

**Oligarchic Attractors:
Concentrated Private Power and the Foreclosure of
Collective Futures**

PIATRA . INSTITUTE

August 2026

Abstract

Concentrated private power affects the distribution of a social product and also the process by which a polity discovers possible futures, by weighting some preferences, financing some organizations, and making some transitions costly to reverse. We define an oligarchic attractor as a politically stable state that is locally preferred under power-weighted choice while socially superior states remain outside its reachable neighborhood, and we require that concentrated material power contribute causally to that separation. The mechanism combines unequal responsiveness, elite persistence, political path dependence, organizational learning, and directed innovation. Its unit of analysis is a patron-institution-cadre-state network. Such a network can accelerate selected projects while reducing the diversity of projects, funders, and decision makers able to challenge its direction, a configuration we call directional acceleration with exploratory compression. Project 2025 illustrates how doctrine, personnel, training, and implementation can be assembled before an electoral opening; it makes parts of the transmission architecture observable without establishing the theory. We specify measures of exploratory compression, network power, selective state capacity, and reversibility, four partial identification designs, and the findings that would falsify the account.

Introduction

Political inequality is usually described through outcomes. Tax burdens differ. Regulation favors incumbents. Public goods are underprovided. Some citizens receive more attentive government than others. These are central distributive questions, but they begin after an alternative has entered the field of choice. A prior question receives less attention: who has the capacity to turn an inchoate possibility into a staffed, costed, legally translated, and politically available program?

The distinction matters whenever public argument treats existing options as the full set of feasible options. A proposal for universal provision may look unaffordable because the tax base, administrative machinery, and supply contracts required to support it were never built; a technical path may look immature because capital repeatedly flowed to a rival path; and a regulatory design may appear politically impossible after incumbent firms have consolidated the expertise, litigation capacity, and relationships needed to defeat it. Each judgment can be accurate at the time it is made. The history that produced the judgment remains inside the word *feasible*.

Oligarchy offers one route into that history. Winters (2011) reserves the term for politics structured by concentrated material power and the defense of wealth, a category narrower than rule by any elite and wider than direct office holding by billionaires. Direct entry into electoral politics is empirically important: Krucmaric et al. (2024) identify political candidacy or office holding among more than 11% of the Forbes billionaires in their cross-national data. Yet wealth commonly operates through organizations whose lives exceed those of donors and officeholders.

Evidence on policy responsiveness supplies a disputed starting point. In an analysis of 1,779 U.S. policy cases, Gilens and Page (2014) report independent associations between adoption and the preferences of economic elites and organized business groups, while average citizens' preferences

show little or no independent association in the joint specifications; the authors describe these results as tentative. Bashir (2015) demonstrates that conclusions from these data depend on how correlated preferences and a binary policy outcome are modeled. Page et al. (2013) find distinctive economic preferences in a small pilot sample of wealthy Americans, but the sample cannot bear a population-wide causal claim.

Those disputes should narrow the argument. They do not support a constant coefficient translating wealth into policy. They support inquiry into mechanisms that can produce unequal responsiveness in some settings and fail in others. The mechanism developed here concerns collective search. It asks whether concentrated private power changes the alternatives that are generated, the transitions treated as available, and the correction processes that remain viable after a choice.

The claim does not imply that every unrealized good was suppressed by an oligarch. Scarcity is real. Technical constraints bind. Voters reject programs. Bureaucracies protect routines. Parties pursue power, and public preferences contain durable conflicts. A theory of oligarchic search has empirical content only if it distinguishes the marginal effect of concentrated private capacity from these alternatives.

A model of power-weighted local search

Let $x_t \in X$ denote the institutional and productive state of a polity at time t . A state includes laws, administrative capabilities, ownership patterns, infrastructure, technical portfolios, and settled expectations. Let $U_g(x)$ be the evaluation of state x by group g . Political influence is represented by nonnegative weights $\omega_{g,t}$ satisfying $\sum_g \omega_{g,t} = 1$. The power-weighted political evaluation of a candidate state is

$$\Phi_t(x) = \sum_g \omega_{g,t} U_g(x).$$

Φ_t is not social welfare. It summarizes the evaluations that a political selection process is likely to register, with the weights produced by institutions and organized capacity. A separate evaluator $W(x)$ represents a publicly defended social criterion. W might be a distribution-sensitive welfare function, a vector of constitutional values, or a family of evaluators used for robustness tests. No empirical application should hide disagreement about W inside a single unexamined number.

