Parliamentary Signaling or Policies?

Analyzing Liberal Democracy Responses to Revolutionary Waves

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November 2023

Abstract

Revolutionary protests in one country can inspire protests in another country, demanding responses from elites seeking to maintain power. In studying these responses, scholars typically employ a policy-focused approach, measuring reactions as policies attempting to mitigate revolution through a repression or co-optation policy strategy. However, using policies as a measure for elite responses in liberal democracies may both overestimate the impact of revolutionary waves by including policies that are results of processes unrelated to the revolutionary threat, and underestimate the impact as the approach misses election-oriented non-policy responses, while potentially overlooking important inter-elite response differences. This article argues that an approach focused on political elites' signaling to voters addresses these problems. Building on legislative debate scholarship, the article demonstrates the usefulness of a parliamentary signaling framework on Danish elite responses to revolutions in the 1910s by showing how this approach enables clearer research on liberal democracy responses to revolutionary waves.

1 Introduction

Throughout the last two hundred years, revolutionary protests in one country have on several occasions started a wave of revolutionary protests that has rolled from one country to the next. Some of the most well-known of these are the democratization protests in Europe following the fall of the French emperor Louis Philippe in 1848, the communist uprisings following the Russian Revolution in 1917, or the cascade of democratic rebellions that marked the overthrow of Soviet communist regimes after 1989 (Hale 2013; Weyland 2009). And the diffusion of protest from one country to the next seems real, as researchers agree that these "demonstration effects", where protest in one country inspires protests in the next, "played a major role in spreading protest" (Hale 2013, 339). The diffusion of protests from one country to the next can thus have large impacts for the political elite - potentially threatening their political survival. This has made research ask how elites respond when revolution is knocking on the door.

Here, research generally agrees that elites will respond depending on what suits their political survival, and that the main response strategies are co-optation and repression. Co-optation describes the attempt to mitigate revolution with policies that buy in to the demands of protesters, most often democratization or redistribution (Aidt and Jensen 2014; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023). Research shows that co-optation is also seen more generally in attempts to mitigate revolutionary threats (Acemoglu and Robinson 2000; Acemoglu and Robinson 2005; Knutsen and Rasmussen 2018; Przeworski 2009). Repression is the other, most common strategy for keeping political power (Gerschewski 2013; Davenport 2007). This strategy has also often been used in response to waves of revolutionary protest, in many cases along with co-optation (Boix 2003, 19–64; Gjerløw and Rasmussen 2022; Weyland 2010, 2019). For both of these strategies, research focus has been on the policies implemented - democratization, redistribution, or crackdowns on protesters. But this raises important questions. How do we know whether these policies were actually in response to the revolutionary waves? And what do we do about all of the elite responses that did not clearly materialize into policy?

This problem is particularly important for liberal democracies. Policies are of course also here vital for setting the political path forward. But in democracies, policies will often be compromises and can be based on proposals that were on the table even before any revolutionary threat, a problem already noted by scholars (Aidt and Jensen 2014, 64). And in a liberal democracy, political survival is not only the survival of the political system but also surviving the next election. Politicians may therefore use the threat of revolution more opportunistically, e.g. to try to attract revolution-weary voters (Acemoglu et al. 2022; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Tooze 2006, 8, 12; 2014, 179–80). This will here be known as the political combat strategy. We also see a problem in a lack of knowledge on how democracies with extensive suffrage and proportional representation respond to revolutionary waves. Franchise extension can change parliamentarians' behaviors (Spirling 2016) and possible co-optation responses such as public spending (Aidt, Daunton, and Dutta 2010), while proportional representation can increase voter turnout (Geys 2006) and redistribution (Persson and

Tabellini 2003), thereby affecting response strategies. But the small and mixed evidence we see on states with extensive franchise and proportional representation does not review the immediate elite responses to revolutionary waves (Sant'Anna and Weller 2020; Weyland 2019; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, appendix A4).

In light of these gaps, the article asks the following two questions. First, how do we best analyze how politicians in a liberal democracy respond to revolutionary waves? And second, do politicians in a liberal democracy with extensive franchise and proportional representation respond to revolutionary waves by using the 1) co-optation strategy, 2) repression strategy, or 3) political combat strategy? This article adds to the literature by providing a new way of analyzing liberal democratic responses, as well as providing empirical results from these analyses of responses in a democracy with extensive suffrage and proportional representation.

The article first argues that parliamentary signaling is better suited than policies to analyze the response of democratic politicians to revolutionary waves. Where policy ends up as an aggregate of many also pre-revolutionary processes, often toeing a final party line (Bräuninger, Müller, and Stecker 2016), parliamentary signaling lets us see how parties and individual MPs change focus on specific issues, as they, in the search for political support from voters, use speeches in parliament to show responsiveness to voters (Fernandes, Debus, and Bäck 2021) and to showcase party and MP brands (Proksch and Slapin 2012). Moreover, policies in democracies only appear after complex policy processes. Therefore, a focus on policies does not reveal the immediate responses to revolutions, or responses that never materialized into policy, thereby potentially hiding the responses we actually want to measure. By using a framework focused on signaling, we are able to capture both more immediate and heterogeneous responses. Second, the article argues that there will be immediate and heterogeneous signaling effects in a liberal democracy in response to a revolutionary wave with the potential of causing revolution in this democracy. Electoral and revolution-mitigating incentives on both political wings will give an overall and immediate increase in signaling on the co-optation and political combat strategies, but not the repression strategy. Especially in case of left-wing revolutionary protests, the most often found form of revolutionary waves (Hale 2013), the stronger incentives on the left-wing for co-optation policies and on the right-wing for the political combat strategy will give heterogeneous responses. All of this, as well as robustness tests for whether MPs changed behavior, can much better be grasped using signaling.

To test these arguments, the study therefore builds a new dataset of Danish parliamentary debates from 1910-1929. Denmark in 1910-1929 offers a useful case as we see here both the existence of a substantial revolutionary movement and politicians recognizing the possibility of revolution (Karpantschof 2019, 396–442; Kühlmann 2018; *Rigsdagstidende 1916/17. Forhandlingerne (Folketinget)* 1917, 149; *Rigsdagstidende 1917/18. Forhandlingerne (Folketinget)* 1918, 3742, 4613; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, appendix A1). By the time of the revolutions in Russia and Germany in the late 1910s, Denmark was a democracy with

extensive suffrage rights and proportional representation (Koefoed 2015), meaning that Denmark can give us knowledge on how such a democracy responds to revolutionary waves.

The results show that, as the article argues, by using the signaling framework, we can more clearly see that there were substantial but heterogeneous co-optation and political combat responses. As expected, both wings increased signaling on co-optation but left-wing parties were more prone to increase signaling. This supports that left-wing parties had more incentives to increase signaling here, and suggests that politicians sought to brand themselves as responsive to potentially revolutionary grievances. We see mixed evidence regarding signaling on repression. For the political combat thesis, we see increased signaling on revolutionary terms on the right-wing, as expected. This means that right-wing politicians would try to put increased focus on revolution, potentially to brand themselves as responsive to revolution-weary voters. In even finer details, we also see that these responses were not solely due to new MPs entering parliament, but also more experienced MPs changing behavior.

The article has three main contributions. First, the article has an important theoretical contribution as we see the merits of using a framework focused on parliamentary signaling that allows us to analyze the initial response to revolutions and the heterogeneity of responses. Second, the article contributes empirically by providing new data which lets us see the response of politicians in a liberal democracy with extensive suffrage and proportional representation, instead of focusing on more autocratic states. Third, the article contributes by disaggregating the responses for parties and individual MPs, while also showing when responses hit the parliamentary agenda, thereby providing a more fine-grained analysis. These more immediate and heterogenous responses only really come to light when using the signaling framework which can strengthen future analyses on how democracies respond to revolutionary threats.

2 Elite responses to waves of revolutionary protest

The causes and effects of waves of revolutionary protest has been a question of interest for political science scholars following several notable revolutionary cascades of the last two hundred years, such as the democratizations of 1848-49 or the communist uprisings after 1917 (Hale 2013; Weyland 2010). As to how protests became protest waves, scholars agree that the demonstration effect – the effect of revolutionary protest in one country inspiring the next country - has “played a major role” (Hale 2013, 339). Following this, a key question has been how elites respond to not lose power as they watch foreign revolutionary protests potentially spreading to their own country (e.g. Gjerløw and Rasmussen 2022; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Weyland 2009, 2019).

