Elections and Elite Violence on the Road to Democratization, 1800–2010

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Abstract

This paper presents an alternative view of how and why countries democratize, using a comprehensive breakdown of all transitions from 1800 to 2010. I show that 9 in 10 transitions occur through one of three channels: in the aftermath of a violent internal conflict among elites (overwhelmingly coups and civil wars), through elections in which the ruling party remains competitive post-transition, or from foreign coercion (primarily defeat in war). Whereas scholars typically think of democratization in terms of the regime giving up power, I argue instead that transitions occur when either a violent elite conflict weakens the regime's grip on power or a ruling party expects a share of power post-democratization. This framework improves predictions of democratic transitions, as they are shown to follow major political events like coups, elections, and wars. Further, the democratizing effects of popular protest and socioeconomic factors are mediated through these triggering events. Lastly, the mode of transition strongly predicts later democratic survival.

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1 Introduction

The Third Wave of democratization began in 1974 with a seemingly unpromising event: a military coup dominated by Marxist junior officers. As Huntington (1991: 3-4) writes, this was an "implausible beginning of a world-wide movement to democracy because coups d'etat more frequently overthrow democratic regimes than introduce them." In fact, Portugal's ensuing path to democracy is so discordant with current perspectives on democratization that it represents the sole case of 21 transitions that Collier (1999) was unable to classify. Yet Portugal's case is far from unusual—this paper shows that transitions triggered by coups represent the single most common type of democratization, with about 4 in 10 transitions occurring within five years of a coup. How does this square with a broader perspective on democratization? Are there other transition paths that have been overlooked?

This paper provides a new framework for understanding democratization, centered on a categorization of all 135 transitions from 1800 to 2010.[1] I show that 9 in 10 transitions correspond to one of three paths: They either occur after a violent conflict among elites (overwhelmingly coups and civil wars), through elections in which the ruling party remains competitive post-transition, or from the application or withdrawal of international force.

The connecting logic is that democratization rarely corresponds with the regime choosing to sacrifice a large share of power, a popular image of democratization that unfortunately underlies much of the literature. Rather, transitions almost always occur when conflict has weakened the regime's power under autocracy or electoral strength leads the ruling party to expect a share of power within democracy. Both circumstances limit the shift in power entailed by transition, encouraging its acceptance by autocratic leaders.

This paper's framework carries several theoretical and empirical implications. It sees democratization as intimately connected with how elites compete for power, namely through internal violence, elections, and war. It also focuses on how major events in autocracy comprise "critical junctures" that produce flux and democratic openings. Critically, the argument

[1] Transitions are defined using the democracy coding of Boix et al. (2013). The original covers 1800–2007 and this was updated to 2010.

is *not* that popular movements do not matter. Rather, the framework provides context to how and when they matter. In particular, they should be most effective when facing weak regimes or when pushing for electoral changes that do not seriously threaten the ruling party. In addition, the framework allows for different paths to democracy that may be taken by distinct types of countries, rather than seeking a mono-causal explanation of all transitions.

On the empirical side, I show that coups and contested elections predict democratization, whereas long-ruling dictators predict autocratic stability. Using a multinomial logit model, I then analyze which country factors predict each distinct mode of democratization, finding important roles played by leader tenure, electoral history, and coercive capacity. Lastly, I show that the modes of democratization strongly predict later democratic survival, with the electoral path the most conducive to stability and elite violence the least.

After reviewing the literature, I describe the three paths to democracy and the strict criteria used to categorize transitions. I then discuss their patterns in time and the implications of the categorization, before turning to the empirical analysis.

2 Theories on Democratization

After long focusing on broad socioeconomic and class forces, the democratization literature turned attention to the processes and contingencies of democratic transition (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991; Collier 1999; Levitsky and Way 2010). In particular, the "transitions literature" provided an actor-centered approach that emphasized the strategic choices of autocratic elites and key members of the opposition (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991). In O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), the democratic opening stems from a regime split over the desired level of repression. A successful transition then occurs when regime soft-liners become dominant and choose to ally with moderate opposition factions, often through an explicit pact (Przeworski 1991).

This paper's framework also emphasizes elite dynamics, but differs by focusing on how this struggle shapes regime power. The elite violence path is superficially similar to O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) in that it involves a split among elites. However, this is not an ideological

divide within a continuing regime, but a rupture or conflict that generates a weak autocracy. Democratization then occurs when the regime cannot hold on to power, and not necessarily due to an agreement with moderate democrats. Moreover, the regime involved in the transition process need not be internally divided. Perhaps the closest theoretical parallel is Skocpol's (1979) theory that social revolutions often occur when the state faces an international conflict and/or economic crisis that leaves it vulnerable. I source regime vulnerability to similar factors and explain how this can result in democratization rather than violent revolution.

The democratization literature has only recently recognized the critical role of the autocratic regime's institutional strength (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Smith 2005; Way 2005; Gandhi 2008; Levitsky and Way 2010; Svolik 2012). Regimes differ in their ability to withstand both mass and elite challenges for various reasons, including coercive capacity, party institutions, state penetration, and internal cohesion. Generally, strong regimes willing to use coercion trump even large and organized democratic movements. In Armenia, for instance, the regime—hardened by a recent war with Azerbaijan—violently shut down electoral protests of up to 200,000-strong in 1996, followed by similar episodes in 2003, 2004, and 2008 (Levitsky and Way 2010: 207-13; Way 2008: 63). Thus, the decline of regime coercive power is central to democratization.

A continual problem with the democratization literature is that theories are often limited to cases in a specific period or region and heavily influenced by the most recent transitions. O'Donnell and Schmitter's (1986) focus on elite divisions and pacts fits a common pattern in Latin America in the 1970s and 80s, but does not have the general applicability that they claim. Post-Cold War transitions with a larger role for opposition movements inspired greater attention to protest dynamics and mass threats (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Collier 1999; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). More recently, the prominence of electoral authoritarian regimes has prompted theories on democratization through elections (Lindberg 2009; Levitsky and Way 2010; Miller forthcoming). Significantly, the few cases that do not fit this paper's framework have received an outsized share of attention in building theories of democratization. These include the pacted transitions of Uruguay, Chile, and Brazil, which

inspired much of the transitions literature, and cases that featured unusually large shifts in power, such as South Africa, Kenya, and Pakistan. This points to the value of considering the full universe of transitions and allowing for several distinct paths to democracy.

Only a few authors have attempted a thorough categorization of democratic transitions. The most common approach is to divide by the actors initiating and pushing along the transition. Huntington (1991) thus organizes Third Wave transitions into those directed from above by regime insiders (transformation), from below by the opposition or protest movements (replacement), and from combined action (transplacement).[2] However, different actors can take the initiative at different times (e.g., South Africa 1994). It is also unclear how to fit many cases—for instance, countries that democratize through elections involve the elite acceptance of elections, opposition contestation, and often mutual bargaining over the electoral rules. Collier (1999) organizes 21 transitions in Western Europe and Latin America into 7 categories, mainly distinguishing by the role of the working class. Others differentiate transitions by the previous autocratic regime type (Dahl 1971; Linz and Stepan 1996; Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Geddes 1999). The aim here is for a comprehensive and analytically informative ordering of transitions.

3 The Three Paths to Democratization

This section describes the three main paths to democracy: elite violence, electoral continuity, and international force. I detail the strict criteria used to categorize each path and discuss illustrative examples and commonalities among the countries. Finally, I overview their patterns over time.