Political choice rarely ranges over all of X . Institutions I_t induce a reachable neighborhood $N_{I_t}(x_t)$. Its members are states that can be formulated and implemented from the current position within a relevant period. Transition costs $\kappa_t(x_t, y)$ include fiscal expense, legal exposure, organizational disruption, information requirements, and the expected cost of organized resistance. A simple stochastic transition rule is

$$\Pr(x_{t+1} = y \mid x_t) = \frac{\exp\{\beta[\Phi_t(y) - \kappa_t(x_t, y)]\}}{\sum_{z \in N_{I_t}(x_t)} \exp\{\beta[\Phi_t(z) - \kappa_t(x_t, z)]\}}, \quad y \in N_{I_t}(x_t).$$

The parameter β records how sharply selection responds to the power-weighted evaluation. The equation serves as a portable representation and does not assert that legislatures literally draw from a logit distribution. It separates three locations of influence because power can change ω and reshape whose evaluation matters, change N_I and determine what becomes a serious candidate, or change κ and make selected departures costly.

An **oligarchic attractor** is a state x^* with three properties over a specified horizon. First, it is locally stable under the transition process: no state in $N_I(x^*)$ offers enough power-weighted gain, net of transition cost, to make departure likely. Second, at least one state z outside that neighborhood is superior under W . Third, concentrated material power contributes causally to the weights, neighborhood, or costs that maintain the separation between x^* and z .

The third condition prevents ordinary policy deadlock from being relabeled oligarchy. It also makes the definition falsifiable. If the same neighborhood and transition costs would persist after an exogenous loss of concentrated private capacity, the proposed mechanism has failed for that case.

Local stability can be strong without unanimity. Define the political margin at x^* as

$$m(x^*) = \min_{y \in N_I(x^*)} [\Phi(x^*) - \Phi(y) + \kappa(x^*, y)].$$

If $m(x^*) > 0$, changes to political evaluations smaller than the margin leave the local ordering intact. Protest, elections, or personnel turnover can occur without moving the system. A larger shock may still alter the ordering. Alternatively, a change in institutions can enlarge $N_I(x^*)$ and reveal an option that was never compared with the incumbent state. The attractor metaphor refers to this return tendency under bounded perturbation. It does not imply inevitability.

This formulation extends two established lines of work. Acemoglu and Robinson (2008) show how elites can invest in de facto power and offset formal institutional change. Pierson (2000) shows how increasing returns, sequencing, and switching costs give politics path-dependent properties. The search formulation adds proposal generation. Formal authority may change hands while the organizations able to write rules, vet personnel, litigate, and coordinate implementation remain asymmetrically distributed. A nominally open choice can then occur inside a privately narrowed neighborhood.

Proposal supply and exploratory compression

Before a policy state can enter $N_I(x)$, someone must develop it. Let A_t be the set of proposals receiving enough attention to be evaluated at time t . For each proposal a , let $r_t(a)$ denote deployable sponsorship resources, $e_t(a)$ the relevant expertise, and $v_t(a)$ the veto exposure anticipated by its developers. A reduced-form entry probability might take the form

$$q_t(a) = \Pr(a \in A_t) = \sigma(\alpha r_t(a) + \eta e_t(a) - \nu v_t(a) + \xi_t(a)),$$

where σ is a bounded link function and ξ_t contains features not represented in the three terms. Money matters because it buys repeated attempts, patient staffing, and the capacity to survive an early loss. Expertise matters because proposals must cross technical and legal thresholds. Expected vetoes can stop development before a public contest begins.

The diversity of developed proposals can be described by their distribution across substantive directions. If $p_{d,t}$ is the share of serious effort assigned to direction d , search entropy is

$$H_t = - \sum_d p_{d,t} \log p_{d,t},$$

and $\exp(H_t)$ is the effective number of equally represented directions. It measures breadth only. Ten cosmetic variants of the same plan should not count as ten directions, and broad search can include poor ideas. Empirical work would need preregistered classifications based on causal mechanisms, affected constituencies, technical architectures, and institutional forms.

Exploratory compression occurs when concentrated private power reduces the effective diversity or independence of serious searches, conditional on the resources available to the polity. Independence matters alongside count because five research teams dependent on one patron can preserve surface variety while sharing a veto boundary, and the same compression can arise through acquisition, exclusive data, intellectual-property control, hiring concentration, or expectations about which projects will receive later financing.

