

# Partisan electoral interventions by the great powers: Introducing the PEIG Dataset

*Conflict Management and Peace Science*

2019, Vol. 36(1) 88–106

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DOI: 10.1177/0738894216661190

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## Abstract

Recent studies indicate that partisan electoral interventions, a situation where a foreign power tries to determine the election results in another country, can have significant effects on the election results in the targeted country as well as other important influences. Nevertheless, research on this topic has been hindered by a lack of systematic data of electoral interventions. In this article, I introduce the Partisan Electoral Intervention by the Great Powers dataset (PEIG), which provides data on all such interventions by the US and the USSR/Russia between 1946 and 2000. After describing the dataset construction process, I note some interesting patterns in the data, a few of which stand in contrast to claims made about electoral interventions in the public sphere and give an example of PEIG's utility. I then describe some applications of PEIG for research on electoral interventions in particular and for peace research in general.

## Keywords

Dataset, elections, external interventions, great powers, partisan electoral interventions

## Introduction

Six decades of rigorous scholarship have greatly increased our knowledge about the causes and effects of various military and non-military forms of foreign interventions.<sup>1</sup> One blind spot in the international relations (IR) literature on interventions has been interventions designed to affect election results in foreign countries; i.e. as most famously occurred in Italy's 1948 parliamentary election and more recently in the 2009 Afghan presidential elections. Despite a few, very recent exceptions (Corstange and Marinov, 2012; Levin, 2016; Shulman and Bloom, 2012), such interventions have not been studied by quantitative IR scholars who have preferred to focus on more violent or usually more overt types of interventions.<sup>2</sup>

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However by not studying partisan electoral interventions, quantitative IR scholars miss an important, common form of intervention. Between 1946 and 2000, the US and the Soviet Union/Russia have intervened in about one of every nine competitive national-level executive elections. Partisan electoral interventions have been found to have had significant effects on election results, frequently determining the identity of the winner (Levin, 2016). Overt interventions of this kind have also been found to have significant effects on the views of the target public toward the intervener (Corstange and Marinov, 2012). Some qualitative scholars who have studied particular cases of electoral interventions at times credit, or blame, them with playing an important role in the subsequent nature of the regime in the target country and influencing the direction of its domestic and foreign policies (Rabe, 2006: chap. 5; Trachtenberg, 1999: 128–132). With the growing realization among IR scholars of the importance of regime type (Huth and Allee, 2002; Park, 2013; Ray, 1995; Reiter and Stam, 1998; Russett, 1993) and, more recently, the nature of the leader in power (Chiozza and Choi, 2003; Colgan, 2013; Horowitz, 2014; Keller and Foster, 2010; Potter, 2007) for their countries' foreign and domestic policies, electoral interventions are a factor that cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, with competitive elections now a significant feature of domestic politics in more than half of the states of the world (Freedom House, 2014), and military interventions becoming an increasingly costly endeavor even for powerful states, partisan electoral intervention, usually a non-violent type of intervention, is likely to become an ever more important tool in the arsenal of the great powers.

Finally, partisan electoral interventions are acts that the side intervened against would usually see as hostile. Accordingly taking into account partisan electoral interventions (as a usually non-violent indicator of the relations between the intervener and target) may also help with another increasingly important concern in IR—measuring and explaining the quality of peace between states and not just the existence, or lack thereof, of violence (Diehl, 2016; Klein et al., 2008; Regan, 2014).<sup>3</sup>

The dearth of research on this topic has also had negative effects on some fields of research in Comparative Politics. By trying to shape electoral outcomes, partisan electoral interventions affect a key democratic institution—national-level elections and the process by which the executive is peacefully replaced or retained. With the growing literature in Comparative Politics on the international influences on democratization and democracy (Boix, 2011; Boix and Svolik, 2013; Donno, 2013; Hyde, 2011; Kelly, 2008; Levitsky and Way, 2005), the separate study of partisan electoral interventions may clarify the exact role of one component of such influences.<sup>4</sup>

One major factor that has greatly hampered quantitative research has been a lack of a dataset focused on partisan electoral interventions, limiting most such quantitative research thus far to single-country survey experiments and/or public opinion polls (Corstange and Marinov, 2012; Shulman and Bloom, 2012). It also has prevented potentially productive synergies between quantitative scholars and diplomatic historians and scholars of intelligence studies, the latter two groups having studied some specific cases of partisan electoral interventions (usually as part of a study of wider topics) utilizing qualitative methods (Gustafson, 2007; Miller, 1983; Prados, 2006; Rabe, 2006: chaps 3 and 5).

My goal is to ameliorate this situation and open new venues for research on this topic by introducing a new, original dataset<sup>5</sup> of partisan electoral interventions by the great powers (PEIG) between 1946 and 2000.<sup>6</sup>

The article proceeds as follows: the first section provides a definition and operationalization of partisan electoral interventions. In the second section, I describe the data collection and coding procedures and the ways in which various possible biases were dealt with. In the third section, I present some patterns observed in the data and check whether some claims made about electoral interventions are supported. In the fourth section I compare findings using PEIG to those found by another dataset utilizing a wider measure of intervention/political influence. Finally, I outline possible research uses for PEIG.

## Definitions and operationalization

A partisan electoral intervention is defined in PEIG as a situation in which one or more sovereign countries intentionally undertakes specific actions to influence an upcoming election in another sovereign country in an overt or covert manner which they believe will favor or hurt one of the sides contesting that election and which incurs, or may incur, significant costs to the intervener(s) or the intervened country. This definition was chosen in order to capture, as closely as possible, the phenomenon commonly referred to when partisan electoral interventions are publicly discussed, proposed and/or denounced.

