The Rise Predicts the Fall: How the Method of Leader Entry Affects the Method of Leader Removal in Dictatorships

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How does the way a nondemocratic leader takes power affect the stability of their government? Prior research argues that irregular leader entries—those that violate the regime's norms for leader selection—are especially likely to foreshadow subsequent unconstitutional transitions. This article contends that some forms of irregular leader entry can actually protect leaders from subsequently being forcibly removed from office. When leaders use a strong and loyal coalition of supporters to overthrow not only their predecessors, but their entire ruling regimes, they demonstrate their strength to any potential rivals. Thus, leaders that gain power through, for example, successful rebellions, popular uprisings, and major regime-changing coups, deter subsequent challenges. They are substantially less likely to be ousted than leaders who take power in ways—such as via normal succession or reshuffling among ruling elites—that do not convey strength so convincingly. We assess our claims by analyzing an original dataset of nondemocratic leader transitions. We show that accounting for the strength demonstrated during a leader's entry to power substantially improves our ability to predict how, and when, that leader will eventually leave office.

How does the way that a nondemocratic leader takes power affect the stability of their government? Previous research shows irregular[1] transitions can undermine governance by increasing the likelihood of political violence, slowing economic growth, and perpetuating cycles of unconstitutional regime change.[2] This link between irregular leader change and regime fragility is well established. Some researchers even approximate a state's capacity to govern with the way its leader claimed power, with regular entries marking strong states and irregular entries defining especially weak ones (Huntington 1968, 3; Gleditsch and Ruggeri 2010).

But by amalgamating many different forms of irregular entry, this literature overlooks how more specific transition types can influence the kinds of threats a leader will face during their time in power. Irregular entry is a broad concept that includes significant and disruptive transitions like rebellions and foreign invasions as well as less consequential internal reshuffles and succession disputes. This inclusive concept does not differentiate contentious transitions between rivals within the same ruling clique from transitions that completely oust the ruling elite and overturn the political structures that kept them in power. We draw on work on opposition coordination in dictatorships (Casper and Tyson 2014; Edmond 2013; Geddes 1999; Kuran 1989; Karklins and Peterson 1993; Lohmann 1993; Little 2017) to argue that we can learn much more about the political consequences of leader entry by disaggregating these irregular transitions into two substantively important types: *irregular regime replacement* and *irregular regime reorganization*.

Foundational research on leader survival in dictatorships suggests all nondemocratic leaders should want to convey strength and invulnerability. Doing so convincingly increases their chances of keeping power. Doing so unconvincingly invites challenges; it compels dictators to make concessions, share power, and accept constraints (Boix and Svolik 2013; Svolik 2009; Magaloni 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Gandhi 2008; Smith 2005). This pressure to appear strong gives rise to a classic signaling problem. All dictators, strong and weak alike, do what they can to appear invulnerable. Their challengers must attempt to discern which claims of strength are actually credible. We contend that some leaders prove the strength and loyalty of their supporting coalitions by forcibly overthrowing their predecessors and overhauling their political systems. These forms of irregular regime replacement include successful rebellions, popular uprisings, and major regime-changing coups d'état. In each of these entry types, a sufficiently strong coalition accepted considerable risks and costs to install their chosen leader. This credible show of strength can deter aspiring rivals from plotting their own attempts to dislodge the new leader from office.

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[1] Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009, 272) define regular leader transitions as those that occur "according to the prevailing rules, provisions, conventions, and norms of the country."

[2] See Alesina, Özler, Roubini, and Swagel (1996); Barro (1991); Campos and Nugent (2002); Chiozza and Goemans (2011); Collier, Elliott, Hegre, Hoeffler, Reynal-Querol, and Sambanis (2003); Feng (1997); Fosu (2002); Gleditsch and Ruggeri (2010); Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009); Gupta (1990); Igbal and Zorn (2008); Jones and Olken (2005, 2009); Jong-A-Pin (2009); Londregan and Poole (1990); Lehoucq and Pérez-Linán (2014); Miller (2012).