March (1991) describes the persistent tension between exploitation of known returns and exploration of uncertain alternatives. Levinthal (1997) shows how local adaptation on rugged landscapes can settle at local peaks. Political economies add an asymmetry absent from a neutral search algorithm. Actors benefiting from the current peak can invest in the definition of the neighborhood and in the costs attached to leaving it.

The claim concerns power, of which wealth is one source. A wealthy founder who finances an untested technical path may expand A_t . Public procurement can do the same. Entrant innovation is associated with both top income shares and social mobility in the evidence assembled by Aghion et al. (2019), and the mobility association weakens in areas with high lobbying. Their result warns against using inequality as a sufficient statistic for institutional closure.

Directional acceleration

Concentrated capital can increase the speed of a chosen technical program, since large fixed investments, tolerance for early losses, integrated production, and rapid executive decisions can solve coordination problems that fragmented finance leaves untouched. A theory that equates private concentration with technological stagnation misses visible counterexamples, including projects whose initial scale, uncertainty, or coordination demands exceed the appetite of dispersed investors.

The relevant distinction is between rate and direction. Acemoglu et al. (2012) formalize how prices, market size, and policy direct technical change. Capital allocation determines which engineering

problems attract teams and complementary infrastructure. A portfolio can therefore move rapidly along a few coordinates while leaving adjacent portions of the possibility space thinly searched.

Let s_d denote progress within direction d and let D_t be the set of active directions. Aggregate technical advance might rise because $\dot{s}_{d^*}$ is large for a favored d^* , even as $|D_t|$, H_t , or the number of independent sponsors falls. This configuration is **directional acceleration with exploratory compression**. It predicts strong local performance without generalized sclerosis. It also predicts fragility if the selected direction proves mistaken and rival capacities have decayed.

Several empirical patterns are consistent with parts of this configuration. Cunningham et al. (2021) estimate that 5.3-7.4% of acquisitions in their pharmaceutical sample are followed by discontinued development of overlapping projects without a product launch. That estimate applies to a defined sample and identification strategy. It does not measure all foreclosed invention. Its importance here is observational: an unrealized project can sometimes leave enough trace to be studied.

Political connection can also alter selection. Using Italian firm and political data from 1993 to 2014, Akcigit et al. (2023) find that connected firms survive longer and grow in employment and revenue while showing no productivity advantage and less innovation. The allocation of survival differs from the allocation of technical performance. Murphy et al. (1991) supply a complementary channel in which rewards to rent seeking redirect talent.

None of these findings demonstrates economy-wide exploratory compression. Together they suggest observables: project discontinuation after ownership change, sponsor concentration within technical domains, exit and entry by independent teams, correction after failed milestones, and the relation between political connection and resource survival. Aggregate patent counts would be a poor sole outcome. They cannot show whether a system is searching distinct directions or producing dense claims around an incumbent trajectory.

Patron-institution-cadre-state networks

The billionaire is a conspicuous but incomplete unit of analysis. Durable influence is produced by a network linking patrons, doctrine-producing institutions, policy translators, personnel systems, public narratives, and state operators. Different nodes perform different tasks. A foundation can sustain a research agenda across electoral cycles. A membership organization can identify constituencies and impose priorities. A legal network can turn doctrine into cases. Training programs can make personnel ready before an opening appears. Appointees can translate a prepared program into administrative action.

Theda Skocpol and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez describe such coordination in the Koch network, emphasizing connections among funders, idea production, advocacy, and constituency organizations (Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez 2016). Hertel-Fernandez et al. (2018) compare that network with the progressive Democracy Alliance. Their comparison is theoretically useful because it separates donor ideology from organizational design. Selection rules, control over recipient organizations, time horizons, and the balance between policy production and constituency building can change what money accomplishes.

Call this structure a patron-institution-cadre-state network. It converts liquid resources into memory by storing doctrine in texts and expert communities, maintaining a roster of people able to occupy positions, rehearsing implementation before authority changes hands, and learning from defeat without dissolving after a campaign. The network can then act during short political windows when actors without comparable preparation are still assembling teams.

This persistence clarifies why an election can be consequential without being sufficient. The electoral result assigns formal authority. The usable content of that authority depends partly on capacities accumulated earlier. Acemoglu and Robinson's distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* power applies at this organizational level. A patron need not issue instructions to every node. Shared selection, repeated funding, personnel circulation, and anticipated approval can align action without a command hierarchy.