In order to be coded as an electoral intervention, the acts done by the intervener<sup>7</sup> required an affirmative answer to two questions: (1) was the act *intentionally* done in order to help or hurt one of the sides contesting the election for the executive; and (2) did the act clearly carry significant costs that were either (a) immediate (cost of subsidizing the preferred candidate's campaign/a covert intervention) and/or (b) longer-term/potential (loss of prestige/credibility if a public intervention fails and/or long-term damage to the relations once act is done or exposed).<sup>8</sup> Each case found to fit to these criteria was then coded as to other relevant aspects (covert/overt,<sup>9</sup> intervener, etc.).

For an example of the way this operationalization was applied in practice, in the case of the 1969 Thai elections, the evidence from US primary documents indicated that the US gave millions of dollars<sup>10</sup> in covert party funding to the UTPT party prior to the elections (i.e. a costly act). According to the records of the US government body that made the decision on approving this covert funding (the 303 Committee), this funding was provided by the US in order to improve the UTPT's electoral chances in the upcoming parliamentary elections (i.e. partisan and intentional).<sup>11</sup> Given that this particular act fits all of the criteria noted above, it was coded as a case of a covert US electoral intervention in the 1969 Thai elections.<sup>12</sup> A list of the kinds of activities which fit this criteria and that are the most commonly used by the intervener for this purpose are listed in the left column of Table 1. Acts of a great power which do not fit one or more of these criteria are listed in the right column.

Some may wonder as to the reason for the focus of PEIG only on electoral interventions done by great powers in general and the US and the USSR/Russia in particular. Partisan electoral interventions can indeed be done and have been done by other states. Iran, for example, probably intervened in the 2010 Iraqi elections.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, Hugo Chavez, the former leader of Venezuela, intervened in some elections held in nearby Latin American countries such as in Peru (2006) and Nicaragua (2006, 2011) (Vanderhall, 2013: 105–106, 118–120).

This focus was chosen for two major reasons. First, while constructing this electoral intervention dataset for a study of partisan electoral interventions I discovered that the majority of such interventions are covert in nature. In order to be reasonably certain that all interventions by these countries have indeed been located, the standard techniques for gathering cross-national

**Table 1.** The main activities coded and used in partisan electoral interventions and examples of excluded activities

Main activities coded as interventions	Examples of excluded activities
Provision of campaign funds to the favored side either directly (to candidate/party coffers) or indirectly	Invitation of preferred candidate to international conferences, international organizations, a visit to another country (unless includes concrete concessions/promises as well)
Public and specific threats or promises by an official representative of intervening country	Photo-ops/meetings of candidate with world leaders/official representatives of the intervener with no concrete results otherwise
Training locals (of the preferred side only) in advanced campaigning and get out the vote techniques	Provision of foreign aid of various types in order to enable the holding of free elections and/or improve their quality (without subsequent attempts to affect the results)
Covert dissemination of scandalous exposes/disinformation on rival candidates	Generic/neutral statements of support for the proper conduct of the electoral process (with no endorsements of a particular candidate/side)
Design (for the preferred side only) of campaigning materials/sending campaigning experts to provide on-the-spot aid	Secret/open refusal of leader/officials of the intervener to publicly meet with a candidate or his/her representatives
Sudden new provision of foreign aid or a significant increase in existing aid and/or other forms of material assistance	Positive/negative things said about a candidate/party by the intervener before an election with no concrete threats/promises
Withdrawal of part or whole of aid, preferred trading conditions, loan guarantees, etc.	Leaks to the press of reports of disagreements between the intervener and the target, etc. "Regular" election monitoring

event data, such as searches in various newspaper indexes and databases, would not suffice. Access to and research in dozens of state archives around the world would be required as well—a monumental task not possible at present owing to the inaccessibility of many of these archives to foreign scholars as well as obvious time, language, and funding limits.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, PEIG focuses on the US and the USSR/Russia owing to the unique availability of relatively complete data on covert electoral interventions performed by these two great powers which was not available for other great powers. The former USSR/Russia is unusual among post-1945 authoritarian powers (i.e. China) in that summaries of the archives of its secret services for most of the twentieth century were smuggled to the West by a defector (see later description). As for the US, owing to a somewhat more relaxed declassification process for many of the relevant archives, the Pike and Church Committees, and greater public/international interest, far more information is available about its post-1945 covert activities than for any of the other democratic great powers (i.e. France or the UK). Nevertheless, I hope in future iterations of PEIG to find a way to include interventions by other states or great powers as well.

## The data collection process

The data collection process for PEIG depended on its type (covert or overt) as well as whether it was a Soviet/Russian or an American intervention. For each intervener the data

collection process began by generating a list of candidate electoral intervention cases. For American electoral interventions I used two sources as a starting point. The first was a list of such interventions constructed for a critique of US foreign policy by Blum (2005: chap.18). The second was CIABase, a reference dataset of alleged CIA activities, created in the 1990s by Ralph McGehee, a former CIA agent.<sup>15</sup> These two lists, although quite useful as a starting point, were nevertheless constructed by non-academics with clear policy biases who, in some cases, utilized sources that were of dubious reliability or somewhat outdated. Accordingly, each candidate case that fits the operationalization above of electoral interventions which was generated from these two sources was carefully cross-checked with more reliable and up-to-date sources.

I then added to this initial list of electoral interventions other possible cases noted in reliable sources, each carefully cross-checked. The main types included:

- (1) Various formal Congressional investigations of CIA activities such as the Pike and Church Committees' reports.
- (2) Declassified internal CIA histories.
- (3) Reliable histories of the CIA and of US covert operations in particular as well as diplomatic histories on the western side of the Cold War in general.
- (4) Academic research in intelligence studies on US covert activities.
- (5) Memoirs by former CIA officials in particular and US government officials in general.
- (6) Histories or academic research on various US democracy promotion activities since the Second World War as well as on "electoral authoritarianism".