Other forms of irregular leader entry do not convincingly convey the strength of a new leader's coalition of supporters. There is much more ambiguity around leader strength when they enter by irregular regime reorganization, as in reshuffles among the ruling elite, extraordinary appointments during political crises, or unestablished election or selection processes. These leaders may have very strong support underlying their claims to power—and most leaders in this position work very hard to persuade their new constituents of their invulnerability—but their claims of strength cannot be as credible as those made by new leaders who proved the strength of their supporting coalitions while forcibly ousting a predecessor's regime. Following regime reorganizations, new leaders can only attempt to persuade potential rivals of their strength with propaganda, public demonstrations, and repression. Below, we estimate nondemocratic leaders who entered office through regime replacement to be three to five times less likely to be forced from power relative to those who entered by irregular regime reorganization.

Nondemocratic leaders who take power through irregular regime replacement are unlikely to suffer similar challenges relative to other dictators, but there are two notable caveats to this argument: this stabilizing effect is short-lived and limited to only a few types of threats. Strong supporting coalitions deter challenges that would require a rival to compete with and overcome a leader's coalition (i.e., direct confrontation through war, street protests, and other forms of complete regime change), but they may encourage tactics that circumvent direct engagement with a new leader's coalition, such as assassination. Furthermore, political allegiances shift while new leaders consolidate power and develop new alliances. Over time a leader's entry coalition can become decreasingly representative of the support they enjoy in the present. Thus, the more time a leader has been in power, the less reliably their method of entry predicts the threats they will face while in office.

Our analysis uses new data that describe eleven forms of leader exit and eight forms of leader entry. These data will allow for more nuanced cross-national studies of authoritarian breakdowns and transitions. Moreover, our argument and findings refine the established wisdom about the "coup traps" (Londregan and Poole 1990; Lehoucq and Pérez-Linán 2014) and "conflict traps" (Collier, Elliott, Hegre, Hoeffler, Reynal-Querol, and Sambanis 2003) that purportedly condemn dictatorships to long cycles of instability. Some leaders are ensnared in these traps and suffer short-lived and tumultuous tenures, but those who forcefully take power with strong coalitions credibly signal their strength, deter rivals, and earn a short reprieve from these kinds of challenges.

The Argument

We derive our argument about how specific forms of entry predict the threats leaders will face from four claims. First, a leader's political survival relies upon their ability to maintain a strong supporting coalition, but in nondemocracies, allegiances are private and therefore prone to misperception. Second, leader entry by forced regime replacement reveals valuable information about the true strength of the leader's coalition, and this information cannot be signaled as convincingly by other forms of entry. Third, political rivals use this information to form their estimates of a leader's coalition strength and their chances of success should they try to seize power. And fourth, the value of any information about leader coalition strength to be gleaned from the leader's

entry into power depreciates quickly, as does the influence this information has on those looking to challenge the leader.

Political Allegiances and Uncertainty in Nondemocratic States

Leaders stay in power by maintaining a strong and loyal coalition of supporters (Ames 1987; Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow 2003; Chiozza and Goemans 2011; Svolik 2012; Sudduth 2017a, 2017b). Leaders of democracies do this by attracting a bloc of voters that is large enough to defeat rival voting coalitions at the polls. Political competition is less transparent in nondemocratic states, but leader coalitions in these systems are typically comprised of adequate shares of the public, the military, and the political elite.[3] Nondemocratic leaders stay in power by ensuring that their coalition remains strong enough to overcome any rival coalitions. They do this by simultaneously incentivizing loyalty among their supporters with private goods provisions while obstructing rivals with repression and the threat or use of political violence (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Bell 2011; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2015; Conrad 2011; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Svolik 2008, 2012).

A defining characteristic of nondemocratic politics is the absence of regular, transparent, and competitive contests for power that reveal the true size and strength of a leader's coalition of supporters. This is certainly true where there are no elections to allow opposition leaders to vie for power against the incumbent, though it is also true where election results are manipulated so as to obscure a leader's true level of support (Beaulieu and Hyde 2009; Daxecker 2014; Levitsky and Way 2010; González-Ocantos, Kiewiet de Jonge, and Nickerson 2015). Even in the increasing share of nondemocratic regimes with multiparty elections, these contests are usually superficial, and the results typically favor the incumbent due to outright distortion of the vote tallies or by policies that place challengers at an insurmountable structural disadvantage (Gandhi 2008; Schedler 2006, 2013).[4]

