

# Collusion, Connection and Capture: The Political Economy of Tsarist Industrialization



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## Introduction

Relationship between competition and growth

→ But exists political economy aspect to level of competition

→ Different social classes have different tools and these tools have different effects on economy

Social Groups:

- **Elites:** political influence → market power → market structure
- **Foreign investors:** technology and financial capital advantages, political influence → can help growth or rent-seeking
- **Entrepreneurial-industrial class:** seek connections, collude or both → collusion can decrease frictions or impede growth

Research Questions focus on tool of price-setting collusion between firms:

- Which social groups collude?
- How does collusion affect firm outcomes and industrialization?

Fig 1: Belgian Pamphlet on investing in Russia



To answer questions:

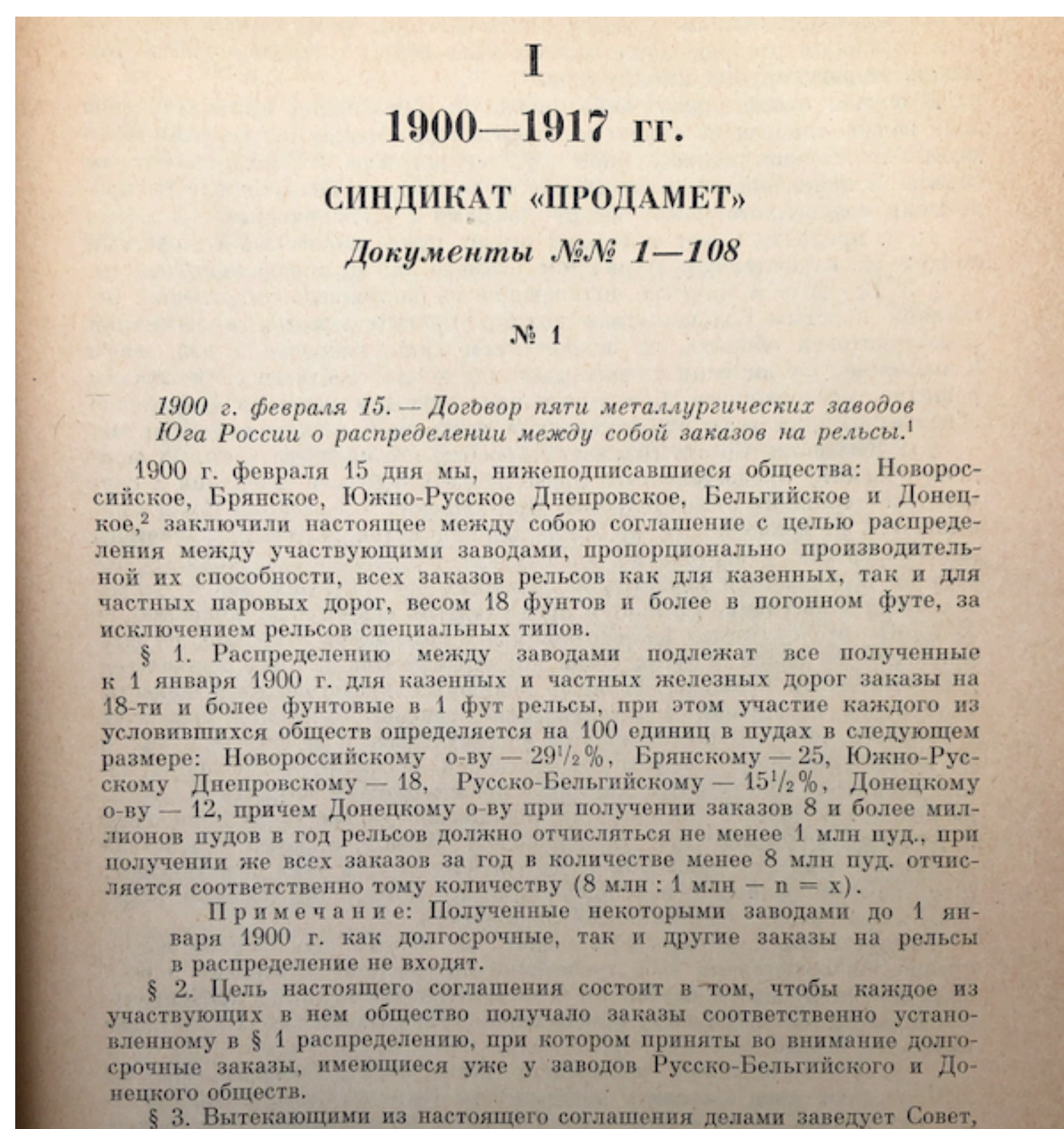
- Use episode of industrialization in Tsarist Russian Empire, late 19th/early 20th centuries
- Collect and create dataset on price-collusion agreements and syndicates