Finally, as a supplement and as a check on this list's inclusiveness, I conducted a keyword search of all of the State Department's FRUS (Foreign Relations of the United States) volumes covering the years since 1946 that were made publicly available by 31 December 2011. The online searchable versions of the FRUS were available through the website of the Office of the Historian in the State Department and, for the older volumes, the University of Wisconsin digital collections.

For the *Soviet/Russian interventions* (especially the covert ones), the primary source for cases of electoral intervention was the Mitrokhin Archive. This is a remarkable, relatively complete, archive composed of summaries describing Soviet secret activities and covert interventions of various kinds (including electoral interventions) during most of the twentieth century. It was created by a disgruntled KGB archivist named Vasili Mitrokhin over the course of 12 years who then smuggled it to the West after the end of the Cold War (Andrew and Mitrokhin, 1999, 2005). This source was then supplemented by the plethora of new sources on Soviet activities that became available following the end of the Cold War.

One important supplementary source for candidate electoral intervention cases was that of Riva (1999) which constructed, based upon the primary archival Soviet sources that became available after the end of the Cold War, a small dataset of the covert financial support provided by the Soviet Communist party to some like-minded parties around the world during the Cold War. This funding was provided in some cases in order to intervene in an upcoming election in the target. Pavel Stolisov was also kind enough to carefully search through his collection of archival documents on Soviet high-level decision-making (smuggled by him to the West from the Gorbachev Library) and provide the author with any documents that were of relevance. Also of use was the set of Soviet government documents

secretly scanned during the early 1990s and then made available online by Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky.<sup>16</sup> For the Post-Cold War era cases, I utilized the existing research on Russian foreign policy and Russian activities during the 1990s, which was then carefully cross-checked. Other types of useful sources included:

- (1) Memoirs of former KGB agents and defectors to the West.
- (2) Histories of the Cold War from the Soviet side as well as Soviet activities during the Cold War in particular countries utilizing the access sometimes granted to scholars to other Soviet archives during the 1990s.
- (3) CWIHP bulletins—these bulletins publish newly available primary sources coming from Soviet (and East European) archives. Also useful was the collection of research papers based on these sources at its website.
- (4) A keyword search of the three main historical journals which are the most likely to publish new research of relevance to this dataset coming from the Soviet archives: the *Journal of Cold War Studies* (1998–2010 volumes), the *Journal of Cold War History* (2000–2010) and *Diplomatic History* (1991–2010).

In order to find additional candidate cases of overt electoral interventions by both powers, I used (as is also common for the collection of overt acts) numerous keyword searches with the relevant terms in three online newspaper archives which cover the entire period (1946–2000): *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian* (UK).<sup>17</sup> Overt interventions, to be effective, must be known to the target public prior to the election. As a result, they usually receive significant journalistic coverage and are unlikely to be missed. As a further check in this regard, one of the newspaper archives which was utilized for this purpose was from outside the US (*The Guardian*) in order to protect the results from a possible US-centric bias which American newspapers are sometimes claimed to have.

Once the list of candidate intervention cases was completed, I began to carefully cross-check the evidence for each one. In many cases the coding decision (especially for the overt interventions) based on the operationalization in the previous section was very clear cut. Where evidence was nevertheless missing for a particular candidate intervention case and/or for particular features, further data was collected utilizing the types of sources noted above. Also utilized were scholarly/historical descriptions of the elections/country in question, the Declassified Documents Reference System website and, for overt interventions, Lexis-Nexis and Keesing's indexes.

Mistaken or spurious public accusations of the US or the USSR/Russia for conducting electoral interventions which they did not actually do in practice were not an uncommon phenomena during the period covered by PEIG. Accordingly for a particular candidate case to be eventually included in PEIG the evidence had to be quite reliable. For example, for a particular candidate case of a *covert* intervention to be included in PEIG, evidence from at least one of the following sources was required:

- (1) An official admission by the intervener in question that it had meddled in that election (via a statement, government/congressional report, etc.).
- (2) Primary archival governmental documents and/or reliable secondary research based on these sources.
- (3) The testimony of reliable former official(s) (in the intervener and/or target) who participated in the decision-making or the execution of this intervention and/or were

witness to these activities in person (a former government official, CIA/KGB agent, etc.).<sup>18</sup>

- (4) An account of this intervention by journalists known for having good government sources in the intervener and for very high-quality reporting (such as Bob Woodward).

Any candidate intervention cases for which doubts still existed as to their coding (or evidence either way was still insufficient) were further checked by consulting the relevant primary documents over the course of two extended research trips to the US National Archives. For that purpose I examined the diplomatic documents related to the country and period in question and, where relevant, also the CIA's Crest system terminal as to potentially useful declassified CIA documents (at the time available only at this location). In such cases, I also consulted with experts on the relevant country/intervener (especially for such Soviet/Russian cases).

A few final precautionary steps were then done. First, in order to allow sufficient time for evidence on recent covert interventions to come to light, the dataset stops at the end of 2000. Second, several additional precautionary searches for possible cases of electoral intervention were conducted. For example, some scholars who study other types of external interventions argue that an intervention by one power frequently leads to an intervention by other, frequently rival, powers (see e.g. Findley and Teo, 2006). Accordingly, in every case in which a US or Soviet/Russian intervention was confirmed, a special effort was made to check the activities of the other great power in regard to that election.