Nondemocratic leaders intensify uncertainty about the size of their supporting coalitions by exaggerating their support and exacerbating opposition coordination problems (Edmond 2013; Lohmann 1993; Kuran 1989). These efforts suppress movements to remove nondemocratic leaders from office because regime opponents cannot accurately juxtapose the strength of the opposition movement against that of the leader's supporting coalition. Lohmann's (1994) study of East Germany describes a country that could have democratized much earlier had the opposition understood its relative strength. Of the uncertainty before the eventual collapse of the German Democratic Republic, she writes the following:

> "[w]hile elections were held regularly, there was no opposition party, and election outcomes were manipulated. Periodic intraparty purges effectively eliminated any opposition within the ruling party. The freedom of press, radio, and television guaranteed in Article 27 of the GDR constitution was a farce ... public opinion

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[3] For more on how a leader's specific sources of support vary in different styles of dictatorship, see, among others Gandhi (2008), Geddes (1999, 2003), and Svolik (2012).

[4] For a more thorough exploration of electoral manipulation in dictatorships than space allows, see Schedler's *The Politics of Uncertainty* (2013), *Competitive Authoritarianism* by Levitsky and Way (2010), and *Political Institutions under Dictatorship* by Gandhi (2008).

polls that indicated a dramatic decrease in public support for the regime in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s were classified and not accessible to anyone but high-level functionaries" (44).

The uncertainty around leader coalitions is worsened by strong incentives to misrepresent allegiances in nondemocratic systems. In democracies, leaders provide their large electorates with public goods that are largely nonexcludable, meaning the goods one receives from the government are minimally influenced by one's political affiliations (Boix 2003; Brown and Mobarak 2009; Deacon 2009; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Lake and Baum 2001; Olson 1993).[5] The same cannot be said of nondemocratic states. Where opposition leaders and their followers are repressed, there are strong incentives to publicly voice support for an incumbent whom one may not support privately—known political opponents can face lower levels of goods provision or even state-sponsored violence (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Kuran 1989, 1991).[6] For these two reasons— (1) the absence of mechanisms that force public declarations of support for competing candidates for executive office and (2) the strong incentives to feign support for the incumbent—political allegiances in nondemocracies are private and prone to miscalculation. This increases the value of events that reveal a leader's true level of support.

Leader Transitions as Information-Revealing Events

The problem described above resembles a classic signaling game. Nondemocratic leaders hold private information about the strength of the coalitions keeping them in power. They also have incentives to exaggerate their strength to any potential rivals, all of whom possess less information about the leader's true strength. The likely outcome of this signaling problem is what formal theorists call a pooling strategy; all dictators do what they can to convey strength. Whether strong or weak, these leaders have incentives to hold sham elections, make examples of political rivals, glorify their successes, control state media, hold militaristic celebrations and parades, and create new holidays and national myths. Any potential challengers must attempt to discern credible signals of strength from empty bluffs, but guessing incorrectly can have devastating consequences. So how can the opposition determine which leaders are truly strong and which ones are feigning support?[7]

The central argument of this article is that some, though not all, forms of leader entry provide a credible snapshot of the support a new leader enjoys when they take power. Forms of entry that unequivocally advertise a strong supporting coalition provide the most unambiguous signal of strength. Leaders achieve this by forcibly seizing power and replacing the preceding political system. When a new leader takes power at the head of a rebel army or popular protest movement, the strength and loyalty of their coalition is evinced by their victory over the previous government. Potential opponents can have no doubt that the new leader has the support of a loyal and risk-acceptant bloc of supporters. Major coups that overturn the entire ruling regime (rather than less consequential reshuffling coups) also demonstrate

that the new leader's coalition is strong and loyal enough to resist threats to the new government. When popular protests overwhelm a government and place a chosen leader in power, observers can infer that public opposition to subsequent regime change would be great enough to discourage efforts to remove the new incumbent by force. In this way, coming to power through irregular regime replacement can be a boon to new leaders hoping to avoid countercoups and reactionary uprisings.

When leaders enter power in other ways, they cannot convey strength so persuasively. For example, leaders who take power during intrajunta/intraparty reshuffles demonstrate that they have the support of a critical share of the divided ruling elites, but these entries do nothing to deter outsiders who hope to overturn the entire political system. Rather, these regime reorganizations only show that the new leader is the strongest member of an increasingly fractured government. Even when these leadership disputes turn violent, as in many palace coups or reshuffling coups, new leaders only prove that they can force the allegiances of regime insiders. These irregular regime reorganizations allow leaders to arise from internal discord and do not credibly demonstrate that the new coalition is strong enough to take control of the state and thwart threats from regime outsiders.