The categories are broken down by number in Figure 1. Elite violence cases represent the majority of transitions, with electoral continuity and international force each at about a fifth of cases. Together, they account for more than 9 in 10 of the 135 democratic transitions since 1800 (defined by Boix et al. 2013). The appendix lists all transitions by category and provides additional details on the coding.

[2] Huntington also allocates a reserve category to foreign-imposed transitions.

3.1 Elite Violence

In the elite violence cases, democratization is preceded either by a violent turnover between autocrats (coups and assassinations) or a violent conflict between the regime and a domestic group, not counting democratic movements (civil wars/insurgencies). The overarching logic connecting these cases is that violent conflict reflects and deepens regime weakness. This lowers the regime's capacity to repress democratic movements and to fight off new autocratic challengers, often leading autocrats to preemptively democratize. When the regime's grip on power is low, democratization becomes less of a concession, and may even be a salvation if a counter-coup or revolution is likely. More generally, conflict and irregular changes in leadership create flux within the regime, opening it up to further political change. Put simply, democratization occurs when something *breaks* the autocratic status quo, and violent elite conflict often fulfills this need.

I overview three specific types of elite violence transitions. As a general rule, the conditions described here should be fulfilled in the five years preceding democratization. There are only three exceptions in which a coup occurred slightly before this period, but led in a clear causal chain to democratization.

Coup: *Democratization occurs following a successful coup that removes the executive.*

I record 52 coup-initiated democratic transitions, making it the single most common transition type.[3] A coup is defined here as a coercive removal of the executive by other government actors, most often the military. Previous research affirms the connection between coups and democratization. Miller (2012) shows that violent turnovers between autocrats predict democratization, with the effect stronger for coups and at higher average income. Thyne and Powell (forthcoming) confirm a positive effect of recent coups and coup attempts on democratization.[4]

[3] Another eight transitions occurred within five years of a coup, but other factors (war or civil war) were judged to be more central.

[4] Also see Varol (2012) on how coups can promote democracy. Goemans and Marinov (forthcoming) analyze the adoption of competitive elections after coups, but do not compare to non-post-coup years or distinguish autocratic and democratic elections. Treisman (2011) connects all leader turnovers to democratization and, unlike other studies, finds a similar effect for regular and irregular turnovers.

Coup plotters' motives are often unclear and frequently mixed within their own coalitions. However, for only a minority of the 52 coups was democracy an intended outcome. Only eight cases were guardian coups, featuring a coup against democracy and a return to civilian rule within three years. In some, this was by design after resolving a political crisis (Turkey 1983, Thailand 1992), while in others it was not (Honduras 2010). In some remaining cases, coups were launched against an autocratic regime with the intention of democratizing. A clear case is the 1960 Turkish military coup in reaction to the ruling Democratic Party's increasing repression and abuse of the army for domestic coercion. The military rapidly shifted to democracy after punishing the DP's leaders. In these cases, the coup serves as the vehicle with which the military shuttles the country to democracy.

Nevertheless, the large majority of coups are undertaken either for grievances not immediately related to democratization (e.g., Portugal 1976) or, predominantly, in a failed attempt to found a new autocratic regime (e.g., Greece 1974, Bolivia 1982, Niger 1999). Why do these coups promote democratization? First, coups *reflect* state weakness given the coup plotters' success. They also reveal the regime's vulnerability to the wider public. Low or uncertain coercive capacity then encourages challenges from the masses and other elites. Second, coups *contribute* to state weakness by disrupting regime control and dividing elite loyalties. Coup plotters often find themselves sharply divided on their preferred trajectories for the country. Cycles of attempted or successful coups, popular protest, and mass violence are common.

Given this chaos, coup leaders often accede to democracy while they can still control the process. Portugal's tortuous path to democracy from 1974 to 1976 is an example (Pimlott 1977; Maxwell 1986). In April 1974, junior military officers ousted a long-lived neo-fascist regime under Marcelo Caetano. Although popularly supported at first, the initially dominant factions of the military junta attempted to found a new, Marxist dictatorship. Shifting coalitions within the junta and renewed popular protest initiated a highly unstable, violent transitional period from 1974–76, featuring seven interim governments and two failed coups. Eventually, popular organization and victories for moderate parties in elections in 1975 and 1976 convinced the military leaders (many of whom supported democracy) to accept defeat. This path enables

outgoing autocrats to control the democratization process and secure political concessions, as with the Portuguese military's gain of de jure veto power until 1982.

In other coup cases, extreme weakness leaves the regime unable to survive against mass protest and elite challengers. Democracy then serves as an escape route for reluctant autocrats. After a leftist electoral victory in Bolivia in 1980, General Luis García Meza led a bloody military coup funded by drug syndicates and former Nazis. After five coup attempts, a divided military forced García Meza to resign in 1981. Although the new military leader opposed a return to elections, an economic crisis and García Meza's attempted takeover in July 1982 prompted the military to accept a reform-minded president. In the face of protests and a general strike in late 1982, the military finally stepped down and allowed the 1980 election winner to assume the presidency. Shockingly, Bolivia's path to democracy in 1979 was even more disordered, featuring four irregular turnovers in the prior 18 months.

In sum, coups lead to democracy by disrupting the autocratic status quo and producing transitional and weak regimes. This tenuous grip on power inclines autocrats to accept democracy and provides an opening for democratic supporters. Thus, democratization should be especially likely when coups combine with pro-democratic preferences and high capacity in the democratic opposition.

Assassination: *Democratization occurs following the assassination of the head of state or head of government.*

Two cases follow from assassinations, Spain 1977 and Pakistan 1988. In the former case, President Luis Carrero Blanco, the acting head of government and presumptive heir to Francisco Franco, was assassinated in 1973. Given Franco's ailing health, this produced a gap in leadership filled by King Juan Carlos I, who chose to push Spain toward democracy. In Pakistan, the dictator Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq was (very likely) assassinated when his plane crashed shortly before long-promised legislative elections. His absence created a power gap that reduced repression and enabled the Supreme Court to legalize political parties in time for the election, which was won by the pro-democratic Pakistan People's Party.

Although a primary cause in only two cases, assassination was a secondary factor in six or seven other cases (e.g., Portugal 1911, Bangladesh 1986).[5] Indeed, Jones and Olken (2009) find that assassinations predict shifts toward democracy, even relative to failed assassinations. Similar to most coup cases, removing a dictator creates uncertainty and instability that can be exploited by the opposition. Also in line with some coup cases, an assassination can transfer power to more pro-democratic leaders.

Civil War/Insurgency: *Democratization occurs during or in the aftermath of a civil war or major insurgency.*

- *The conflict involves at least 1,000 deaths.*
- *The principal aim of the anti-government side is not democracy.*

The civil war and insurgency cases (the distinction is not important for this paper) are the only elite violence cases that do not entail the removal of a dictator. Rather, a prolonged and bloody conflict weakens the autocracy and inclines leaders toward democracy. This can occur in two ways. First, a civil war can be resolved with a negotiated peace agreement that includes democratization, sometimes after state collapse (e.g., Mozambique 1994, Liberia 2006). Along similar lines, Wanthchekon and Neeman (2002) argue that multiple competing elites who cannot individually secure power may agree to shift from warlordism to democracy. Second, the conflict can divert the regime's coercive capacity, leaving it more willing to concede to a democratic movement (e.g., Sudan 1965, The Philippines 1986).

A surprising fact is that only one of these cases involved a revolutionary takeover of government (Nicaragua 1984). In all other cases, either the state won or there was a negotiated resolution.[6] Generally, violent takeovers from below either do not lead to democracy or produce fragile, quickly overturned democracies (e.g., France 1848, South Korea 1960).