Background:

- Unknown presence of price collusion and level of competition
- Huge influx of Foreign Direct Investment from West
- Clear Social groups: *Nobles and government officials* (Elites), *Foreign investors, Merchants* and *Other non-noble entrepreneurs* (Entrepreneurial-Industrial Class)
- Collusion illegal, but still happening

## Data

Fig 2: Example of collusive agreement published by historians



Source: *Monopolii v Metallurgicheskoi Promyshlennosti Rossii 1900-1917, Documenty i Materialy* (1959)

- Collecting from published primary and secondary texts by historians, and contemporary sources
- 150 Collusive Agreements or Syndicates, 15 Trusts – during 1878-1917
  - sorted by industry SIC codes
- Identified colluding firms within broad metallurgy sector

Fig 3: New collusive agreements and syndicates over time

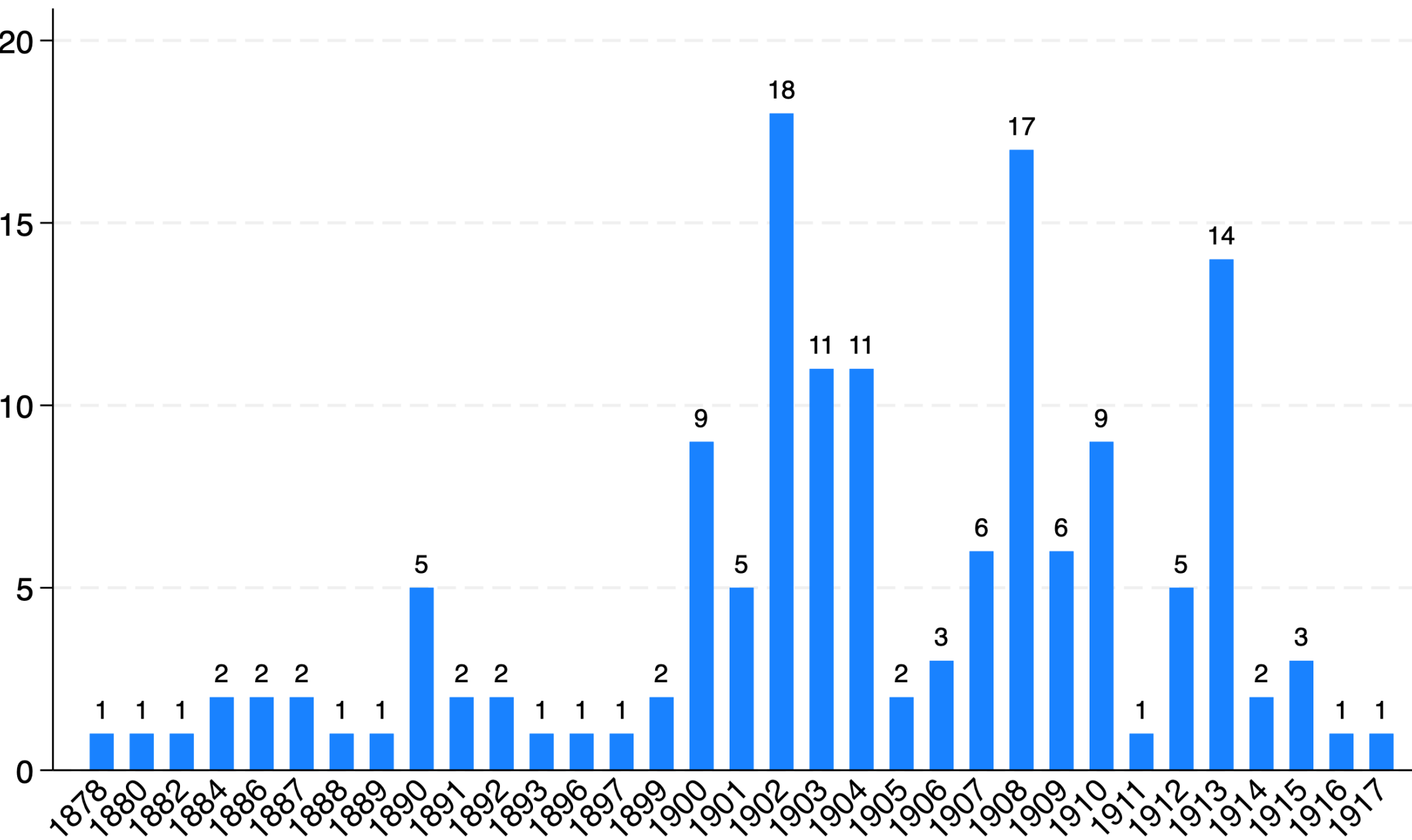


Fig 4: New collusive agreements and syndicates by 2-digit SIC Industries