Network power should therefore be measured as deployable capacity, and contact counts are a poor proxy: a donor with many weak ties may be less consequential than an institution bridging policy authors, litigation groups, and a personnel pipeline, while candidate measures include weighted betweenness across layers, control of unique expertise, replacement time for key organizations, persistence of funding after electoral defeat, and temporal proximity between prepared recommendations and government action. These measures must be time-stamped. A network reconstructed from its later success will exaggerate foresight and erase failed branches.

Selective state capacity and social feedback

The state does not have one quantity of capacity. A government can become more effective at surveillance or border enforcement while losing expertise in public health, competition policy, benefits administration, or environmental monitoring. Let

$$C_t = (c_{f,t}, c_{a,t}, c_{e,t}, c_{d,t}, c_{r,t})$$

represent fiscal, administrative, epistemic, distributive, and regulatory capacities. An intervention changes a vector ΔC , whose entries may differ in sign. Describing the state as stronger or weaker overall conceals the pattern that the theory predicts.

An oligarchic network has reason to preserve public capacities complementary to its projects and to constrain capacities that expose rents, create public substitutes, or support organized counterpower. This yields a hypothesis of **selective state capacity**. After a network gains access, budgets, staffing, data systems, and enforcement intensity should shift toward complementary functions and away from threatening ones, controlling for the announced program and external shocks.

Social structure can reinforce the shift. Chetty et al. (2022a) find a strong association between economic connectedness across class lines and upward mobility. Their companion analysis separates cross-class exposure from the probability that exposed people form friendships (Chetty et al. 2022b). These studies do not show that oligarchy causes low mobility. They offer measures of relational structure that can be joined to institutional data.

Albertazzi et al. (2025) report observational and experimental evidence that perceived inequality can reduce generalized social trust. Translation from a short experiment to national institutional change is uncertain. The direction of the effect suggests a testable feedback. When inequality is visible and public institutions appear unresponsive, trust and cross-group cooperation may weaken. Lower cooperation raises the cost of broad public provision and makes private coordination appear comparatively effective. That comparison can further increase the weight of organized wealth.

A minimal feedback representation is

$$\omega_{o,t+1} = \omega_{o,t} + aP_t - bQ_t, \quad |N_{I_{t+1}}(x)| = f(H_t, C_t, T_t),$$

where P_t is organized private capacity, Q_t is effective public and civic counterpower, and T_t is generalized trust. The signs $a > 0$ and $b > 0$ encode hypotheses. The neighborhood function requires estimation from evidence. High trust can support exclusion as well as solidarity, and public capacity can entrench incumbents. The empirical question is which ties connect whom, for what action, under which rules.

Project 2025 as an illustrative case

Project 2025 is useful because its organizers publicly described an unusually legible architecture. Heritage materials identified four connected components: a policy volume, an online personnel database, a training academy, and an implementation playbook (Chretien 2023; Heritage Foundation 2023). The project was explicit about preparing policies and people before a potential presidential transition. The documents allow researchers to observe doctrine, contributor networks, proposed administrative changes, and a declared personnel strategy at a common timestamp.

Although that architecture resembles the proposed unit of analysis, it does not validate the theory, because a policy recommendation can be adopted for reasons independent of its source while campaign commitments, voter demand, party priorities, litigation, agency expertise, and external events converge on the same action. Publicly listed contributors may have nominal roles, while unlisted actors may be decisive. Any implementation score must distinguish textual similarity from causal influence.

The illustration also shows why reversibility belongs in the analysis. Rules governing career personnel affect the cost and speed of changing administrative direction. As of August 2026, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management describes Schedule Policy/Career as an excepted-service category created under Executive Order 14171 for policy-influencing positions. OPM states that the positions remain career based, merit filled, and nonpolitical (Office of Personnel Management 2026). The category and its implementing rules can be coded as an institutional change. Whether they increase effective presidential control, reduce expertise, improve performance, or alter policy persistence is an empirical matter that requires staffing and outcome data.

Project 2025 should therefore enter a research design as one traceable case, and should not be used as a partisan synonym for oligarchy. Comparable projects on the left and right are necessary.

So are failed transition efforts, donor networks that did not secure implementation, and policies adopted without a visible private preparation network. The mechanism predicts advantages from integration and preparation. It does not predict that a particular ideology always possesses them.