[5] In comparison, the natural death of a dictator was a contributing factor in perhaps five cases (Spain 1977, Guyana 1992, Niger 1993, Croatia 2000, Zambia 2008).

[6] Liberia 2006 is a borderline case as rebels successfully ousted Charles Taylor in 2003. However, the transition followed an internationally mediated peace agreement.

3.2 Electoral Continuity

Electoral continuity cases follow a very different trajectory. Instead of violence producing regime weakness under autocracy, these are largely peaceful transitions in which the ruling party predicts strength under democracy. Specifically, they are undertaken by ruling parties that remain electorally competitive post-democratization.

Electoral Continuity: *Democratization occurs when an established ruling party loses power through elections or wins in free and fair elections, then remains competitive after transition.*

- *The ruling party has continuously controlled government for at least one previous election cycle. No coups have occurred and the party is the supreme institutional power.*
- *Within two electoral cycles of transition, the party either (a) wins the presidency, or (b) wins a legislative plurality or at least 40% of legislative seats.*

This category, which comprises 27 transitions, does *not* include all cases that democratized through elections. Peru 1956, for instance, fails the first bullet-pointed condition. Although the military's favored candidate, Manuel Prado, won the first multiparty election, no prior ruling party existed. To see how strict the second condition is, Brazil 1985 does not qualify despite it being a canonical case of guided democratization through elections. The military's Democratic Social Party did not remain a significant electoral force after transition, badly losing the indirect presidential election in 1985 and winning fewer than 10% of legislative seats in 1986 following a party split. Finally, the 40% rule is only needed for a single case, Guyana 1992, where the former ruling party narrowly missed a legislative plurality in three consecutive elections. Thus, in all but one case, the ruling party successfully regained power post-democratization.

Categorizing these cases using post-transition events is arguably limiting, as they cannot then be coded in the immediate aftermath. It also raises the question of how later events influence the transition. However, the logic is that democratization becomes less threatening when ruling parties expect to compete in democracy. Tracking these expectations is very difficult, but using post-transition outcomes is justified as long as party elites reasonably

anticipate their success. In fact, all that is necessary is that party elites do not drastically underestimate their chances. If anything, the coding is conservative, as other ruling parties democratized incorrectly expecting to remain competitive (e.g., Poland 1989, Central African Republic 1993).

The idea that the opportunity to compete under democracy encourages ruling parties to democratize has been expressed in Wright and Escribà-Folch (2012), Slater and Wong (2013), and Miller (forthcoming). Collier (1999) also points to several ruling parties in Western Europe and Latin America that extended suffrage for electoral advantage or to coopt the middle class. Indeed, 9 of the 27 electoral continuity cases occurred when competitive oligarchies extended suffrage. The remaining 18 democratized by improving electoral contestation.

3.3 International Force

The democratization literature increasingly recognizes the importance of international factors, ranging from democracy aid to normative influence to war. The international force category includes cases that democratized due to the coercive influence of an external power.

International Force: *Democratization occurs with the exercise or withdrawal of foreign military power, including defeat in war. Either:*

- *An external hegemon withdraws coercive control, or*
- *An external power produces government collapse by removing the executive or conquering substantial state territory.*

The first type involves an autocratic hegemon withdrawing control, thus creating an opportunity for transition. Nine cases qualify, all in the post-Communist sphere as a result of the Soviet Union's downfall.[7]

The second type involves the regime's defeat in war, which creates a democratic opportunity for either domestic forces or the conquering power. The most familiar cases are the nine transitions following the two World Wars. In four other cases (France 1870, Uganda 1980,

[7] In many other transitions, the withdrawal of external support was a contributing factor, such as the U.S. role in The Philippines 1986 and South Korea 1988.

Grenada 1984, Panama 1991), the country was conquered and the executive removed. In two cases (Honduras 1971, Cyprus 1977), significant territory was taken and the government collapsed. Of these six, democratic change was an explicit goal only in Grenada and Panama. This reflects the literature's consensus on the highly mixed record of foreign-imposed regime change in promoting democratization (Grimm 2008; Downes and Monten 2013).

3.4 Exceptions

The above categories encompass more than 9 in 10 transitions since 1800, but this leaves 13 outliers. As mentioned, they include many cases that fit the prevailing theories of democratization. Mass protests played a role in several cases (e.g., Uruguay 1985, Nepal 1991), with four featuring popular revolts that coercively removed the executive (France 1848, South Korea 1960, Peru 2001, Georgia 2004). Pacts were central in about four cases (Brazil 1985, Uruguay 1985, Chile 1990, South Africa 1994).

An interesting aspect of these cases is that elections played a significant role in 11 of the 13 transitions (all but France 1848 and Nepal 1991). Three featured popular protests in reaction to stolen elections. Three others featured shock election losses for the ruling party. Two were cases of guided democratization through elections (but do not meet the electoral continuity criteria). Finally, in Uruguay 1985, Chile 1990, and South Africa 1994, plebiscites revealed strong popular support for democratization.

Many of the exceptions fit the logic of other paths even though they do not meet the strict criteria. For instance, South Korea 1960 was arguably still in a post-war phase, with the final armistice of the Korean War signed in 1953. Fitting the civil war logic, Georgia suffered from separatist conflicts in the early 1990s, attempted revolts in the late 90s, and still featured breakaway regions and persistent state weakness by the time of electoral protests in 2003. Peru 1956 almost fits both the coup and electoral continuity paths, as it experienced a coup in 1948 and the military's chosen candidate, Manuel Prado, won the first democratic election. However, no ruling party existed. Brazil 1985, Central African Republic 1993, South Africa

1994, and Kenya 2002 all narrowly miss the electoral continuity path because the outgoing ruling parties were not sufficiently competitive post-transition.

3.5 Patterns in Time

Figure 2 displays the prevalence of the four categories of democratic transition by time period. The top graph shows the total transitions and the bottom graph the fraction in each period. The five periods roughly correspond to democracy's First Wave, the First Reverse and Second Waves, the Second Reverse Wave, the early Third Wave, and post-Cold War.

The relative prevalence of the modes shifts across time. The elite violence path was uncommon through World War I, but represents a plurality of cases in every period after. It was especially dominant during the Cold War. Since then, the electoral mode has risen in importance. Puzzlingly, it was dormant between 1920 and 1990 (only three cases, with none between 1942 and 1988), but was the most common type of transition before then. Of course, its old and new periods represent distinct types of electoral transition, with the former involving extensions of suffrage and the latter improvements in contestation (Collier 1999; Miller forthcoming). The international force cases cluster around the two World Wars and the end of the Cold War. Only six cases were not a direct result of one of these events. Finally, reflecting the increasing role of international mediation, 14 of the 17 civil war and insurgency cases have occurred since 1984.

4 Implications

What does this breakdown of transitions tell us about democracy? Most centrally, it challenges prevailing theories about how and why democratization happens. Popular challenges to strong, cohesive autocratic regimes rarely succeed. Such autocracies also rarely choose to concede to democracy, unless they are confident that democratization does not actually mean sacrificing power. Rather, democratization usually occurs when a domestic or international conflict weakens the autocratic regime's grip on power. This calls for greater focus on how

autocrats contend for power, the near-term events that shift power, and the regime's coercive capacity.

The framework can also aid in the prediction of democratic transitions. Of course, the categorization only shows that certain events often precede transitions. It does not follow that these events are predictive of transitions, which requires looking at a full sample of autocracies. The next section tackles this, focusing on whether coups and contested elections predict democratization.