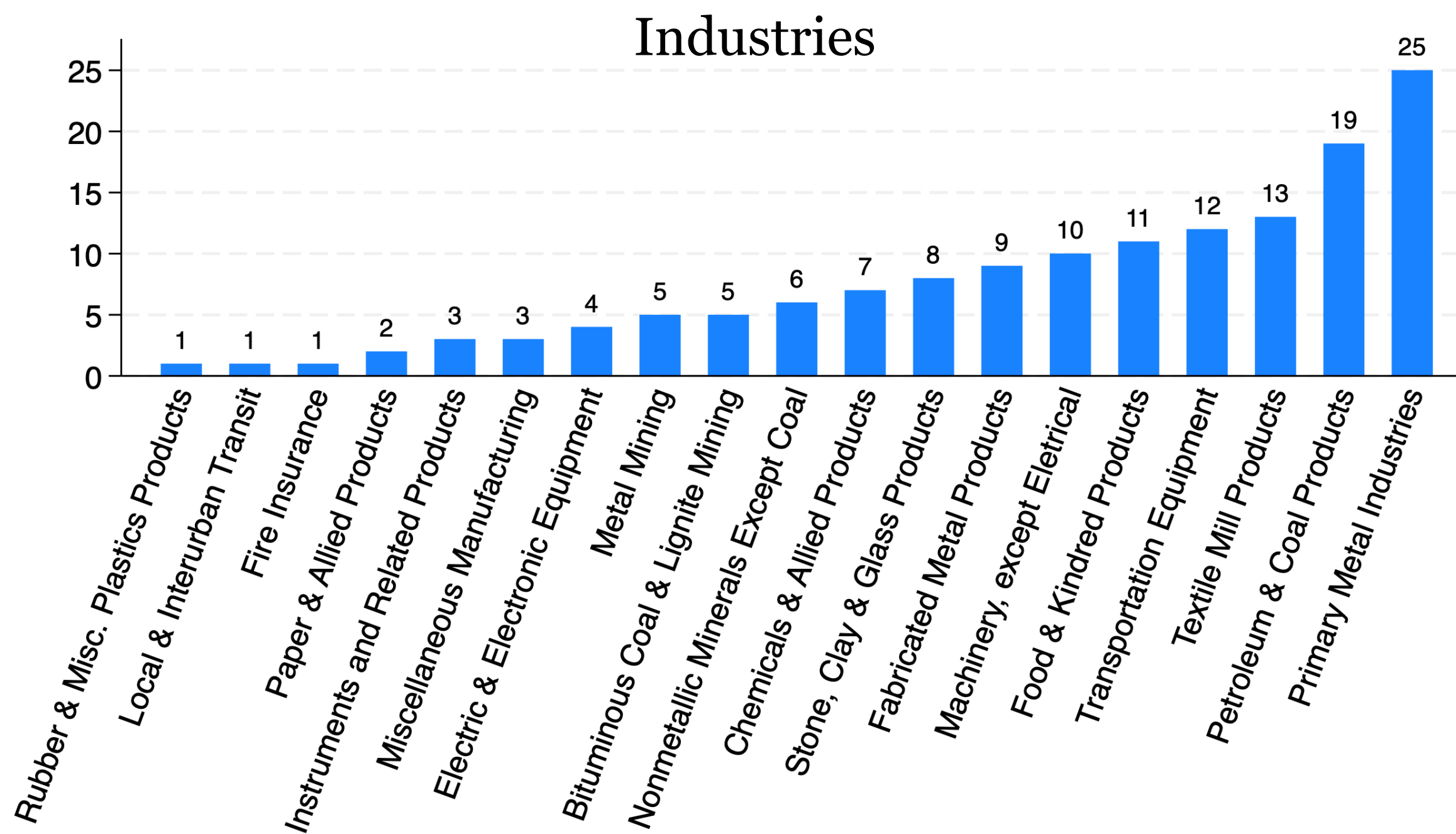


Fig 5: Presence of Founder Types in 18 Metallurgical Agreements and Syndicates

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Noble																		
Gov																		
Merchant																		
Foreigner																		
Foreign Firm																		
Rank Noble	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	C	P	P			P	P	S	C	P	
Rank Gov	S	S	A	S	A	S	Pr	Pr	A	A			Pr	Pr		Pr	S	S

Rank Noble or Royal Officer:

P = Prince

C = Count

S = Secretary of State

Rank Gov Official:

S = State Councilor

A=Actual State Councilor

Pr = Privy Councilor

Merge with following datasets:

RUSCORP (Owen, 2006)

- Corporate charters 1700-1913 (4,542)
- Industry (SIC codes) and location (sub-province level)
- Founder Social Status (or Organization), Citizenship

Balance Sheet Data (Gregg and Nafziger 2024)

- Non-financial corporations 1899-1914

→ Yearly incumbents

- Total assets, Profits and Losses, Market share from revenue

Industry Level Data (Izmest'eva 2025)

- Full data only for extractive and metal industries → 8 industries over 1899-1913
- Revenue, Production, Total Factories & Mines, Total Workers, Machine Power

## Suggestive Evidence (1899-1913)

### OLS at Industry Level

Table 1: Association between new collusive activity and social groups within 2-digit Industries

	Collusion Dummy (1)	Collusion Dummy (2)
Nobles & Gov Officials Share	-0.180* (0.090)	-0.201* (0.100)
Foreign Share	-0.131* (0.075)	-0.114 (0.076)
Merchants Share	-0.060 (0.058)	
Merchants Share - No Elites		-0.026 (0.061)
Merchants Share - W\Elites		-0.134* (0.080)
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Industry FE	Yes	Yes
Clusters (Industries)	50	50
Obs (Industry-Yr)	668	668
R-squared	0.36	0.36
Av. Dep. Var.	0.12	0.12

Note: Omitted group is *Other* group (non-noble professionals, military, low-ranking gentry). Industry-level clustered standard errors in parentheses.

\* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

→ Elite and foreign presence negatively

associated with collusion compared to *Other*

→ Merchants have similar level collusion to *Other*

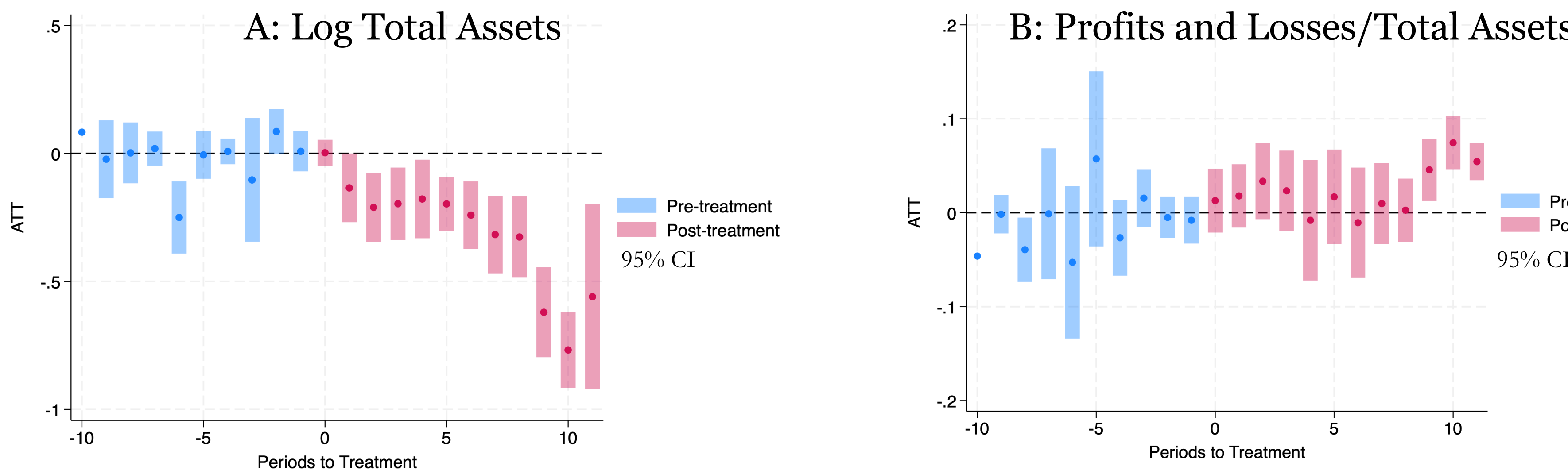
## Staggered Event Studies using Callaway and Sant'Anna (2021), Sant'Anna and Zhao (2020)

Table 2: Exposure to collusion within industry and corporate outcomes

	(1) Market Share	(2) Log Total Assets	(3) Profit/Loss/1000	(4) Profit/Loss/TA	(5) Profit Dummy
ATT	0.0115** (0.00522)	0.0602* (0.0330)	-32.10 (22.77)	-0.00758* (0.00428)	-0.0461** (0.0194)
Clusters (Corps)	931	961	947	947	947
Obs (Corp-Yr)	6258	10601	10279	10279	10279
Av. Dep. Var.	0.05	14.72	201.29	0.03	0.86

Note: Corporate level outcomes for all corporations in industries with collusion versus those without. \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

Figure 6: Colluding firms in Metallurgy



→ Colluding firms in metallurgy have decrease in total assets and eventual increase in profits

Table 3: Exposure to collusion and industry outcomes

	(1) Total Revenue (Th. Rubles)	(2) Production (Th. Tons)	(3) N Factories & Mines	(4) N Workers	(5) Machine Power (HP)
ATT	7,866* (4,757)	789 (767)	50** (25)	6,636 (5,720)	12,165* (7,021)
Clusters (Industries)	8	8	8	8	8
Obs (Industry-Yr)	112	112	110	112	109
Av. Dep. Var.	30,685	4,916	384	30,297	28,139

Note: Industry level outcomes. Industries with collusion compared with those without collusion yet. \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

→ Industries with collusion have higher revenues without increase in production (demand must be increasing despite higher prices)  
→ Increase in number of factories and mines, and machine power implies production capacity increased