Here, the literature sees two main strategies of elite response: co-optation and repression. Co-optation is seen as a way of providing either political or economic concessions to protesters to mitigate rebellion (Acemoglu and Robinson 2000; Acemoglu and Robinson 2005; Przeworski 2009; Rasmussen and Knutsen

2023). Focusing on European democratization, Weyland (2010) qualitatively shows that elites responded to foreign revolutions with democratization reforms to stave off domestic protests. Aidt and Jensen (2014) further this argument by using statistical analyses to show how the spread of information on revolutions from one country to another increased the likelihood of elites responding with reforms of democratization. Earlier, Boix (2003) had provided a theoretical argument behind the mechanism, showing that foreign revolutions made political actors reevaluate the chances of revolution succeeding in their country. Focus was for this strand of literature mostly on autocratic states while others have focused more on more democratic states, as Gjerløw and Rasmussen (2022) show how the introduction of proportional representation in Norway was a result of foreign left-wing revolutions in the 1910s. Within this focus on more democratic states, we also see new research on social and economic reforms as a co-optation strategy. Rasmussen and Knutsen (2023) show how social reforms were introduced in 1910s Norway in response to the Russian Revolution, while Sant'Anna and Weller (2020) show how redistribution in the OECD correlated with communist revolutionary events. This research has to a large degree focused on policy responses, such as democratization or redistribution.

Repression is also a possibility as a response and is seen as one of the key strategies of autocracies (Gerschewski 2013; Wintrobe 1998), nonetheless minimized when deemed too costly (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005). Research focus has for this strategy also been on policy responses. Weyland (2010) shows how repressive policies of autocracies held off democratization protests from succeeding. But repression can also be seen in democracies to a lesser extent (Davenport 2007). The relatively democratic Norway increased repressive plans and surveillance of revolutionary groups after the Russian Revolution (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023). Combined with economic co-optation, the regime survived. Weyland (2019) also shows increased repression in Latin American democracies in response to the Cuban Revolution which successfully mitigated left-wing revolutions. We thus see a common approach of analyzing state responses to waves of revolutionary protest as either co-optation or repression policies.

But two shortcomings of this literature limit our ability to understand how liberal democracies respond to revolutions that risk spreading into their own country. The first problem is that this literature focuses so heavily on policy responses. The focus on policy is intuitive as policies are vital for setting reform paths. But in democracies, policies implemented can be results of many other different processes than the threat of revolution. E.g., policy processes of what looks as co-optation policies may have started years before revolutionary threats: In their otherwise very informative article showing how franchise extensions were reactions to revolutionary events, Aidt and Jensen (2014) code Denmark's 1915 franchise extension as coinciding with revolutionary events in 1915 (Aidt and Jensen 2014, 59), but the franchise proposals were already on the table and generally agreed upon in 1909 (Koefoed 2015). And the reform process of the UK franchise extension implemented in 1918, following the Russian Revolution, actually started in 1912 (Aidt and Jensen 2014, 64). Moreover, if we only look at policies implemented, we will miss how both different parties and politicians within parties in democracies respond differently to events, as even politicians from the same party have been shown to respond differently to the same legislation, in order to best gain voter

support (Herzog and Benoit 2015). And repressive policies may stem from secret police acting on its own (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, 31) and not the response of politicians. Thus, by only analyzing responses as policies, we may end up focusing on responses that were not the reactions of the political elite. As a counter to this, Gjerløw and Rasmussen (2022) and Rasmussen and Knutsen (2023) review Norwegian politician responses to revolutions but their qualitative approach limits the amount of data they can assess.

The other problem is our limited knowledge on how democracies with extensive franchise and proportional representation respond, as franchise extension can change parliamentarians' behaviors (Spirling 2016) and possible co-optation responses such as public spending (Aidt, Daunton, and Dutta 2010), while proportional representation can increase turnout (Geys 2006) and redistribution (Persson and Tabellini 2003), thus potentially affecting electoral concerns and co-optation willingness. We see that Norway pre proportional representation responds to revolutionary waves with co-optation and limited repression (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Gjerløw and Rasmussen 2022). Weyland (2019) shows how Uruguay, which had proportional representation (Wills-Otero 2009), extensive franchise (Kellam 2013), and one of the highest democratic standards of the world (Michael Coppedge et al. 2023), a decade after the Cuban Revolution fell into autocracy, but does not focus on the initial Uruguayan responses to revolutionary protest waves. Sant'Anna and Weller (2020) shows that co-optation policy enactments in more developed democracies correlates with revolutionary events but, following the first problem of the literature, it is not clear that the policies were responses to revolutionary events. This article addresses these problems in the following sections.

3 Theory

3.1 Analyzing elite responses through parliamentary signaling

This article argues that if we want to gain a better understanding of how politicians respond to revolutionary waves, we can usefully study their reaction through signaling in parliamentary debates. This is based on the assertion that, compared to an approach of policy response focus, the focus on signaling lets us more clearly see whether or not responses were in reaction to revolutionary events, how parties and politicians differed in responses, and also shows responses that were not policy-focused but were still attempts to attract voters.

The parliamentary signaling focus will be used to analyze how elites respond in parliamentary speeches, and parliamentary signaling will be seen as mentions of specific words and sentences in formal debates within the parliament. This includes all formal parliamentary debates as we expect parliamentary speeches to be based on strategic positioning by parties and MPs in order to attract voters (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2014). Parliamentary signaling stands in contrast to (public) policy understood as government actions and non-actions (Dye 2017, 1). The background of using parliamentary signaling is that, in the search for political support from voters, parties use speeches in parliament to shore up the party brand (Proksch and Slapin 2012)

as well as to show responsiveness to voters (Fernandes, Debus, and Bäck 2021), such that parliamentarians have e.g. been seen to voice disagreement to budget cuts even as they follow party discipline and vote for these cuts (Herzog and Benoit 2015), or have in speeches increased focus on geographical locations of certain constituents (Zittel, Nyhuis, and Baumann 2019). This is signaling in that the mentioning of certain words and sentences signals to voters that this politician is responsive to issues for which voters try to find representatives for (Fernandes, Debus, and Bäck 2021).

The concept of parliamentary signaling is based on a growing literature on how parliamentary speeches function as signals to voters to position one politician or party against others (e.g. Bäck, Debus, and Müller 2014; Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2014; Slapin et al. 2018; Zittel, Nyhuis, and Baumann 2019; Fernandes, Debus, and Bäck 2021). Focusing on signaling lets researchers see a more immediate and heterogeneous response to events. Where policy ends up as an aggregate of many processes, often toeing a final party line (Bräuninger, Müller, and Stecker 2016), parliamentary debate signaling lets us see how parties and individual MPs change position on specific issues (Herzog and Benoit 2015) and how this correlates with events outside of parliament (Barrie, Fleming, and Rowan 2023).

Parliamentary signaling consists of strategic positioning from parties on what to speak about as parties need to balance three interests in the search for voter support: Signaling the overall party brand to attract voters; signaling to specific constituencies that may require more targeted signaling; and allowing MPs to dissent for both signaling to specific constituencies and allowing the venting of disagreements to secure unity for roll-calls (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2014). When integrating this into a setting of waves of revolutionary protest, we get an analytical model as follows: To start off, when revolutionary protests spread and democratic politicians see that these protests could also flare up in their own country, they need to respond to secure their political survival (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Weyland 2010). They here have several possible strategy choices - the co-optation, repression or political combat strategies - which will be elaborated further down, and these strategies guide their parliamentary signaling response. Politicians will then use certain phrases resonating with specific constituencies, as politicians seek to maintain both their party and individual brands in the need to attract voters (Herzog and Benoit 2015; Fernandes, Debus, and Bäck 2021), shaping their responses so as to both live up to demands of voter attraction and mitigating revolution. This is their response to the wave of revolutionary protests. To investigate these responses, we thus need to study not only overall parliamentary signaling but also party-level and MP-level signaling, and this will be seen in the methodological choices in this article.

Parliamentary signaling becomes analytically important on three grounds for studying how democratic political elites respond to the threat of revolution. First, signaling is a substantial response in itself. As signaling aims at attracting voters, it can potentially affect elections and thus also policy processes (Proksch and Slapin 2012; Zittel, Nyhuis, and Baumann 2019). Second, these parliamentary signaling responses would be lost if we focus on measuring policies. A focus on policy responses is common in the literature (e.g. Aidt and

Jensen 2014; Boix 2003; Weyland 2010), but if proposed policy was never implemented, we would hardly see any response, even though some politicians might have proposed new legislation in response to revolutionary threats. Without signaling, we would thus not see substantial responses to revolutions if these responses did not materialize into policy, or if policy could not clearly be interpreted as a response to revolutions. And since we see heterogeneous parliamentary responses to political events both within and between parties that could hardly be seen with a policy focus (Barrie, Fleming, and Rowan 2023; Herzog and Benoit 2015), signaling lets us see a more detailed response. Third, by studying signaling, we can much clearer see if responses were actually correlated with specific events (see e.g. again Barrie, Fleming, and Rowan 2023), instead of risking studying policies that were results of complex policy processes started before revolutionary events, a problem already noted by scholars (Aidt and Jensen 2014, 64). We limit these measurement problems when focusing on parliamentary signaling.