A further question is how country characteristics and opposition behavior interact with these triggering events. Even if coups predict democratization, the large majority of coups (around seven in eight) do not result in democracy. Rather, coups create an opening that actors must exploit. For instance, Miller (2012) finds that coups more strongly predict democratization at higher economic development, as this reflects the wider population's pro-democratic sentiment and economic power. Future research should look more closely at how factors combine with coups, wars, and elections to produce democracy. Further, the same factors may also predict the initial triggering events, as economic development does with coups and civil wars. The total contribution of each factor combines its direct impact and its effect mediated through each event. As a first step, the next section analyzes which country features predict each distinct mode of democratization.

As a final implication, the paths should also predict subsequent political trajectories. How the democratization process affects later democratic survival is a somewhat neglected subject. Several authors claim that transitions involving pacts and elite cooperation encourage democratic stability (Dahl 1971; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Others argue that violence in the transition process harms democratic consolidation and quality (Huntington 1991; Cervellati et al. 2014). Miller (forthcoming) finds that electoral experience under autocracy predicts later democratic survival. The elite violence path, which involves low elite cooperation and high propensity for violence and disorder, should thus be the least predictive of democratic stability. The elite continuity path should be the most positive, as it involves elite coopera-

tion and low violence. In particular, former ruling parties give autocratic elites a stake in the young democracy and add structure and continuity to the country's electoral politics.

5 Analysis

5.1 Predicting Democratization

Coups and contested elections are two of the triggers that encourage democratic change, albeit in very different ways. Figure 3 shows the annual likelihood of democratization, dividing autocracies by whether they experienced a coup within the previous five years or allow multiple parties to sit in the legislature (Przeworski 2013).[8] If a country has experienced neither, the annual likelihood of transition is only 0.64 percent, accounting for a mere 17 cases in history. With multiple parties and no recent coup, this shifts up to 2.23 percent.[9] Following a recent coup, the probability is 2.50 percent, a four-fold increase over the base category. Democratization's chances are also elevated following war: If a civil war has ended within five years, the annual likelihood is 1.63 percent; for international war, it's 1.75 percent.

Given that coups and multiparty contestation are highly non-random, I proceed to testing their relationship with democratization more rigorously. Table 1 displays probits predicting democratization in a sample of autocracies from 1830–2008. Three types of leader transition are tested: coups, any other irregular turnover, and regular turnover. Regular turnovers are defined as changes in the chief executive through constitutional means, including electoral turnover and natural death. Non-coup irregular turnovers include revolutions and foreign imposition. Each type is tested with a dummy for an occurrence within the previous five years (Przeworski 2013).[10] Models 1–3 test the three types of turnover, while Models 4–6 instead test the effect of leader tenure (in years, from Cheibub et al. 2010; Przeworski 2013).

[8] The sample is from 1802–2009. Only 10 of 135 transitions are lost due to missing data.
[9] This is not due to elections implemented shortly before democratization, which may be part of a transition process. If we require five consecutive years of contested elections, the annual likelihood of transition remains high at 1.98 percent.
[10] Results are substantively identical using leader data from Goemans et al. (2009), although this limits the sample to 1875–2004.

Multiparty contestation is tested in three distinct ways in separate models. *Multiparty Legislature* is as described above. *Contested Years* is the number of consecutive years the regime has allowed contested elections without a violent disruption (Przeworski 2013), proxying for the durability of the ruling party. Lastly, *Contested Legislature* indicates whether the regime legally allows multiple parties to compete in legislative elections (Cheibub et al. 2010), which is available for 1946–2008.

All models include a standard set of controls. For socioeconomic characteristics, I include *GDP/capita* (logged, in real 2000 dollars, from Maddison 2008; Haber and Menaldo 2011; World Bank 2011), *Economic Growth* (the average percentage change in *GDP/capita* over the previous two years), and *Literacy* (as a percentage of adults, from Banks 1976; Norris 2008; World Bank 2011). Accounting for diffusion, *Regional Democracy* is the fraction of the surrounding region that is democratic. To capture each country's democratic history, I control for the consecutive years the country has been autocratic (*Regime Duration*) and its *Previous Democratic Spells*. Following Albertus and Menaldo (2012), the regime's coercive capacity is measured as *Military Size* (military personnel as a percentage of the population, from Correlates of War 2010). Lastly, I control for the year (as a linear term).

Results The results clearly show the strong positive effect of a recent coup. For Model 1, holding other variables at their means, a coup triples the annual likelihood of democratization from 1.47% to 4.32%.[11] Other types of leader turnover are also positive, but substantively small and insignificant. Leader tenure is significantly negative for democratization, even controlling for a recent coup. Shifting leader tenure up one standard deviation proportionally lowers the chance of democratization by about 30%. This suggests that long-ruling leaders are able to consolidate power and forestall democratization. In addition, all three measures of electoral contestation are robustly positive for democratization. The effect is especially strong for the presence of a multiparty or legally contested legislature. For Model 3, democratization is about three times as likely with a *Contested Legislature* than without.

[11] This is a larger effect than in the simple comparison without controls because coups tend to occur in countries with socioeconomic conditions unfavorable to democratization.

The juxtaposition of these results is instructive. Coups predict democratization, but so does allowing peaceful contestation through elections. Leader tenure is negative, but a long-lived ruling *party* is positive. Rather than reflecting a single common cause, these variables demonstrate the different paths that can be taken to democratization.

Results for the controls are mostly expected. *Regional Democracy* and *Literacy* are strongly positive. *Economic Growth* is negative and marginally significant. *Military Size* is negative, but not significant. No effect is found for average income or the duration of autocracy.

5.2 Predicting the Mode of Democratization

An important implication of this paper's framework is that different country types can democratize in disparate ways. Thus, specific country factors can promote one type of democratization and discourage another type, possibly leading to no net effect on democratization. This section investigates what predicts each distinct mode of democratization.

Table 2 displays two multinomial logit models, which predict each of several distinct (unordered) events. Democratization is disaggregated into the paths of elite violence, electoral continuity, and the remaining cases.[12] The displayed effects for each type of democratization are measured relative to the base category of no democratization. The same control variables are included, with *Military Size* and *Literacy* omitted in Model 1 to maximize sample size. I do not test the direct effects of recent coups or electoral contestation since these are included in the definitions of the dependent variables. Rather, the models test two related political variables, each lagged by five years: *Leader Tenure* and *Contested Years*. Both capture regime durability in the recent past in a way that is not tautologically related to the outcome.

Results The findings clearly show that different factors predict distinct types of democratization. *Leader Tenure* is significantly negative for the elite violence path, but not for other types. Thus, its effect from Table 1 stems from preventing violent intra-regime splits. *Contested Years* is positive only for electoral continuity, confirming that it contributes to democratization entirely through dominant parties that remain competitive post-transition.

[12] International force and other cases are combined due to the small sample sizes.

Results for the control variables are also instructive. *Military Size* is significantly negative only for elite violence, suggesting that coercive capacity is most useful for preventing violent intra-national struggle. *Literacy* is strongly positive except for elite violence, possibly because it prevents the initial outbreak of violence. *Previous Democratic Spells* is strongly positive mainly for elite violence. This variable tracks the number of prior breakdowns, and hence indicates how past political disorder contributes to democratization. In particular, it shows that cases of re-democratization are more likely to be through violent means. More puzzlingly, *Economic Growth* is negative for all types, but only significantly so for the other category, and *Regional Democracy* is significantly positive for all types except electoral continuity.