Regular entries that follow a regime's established norms for leader transition are a hallmark of stable dictatorships, but these transitions reveal relatively little about the size and loyalty of a new leader's coalition. Loyalties do not automatically transfer from a monarch to an heir or from a president to a vice president, and this is why new leaders are so frequently challenged shortly after succeeding their predecessors. Historical studies of Europe's hereditary monarchies suggest succession mechanisms provide stability by dissuading intraregime infighting, (Kokkonen and Sundell 2014; Kurrild-Klitgaard 2000), but family monarchies are increasingly rare (Brownlee 2007), and these norms may not dissuade regime outsiders. Isabel Perón of Argentina was the clear chosen successor of Juan Perón—she was his wife and vice president—yet she suffered multiple coup attempts and was deposed less than two years after taking power. Kim Jong Un continues to serve as the North Korean President, but his succession was followed by numerous purges, executions, and other demonstrations of strength. International observers continue to question the strength of his coalition, warning that a potential rival could emerge. He did not force his way into office in a complete regime replacement, so we can only speculate about his true level of support within the North Korean military elite.

Which Threats Are Deterred by Credible Signals of Strength?

The unambiguous signal of strength that occurs when a new leader forcibly replaces their predecessor should deter challengers, though some forms of leader removal should be more sensitive to leader coalition strength than others. Specifically, strong coalitions should deter *coalition competition* that pits a leader's supporters against an opposition coalition in a direct contest for state control. These forms of removal include civil wars where rebel groups directly engage with forces defending the incumbent's government, coup attempts that seek to overthrow (rather than reshuffle) the government, and popular movements where opposition groups confront the incumbent's supporters in the streets. Coalition-competing threats should be deterred by reliable information about leader coalition strength because the

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[5] Goods distribution is not perfectly equal in democracies (Bell 2011; Keefer 2007; Min 2015; Ross 2006), though disparities are smaller than what is observed in nondemocracies.

[6] Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003, 37) call this the "loyalty norm" that helps to preserve nondemocratic winning coalitions.

[7] See, among others, the foundational "beer-quiche" game in which both beer-drinkers and quiche-eaters opt for beer so as to signal their toughness to a nearby bully (Cho and Kreps 1987).

viability of these challenges crucially depends upon opponents' beliefs about the relative strength of the leader's coalition.[8]

Other threats to leaders eschew direct competition between the coalitions of the leader and an opposition movement, and, therefore, should not be similarly deterred by demonstrations of leader coalition strength. We call these forms of removal *coalition circumvention*. Assassins, for example, remove a leader from power with no intention of overcoming the leader's supporters and placing an opposition member in power. When the ruler of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Laurent Kabila, was assassinated by a child soldier in 1999, the young assassin surely was not attempting to place himself or another regime outsider in office. This threat to Kabila occurred despite the strength of his supporting coalition. Kabila's formidable coalition—his son is now approaching two decades in power—could have been a primary motivation for using a removal tactic that would intentionally circumvent coalition competition. Opponents also circumvent competition when they enlist global or regional superpowers to remove the incumbent from office. Nondemocratic leaders suffer foreign overthrows relatively infrequently (we count only twenty-four since 1950), but when they do they are typically overthrown by states that are far too strong to be meaningfully deterred by the way in which a leader came to power. American actions against Mohammad Mossadeg (Iran, 1953) and Mullah Omar (Afghanistan, 2001) typify the overwhelming strength of the foreign country during these transitions, as do French actions against Bokassa (Central African Republic (CAR), 1979) and Soviet moves against Nagy (Hungary, 1956), Karmal (Afghanistan, 1986), and Tsedenbal (Mongolia, 1984).

Having had a strong coalition at the time of entry does little to protect leaders from threats emerging from within the coalition. These kinds of threats do not force challengers to overcome the coalition that put the leader in power. Rather, they constitute reshuffles among coalition members that demote the incumbent leader. We call these internal realignments and reshuffles *coalition collapse*. This form of removal includes two ways that leaders are involuntarily replaced by members of their own governments: reshuffling coups and legal processes like impeachment. Because these forms of removal do not require challengers to overcome the leader's united coalition, these threats should be minimally affected by any signals sent by a leader's method of entry into office.