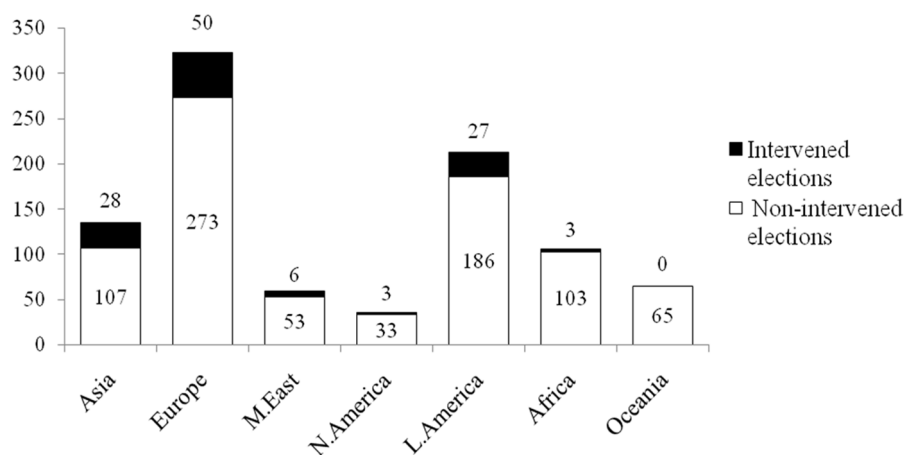
Likewise, elections in countries which were past/subsequent targets of other non-electoral interventions by the US or the USSR/Russia (such as Guatemala, South Korea, Iran, South Vietnam, etc.) received special and careful attention. Similar attention was also given to other elections in countries in which an electoral intervention was found in the initial list of cases.<sup>19</sup>

## Descriptive statistics

In this section, I present key descriptive statistics of the patterns of US and USSR/Russian electoral interventions between 1946 and 2000 and analyze some claims made about them. When feasible or analytically useful, some of the general patterns described in the following sections are examined using two forms of table statistics: the cumulative binomial probability test (see Gaubatz, 1999: chap. 6) and the chi-square test. Accordingly any reference in the following sections to certain patterns being statistically significant (or not) refers to results found using these two methods.

Overall, 117 partisan electoral interventions were made by the US and the USSR/Russia between 1 January 1946 and 31 December 2000. Eighty-one (or 69%) of these interventions were done by the US while the other 36 cases (or 31%) were conducted by the USSR/Russia. To put this number in the proper perspective, during the same period 937 competitive national-level executive elections, or plausible targets for an electoral intervention, were conducted within independent countries.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, 11.3% of these elections, or about *one of every nine competitive elections* since the end of the Second World War, have been the targets of an electoral intervention.

Even in absolute numbers electoral interventions have been a more common form of intervention by these two powers than other, better known methods. For example, during



**Figure 1.** Internal elections by region: all interveners 1946–2000.

the same period only 18 foreign-imposed regime changes (a category that includes military invasions as well as significant covert coups such as in Iran in 1953) were conducted by either the US or the USSR/Russia (Downes and Monten, 2013). Likewise, between 1946 and 2000 there were 53 significant military interventions (including the deployment of at least 500 soldiers) by these two countries (Sullivan, 2007).

As can be seen in Figure 1, electoral interventions occurred in every world region except for Oceania, although their relative frequency varied greatly.<sup>21</sup> Overall, given the number of competitive elections in existence in every given region, elections in Europe and Asia were significantly more likely to be targets of such interventions ( $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.001$ , respectively). In contrast, elections in Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania were significantly less likely to be targets of electoral interventions ( $p < 0.001$  in both cases), perhaps owing to the relative marginality of many of the states in both regions. As for specific interveners (Figures 2 and 3), the main statistically significant differences between them were as to the most preferred target region. The Russians mostly intervened in Europe ( $p < 0.01$ ). In contrast, given the number of elections in each region, the US was more likely to intervene in Asia ( $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>22</sup>

As to specific countries in which electoral interventions had occurred, 60 different independent countries have been the targets of such interventions since 1946. The targets came from a large variety of sizes and populations, ranging from small states such as Iceland and Grenada to major powers such as West Germany, India, and Brazil. As can be seen in Table 2, with the unique exception of Italy, each great power tended to most frequently target different states in its electoral interventions.

As for the subtypes of national-level elections targeted by interveners, about 19.5% of all electoral interventions occurred in founding elections. Given the number of founding elections overall during this period, no significant difference was found between the chances of an electoral intervention occurring in founding vs non-founding elections.<sup>23</sup>

As for the specific characteristics of the electoral interventions, one important fact that stands out is the covertness of most such interventions. Like the proverbial iceberg, the vast majority of electoral interventions (64.1%) were covert and were not known to the target