5.3 Effect on Democratic Survival

Finally, how does the mode of democratization affect subsequent democratic survival? Figure 4 displays a Kaplan-Meier survival plot for democracies, dividing by the different modes. As expected, democracies born from elite violence are extremely fragile. After democratization, the median survival time is a mere 16 years and about a quarter break down by year 7. Electoral continuity cases are the most stable, with more than 80% lasting at least 15 years and a majority never breaking down.[13] This is not due to the older cases in Western Europe—the plot looks virtually identical when only including transitions from 1946 onward.

Still, it may be that the difference is due not to the transition paths themselves, but the different types of countries that select into each path. Table 3 displays probits predicting democratic survival from 1802–2010. Four distinct sources of democracy are tested, with elite violence as the reference category. Electoral continuity, international force, and other transitions are distinguished. There are also 72 democratic spells that began upon independence, and hence did not involve a democratization process. This source of democracy is also tested. The standard controls are included, with the exception of *Military Size* and *Literacy*. Model

[13] In part, this reflects that electoral continuity cases are coded based on the observation of post-transition competition, which requires the initial survival of the democracy. However, the criteria can also be fulfilled in the elections contemporaneous with transition. Further, the few years required to observe competition cannot account for the dramatic differences in survival over several decades. Lastly, the survival plot and probit results are substantively identical when only counting survival after the electoral requirements have been met.

1 includes all democracies, whereas Models 2 and 3 limit the sample to democracies younger than 20 years and 10 years, respectively, to test whether the modes have a different effect on young democracies.

Results Across all models, electoral continuity is strongly related to democratic survival. At the median income for democratizing countries, a democracy with an electoral rather than a violent origin has about 1/3 the annual likelihood of breaking down. This is equivalent to the effect of *quadrupling* the country's average income. For democracies younger than 10 years, the effect is even larger. Countries with violent rather than electoral origins face more than seven times the annual likelihood of breakdown. This is equivalent to the effect of moving from Bangladesh to The Netherlands on average income. Countries that were democratic at independence area also more likely to survive, although this effect is weaker for the youngest democracies. The remaining democratization cases are also more stable compared to elite violence, but not significantly so. Among the controls, average income and regional democracy are supportive of democratic survival.

6 Conclusion

This paper presented a comprehensive breakdown of all democratic transitions since 1800. Using strict criteria to categorize cases, it found that more than 9 in 10 transitions occur following a violent internal conflict (such as coups and civil wars), through elections in which the ruling party remains competitive post-transition, or from international coercion. The implication is that regimes democratize when their power is tenuous or is expected to be high under democracy.

The paper tested several implications of the framework for democratic transition and survival. It found that coups and contested elections are strong predictors of democratization, while long-ruling dictators are negatively predictive. Distinct country-level factors also relate to specific modes of democratization. Leader tenure and military capacity negatively predict elite violence transitions, whereas literacy and long-lived ruling parties predict electoral

continuity transitions. Finally, tests of democratic survival showed that electoral continuity cases and countries that were democratic at independence are far more stable than elite violence cases. An implication is the positive role of autocratic electoral competition in promoting democracy in the long run. Democracy promoters should encourage this practice and see strong ruling parties as potential vehicles for strategic democratization.

Appendix: A Categorization of Democratic Transitions

Transitions are defined using the democracy coding of Boix et al. (2013). The original covers 1800–2007 and this was updated to 2010. Following Dahl (1971), democracy is defined as satisfying requirements for both contestation and participation. Specifically, a democracy must allow free and fair elections with a minimal suffrage requirement of half the adult male population. The expanded data includes 135 transitions from autocracy to democracy. A further 72 cases were democratic at independence, including the United States, India, and New Zealand.[14] Thus, the data includes 207 total democratic spells.

The technical requirements for each category of democratic transition are described in the text. A small number of transitions meet the requirements for more than one mode, in which case a judgment was made about which factor was most significant. For instance, Albania 1997 and Croatia 2000 followed major civil conflicts, but also meet the requirements for electoral continuity. Both democratized from competitive authoritarian regimes and the ruling parties regained power in 2005 and 2003, respectively. I judge the state weakness produced by conflict to be a more significant contributing factor, so categorize these as civil war/insurgency cases. Preference is also for events prior on the causal chain. Although Argentina democratized shortly after defeat in the Falklands War, this was preceded, and the war encouraged, by coups in 1976 and 1981. Hence, this is counted as a coup case.

A list of all 135 transitions is on the following page. Further distinctions are made within some categories, including civil wars and insurgencies. Electoral continuity cases are divided into competitive oligarchy and electoral autocracy types, where the former democratized by extending suffrage rather than allowing freer contestation. Among the exceptions, a rough distinction is made between opposition-led and regime-led transitions.

[14] Boix et al. code four cases as democratizing within a few years of independence (Luxembourg 1890, Ireland 1922, Pakistan 1950, Gambia 1972). Since these did not feature established autocratic regimes as independent nations, they are counted among the 72.

Categorization of Democratic Transitions, 1800–2010

Elite Violence

Coup

Greece 1864
Greece 1926
Cuba 1940
Costa Rica 1948
Panama 1952
Colombia 1958
Burma 1960
Peru 1963
Ghana 1970
Thailand 1975
Ecuador 1979
Peru 1980
Argentina 1983
El Salvador 1984
Guatemala 1986
Thailand 1992
Ecuador 2003
Honduras 2010
Cuba 1909
Spain 1931
Guatemala 1945
Ecuador 1948
Honduras 1957
Guatemala 1958
Turkey 1961
Dom. Rep. 1966
Argentina 1973
Portugal 1976
Ghana 1979
Bolivia 1982
Thailand 1983
Bangladesh 1986
Suriname 1991
Niger 1999
Comoros 2006
Portugal 1911
Chile 1934
Brazil 1946
Panama 1950
Argentina 1958
Venezuela 1959
Argentina 1963
Guatemala 1966
Greece 1974
Bolivia 1979
Nigeria 1979
Honduras 1982
Turkey 1983
Sudan 1986
Mali 1992
Lesotho 2002
Bangladesh 2009

Civil War

Indonesia 1955
Sri Lanka 1991
Senegal 2000
Burundi 2005
Nepal 2008
Sudan 1965
Mozambique 1994
Serbia 2000
Liberia 2006
Nicaragua 1984
Croatia 2000
Sierra Leone 2002
Solomon Islands 2006

Insurgency

Lebanon 1971
Albania 1997
The Philippines 1986
Suriname 1988

Assassination

Spain 1977
Pakistan 1988

Categorization of Democratic Transitions, 1800–2010 (cont.)