One might ask if signaling is an 'uncredible commitment' and therefore should not be in focus. Parts of the literature focuses on the distinction between credible and uncredible commitments where credible commitments are long-term concessions that bind the elite's future actions (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005; Knutsen and Rasmussen 2018). These scholars might argue that e.g. signaling a promise to do more redistribution is a case of 'uncredible commitment', as it does not necessitate long-term concessions but can be 'cheap talk'. But this objection misses that signaling is substantial in itself for measuring responses to revolutions in democracies. As signaling serves to attract voters, it potentially affects elections and therefore the policy process (Proksch and Slapin 2012). Furthermore, credible commitment promises will also start as signaling, but if these never become policy, then a strict policy-focus will miss these credible commitment responses.

Parliamentary signaling can thus help research focusing on policy responses. The focus on parliamentary signaling helps the policy literature in seeing in more detail whether or not policy responses were reactions to revolutionary threats, helps in seeing when responses emerge but do not materialize into policy, and for which politicians and parties the responses emerge.

3.2 Response expectations

The article follows Rasmussen and Knutsen (2023) and Boix (2003) in assuming political elites as having an interest in the continuation of the political system that secures their livelihood, and a strong disinterest in a social revolution which may both upend their privileges and threaten their lives. From this follows that politicians will also have focus on reelection as this also determines their livelihood. Following this, democratic politicians will have three main concerns in the event of a revolutionary wave that is risking to spark revolutionary movements in their own country. These concerns will, along with their party interests, determine the response strategies of the politicians.

The first of these is the electoral concern, that of stopping revolution in a way that is electorally most

favorable. For an analogy of this, we can look to Norway (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023). Here, when revolutionary movements pressured the right-wing government, they introduced more social policy but only so much that it tempered revolutionary pressures but did not actually implement something akin to socialism, which would have been even more detrimental for electoral goals. Thus follows that the more this revolution mitigating policy path can harm electorally, the less probable it is, though this tendency will be weakened as revolution becomes more probable. On the other hand, the more a policy can be advantageous electorally, and the higher the chance that the policy can stop revolution, the higher will the probability of support for this policy path be. Here we can again look to Norway (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023), as the non-revolutionary Social Democrats supported expanding social policy to co-opt the revolutionary movements.

The second concern is the self protection concern. This concern refers to how for non-revolutionary elites, there will be a threat of them being seen as a counter-revolutionary, in case revolution does come. From this concern and historical analogies, we can derive some behavioral logics. We will think that the more a politician sees themselves as in danger of being seen as a counter-revolutionary, and the higher they see the probability of revolution, the more will they be tempted to use any strategy - co-optation og repression - that stops revolution. Being seen as counter-revolutionary carries the risk of losing your privileges, as well as death, and this can explain the willingness of elites to avoid revolution that we see in the literature (Aidt and Jensen 2014; Przeworski 2009; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Weyland 2010).

Following this logic, the more a politician sees themselves as in danger of being seen as a counter-revolutionary, the higher is the probability that they will use repressive measures – as, if they are already seen as counter-revolutionaries, they already stand to lose privileges and have less of a pro-revolutionary image to lose. For a historical analogy, we can see the armed opposition to the Bolshevik takeover of Russia or to the Castro takeover of Cuba as a reaction of people who knew their privileges would not prevail in a post-revolutionary society.

But of course, this concern can also lead to turncoats and bandwagoning, as we e.g. find with Talleyrand, the bishop who "cleverly" became actively pro-revolution in late 18th century France (Spiegel 2019), as revolution became inevitable. From this follows that the more you see the revolutionary winds changing and repression as costly, the less open anti-revolutionary would you want to cast yourself, as long as you see it as probable that you can be seen as not counter-revolutionary.

The third concern is the opportunism concern, a question of how a politician can use the potential of revolution to win political gains. The more a politician can gain electorally or in political concessions from using the potential of a revolution, the more probable is it that they will do this. This could be seen with the first red scare in the US (Tooze 2014, 179–80) or the spectre of Judaeo-Bolshevism in post-WWI Germany (Tooze 2006, 8, 12), both of which were used to attract revolution-weary voters. In Norway, reformist socialists used the spectre of revolution to argue for concessions that could mitigate revolution (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, 47–48). These three concerns will play out differently for different political parties, in

interplay with available response strategies, and this will determine how each party chooses to respond to foreign revolutions.

This leads to a review of the strategies that politicians can use in response to the wave of revolutionary protests. The literature has so far focused on the co-optation and repression strategies, while a further read into historical evidence provides another strategy, the political combat strategy.

Co-optation as a counter-revolutionary response strategy plays a substantial role in the literature as a way of trying to mititgate revolutionary threats by providing concessions (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005; Aidt and Jensen 2014; Przeworski 2009; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Weyland 2010). These concessions can be thought of as either political or economic inclusion (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, 21). Political inclusion will be less relevant here as we want to focus on democracies with already large inclusion in terms of voting rights and proportional representation. But economic co-optation is more relevant, as it focuses on social and labor policies that will mitigate grievances and therefore may hinder revolutionary movements (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, 21–23).

Given the concern of stopping revolution in an electorally favorable way, co-optation will be a probable response for both political wings in a democracy. This is because we expect no pro-revolutionary political wings in a democratic parliament with both extensive franchise and proportional representation, and thus both political wings want to secure the political system by concessions rather than only relying on the potentially more costly repression (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005). Supporting this, we can look at how the introduction of proportional representation was instrumental in turning Norwegian revolutionaries away from a revolutionary path (Gjerløw and Rasmussen 2022; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023).

But of course, given the underlying logics of the electoral concern, we can expect heterogeneity on the party level. Right-wing parties will be tempted towards using the co-optation strategy less than the left-wing as the economic co-optation policies will be more in the electoral interest of the left-wing. This means that signaling increases on co-optation should be bigger for left-wing parties. As we will be investigating waves of revolutions, we will expect generally heightened perceptions of revolutionary threat, and we should thus see signaling increases for parties on both wings.

Given the self protection concern, right-wingers could be tempted to use co-opt policies to not be seen as counter-revolutionaries. But it is not clear whether they would focus mostly on co-opt policies or on repressive measures, as it is not obvious that right-wing politicians would see co-opt policies as a credible way of being seen as not counter-revolutionary, as they were already part of right-wing parties of an expected counter-revolutionary public perception. This also means that signaling increases for the co-optation policies should be larger for left-wing parties.

Following the signaling framework, signaling on co-optation will increase as it brands both wings as responsive to e.g. poverty or inequality, thereby also decreasing risks of revolution by recognizing the population's

grievances. From this follows expectations (a) and (b).

(a) Signaling on co-optation is positively associated with the revolutionary period.

(b) Signaling on co-optation shows a more widespread and larger positive association for the left-wing in the revolutionary period.

As co-optation methods are expected to be available, as repression is costly (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005, 39–40), and as repression is less wide-spread in democracies (Davenport 2007), a repression parliamentary signaling response will not be very probable in the case of a democracy extensive franchise and proportional representation.

This is also because the incentives go both ways. In, e.g., the case of a left-wing revolutionary wave (which covers most, if not all, waves of the past centuries (Hale 2013)), right-wing parties could want to signal a willingness to safeguard societal order through repression, as this could speak to their electoral concern as right-wing voters would be expected to be more weary of a left-wing revolution. But as repression can lead to loss of life and assets (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005, 39–40), it can be detrimental to the main focus of elites, namely keeping their privileges, and, if it fails, can lead to a revolution where elite attempts at repression will have heightened risks of being cast as counter-revolutionary. In the case of a left-wing revolutionary wave, the incentives for a left-wing repression strategy are even less present, as this may hurt their electoral interests as left-wing voters might identify more with left-wing persons who could be the victims of repression.

Following the signaling framework, signaling on repression will thus not increase as it brands a party as both potentially endangering any peace that secures general privileges and non-responsive to societal material grievances. Thus follows the following response expectations:

(c) Signaling on repression is not associated with the revolutionary period.

(d) Signaling on repression is not associated with the revolutionary period for either political wing.

Wide-scaled repression in response to international revolutions may not be very probable in a democracy. We can instead from the literature deduce a third, more probable strategy - the political combat strategy. With the political combat strategy, politicians try to increase revolutionary fears in ways that can help to combat their political opposition and build electoral support for themselves. Politicians following this strategy will try to stoke revolutionary fears as it could help them mobilize supporters and achieve political concessions.