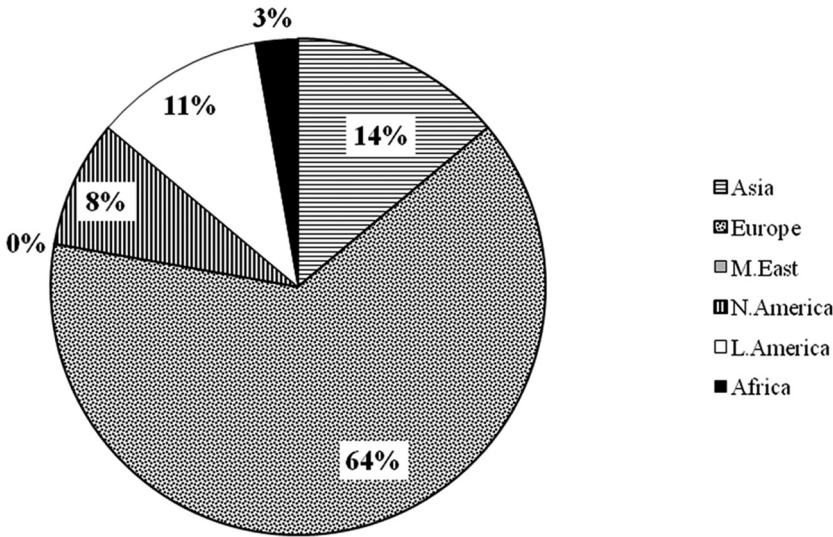


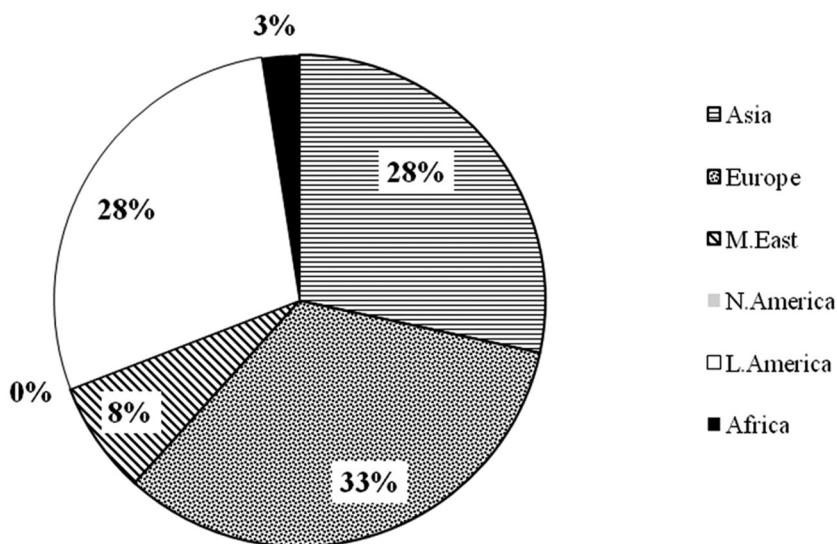
Figure 2. USSR/Russia electoral interventions by region, 1946–2000.

Table 2. Top five targets of electoral interventions—the US and the USSR/Russia

US			USSR/Russia		
		Number of intervention attempts			Number of intervention attempts
1	Italy	8	1	West Germany	5
2	Japan	5	2	Finland	4
3	Israel	4	2	Italy	4
3	Laos	4	4	France	2
3	Sri Lanka	4	4	India	2

country’s public prior to election day.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, about a quarter of the overt interventions (23.8%) also had some clearly covert components. A second finding of interest is that incumbents and challengers are almost equally likely to be recipients of an electoral intervention on their behalf. Of the 111 intervention cases in which the identity of the aided candidate/party is known, and there is a clear incumbent in the election, about 52.2% of the interventions were done in favor of the incumbent and 47.8% in favor of the challenger.<sup>25</sup> Another interesting finding is that approximately 44.4% of all intervention cases (40.6% with the exclusion of the Italian cases) are repeat interventions, in other words, cases in which the same great power after intervening once in a particular country’s elections decided to intervene again in (one or more) subsequent elections.<sup>26</sup> Seventy-one percent of the repeat interventions are in consecutive elections.<sup>27</sup>

A wide variety of costly methods were used by the great powers in order to help the preferred side. Given, as previously noted, the large number of interventions that were covert (with some details still remaining classified), a full accounting of all of the specific methods



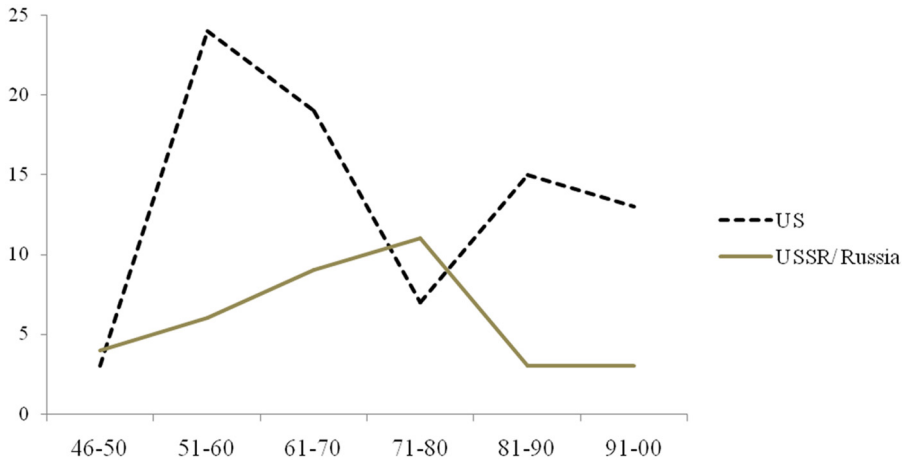
**Figure 3.** US electoral interventions by region, 1946–2000.

used in order to help a client in a particular election, beyond the most general characteristics of the intervention, cannot yet be done in many of the intervention cases. Nevertheless, PEIG's data indicates that many electoral interventions were not limited to "generic" public threats/promises by the intervener or, for that matter, to sending "big bags" of money to the preferred side's election campaign.<sup>28</sup>

For example, in a few cases of intervention (such as Guyana 1968 or Chile 1964), key components of the intervention seem to have been designed to serve as pre-election "pork" (i.e. for roads and other infrastructure) for particular constituencies in order to help the incumbent attract support. In at least one case (Malta 1971), one component of the intervention seems to have been designed to "goose" the economy in the months preceding the election—an example of what might be called the "transnational" form of the political business cycle. Indeed, in the above-noted Chilean case, one of the components of the American intervention seems to even have included smuggling frozen meat into Chile in order to deal with a severe shortage that had developed there in the pre-election period.

Nor were the costly methods of intervention limited to economic issues or means. For example, in some interventions the assistance also included, among other things, surrendering a strategically important military base to the target (Finland 1956), coming out in support of a highly contentious claim by the target for a particular disputed territory (Italy 1948), and enabling the release of convicted Nazi war criminals (Germany 1953).