It follows from this argument that the irregular regime replacements that send the most unambiguous signals of leader coalition strength should dissuade the coalition-competing threats that are most sensitive to the strength of an incumbent's supporting coalition. Forms of removal that are minimally affected by coalition strength vis-à-vis outsiders should not be similarly deterred by irregular regime replacement. Accordingly, we form the following hypotheses:

H1: *Nondemocratic leaders coming to power via irregular regime replacement are less likely to suffer removal by coalition competition.*

H2: *Nondemocratic leaders coming to power via irregular regime replacement are no less likely to suffer removal by coalition circumvention or collapse.*

Signals of Strength Will Fade Over Time

The argument requires a final caveat. The importance of any signal fades with time, both because the information conveyed by the signal is less recent and, in this context, because political realities often force dictators to reconstitute their supporting coalitions. Work on the institutionalization of nondemocratic governments highlights both of these time-sensitive mechanisms. When necessary, dictators rebuild their coalitions using strategies like purging, ideological realignment, and political party formation (Sudduth 2017a; Gandhi 2008; Magaloni 2008; Svolik 2012). Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, for example, famously rose to power in a coup supported by fundamentalist Islamists like the theocrat Hassan al-Turabi. Islamism was prominent in the early years of his regime, but al-Bashir severed his ties to this movement once he consolidated power and gained the ability to personalize his regime. Over the course of al-Bashir's twenty-five years in office, his government has gone from courting al Qaeda and aggressively pursuing Islamization to jailing Hassan al-Turabi and calling the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. This is a clear example of how the way a leader entered power becomes less relevant as political conditions change with time.

Even where leaders are somewhat less intentional about reshaping their supporting coalitions, we would argue that the passage of time depreciates the value of the information provided by a leader's entry and therefore weakens any deterrent effect that an irregular regime replacement might have on subsequent political challenges. Fidel Castro's successful revolution in Cuba provided opponents with a much better understanding of Fidel's military strength in the early 1960s than it did in the early 2000s. Thus, we posit an additional conditional hypothesis:

H3: *The magnitude of any relationship between leader entry type and leader exit type will fade with a leader's time in office.*

Data

Our dataset of nondemocratic leader transitions consists of leader-year panels for the 773 individuals who took control of a nondemocratic government between 1950 and 2016 and then held power for at least one week.[9] To generate this leader list, we first used the data and coding rules produced by Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010) to identify periods of nondemocratic rule in every sovereign state. Cheibub et al. (2010) use a procedural definition of democracy that labels governments nondemocratic if executive offices are not filled through legitimate and contested elections. According to this definition, 141 countries were nondemocratic at some point between 1950 and 2016.

Next, we consulted several datasets and codebooks (Cheibub et al. 2010; Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009) to create a list of leaders serving during these nondemocratic periods, taking special care to correctly assign leaders to regimes during years that experienced major regime change. We also consulted Svolik and Akcinaroglu's dataset on Goverment Change in Authoritarian Regimes.[10]

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[8] Little (2017) and Casper and Tyson (2014) similarly argue political rivals can make inferences about nondemocratic leader strength following elections and protests, respectively, though perceptions of both events may be prone to government manipulation and state-controlled media.

[9] The "one-week rule" is standard practice in this research literature because many contested leader transitions see power change hands several times over the course of the conflict. Without an arbitrary threshold for time in power, many failed coups would produce temporary "leaders" who served for a few hours and never emerged from the initial conflict for power with any real capacity to govern. See, for example, the failed coup in Sudan that occurred July 19–23, 1971.

[10] Svolik, Milan W. and Seden Akcinaroglu. 2007. "Government Change in Authoritarian Regimes Codebook." Unpublished data sets. University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.