This strategy speaks to the opportunism concern on how to use revolutions for political gains. Again using the example of waves of left-wing revolutions, the historically most common type (Hale 2013), right-wing politicians could try to benefit from fears of a leftist revolution by trying to increase the perceived threat of

revolution, creating a 'red scare', as revolution-weary voters might then increasingly support the right-wing (see again: Acemoglu et al. 2022; Tooze 2006, 8, 12; 2014, 179–80).

Left-wing politicians may also try to strengthen revolutionary fears in casting themselves as the necessary reformers to gain support from revolution-weary voters or get concessions from revolution-weary political opponents (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, 47–48). Both wings thus have some incentive for increasing signaling, as they can brand themselves as having an eye on potential voter worries of revolution:

(e) Signaling on revolutionary terms is positively associated with the revolutionary period.

On the other hand, stoking revolutionary expectations could also damage a non-revolutionary left-wing party as the increased focus on revolution could attract more voter attention to revolutionary left-wing parties. Non-revolutionary left-wing parties will therefore have less definitive incentive to stoke revolutionary fears compared to right-wing parties, as left-wing signaling on this could also brand themselves as the party not serious about social change. Thus follows:

(f) Signaling on revolutionary terms shows a more widespread and larger positive association for the right-wing in the revolutionary period.

4 Research design

4.1 Case selection

To investigate the response of a liberal democracy with extensive franchise and proportional representation to a wave of revolutionary protest, we need a fitting case. Denmark in 1910-1929 offers a useful case as we can investigate how Danish politicians responded to the socialist revolutions in Russia and Germany. By the time of the revolutions, Denmark was a democracy with extensive suffrage rights and proportional representation (Koefoed 2015).

As we need a case where revolutions had the potential to spark revolutionary movements, this excludes e.g. European responses to the Arab Spring of the 2010s, as these revolutions would not and did not risk sparking a likewise revolution in Europe. But Denmark also fulfills the criteria of being a case where waves revolutionary protest had the potential of sparking revolutionary movements. During the 1910s, Denmark had several socialist uprisings with basis in a considerable revolutionary movement (Karpantschof 2019, 396–442; Kühlmann 2018), party invitation to the Congress of the Comintern which is seen as a sign of an institutionalized revolutionary movement (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, appendix A1), and politicians talking openly about the risk of revolution (*Rigsdagstidende 1916/17. Forhandlingerne (Folketinget)* 1917, 149; *Rigsdagstidende 1917/18. Forhandlingerne (Folketinget)* 1918, 3742, 4613). This

shows both the existence of a substantial revolutionary movement and politicians recognizing the possibility of revolution.

The 10 years after the onset of World War I (and even more so from 1917 onwards) were followed by a period of historic and dramatic changes in Danish social and taxation policies (Johansen 2007; Petersen, Petersen, and Christiansen 2011, 35–55, 269–81; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, xi), as taxes on the richest Danes increased substantially, and social and labor policy became more inclusive. These reforms were implemented under both left-wing and right-wing governments.

4.2 Data

To study signaling responses, the article uses a new and original data set from the Danish parliament which for the first time compiles Danish parliament debates from decades of the first part of the 20th century. The data set has been made from transcriptions of Danish parliament debates which have been divided according to each speaker, their speech and the date of the speech. The transcriptions are delivered by the Danish Parliament and comprise all debates of the Danish second chamber, Folketinget, from 1910-1929.

This focus is chosen as Folketinget have elections in local constituencies but deliberate on national policy matters and are up for election every two to four years. This makes Folketinget the place we would expect to see deliberations on matters that are currently happening, as these politicians need to stay up to date to secure reelection. The upper house of Denmark (Landstinget, abolished in 1953) had longer election terms, meaning less incentive to react to current events. Moreover, elections here were not thoroughly democratic. The focus on Folketinget means that the article can go more into depth with the chamber where we would expect to see most responses to current, international events.

The debates in Folketinget were important for wider political debate as newspapers reported from the speeches of Folketinget every day (see e.g. large papers such as Berlingske Tidende or Social-Demokraten at “Mediestream - Aviser” (n.d.)). This prevalence of reports from Folketinget-speeches shows that parliamentary speeches were not just intra-elite signaling but would be read by non-elite Danes and can thus be seen as signaling to the general voter.

The data set consists of 69,201 speeches, giving an average of 3460 speeches per year. By studying the large amount of data that this data set comprises, the analysis can lessen the effects of selection bias that would have been a larger issue if qualitative text analysis was used. 1919 had the highest number of speeches with 4571 while 1924 had the lowest with 1743. Election years such as 1924 tended to have a lower number of speeches. A speech on average consisted of 382.9 tokens which is relatively high and shows that speeches were quite long compared to today (for comparison with Folketinget-data from recent decades (Rauh and Schwalbach 2020), see Appendix 1). See also Appendix 2 for further descriptive statistics on the data. As can be seen in figure 1, the number of speeches of each party mirrored the electoral results of the years. The

Liberals (V) generally dominated the floor as the biggest party for most of the time while the rise of the Social Democrats (S) and decline of Social-Liberals (R) in this period can also be seen.

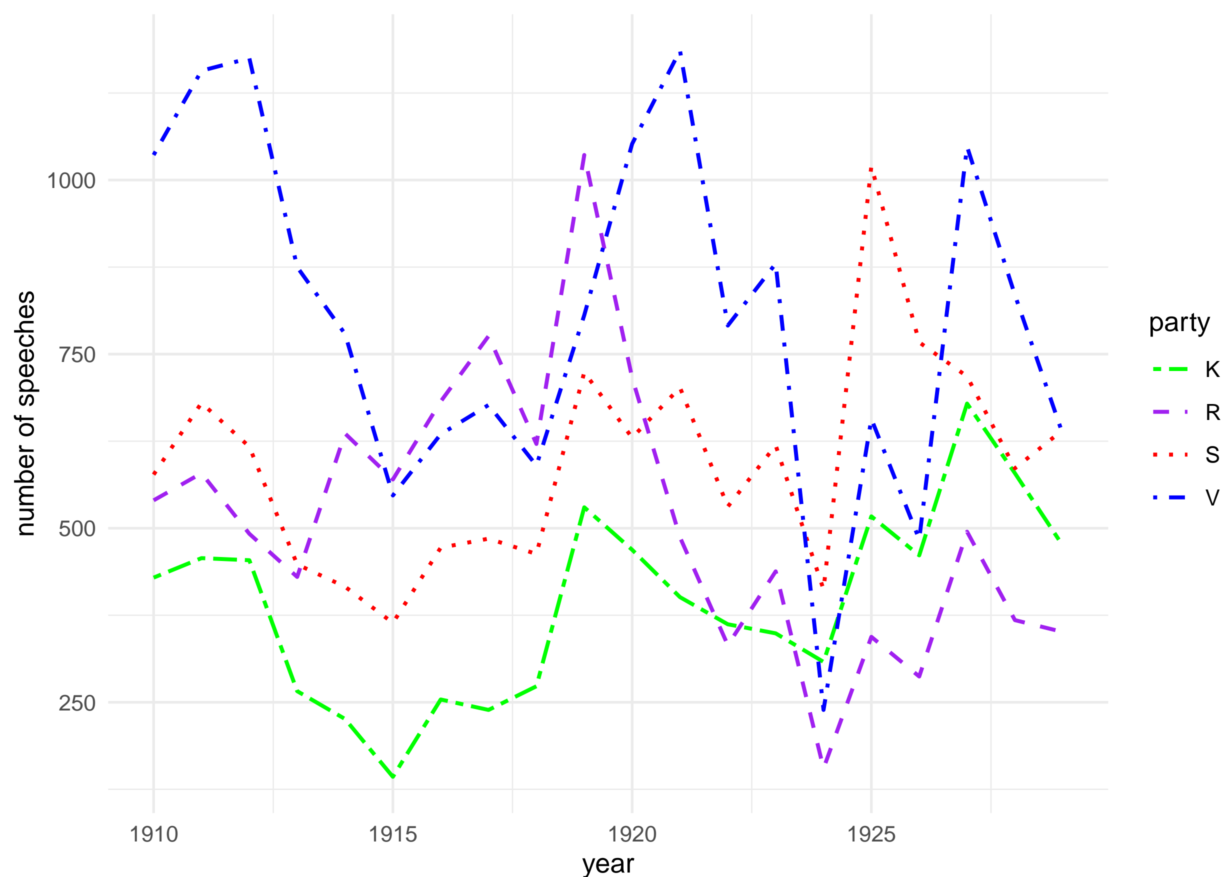

Figure 1: Number of speeches per party, 1910-1929

The data is dependent on optical character recognition of the transcribed documents. The risk to this study would be if some words of interest or speakers were consistently not recognized, or that that the revolutionary period was more prone to miss-recognitions than the non-revolutionary period, or vice-versa. By validating text through manual reading, it is found that there does not seem to be consistent errors for the words of interest, for speakers or certain years (see Appendix 3).