The costly assistance given to the campaigns of the preferred candidate/party also was quite varied in many cases. Examples of some methods used by the intervener varied from, among other things, drugging the rival candidate right before he was about to have a major press conference (Philippines 1953) to providing various vitally needed campaigning equipment (Laos 1955; Romania 1990), to secretly flying in, at the intervener's expense, expert "spin doctors" (Russia 1996).



**Figure 4.** US and USSR/Russia electoral interventions by decade, 1946–2000.

This variety indicates that many electoral interventions were “customized” by the intervener to fit a particular client’s needs. This is unlike the common manner in which many forms of foreign aid are frequently characterized.

Turning to the temporal patterns exhibited by the electoral interventions (Figure 4), they seem to be roughly congruent with the overall behavioral patterns of each power on other, heavily studied, dimensions during the Cold War. In the American case, the pattern of its partisan electoral interventions found here is concomitant overall with the way US behavior during the Cold War is usually described by historians: a burst of activity during the early Cold War followed by a decline usually ascribed to the combined effects of Vietnam and Détente and then a renewed burst of activism during “The Second Cold War” of the early to mid-1980s (Smith, 1990; Westad, 2005). In the Soviet case, these patterns are also concomitant with the way historians nowadays usually describe Soviet behavior on other dimensions during the Cold War: an overall increase in international activism over time peaking in the 1970s followed by a decline in overall activism ascribed first to the war in Afghanistan and then to Glasnost and Perestroika (Westad, 2005; Zubok, 2007). Likewise, as in other types of intervention, the end of the Cold War does not seem to have resulted in the stoppage of partisan electoral interventions. They continue to be frequently done by both great powers.<sup>29</sup>

The patterns in the data also enable us to examine two claims frequently made about electoral interventions. When publicly justifying their partisan electoral interventions long after they took place, policymakers and “on the ground” operatives frequently claim that they did those electoral interventions largely because the “other side” was intervening in this manner as well (see e.g. Colby, 1978: 109–113).<sup>30</sup> However, as can be expected from Table 2, only seven (or 6.3%) of the intervened elections in PEIG are cases of a double electoral intervention—i.e. that the US was backing one side while the USSR/Russia was backing another side during the same election.<sup>31</sup> This percentage of double interventions is only slightly higher (7.8%) if only Cold War interventions are counted. This is despite, as noted, a special effort made in the data collection process to check the behavior of the other superpower whenever

clear evidence of intervention by one of the great powers was found in a particular election. Two of the most famous cases of intervened national level elections—the 1948 Italian elections and the 1970 Chilean elections—were double interventions but they are not typical.

Of course, during the Cold War the bipolar rivalry had an important role in the way that each great power defined “dangerous” or “unacceptable” leaders/parties in third countries. Likewise, one cannot completely dismiss the possibility that in a few cases of electoral intervention mistaken beliefs about the plans of the other superpower were an important factor in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, the relative dearth of such double interventions seems to indicate that this factor (the decision of the other superpower to electorally intervene) was usually a relatively minor part of the decision process which led or did not lead to an electoral intervention. Indeed, in some cases there is even evidence that claims of such interventions, that is, creating an impression of a double intervention occurring when only one country is intervening, were sometimes made as part of a disinformation campaign so as to hide the actual covert intervention in one’s favor and/or to “muddy the waters” in overt ones.<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, contra to Corstange and Marinov’s (2012: 658) suggestion, no evidence exists that countries with fragile democratic institutions are more likely to be the targets of such interventions than “full” democracies. In order to test this claim I used, as is the standard in the field, a 6 or above Polity2 score in the year in which the electoral intervention occurred to indicate a fully democratic polity. When the share of electoral interventions in democratic polities under this definition was compared with the probability of competitive elections occurring in such polities during the same period, no statistically significant chances of such interventions overall occurring in such countries was found.<sup>33</sup> The same thing was found (no statistically significant relationship) when this test was repeated for each separate decade in the dataset. This result is far from surprising given that in 72 cases (or 64.3% of all interventions) the target had a 6 or higher Polity score. Indeed in 43 cases (or 38.4% of all interventions) in which an intervention had occurred, the target had a combined Polity2 maximum score of 10—a score usually reserved to countries whose democratic credentials are beyond doubt (such as Sweden or the US).<sup>34</sup>

## Empirical comparison

Partisan electoral interventions are one strategy that the great powers can utilize in order to exert political influence upon other countries. Accordingly results derived from PEIG can be compared with some datasets that attempt to measure great power political influence by conflating multiple political influence strategies. One such dataset was recently constructed by Berger et al. (2013) in order to measure great power political influence resulting from successful covert US and Soviet interventions of various kinds during the Cold War. This dataset includes some cases of covert electoral interventions by the US and the USSR together with violent covert coups and covert regime security and maintenance operations.<sup>35</sup>

In Table 3 I compare the results obtained by using Berger et al.’s wide political influence measure to those obtained in a new article (Levin, 2016) utilizing PEIG to examine the effects of each measure on election results. As can be seen in Model 1, when I utilize Berger et al.’s political influence measure, no statistically significant effect is found.