Electoral Continuity

Competitive Oligarchy

United Kingdom 1885
Belgium 1894
The Netherlands 1897
Denmark 1901
Chile 1909
Sweden 1911
Argentina 1912
Uruguay 1919
Colombia 1937

Electoral Autocracy

Uruguay 1942
South Korea 1988
São Tomé and Príncipe 1991
Benin 1991
Cape Verde 1991
Guyana 1992
Niger 1993
Madagascar 1993
Guinea-Bissau 1994
Malawi 1994
Taiwan 1996
Ghana 1997
Indonesia 1999
Mexico 2000
Paraguay 2003
Antigua 2004
Zambia 2008
Maldives 2009

International Force

Post-War

France 1870
Germany 1919
Italy 1919
Austria 1920
Greece 1944
France 1946
Austria 1946
Italy 1946
The Philippines 1946
Japan 1952
Honduras 1971
Cyprus 1977
Uganda 1980
Grenada 1984
Panama 1991

Post-Soviet

Poland 1989
Bulgaria 1990
Hungary 1990
Czechoslovakia 1990
Mongolia 1990
Romania 1991
Albania 1992
Lithuania 1992
Latvia 1993

Other

Protest/Opposition-Led

France 1848
South Korea 1960
Nepal 1991
Central African Rep. 1993
Peru 2001
Kenya 2002
Georgia 2004
Pakistan 2008

Pacted/Regime-Led

Peru 1956
Brazil 1985
Uruguay 1985
Chile 1990
South Africa 1994

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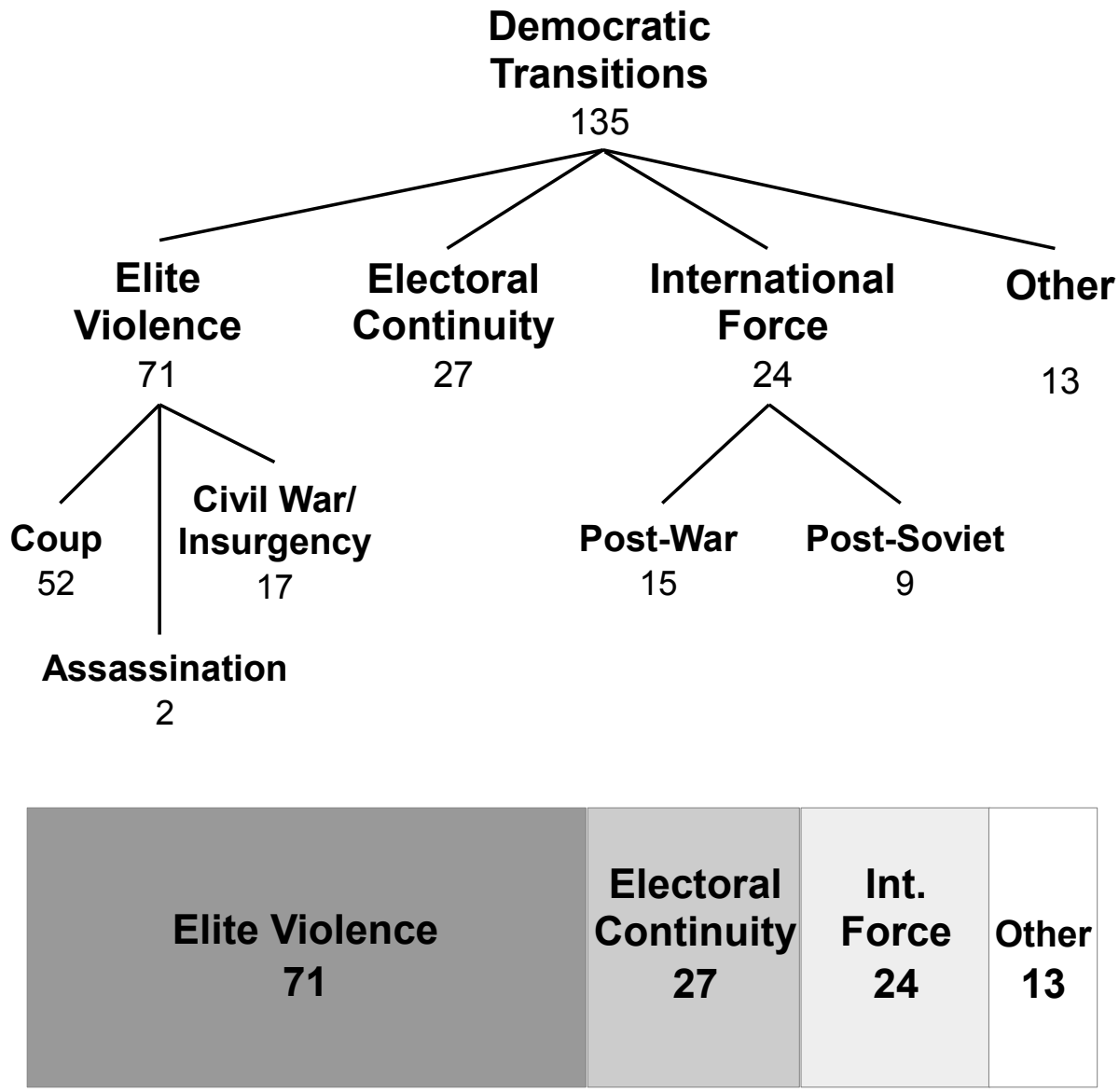

Fig. 1: A breakdown of all 135 democratic transitions between 1800 and 2010. The three primary modes of democratization detailed in the paper (elite violence, electoral continuity, and international force) account for more than 9 in 10 transitions.

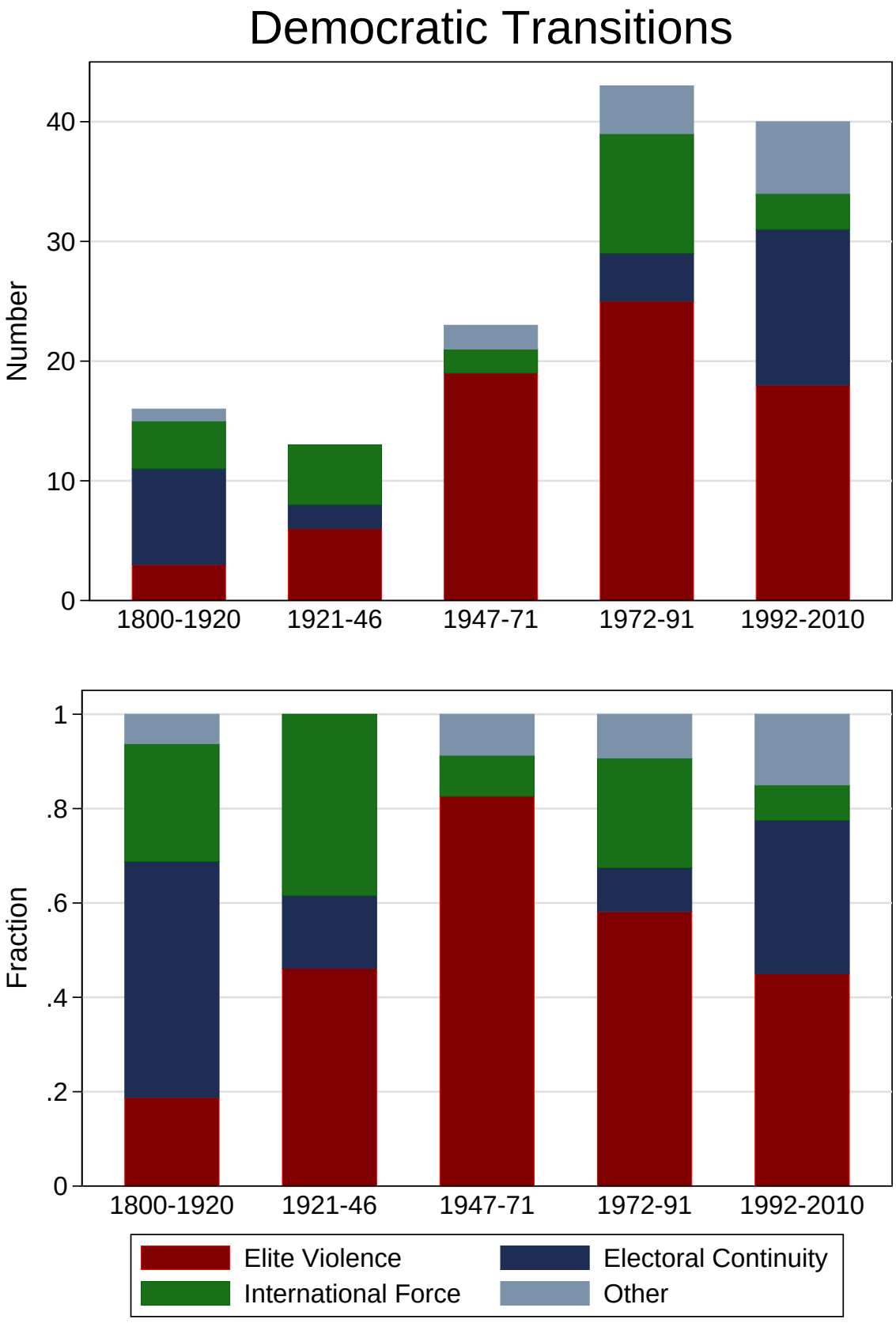

Fig. 2: The prevalence of four categories of democratic transition by time period. The top figure shows the total transitions and the bottom the fraction in each period.