4.3 Measuring signaling response and revolutionary period

The article measures signaling as the mentions of specific words and sentences. The quasi-Poisson regression models use words in their shortest, most meaningful but distinct semantic form, while the Wordfish-model further integrates the context by also measuring which words surround other words. Co-optation signaling is measured on four key social policy topics of the era: unemployment benefits, working day shortening, price increase compensation, and additional income and wealth taxes. The topics have been chosen from

the social and labor topics of focus in the literature on the Danish case in the period in question (Johansen 2007; Petersen, Petersen, and Christiansen 2011, 35–55, 269–81; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, xi).[1]

The article measures signaling on repressive concepts by defining repressive concepts based on the case background and relevant literature. Looking at the literature (Karpantschof 2019, 396–442; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, 29–49), the relevant repressive measures would be connected to increased policing, surveillance, arrests, shooting, prisons, imprisonment, execution, and deportation.

When measuring signaling on political combat, the article focuses on signaling on revolutionary threats. To measure signaling here, the article also bases its operationalization on the literature. Here we see a focus on the terms revolution, socialism, bolschevism, communism and anarchism (Karpantschof 2019, 396–442; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023).

The article wants to measure the impact of a period of revolutionary waves. The literature tells us that the years 1917-1919 are of very high significance for potential effects in Denmark due to the wave of revolutionary protest starting with the Russian (1917) and spreading to the German (1918-1919) revolutions (Karpantschof 2019; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023). The first part of the Russian Revolution starts in March 1917 with the end of the tsar regime; the second part occurs in November 1917 when the Bolsheviks take power. After this follows a period of unrest in Denmark until the start of the German Revolution that we also want to include as part of the revolutionary period (Karpantschof 2019). The German Revolution starts in November 1918 with the Kiel Mutiny and ends with the Weimar Constitution in August 1919. This marks an end to the international revolutionary period of the Russian and German revolutions.

The models therefore regress a dummy variable for the period of March 1917-August 1919 against the previous years of the decade. This period delimits the period of revolutionary protest wave pressure most affecting Denmark, lasting from the the beginning of the Russian Revolution until the end of the German revolutionary period.

4.4 Control variables and benchmark model

As we are dealing with a count variable with risk of overdispersion, the benchmark model of the study uses a quasi-Poisson regression. All models include robust standard errors. The more extensive models control for Danish growth and unemployment for all years as these variables may affect the independent variable systematically while also affecting the dependent variable by heightening signaling on revolt or social reform.

The more extensive models also control for elections, which again may both affect certain years as well as the willingness of politicians to signal on social policies or social pressures. The models then control for the number of words (tokens) for each year. As reforms of Folketinget meant that the house grew in the number of MPs, this can have affected the number of and length of parliamentary debates, meaning that this in itself

[1] Old-age pension has been left out as there were too few observations for robust statistical analysis.

might have increased mentions of revolution and socialism. Finally, the models control for Danish inflation which may have affected the probability of politicians to signal on social policies or repression, or may have heightened attempts to stoke revolutionary fears. For the more extensive models, there is a risk of controls being mediators and thus affecting the dependent variable. Therefore the study also shows models without controls.

To control for other time specific changes across the period that are not captured by the control variables, the most extensive models also control for time fixed effects. The article uses time fixed effects instead of a time trend as there is no theoretical basis of one specific trend in parliamentary discourse which should not follow any given linear or polynomial trend. To estimate the time fixed effects without losing variables due to collinearity, the years are clustered by every two years.

5 Empirical results

5.1 Clear co-optation and political combat responses

Turning to look at the responses to the revolutions, we start by looking at the signaling response on co-optation. We here see increases in signaling for all the topics within 1917-19 (figure 2). Unemployment benefits sees increased signaling in 1917, as expected. For working day hours, there is an increase in 1918. For signaling on price increase compensation, the increased signaling starts already in 1915-1916, suggesting that this was initially dependent on the rising inflation after the outbreak of World War I. For signaling on increased taxation on the richest individuals, signaling on the topic takes off in 1917 and 1918 and then wanes.

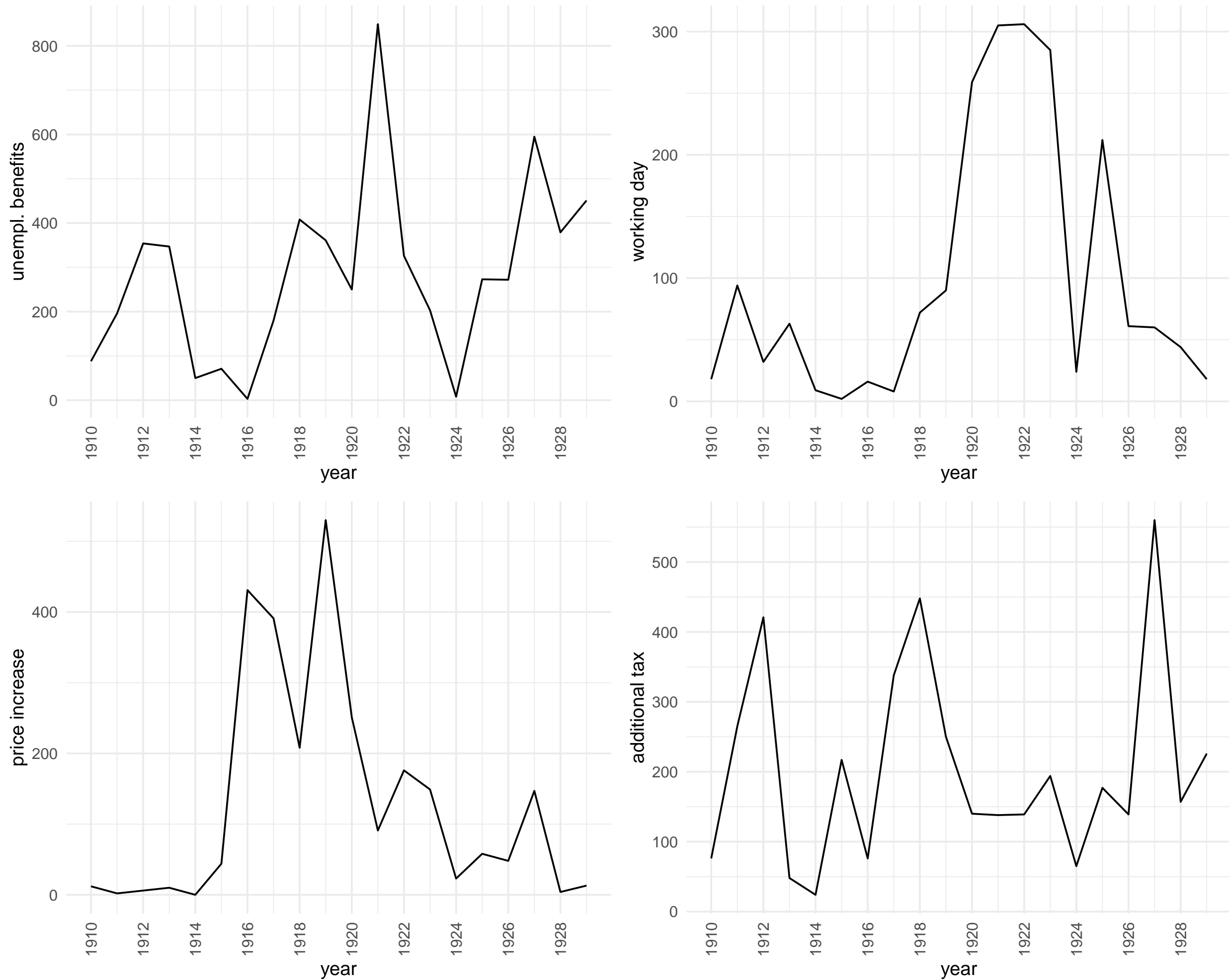

Figure 2: Frequency of signaling on co-optation, 1910-1929

We then turn to the first regression models (all models can be found in full in Appendix 4). We see statistically significant increases in signaling on co-optation (table 1 and table 2). This is in line with expectation (a).