**Table 3.** Effects on election results in influenced countries—Berger et al.'s dataset vs PEIG

	(1) Berger et al.'s measure	(2) PEIG
Political Influence	2.282	
Electoral Intervention—PEIG	(2.313)	3.190** (1.226)
Previous Vote	0.417** (0.0627)	0.368** (0.0509)
Growth	0.379** (0.137)	0.564** (0.106)
Trade Openness	−2.882 (2.023)	0.315 (1.384)
Growth × Trade Openness	−0.104 (0.174)	−0.291* (0.134)
Presidential Election	−4.872 (3.042)	−1.737 (1.964)
Growth × Presidential Election	0.0958 (0.272)	0.0367 (0.164)
Re-election	8.328** (2.562)	8.315** (1.662)
Effective Number of Parties (logged)	−13.00** (2.314)	−14.30** (1.929)
GDP Per Capita (logged)	0.755 (0.862)	0.935 (0.722)
Africa	3.144 (4.650)	2.881 (3.170)
Asia	−0.699 (2.803)	−3.178 (2.030)
Central and Eastern Europe	−9.943** (3.664)	−4.710* (1.903)
Latin America and Caribbean	−0.673 (2.378)	−1.608 (1.478)
Constant	28.94** (9.312)	28.85** (7.493)
Elections ( <i>N</i> )	463	698
Countries	79	121
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.539	0.548

Standard errors in parentheses; \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ . Both models estimated in Stata 11 using ordinary least squares with PSCE (panel corrected) robust standard errors.

In contrast, when PEIG is used (Model 2), I find that an electoral intervention in favor of one of the sides contesting the election has a statistically significant effect, increasing its vote share by about 3%.<sup>36</sup> Such an effect can have major “real life” implications. For example, such a swing in the vote share from the winner to the loser in the 14 US presidential elections occurring since 1960 would have been sufficient to change the identity of the winner in seven of these elections.<sup>37</sup>

These results illustrate that not all strategies of political influence have similar effects. It also shows the analytical limitations of using broad-brush measures that combine multiple influence strategies. Accordingly, in order to accurately capture the effects of this method of

political influence a disaggregated, fine-grained measure limited to only electoral interventions is required.

## Conclusions

The lack of systematic data has hindered research on partisan electoral interventions, an understudied yet important form of intervention. In this article, I begin to rectify this problem by introducing a new dataset on partisan electoral interventions done by two of the major great powers (the US and the USSR/Russia) who probably also conducted a large share of all such interventions overall since the end of the Second World War. PEIG can help scholars to study, in a more systematic manner, various questions about electoral interventions such as their effects on the targeted country, the choice of covert vs overt subtypes of electoral interventions, and the relationship between the target and the intervener following an intervention of this kind. It also contributes to qualitative research on these topics by providing a “universe of cases” from which particular cases of intervention can be chosen for further in-depth analysis. PEIG can also aid scholars who are interested in more nuanced measures of peace to further improve the quality of indexes designed to measure the level of peaceful relations between the great powers and other states with democratic, newly democratic, and “competitive authoritarian” regimes.

PEIG can also contribute to other fields of inquiry. For example it can be used to systematically investigate the relationship between electoral interventions and other forms of intervention. It can also be used to advance research in Comparative Politics on democratization, democratic breakdown, peaceful democracy promotion, and international influences on regime type. Future versions of PEIG will include more years and, hopefully, more great powers and other possible interveners, expanding even further its utility for these purposes.

The patterns visible in PEIG already demonstrate that some common claims made about electoral interventions, such as these interventions being more likely when a “dangerous” opponent of that great power is known to be intervening in this manner, are inaccurate. Future research utilizing PEIG will further increase our knowledge on partisan electoral interventions.

## Acknowledgments

For valuable comments and advice on this paper and on the construction of this dataset, the author wishes to thank Arthur Stein, Barbara Geddes, and Robert Trager. I would also like to thank Caroline Hartzell and the four anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions.

## Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## Supplemental material

All data, replication materials, and instructions regarding analytical materials upon which published claims rely are available online through the SAGE CMPS website: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0738894216661190>

## Notes

1. The literature on interventions in IR is quite large and cannot, of course, be reviewed here in detail. For some of the most recent research on, for example, the effects of interventions of different types see Bapat and Kwon (2015), DeMeritt (2015), Downes and Monten (2013), Hultman et al. (2015), Pickering and Kisnagni (2014) and Sullivan and Karreth (2015).
2. For one of the few IR scholars who briefly notes such interventions see Gaubatz (1999: 112–113).
3. These two citations are recent presidential addresses on this topic.
4. The qualitative Comparative Politics literature on democratization and democracy promotion has, at times, briefly noted partisan electoral interventions (see e.g. Bunce and Wolchik, 2011; Lowenthal, 1991). However even when noted they are usually classified and aggregated with other unrelated acts. That leads this literature to overlook the important differences between partisan electoral interventions and, for example, fully neutral interventions by states or acts done by non-state actors.
5. The dataset, codebook and Online Appendices as well as the replication materials and code for this data feature are available on the authors' website: [www.dovhlevin.com](http://www.dovhlevin.com). They are also available online through the SAGE CMPS website.
6. Another new dataset (Berger et al., 2013) that attempts to measure great power political influence also includes, among other kinds of covert interventions, some cases of covert partisan electoral interventions. See the empirical comparison section in this paper for a statistical comparison of this dataset vs PEIG on one result, and Online Appendix A, part 4 for a description of this dataset and the serious limitations it poses for the analysis of electoral interventions compared with PEIG.
7. Acts done by private citizens of a great power on their own volition, such as American campaign consultants hired for pay by a candidate/party in another country to give it campaigning advice, are excluded. Activities by organizations largely funded by one great power, such as the NDI or IRI, are counted as a partisan intervention if the election-related assistance provided in the run-up to an election in a given country is designed so as to exclusively help only one particular side contesting it rather than being available to all interested parties/candidates (as is usually the case with the above examples). The use by the US government of such bodies in order to conduct part or the whole of a partisan electoral intervention has become more common since the end of the Cold War. However one should note that the specific methods used by these bodies in order to conduct these partisan electoral interventions are not new—as some intelligence studies scholars and even some NED officials themselves quietly admitted on a few occasions (Barry and Pruesch, 1990: 48; Richelson, 2006: 414).
8. See Section 2.2 in Online Appendix A for a further description of how potential costs were defined.
9. To be coded as a covert intervention, all of the significant acts done in order to help a particular party/candidate must have been either a secret and/or the connection between those acts and the election not known to the average voter in the target.
10. FRUS 1969–1976, vol. 20: document 3. The exact sum has not yet been declassified but based on the context it was clearly significant.
11. Ibid.
12. Secondary sources on this intervention as well as preelection media sources were then examined and both indicated that this covert intervention was not exposed to the Thai public prior to the elections.
13. David Ignatius, 'Tehran's vote-buying in Iraq', *Washington Post*, 25 February 2010.
14. Accordingly, elections coded in PEIG as ones where no electoral interventions had occurred may have been nevertheless targets of electoral interventions by other powers and elections where one or both of the superpowers were involved in this manner may have also been targets of other