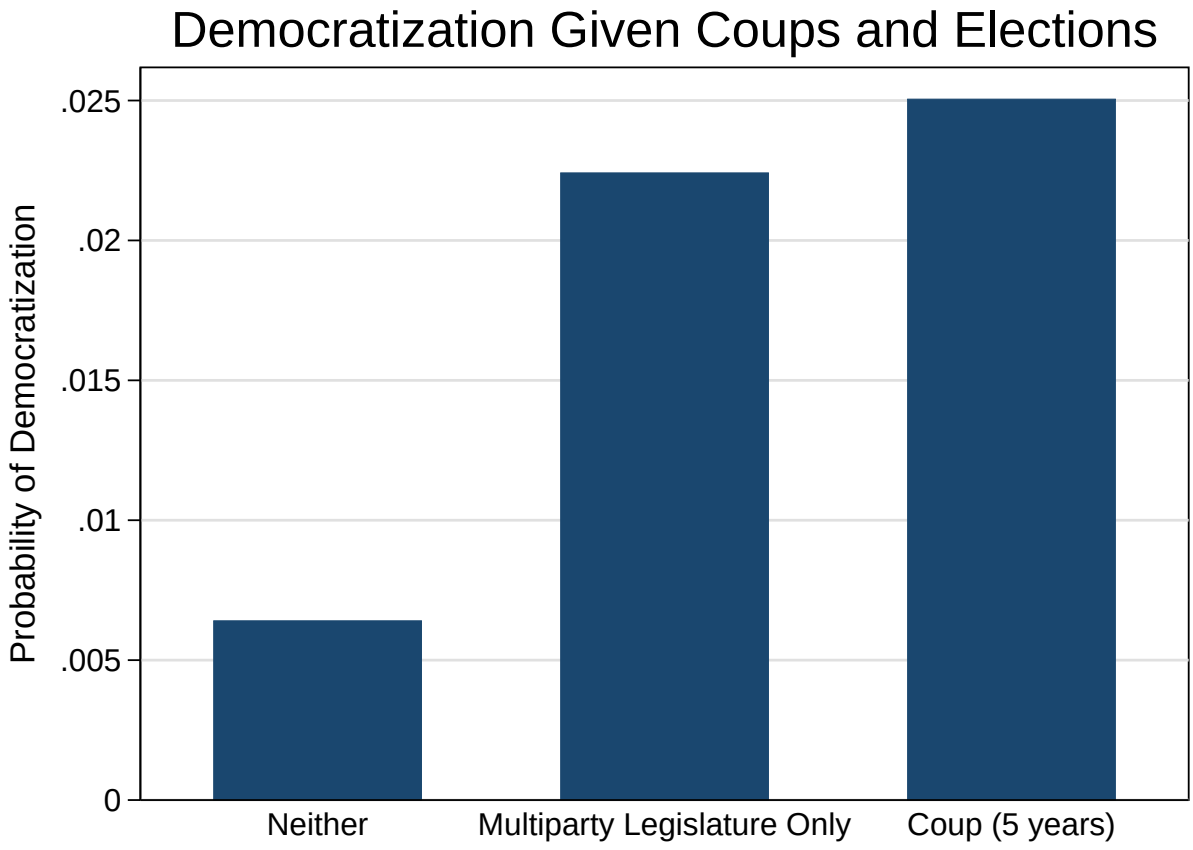

Fig. 3: The annual likelihood of democratization by three categories. Democratization's chances are elevated if a country experiences a coup or allows multiparty contestation for the legislature.

Table 1: Models Predicting Democratization

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Coup (5 years)	0.498***	0.478***	0.558***	0.392***	0.361***	0.385***
	(4.99)	(4.78)	(5.18)	(3.78)	(3.53)	(3.36)
Other Irregular Turnover (5 years)	0.146	0.146	0.163			
	(1.36)	(1.39)	(1.35)			
Regular Turnover (5 years)	0.012	0.092	0.048			
	(0.11)	(0.92)	(0.42)			
Leader Tenure				−0.020**	−0.022**	−0.027**
				(−2.63)	(−2.99)	(−3.26)
Multiparty Legislature	0.370***			0.323**		
	(3.70)			(3.17)		
Contested Years		0.006*			0.006*	
		(2.26)			(2.00)	
Contested Legislature			0.489***			0.480***
			(4.97)			(4.83)
GDP/capita (ln)	−0.055	−0.057	−0.047	−0.049	−0.048	−0.046
	(−1.18)	(−1.27)	(−0.97)	(−1.08)	(−1.07)	(−0.97)
Economic Growth	−0.017*	−0.017*	−0.019*	−0.012	−0.013	−0.018*
	(−2.25)	(−2.18)	(−2.40)	(−1.63)	(−1.67)	(−2.27)
Regional Democracy	0.539**	0.609***	0.424	0.502**	0.597***	0.405
	(3.13)	(3.60)	(1.79)	(2.87)	(3.45)	(1.63)
Regime Duration	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.34)	(0.04)	(0.12)	(0.52)	(0.26)	(0.22)
Previous Democratic Spells	0.178**	0.135*	0.182**	0.165**	0.127*	0.185**
	(2.93)	(2.34)	(2.93)	(2.70)	(2.20)	(3.02)
Military Size	−0.043	−0.065	−0.116	−0.027	−0.046	−0.087
	(−0.62)	(−0.96)	(−1.70)	(−0.43)	(−0.73)	(−1.33)
Literacy	0.006**	0.008***	0.007**	0.006**	0.007***	0.007**
	(2.84)	(3.69)	(2.95)	(2.75)	(3.56)	(2.79)
Year	0.002	0.003	0.001	0.003*	0.004**	0.002
	(1.18)	(1.87)	(0.22)	(2.04)	(2.64)	(0.52)
N	5,279	6,093	4,225	5,229	6,023	4,228
Countries	140	140	131	140	140	131
Pseudo R^2	0.106	0.107	0.124	0.107	0.110	0.136

Notes: The table displays probits predicting democratization. Years are 1830–2008. t statistics (based on robust standard errors) are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$