We see for the models with control variables (models II) that signaling on unemployment benefits increases by around 300% and signaling on working day by around 400% compared to the mean of the non-revolutionary years, while signaling on price increases by around 500% and on additional taxes around 88% (see Appendix 5). It should be noted that these high percentages will be due to signaling being, for some non-revolutionary years, very low, and that holding the control values constant here increases the coefficients more than their increases in the descriptive statistics.

The models are robust to control variables and time fixed effects. To further check the robustness, a placebo variable of fake international revolution years in the years before the start of the Russian Revolution is implemented in Appendix 6. The results of the benchmark models are also robust to these placebo years as we do not see significant increases for the placebo years.

Table 1: Signaling on policies (I)

	Unempl. benefits (I)	Unempl. benefits (II)	Unempl. benefits (III)	Working day (I)	Working day (II)	Working day (III)
(Intercept)	-3.087***	-5.258***		-4.643***	-6.569***	
	(0.118)	(1.090)		(0.129)	(1.106)	
Revolutionary period	0.482*	1.538***	14.608***	0.584**	1.965***	12.492***
	(0.193)	(0.394)	(0.263)	(0.193)	(0.450)	(0.433)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Obs.	32687	32687	32687	32687	32687	32687
Deviance	17479	16762.1	16266.9	4059.9	3911.4	3824.4
Std.Errors	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 2: Signaling on policies (II)

	Price inc. (I)	Price inc. (II)	Price inc. (III)	Add. tax (I)	Add. tax (II)	Add. tax (III)
(Intercept)	-3.836***	-0.640		-3.032***	-8.540***	
	(0.109)	(1.016)		(0.084)	(0.746)	
Revolutionary period	1.605***	1.817***	1.726***	0.804***	0.611**	0.651*
	(0.134)	(0.367)	(0.365)	(0.144)	(0.230)	(0.315)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Obs.	32687	32687	32687	32687	32687	32687
R2 Adj.	11828.4	10424	10340	18658.5	17896.6	17850.4
Std.Errors	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Next, the article turns to assessing heterogeneity among the four biggest parties, the left-wing Social Democrats (S) and Social-Liberals (R), and right-wing Conservatives (K) and Liberals (V). In line with expectation (b), statistically significant increases on signaling are more widespread for the left-wing than the right-wing. The largest increases in signaling are also seen for the left-wing, though confidence-intervals for the Social Democrats and Social-Liberals overlap with the Liberals (Appendix 7).

Table 3: Signaling on policies, parties

	S	K	V	R
Unempl.	3.085**	0.474	2.043***	0.220
	(1.029)	(0.988)	(0.590)	(0.696)
Working day	2.338**	0.171	2.442**	4.376***
	(0.838)	(1.247)	(0.858)	(1.068)
Price inc.	2.367***	1.917+	1.660**	1.781*
	(0.431)	(1.003)	(0.614)	(0.907)
Add. tax	0.303	0.644	0.760	0.557
	(0.559)	(0.652)	(0.436)	(0.404)
Control	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE	No	No	No	No
Obs.	5903	3778	9348	7571

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Given our expectation (c), we should not see statistically significant increases in signaling on repression. We see no increase in either 1917 or 1918. We then see an increase in signaling on repression in 1919 that is nonetheless still substantially smaller than the peak in 1911:

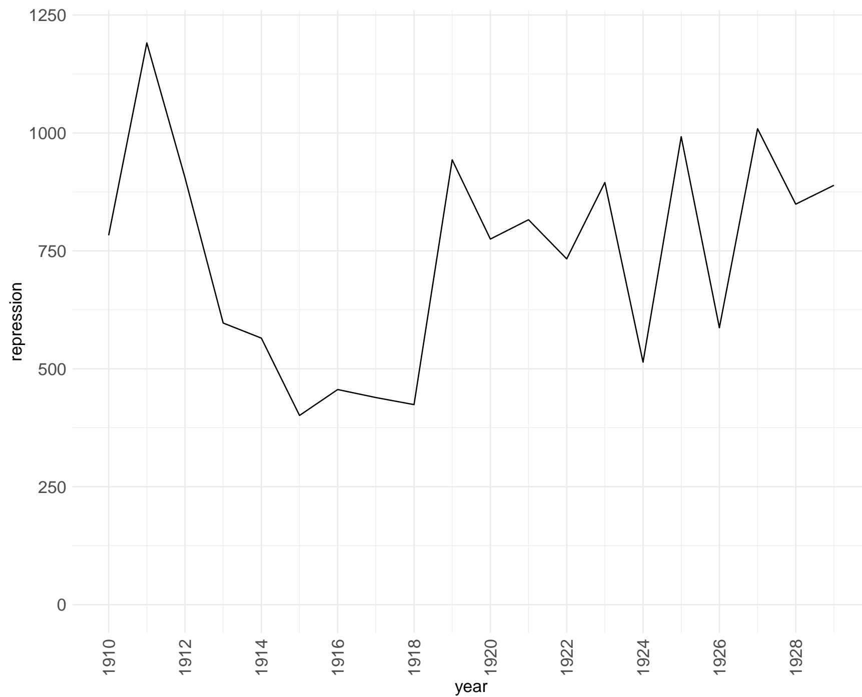

Figure 3: Frequency of signaling on repression measures, 1910-1929

We then turn to the statistical models where we see a statistically significant fall in signaling on repression with no control variables and no significant changes with control variables table (table 4, models I and II). This increase turns positive and significant when using time fixed effects (model III). Further tests show very large multicollinearity values, and when the control variable affected the most is removed, model III changes

to having a non-significant increase (Appendix 8). The results therefore mostly suggests no statistically significant increase, though the evidence is mixed.

One concern for measuring repression signaling could be that repressive measures would not be publicly communicated. But it is also plausible that politicians would try to poster as 'strongmen' to attract voters, e.g. increasing talk on imprisonment or surveillance of radicals. Historical evidence suggests there were some, but highly targeted repressive imprisonments of 10-20 left wing persons (Karpantschof 2019, 396–442; Kühlmann 2018). From the results, we cannot conclude whether this impacted signaling on repression.

Table 4: Signaling on repression

	Aggregate			Parties			
	I	II	II	S	K	V	R
(Intercept)	-1.598***	-2.090***		-1.767***	-1.615**	-1.784***	-1.695***
	(0.030)	(0.215)		(0.514)	(0.553)	(0.337)	(0.402)
Revolutionary period	-0.295***	0.068	0.649***	0.134	-0.015	-0.147	0.136
	(0.048)	(0.098)	(0.157)	(0.228)	(0.235)	(0.142)	(0.164)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes				
FE	No	No	Yes				
Obs.	32687	32687	32687	4987	3059	7964	6461
Deviance	27929.9	27630.9	27595.9	5437.1	3066.6	6377.4	5818.2
Std.Errors	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

As we would expect for the four biggest parties, the Social Democrats (S), Conservatives (K), Liberals (V) and Social Liberals (R), we see no significant increases on repression signaling (table 4, panel "Parties"). This supports expectation (d) but the mixed results on the aggregate level models still makes it difficult to draw conclusions.

We then test the political combat expectation (e), from which we expected to see increases on signaling on revolutionary terms. We see that there are increases in signaling on revolutionary terms and that these increases start already from 1916. We also see a high level of signaling in 1917, a decrease in 1918 but then a substantial increase in 1919 and further increases during the 1920s.

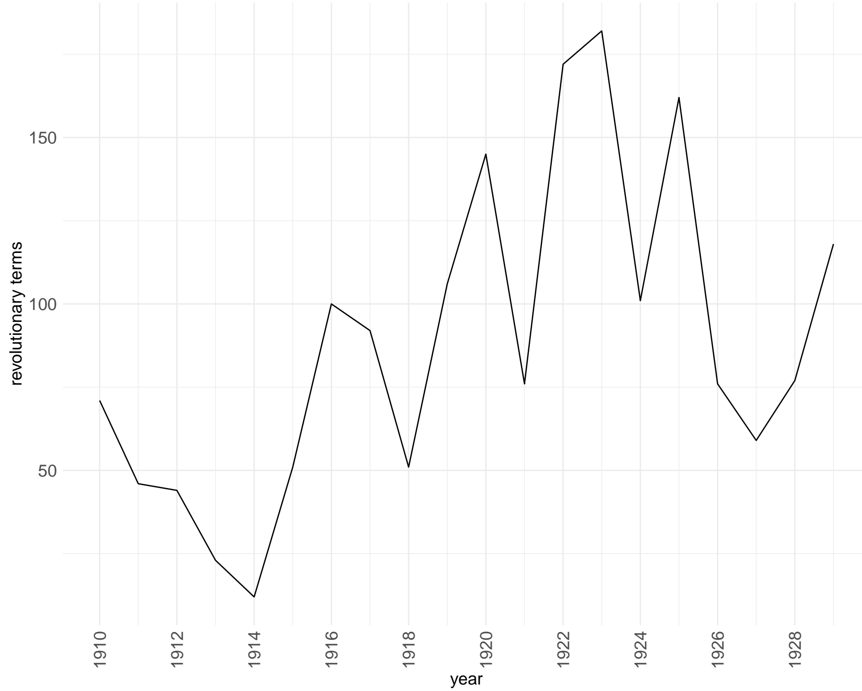

Figure 4: Frequency of signaling on revolutionary terms

For all statistical models, we see an increase in signaling on revolutionary terms (table 5). For the benchmark model II, we see an increase in signaling on revolutionary terms of around 87% compared to the mean of the non-revolutionary years. These results are also robust to running the model with the placebo years (Appendix 6). This is consistent with expectation (e) and that politicians seemingly increased signaling on revolutionary terms in the revolutionary period.