Measurement and identification

An unrealized future cannot be observed in full. Research can observe traces of search, selection, and abandonment. A credible dataset would join a temporal multiplex network to policy and technical portfolios. Nodes would include donors, foundations, research institutes, advocacy groups, law firms, training programs, policy authors, appointees, agencies, firms, and projects. Edges would record funding, employment, coauthorship, board service, training, recommendation, appointment, contracting, and documented consultation.

The network would be paired with four families of outcomes.

Proposal diversity records the number and effective diversity of developed alternatives, their causal mechanisms, and the independence of their support. Version histories, legislative text, regulatory comments, grant portfolios, procurement solicitations, and abandoned research programs can reveal entry and exit from the candidate set.

Decision diversity records concentration among funders, owners, expert communities, and appointment pipelines. It asks, beyond demographic description, whether formally distinct teams depend on the same approval centers, data, or later-stage financing.

Correction capacity records time from adverse evidence to revision, survival of dissenting teams, replication resources, appeal routes, and the cost of reversing ownership or administrative commitments. A fast system that cannot abandon a failing direction has high execution capacity and low correction capacity.

Selective public capacity records changes across the vector C_t . Staffing, vacancy duration, enforcement actions, procurement competence, data quality, benefit error, litigation performance, and emergency response should be measured separately by function.

The central explanatory variable is network power. For network k at time t , a composite index could be preregistered as

$$P_{k,t} = w_1 R_{k,t} + w_2 B_{k,t} + w_3 E_{k,t} + w_4 S_{k,t},$$

where R is deployable resources, B cross-layer brokerage, E control of scarce expertise, and S survival across electoral cycles. Results should be reported for the components and for multiple weight vectors. Otherwise an index can be tuned until a favored network appears powerful.

No single design identifies the mechanism. Several partial designs can attack different links.

Recommendation-level event studies can compare agency actions before and after personnel linked to a prepared program enter office, using as their unit a recommendation with a publication

date, responsible organization, legal vehicle, and degree of implementation. Recommendations already present in party platforms require a separate category, while textual lineage supports transmission only when semantic similarity aligns with dates, citations, personnel, and procedural records.

Personnel discontinuities offer a second design. Close elections, unexpected vacancies, staggered confirmation, and judicial interruption can create variation in whether prepared cadres occupy relevant posts. These events are imperfect: close elections can alter mandates, and vacancies are rarely random. Pretrends, negative-control agencies, and explicit balance tests are mandatory.

Funding shocks offer a third design. Donor death, foundation term limits, legal changes, asset shocks unrelated to the policy domain, and mergers among sponsoring firms can alter network resources. The exclusion restriction is demanding. An asset shock can change the underlying industry's policy needs at the same time that it changes advocacy capacity.

Comparative organizational analysis addresses an additional problem. The Koch network and the Democracy Alliance differ in ideology and internal design (Hertel-Fernandez et al. 2018). Within-side changes in governance and matched cross-side episodes can help separate program content from integration, persistence, and control. Cross-national cases with different campaign-finance rules, civil-service protections, ownership structures, and public research capacity can test whether the same concentration produces different neighborhoods.

The theory receives support only if changes in concentrated capacity precede changes in search and reversibility, and those changes mediate later policy persistence. A direct correlation between wealth shares and an unpopular policy is inadequate.

Falsification conditions and scope

The account should be rejected or narrowed under several observable conditions.

If increases in network concentration consistently expand independent proposal diversity, shorten correction time, and leave no asymmetry in transition costs, exploratory compression is absent. If policy and personnel architectures built by wealthy networks have no implementation advantage after electoral mandate, party control, public opinion, and expertise are considered, organizational mediation is weak. If formal reforms that reduce private access leave proposal supply and reversibility unchanged, the measured access channel was incidental. If donor ideology predicts outcomes while network integration, persistence, and brokerage do not, the proposed organizational mechanism adds little.

The strongest disconfirmation would come from temporal evidence. Suppose socially superior alternatives, defined in advance under several public evaluators, were fully developed and remained inside the reachable neighborhood. Suppose decision makers considered them on comparable information and rejected them because broad constituencies preferred the incumbent state. That would be democratic disagreement, even if wealthy citizens agreed with the outcome. Applying the oligarchic-attractor label to such a case would misdescribe it.

Normative disagreement also limits W . A claim that an outside state is socially superior should survive several evaluators, distributional weights, and rights constraints. Some alternatives will remain rank-incomparable. The theory needs only cases where the superiority judgment is robust, but researchers must identify those cases before looking at network exposure.