These sources occasionally disagree about the identity of a country's chief leader because some favor nominal heads of government while others list the de facto or "effective" leader. We resolved these differences by doing case research to identify de facto leaders. Finally, we excluded the short-lived tenures of "leaders" who merely served as placeholders (such as Kebreau in Haiti). We recoded 93 (out of 773) leaders in our dataset as placeholders and excluded them from our analyses. Our main findings do not substantially change when they are included, though including them increases the estimated probability of a voluntary resignation and decreases estimated likelihoods of all irregular forms of leader removal. We provide a complete list of our leaders, placeholders, and transition types in a supplementary appendix.[11]

Leader Entry Types

We assign each leader one of eight entry types. Most nondemocratic leader transitions are regular and voluntary, meaning that they are not forced by a major crisis and they occur with the consent of the outgoing regime. If such transitions occur as part of a precedented process for leader selection, as in regular elections, succession structures, and normal selection by the party/junta, then we label these *regular selection/election*. Leaders entering this way include most heirs in monarchies, rising party members, and winners of precedented elections. If the entry was unprecedented but otherwise peaceful and voluntary, as in first-time transitions between regime founders and their heirs (for example, Fidel to Raul Castro in Cuba) or initial appointments at state independence (for example, Sékou Touré in Guinea), we code the entry as *first selection/election*. We make this distinction, so we can determine whether regular forms of leader entry better insulate leaders from challenges if those regular entries are legitimized by historical precedent. These two types of leader entry describe about half of the 773 leaders in the dataset, with 259 entering by regular election/selection (33.5 percent) and 172 (22.3 percent) rising through first election/selection.

Nearly half of all nondemocratic leaders entered in more tumultuous "irregular" transitions, but we differentiate between six different forms of irregular entry. When governments are compelled to choose a new leader during a major crisis, such as a popular protest or assassination, we call this *forced election/selection*. These entries are different from other irregular entries in that the outgoing government chooses the new leader during the crisis. These entries are not common (88 of 773, or 11.4 percent), but high-profile examples include Egypt's Hosni Mubarak following the killing of Anwar Sadat and Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo, who first entered office when a botched coup attempt failed to oust the ruling regime but succeeded in killing the leader of the junta in which Obasanjo served. These entries can also occur during war if a war forces the old leader out, yet does not put a rebel leader in power. The rebellion against Charles Taylor in Liberia's second civil war (1999–2003) removed Taylor, but when he vacated office his position transferred to a regime insider, Vice President Moses Blah,

rather than someone affiliated with the rebel movement. This ascent, despite being triggered by war, is a forced election/selection.

All other forms of entry occur without the consent of the government. *Foreign installation* (twenty leaders, 2.6 percent) occurs when new leaders are put in place by the governments of other countries. These transitions require more than foreign assistance (as in some coups and rebellions). Instead, the foreign government must be the main armed force that selects the new leader. *Successful rebellion* (twenty-seven leaders, 3.5 percent) and *successful protest* (four leaders, 0.5 percent) occur when governments are forced from power and the leaders of the rebel or protest movements claim power for themselves. Finally, we follow Aksoy, Carter, and Wright (2015) by making a distinction between two types of coups: (1) the *reshuffling coup* that puts a new individual in charge of the extant political regime and (2) the *regime-changing coup* in which the new leader significantly and immediately changes political institutions and/or the nature of executive power.[12] Taken together, reshuffling coups (ninety-five leaders, 12.3 percent) and regime-changing coups (108 leaders, 14.0 percent) account for one in four nondemocratic leader entries.

Next, we classify these eight types into the broader theoretically relevant categories discussed above (also see Tables 1 and 3 below). The only regular methods are regular election/selection and first election/selection. In both cases power is transferred voluntarily by the previous government. Irregular regime reorganizations occur when the change is involuntary, yet the ruling regime is minimally changed, as in a forced election/selection or reshuffling coup. Irregular regime replacements occur during a regime-changing coup, successful protest, or successful rebellion. Foreign installation is a distinct category.

Leader Exit Types

Because we theorize that strong leader coalitions dissuade some strategies for leader removal but not others, we also classify leader exits into several types. *Voluntary resignation* occurs when leader exit is completely voluntary (378 leaders, 48.9 percent) or forced only by failing health (eight leaders, 1.0 percent). An additional fifty-three leaders (6.9 percent) exited through *natural death*. Rumors surround leader deaths and resignations in dictatorships, but we code these events as health-induced unless there is very strong evidence that false health reports were used as a pretext for a more nefarious plot to force the leader from power.