Table 5: Signaling on revolutionary terms

	Aggregate			Parties			
	I	II	III	S	K	V	R
(Intercept)	-4.168***	-3.808***		-0.691	-7.429***	-3.828**	-4.246*
	(0.120)	(0.814)		(1.337)	(2.222)	(1.360)	(1.853)
Revolutionary period	0.461*	0.646*	2.164**	0.844	-0.852	1.264*	-0.433
	(0.179)	(0.324)	(0.775)	(0.510)	(1.051)	(0.494)	(0.913)
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
FE	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	
Obs.	32687	32687	32687	4987	3059	7964	6461
Deviance	10785.2	10679.5	10496.2	3469.1	1365.7	2595.9	1637.6
Std.Errors	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Next the article tests for heterogeneity. Given our expectation (f), we should see increased signaling only for the right-wing. We can see that the signaling increases only for the right-wing Liberals (table 5, panel "Parties"). This is consistent with expectation (f) as we would expect only a right-wing party to have clear

enough incentives to try to stoke revolutionary fears to attract revolution-weary voters.

5.2 Further robustness tests

As we see, the main results are robust to the inclusion and omission of control variables and time fixed effects. They are also robust to placebo year tests. The results thus suggest that it was the revolutions that made the politicians change signaling behavior on the co-optation and political combat strategies. A possible concern for the robustness of this conclusion would be if the results were only due to new, more left-wing politicians coming in, and not the old politicians changing their ways. To control for this, new regressions are run with only politicians who had first been elected to parliament in 1910 or earlier. In case it was only new politicians creating the changes signaling, we should no longer see significant changes.

As seen in table 6, the results for the co-optation policies are still highly significant. This is consistent with a thesis that it was not merely the entrance of new politicians that created the changes in signaling in the revolutionary period. Instead, it seems that more seasoned politicians changed their ways.

Table 6: Signaling on policies, robustness to MP change

	Unempl. benefits	Working day	Prince inc.	Add. tax	Repression	Rev. terms
(Intercept)	-5.209***	-5.712***	-0.951	-8.616***	-2.040***	-4.210***
	(1.087)	(1.122)	(1.047)	(1.976)	(0.231)	(0.857)
Revolutionary period	1.937***	2.018***	2.149***	1.104***	0.402***	0.836*
	(0.395)	(0.506)	(0.372)	(0.242)	(0.106)	(0.369)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FE	No	No	No	No	No	No
Obs.	27986	27986	27986	27986	27986	27986
Deviance	14563.9	3114.3	7701	15479.6	24863.6	9469.8
Std.Errors	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust	Robust

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

For signaling on repression, we now see a highly significant, though not very large, increase in signaling. This goes against our results on an aggregate level, and shows that among politicians with a longer career, there was more of a turn towards repressive signaling in the revolutionary period. This could fit the picture that the Danish state increased policing and surveillance of left-wing environments (Karpantschof 2019, 396–442; Kühlmann 2018). But the question of differences in repressive reactions among older or younger politicians is not the focus of this article. Nonetheless, this further adds to the mixed picture we see for the signaling response on repression.

Finally, we see for the political combat strategy that the increase in signaling on revolutionary terms is still significant. For both the co-optation and political combat strategy, the results are consistent with a thesis that the changes in the revolutionary period were not solely due to newcomers, but most probably also a result of politicians with longer parliamentary careers changing behavior.

Another concern could be that the co-optation policies in focus were ‘cherry-picked’ and not actually important in debates, and thus perhaps not relevant to study. To counter this, the article also takes a more inductive approach by using unsupervised topic modelling to find the most common topics in the parliamentary debates from 1910-1919. The results are also robust to this approach as we see the same co-optation policies as part of the most important topics, and we also see increases in signaling for these in line with the other empirical results (Appendix 9).

As the empirical results are based on an observational study, it is necessary to further probe the causality of the relationship. There is a risk of confounding factors impacting the results. The study already tries to control for potential confounders such as election years or inflation. Another potential confounder is World War I. This has not been included in the initial controls because of potential collinearity problems with the inflation control. But the results are also robust to the inclusion of World War I as control (Appendix 10).

Another potential problem could be that results are driven by party specific developments. Parties may have their own specific developments in signaling which, for each of them, explain their changes in signaling. Therefore, the models are also run with party fixed effects. The results are also robust to these specifications (Appendix 11).

There is also a risk of measurement error as we could be worried that the results are driven by unreliable measurement of signaling for some specific dates, and that the results are thus highly volatile. Therefore, the models are run again where, on each run, one of each consecutive dates from the revolutionary years is removed. All models here show estimates in the direction reported in the empirical results. For signaling on revolutionary terms, 99.2% of runs show p-values below 0.05 while 100% of runs shows p-values below 0.08. For signaling on additional taxation, one out of 351 runs shows some p-value volatility. All other models are totally stable on this robustness check (Appendix 12). This suggests that measurement error is of no greater concern for the empirical results. Finally, the models are also robust to runs using a Poisson and standard OLS regression (Appendix 13).

5.3 Assessing heterogeneous responses on policy issue positions

The increased signaling on co-optation policies does not tell us how parties positioned themselves on the policies. Political opponents could, by default, disagree with each other, or the revolutionary pressures could push political opponents into more agreement than usual.

To assess this, the article uses the Wordfish-model (Slapin and Proksch 2008) which is an unsupervised model estimating party positions on political issues. This model has been demonstrated to be able to show how parties position themselves on issues by computing the differences in words used by the parties (Catalinac 2018; Lo, Proksch, and Slapin 2016; Proksch and Slapin 2010).[2] For measuring co-optation policy

[2] This method is preferred to the Wordshoal-method (Lauderdale and Herzog 2016) which requires clear debate IDs and focuses on individual MPs, not parties.

positions during the revolutionary years, the model is run on all speeches mentioning one of the keywords used for measuring co-optation signaling. For the non-revolutionary years, all speeches are used for creating non-revolutionary baseline positions.