Table 2: Multinomial Logits Predicting Modes of Democratization

	Elite Violence		**Electoral Continuity**		**Foreign/Other**	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Leader Tenure (lagged)	-0.068^{**}	-0.057^{*}	-0.023	-0.022	0.002	-0.008
	(-3.05)	(-2.49)	(-0.74)	(-0.65)	(0.10)	(-0.42)
Contested Years (lagged)	-0.013	-0.023	0.037^{***}	0.029^{***}	0.001	-0.008
	(-1.25)	(-1.77)	(4.69)	(3.54)	(0.07)	(-0.42)
GDP/capita (ln)	-0.029	0.080	-0.081	-0.548	0.333^{*}	-0.065
	(-0.26)	(0.55)	(-0.32)	(-1.80)	(2.31)	(-0.40)
Economic Growth	-0.032	-0.039	-0.009	-0.012	-0.083^{**}	-0.087^{**}
	(-1.38)	(-1.41)	(-0.24)	(-0.31)	(-3.23)	(-2.68)
Regional Democracy	2.036^{***}	2.191^{***}	1.408	0.998	2.214^{**}	1.546^{*}
	(4.97)	(4.18)	(1.92)	(1.36)	(2.89)	(2.08)
Regime Duration	-0.001	-0.003	0.002	0.002	0.003	0.002
	(-0.45)	(-0.83)	(0.65)	(0.70)	(0.87)	(0.59)
Previous Democratic Spells	0.583^{***}	0.505^{***}	-0.196	-0.426	0.526^{*}	0.312
	(4.66)	(3.75)	(-0.41)	(-0.81)	(2.21)	(1.39)
Year	0.014^{***}	0.007	0.009	0.003	0.004	0.002
	(3.76)	(1.59)	(1.55)	(0.49)	(0.68)	(0.25)
Military Size		-0.681^{*}		-0.578		0.032
		(-2.57)		(-1.37)		(0.15)
Literacy		0.003		0.032^{***}		0.035^{***}
		(0.48)		(3.35)		(3.26)
N	7,098	6,003	7,098	6,003	7,098	6,003
Countries	144	143	144	143	144	143
Pseudo R^2	0.101	0.113	0.101	0.113	0.101	0.113
BIC	1,558.81	1,474.31	1,558.81	1,474.31	1,558.81	1,474.31

Notes: The table displays multinomial logits predicting three modes of democratization, with autocratic stability as the reference category. Two models are shown, labeled (1) and (2). Both use a sample of autocracies. Years are 1805–2010 for Model 1 and 1830–2008 for Model 2. t statistics (based on robust standard errors) are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$

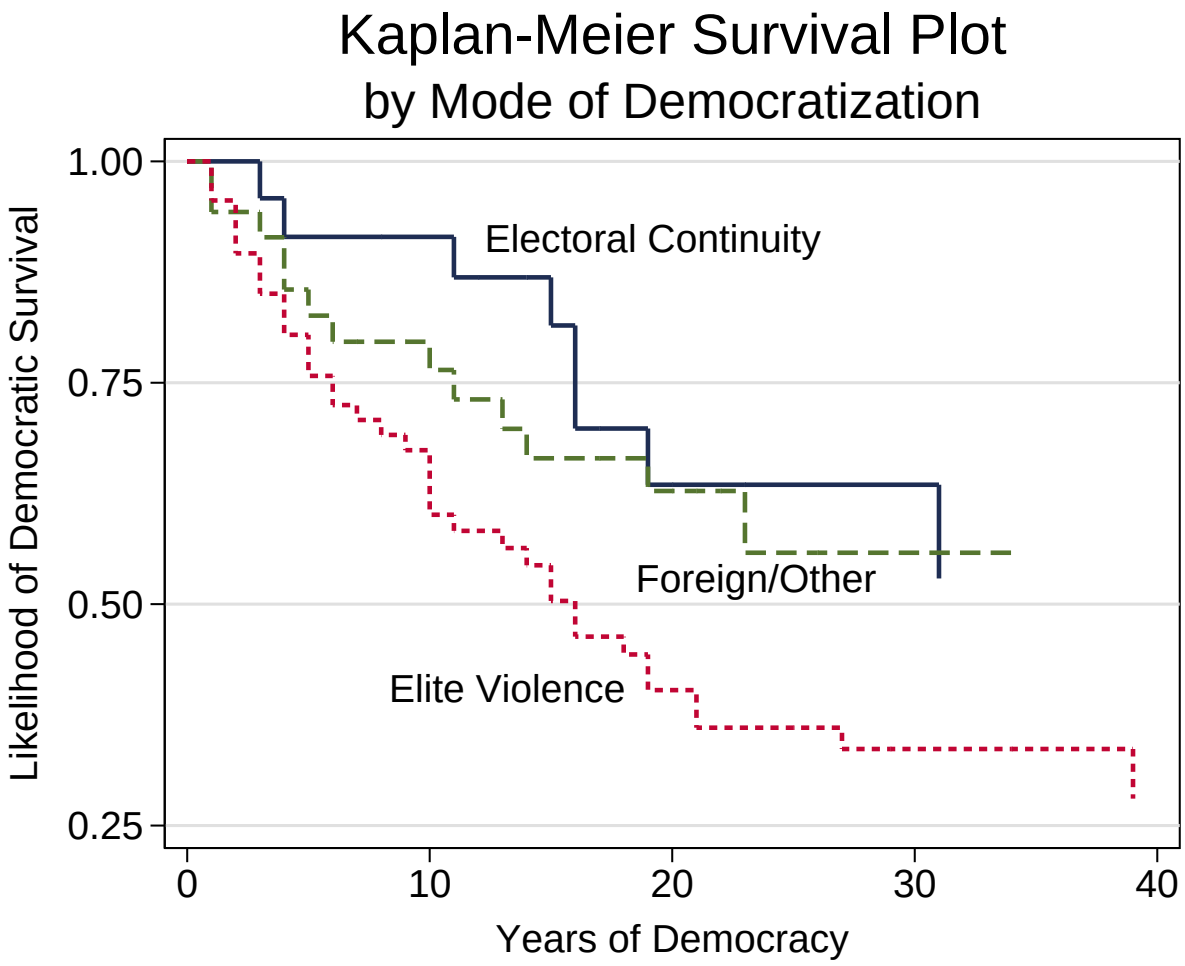

Fig. 4: The observed survival likelihoods of democracies by mode of democratization. Democratic survival is much more likely following an electoral path to democracy rather than a violent path.

Table 3: Models Predicting Democratic Survival

	All Years	**Age $\leq$ 20**	**Age $\leq$ 10**
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Electoral Continuity	0.454^{**}	0.489^{**}	0.819^{**}
	(2.71)	(2.80)	(2.91)
International Force	0.113	0.188	0.179
	(0.69)	(1.03)	(0.75)
Other Democratization	0.048	0.004	0.020
	(0.22)	(0.02)	(0.08)
Independence	0.486^{**}	0.474^{**}	0.200
	(3.09)	(2.73)	(1.01)
GDP/capita (ln)	0.347^{***}	0.302^{***}	0.338^{**}
	(4.46)	(3.32)	(2.95)
Economic Growth	0.019	0.019	0.006
	(1.60)	(1.35)	(0.42)
Regional Democracy	0.580^{**}	0.636^{**}	0.643^{*}
	(2.70)	(2.61)	(2.16)
Regime Duration	0.004	-0.007	-0.009
	(1.03)	(-0.60)	(-0.34)
Previous Democratic Spells	-0.031	0.016	-0.031
	(-0.42)	(0.20)	(-0.29)
Year	-0.001	0.001	0.000
	(-1.00)	(0.42)	(0.13)
N	4,289	2,158	1,296
Countries	113	113	113
Pseudo R^2	0.147	0.081	0.088

Notes: The table displays probits predicting democratic survival from the mode of democratization. Elite violence is the reference category. Model 1 includes all democratic years. Model 2 only includes democracies 20 years or younger. Model 3 tightens this to 10 years. The sample covers 1802–2010. t statistics (based on robust standard errors) are in parentheses. $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$