powers as well. However, from the data that is available about such countries' activities, it also became clear that the vast majority of partisan electoral interventions are done by the great powers.

15. Kindly provided to the author by John Judge, the holder of McGehee's papers.
16. <http://bukovsky-archives.net/>
17. Available at the Proquest historical newspapers service and *The Guardian* website, respectively.
18. Or, of course, academic/reliable secondary research based, among other things, upon interviews with such officials.
19. For a further description of the coding of other characteristics see Online Appendix A. It is certainly still possible, despite my best efforts in this regard, that I have missed/mis coded some cases of partisan electoral interventions. One advantage of publishing this dataset is that some more robust "crowd-sourcing" will become possible and I would welcome being informed of any such "missed" cases and incorporate them into future versions of PEIG.
20. For the definition of an intervenable election (and any possible related reverse causality issues) see Online Appendix A, Section 1.1. Four cases of partisan electoral interventions had occurred in elections which were not competitive following my criteria (Bolivia 1964, Chile 1988, South Vietnam 1961 and 1971), usually owing to last-moment boycotts of the elections by one of the major sides which were widely expected to contest them or (in the Chilean case) a rare example of a relatively competitive plebiscite. These cases are nevertheless included in the subsequent calculations unless noted otherwise.
21. See Online Appendix A, Section 3.1 for the definition of these regions and the PEIG dataset for the region dummies. The number of competitive elections in each region varied depending upon various factors such as the number of states, the number of democracies, and the subtype of democratic regime, with regions with more presidential regimes (and fixed elections terms), such as Latin America, with somewhat less competitive elections as a result.
22. Calculated using the cumulative binomial probability test (both directions). The above finding as to the US is congruent with Prados's (2006: 627) analysis, based on qualitative research on CIA activities, as to overall rate of covert electoral interventions in different world regions.
23. For these calculations I excluded the three intervention cases noted as occurring in non-competitive elections (see note 20). If one counts the fourth exception, Chile's 1988 plebiscite, as a founding election (whose criteria it fully fits except for its plebiscitary nature), the US (at marginal significance of  $p < 0.1$ ) is more likely to intervene in such elections.
24. The average for each intervener is roughly the same, with 65.4% of US interventions being covert while 61% of USSR/Russian interventions are of this type, a statistically insignificant difference ( $\chi^2$  test insignificance at 0.65, test statistic 0.2).
25. For the definition of incumbents and challengers see Online Appendix A.
26. US and Soviet/Russian interventions have equal shares of "repeat customers".
27. The exclusion of the Italian intervention cases does not affect this finding.
28. For the users' convenience, I included in PEIG a few variables indicating the six general categories of assistance most electoral intervention are known to have included. Nevertheless, given our current state of knowledge about the exact details of many electoral interventions, the incompleteness of these measures as to many cases of interventions must be kept in mind when their use is under consideration.
29. As for the temporal relationships of partisan electoral interventions to other situations of conflict and types of intervention, 10.2% of the partisan electoral interventions in PEIG were made in elections occurring during or within five years of a civil war (Fearon and Laitin's (2003) measure). Some 5.9% of the partisan electoral interventions were made in elections during or within five years of a major military intervention by a great power (Sullivan's (2007) measure), and 2.5% of such interventions were made in elections occurring within five years of a violent regime change operation (or foreign-imposed regime change) (Downes and Monten's (2013) measure).



30. Some scholars of electoral interventions have made similar arguments (Corstange and Marinov, 2012: 658).
31. In another half dozen cases (such as the US interventions in Mauritius 1982 or Israel 1996), claims were made by some of the sources that were consulted that another country, one hostile to the intervener (such as Libya under Qaddafi or Iran, respectively) was aiding the other side in the elections. However, even if these claims were true (and the evidence is frequently quite weak), the overall number of double interventions would remain quite low.
32. For example in the 1953 West German election, CDU leader Konrad Adenauer made intentionally spurious charges that some SPD members were covertly receiving money from the GDR—this while he was being overtly aided by the US (Schwarz, 1995: 77–78).
33. Using the cumulative binomial probability test (both directions). This analysis only includes cases in which Polity has scores. For the analysis of this result by intervener see Online Appendix A.
34. In other words, countries with fully democratic regimes are not any less or more likely to be targets of such interventions than countries with less consolidated democratic regimes given the number of competitive elections occurring in them during this period.
35. See Online Appendix A, part 4 for a further discussion of this dataset. Berger's dataset is provided in a format that prevents differentiation between electoral interventions and other methods of influence.
36. Similar results are found utilizing PEIG if I drop the post Cold War intervention cases and limit the analysis to the Cold War era (see Online Appendix 1, Section 5.1 for this model).
37. Assuming, of course, a similar shift in the relevant "swing states" and, accordingly, the Electoral College.

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