Oligarchic search is therefore a middle-range theory. It does not say that wealth is the only source of political closure, that all concentrated firms are inert, or that public institutions are automatically exploratory. It predicts a specific sequence: concentrated resources become durable organizational capacity; that capacity changes proposal entry, political weights, or transition costs; search becomes less independent or less reversible; a locally stable state persists despite robustly preferred alternatives outside its effective neighborhood.

On this account, leaving such a state requires more than replacing a decision maker. It requires institutions able to generate rival programs, preserve independent expertise, and revise commitments after failure. Electoral competition remains necessary because it can create an opening, and whether a polity can use that opening depends on the capacities built before it.

References

- Acemoglu, Daron, Philippe Aghion, Leonardo Bursztyn, and David Hemous. 2012. "The Environment and Directed Technical Change." *American Economic Review* 102 (1): 131–66. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.102.1.131>.
- Acemoglu, Daron, and James A Robinson. 2008. "Persistence of Power, Elites, and Institutions." *American Economic Review* 98 (1): 267–93. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.98.1.267>.
- Aghion, Philippe, Ufuk Akcigit, Antonin Bergeaud, Richard Blundell, and David Hemous. 2019. "Innovation and Top Income Inequality." *The Review of Economic Studies* 86 (1): 1–45. <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdy027>.
- Akcigit, Ufuk, Salomé Baslandze, and Francesca Lotti. 2023. "Connecting to Power: Political Connections, Innovation, and Firm Dynamics." *Econometrica* 91 (2): 529–64. <https://doi.org/10.3982/ecta18338>.
- Albertazzi, Andrea, Patrick Lown, and Friederike Mengel. 2025. "Income Inequality and Social Trust." *Economics Letters* 257: 112675. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2025.112675>.
- Bashir, Omar S. 2015. "Testing Inferences about American Politics: A Review of the "Oligarchy" Result." *Research & Politics* 2 (4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168015608896>.
- Chetty, Raj, Matthew O. Jackson, Theresa Kuchler, et al. 2022a. "Social Capital I: Measurement and Associations with Economic Mobility." *Nature* 608 (7921): 108–21. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-022-04996-4>.
- Chetty, Raj, Matthew O. Jackson, Theresa Kuchler, et al. 2022b. "Social Capital II: Determinants of Economic Connectedness." *Nature* 608 (7921): 122–34. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-022-04997-3>.

- Chretien, S. 2023. "Project 2025." The Heritage Foundation, January 31. <https://www.heritage.org/conservatism/commentary/project-2025>.
- Cunningham, Colleen, Florian Ederer, and Song Ma. 2021. "Killer Acquisitions." *Journal of Political Economy* 129 (3): 649–702. <https://doi.org/10.1086/712506>.
- Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." *Perspectives on Politics* 12 (3): 564–81. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592714001595>.
- Heritage Foundation. 2023. *Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise*. The Heritage Foundation. https://static.heritage.org/project2025/2025_MandateForLeadership_FULL.pdf.
- Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander, Theda Skocpol, and Jason Sclar. 2018. "When Political Mega-Donors Join Forces: How the Koch Network and the Democracy Alliance Influence Organized U.S. Politics on the Right and Left." *Studies in American Political Development* 32 (2): 127–65. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0898588x18000081>.
- Krcmaric, Daniel, Stephen C. Nelson, and Andrew Roberts. 2024. "Billionaire Politicians: A Global Perspective." *Perspectives on Politics* 22 (2): 357–71. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592723002761>.
- Levinthal, Daniel A. 1997. "Adaptation on Rugged Landscapes." *Management Science* 43 (7): 934–50. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.43.7.934>.
- March, James G. 1991. "Exploration and Exploitation in Organizational Learning." *Organization Science* 2 (1): 71–87. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2.1.71>.
- Murphy, Kevin M., Andrei Shleifer, and Robert W. Vishny. 1991. "The Allocation of Talent: Implications for Growth." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 106 (2): 503. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2937945>.
- Office of Personnel Management. 2026. "Schedule Policy/Career." U.S. Office of Personnel Management. <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/hiring-authorities/schedule-policycareer/>.
- Page, Benjamin I., Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. 2013. "Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans." *Perspectives on Politics* 11 (1): 51–73. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s153759271200360x>.
- Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 94 (2): 251–67. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2586011>.
- Skocpol, Theda, and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez. 2016. "The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism." *Perspectives on Politics* 14 (3): 681–99. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1537592716001122>.

Winters, Jeffrey A. 2011. *Oligarchy*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511793806>.