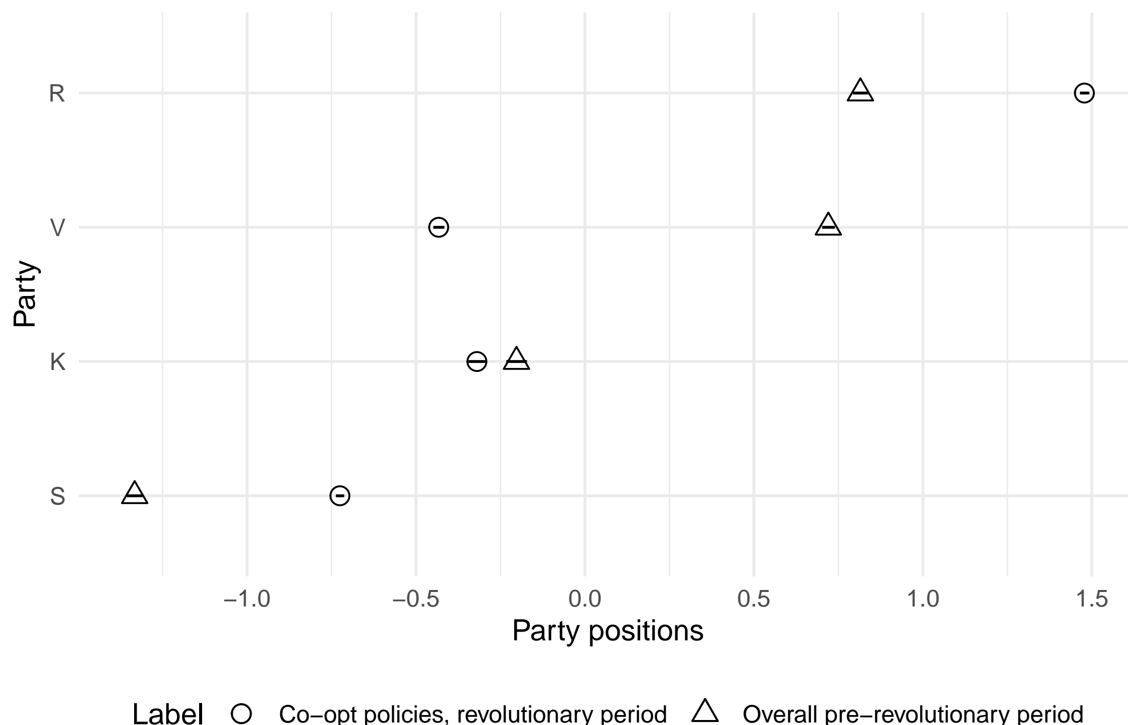

Figure 5: Co-optation party positions

The Social Democrats (S), Liberals (V) and Social-Liberals (R) most consistently increased signaling on co-optation. Figure 5 shows that the left-wing Social Democrats and right-wing Liberals move much closer to each other on co-optation policy positions compared to their general positions from 1910 until early 1917. The moderate Social-Liberals become an outlier in the revolutionary period. This is explained by this party being the main governing party, leading them to use more formal, procedural words that set them apart from other parties, something only becoming evident after they became the ruling party in 1913 (Appendix 14). Focusing instead on the more comparable Social Democrats and Liberals, we thus see that their increased signaling on co-optation was considerably more aligned than earlier. This suggests that the threat of revolution pushed both parties into responding more similarly on co-optation than their usual, pre-revolutionary signaling. As the Social Democrats were seen as in favor of expanding social and labor rights (Petersen, Petersen, and Christiansen 2011), the Liberals turning left and closer to the Social Democrats could suggest that, following the signaling framework, they wanted to increasingly brand themselves as recognizing potential grievances of the population, as this would also have lowered revolutionary risks. The Social Democrats moving right compared to the pre-revolutionary years could be part of a strategy to brand

the party's co-optation responses as reformist and closer aligned to the other parties, as the party increasingly distanced itself from revolution and sought political coalitions during the 1910s (Christiansen 1978; Stauning 1915)

6 Discussion and conclusion

Scholars have in recent decades debated how elites respond when foreign revolutions risk sparking revolutionary movements in their own country (e.g. Aidt and Jensen 2014; Gjerløw and Rasmussen 2022; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Weyland 2009, 2010). This plays into a broader political science debate on how elites respond to revolutionary threats (e.g. Acemoglu and Robinson 2005; Boix 2003; Przeworski 2009). Here, research has generally focused on the policies that elites respond with, and there has generally been little focus on liberal democracies with extended suffrage and proportional representation. This has left us with two questions which this article has tried to answer: How do we best analyze how politicians in a liberal democracy respond to a wave of revolutionary protest, and which strategies do politicians in a liberal democracy with extensive suffrage and proportional representation respond with?

This article argues that, more than just looking at policy responses, we should also analyze the responses of liberal democracies through a framework focusing on parliamentary signaling. Demonstrating this framework on the case of Denmark from 1910-1929 shows its advantages compared to earlier, policy-focused analytical approaches. As the signaling framework allows us to see a more fine-grained response, we see that more seasoned politicians and not only newcomers responded to the revolutions. And here, the results suggest that there was a change in behavior among the political elite towards more co-optation and political combat signaling. Using the signaling framework to understand this, the results suggest that politicians and parties seemingly sought to brand themselves as responsive to potentially revolutionary grievances, while the right-wing Liberals seemingly also sought to signal responsiveness to revolution-weary voters. These results would have been hard to see if not focusing on parliamentary signaling.

Previously, recent research has aimed at examining how politicians respond with policy to revolutionary waves and revolutionary threats in order to preserve their own power (e.g. Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Weyland 2019). The results of this article provide a new look on how politicians seek to preserve power in responding to revolutionary waves, by showing that the right-wing Liberals increased signaling on revolutionary terms where speeches from the parliament support a hypothesis that this was done to attract revolution-weary voters (e.g. *Rigsdagstidende 1917/18. Forhandlingerne (Folketinget)* 1918, 3705; *Rigsdagstidende 1918/19. Forhandlingerne (Folketinget)* 1919, 1007). This shows that democratic politicians' responses to revolutions also appear to be attempts to use revolutions to increase voter support, a contribution we would not have seen without a focus on signaling.

By using the signaling framework, we can also see that the co-optation and political combat signaling

changes in politician behavior follow within the revolutionary period. This strengthens the hypotheses from the literature of a connection between revolutionary waves and politicians responding with e.g. co-optation (Aidt and Jensen 2014; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Weyland 2010). Signaling makes us particularly strong in measuring these immediate responses compared to a focus on policies, as policies within democracies can take longer to be manifested. Again, this problem is not merely hypothetical, as Aidt & Jensen (2014, 64) in their otherwise quite informative article end up measuring franchise extension reforms in democracies at the implementation year of these reforms and not the year when the reform process started. But as the signaling framework allows this article to show that co-optation signaling significantly increased in the period of revolutionary waves, this article provides further evidence for the co-optation thesis that revolutionary waves are met with co-optation responses (e.g. Gjerløw and Rasmussen 2022; Hale 2013; Weyland 2010)

But would we not expect to see a rise in signaling on co-optation on both political wings just by default, as new proposed legislation would demand a response by the opposition? And does this not make signaling unsubstantial? This is not the case. As we see from the heterogeneous party changes in signaling, not all parties actually see a rise in signaling on the co-optation topics. It is therefore not by default that parties or politicians decide to increase signaling on co-optation. And this shows that co-optation signaling is a strategy that also opposition parties will use according to how it meets party branding demands.

The signaling framework also gives us more information on how politicians responded concerning repressive measures. Had we just looked at policies enacted, we would see the implementation of surveillance and arrests of left-wing revolutionaries around the time of the revolutions (Karpantschof 2019, 396–442; Kühlmann 2018). However, this does not tell us whether or not there was also a wish from the political elite to signal to all of the Danish population a willingness to crack down on revolutionaries. But by using the signaling framework, we can see that signaling on repression was not consistently increasing, which strengthens the conclusion that there was no clear, public political response of repression in reaction to the revolutions, and that repression had other causes, such as the police acting on its own or a desire to remove potential revolutionaries without attracting the public eye.

Under what conditions do these conclusions hold up? The article focused on revolutions with the perceived potential of sparking revolutionary movements in the country of interest. This necessitates that the revolutionary pressure should be perceived by politicians as threatenin, and the choice of case is further strengthened if we see a revolutionary movements with the strength to destabilize the state - criteria both met by Denmark. But not all revolutions will meet these criteria, e.g. the Arab Spring arguably did not have the perceived potential to spark revolutions in Denmark and thus does not apply here. Moreover, the response to revolutions will depend on these revolutions being politicized. If no political actors try to use these revolutions to push for political changes, the response among the political elite will be smaller. The response can also depend on the discrepancy between the actual rights within the country and the rights promised in the revolutionary countries. Here, the response in Denmark was probably increased by the fact

that the welfare system was not yet well-developed and labor rights, such as working time rights, were still limited compared to later in the century (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023, appendix A4). The revolutions in Russia and Germany, instead, promised wholly different social and labor rights. This discrepancy will probably also have helped in creating momentum for a revolutionary movement in Denmark.

We thus see what looks as substantial and heterogeneous co-optation and political combat responses to the revolutionary wave. We see that a democracy with extensive franchise and proportional representation also responds to a revolutionary wave by increasing focus on co-optation, an important insight as the literature until now has focused more broadly on autocracies or democracies with less limited franchise or non-proportional representation (Aidt and Jensen 2014; Gjerløw and Rasmussen 2022; Weyland 2009), or have not more deeply reviewed the immediate elite responses to revolutionary waves from states with extensive franchise or non-proportional representation (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2023; Sant'Anna and Weller 2020; Weyland 2019). The results also show that this co-optation response pattern is seen for both left- and right-wing parties, another important insight as research has earlier tended to look at a more aggregated response. This again highlights the relevance of a signaling framework that allows us to disaggregate responses into finer details.

The article thus contributes by demonstrating a framework focused on parliamentary signaling that allows us to analyze the initial response to revolutions and the heterogeneity of responses. This framework lets us disaggregate the responses for parties, political wings and individual MPs, thereby giving us a more fine-grained response. These responses only really come to light when using the signaling framework and also show that not all parties or politicians responded in the same way to the revolutionary protest wave. This suggests that different parties see different electoral opportunities and challenges in revolutionary threats, something that would be an opportunity for further research.

7 References

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