We code two kinds of involuntary removal from within the regime (coalition collapse). A *reshuffling coup* occurs when a leader is forcibly removed by a secret internal faction that splits their coalition. These coups do not overthrow the entire government, but instead change the leadership structure among the ruling elite. Eighty-three of the nondemocratic leaders who entered power after 1950 (10.7 percent) lost power this way. Leaders can also be forced out under legal pretenses. These instances of *legal removal* are involuntary and undermine the internal cohesion of the regime, but they use available legal structures for removal rather than subversive coup conspiracies. We count only nineteen cases (2.5 percent), including Razak's faction of Malaysia's United Malays National Organisation party successfully overcoming Tunku Abdul Rahman, the country's first prime minister.

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[11] Using two independent coders, we are able to achieve an intercoder reliability of 97 percent after the first attempt to construct the data. Additional sources were consulted to classify the more ambiguous cases, many of which involved uncertainty about the role of foreign actors or whether assassinations were part of larger coup or rebel conspiracies. We identify placeholders using the LEAD data and coding rules from Ellis, Horowitz, and Stam (2015). All decisions and a leader-by-leader comparison to Archigos (4.1) are included in a supplementary appendix.

[12] We expand their dataset to include more coups and a longer time period. We also recode some coups. All of these decisions are included in the online appendix.

Table 1. How leader entry signals leader strength

Entry type	Definition	Uncertainty about leader strength
Regular entry	Entry consistent with constitutional or established rules for leader selection, such as normal succession, selection by party/junta elites, or popular election.	*Moderate.* New leader has no chance to display their strength when they inherit the status quo regime. Entry does not reveal whether they are strongly supported or passively accepted by those beyond the ruling inner circle.
Irregular re-organization	Entry either violates rules/norms or occurs where there are no established rules/norms *and* leader rose without forcefully ousting the old regime, as in reshuffles or unestablished election, succession, or selection processes.	*High.* A reshuffle between insiders in the governing clique may reveal a new leader's popularity among the ruling elite, but it can also advertise the weakness of the regime to politcal rivals outside the ruling clique.
Irregular replacement	Entry violates established rules or norms for leader change *and* change results from the coordinated use of force, as in rebellions, major regime changing coups, and protest movements.	*Low.* The new leader took power with a sufficiently strong and loyal coalition of supporters. The new leader's strength is made credible by their success in forcing the previous leader from office against the will of the ruling elite.

Table 2. How involuntary leader exits are affected by signals of leader strength

Removal type	Definition	Sensitivity to leader strength
Coalition competing	Unconstitutional removal in which a coalition of regime outsiders overthrows the ruling government in a direct competition for power.	*High.* The viability of the attempt depends upon the relative strength of the incumbent's supporters vis-à-vis the opposition coalition.
Coalition cir-cumventing	Unconstitutional removal where regime outsiders evade direct competition with the incumbent's coalition by using assassins or turning to foreign superpowers.	*Low.* The viability of the challenge is minimally influenced by leader strength because challengers avoid direct coalition competition or use substantially stronger foreign allies.
Coalition collapsing	The leader is forced from power involuntarily during reshuffling among members of the regime, uusually in palace coup detat or pseudolegal impeachments.	*Low.* The viability of the challenge is minimally influenced by leader strength because challengers emerge from within the regime and convince others to reallocate political power.

Table 3. A typology of leader entry and exit

		Leader entry		
Regular entry	*Irregular replacement*	*Irregular reorganization*	*Foreign installation*	
Regular selection first selection	Rebellion protest regime coup	Reshuffle coup forced selection	Installation	
		Leader exit		
Voluntary resignation	*Natural death*	*Coalition competition*	*Coalition circumvention*	*Coalition collapse*
Election/selection health reasons	Death	Rebellion, regime coup protest	Foreign action assassination	Reshuffle coup legal removal

These forms of coalition collapse similarly pit one faction of the ruling coalition against the other, though the former is usually a secret conspiracy while the latter is often a prolonged and public legal battle.

We divide threats emerging from outside the ruling coalition into two broad categories: coalition competition and coalition circumvention (refer to Tables 2 and 3). Coalition-competing methods of leader removal are most likely to be deterred by a strong leader because they require a challenger to forcibly remove the governing coalition. The three types of coalition-competing removal are *regime-changing* coup (sixty-six leaders, 8.5 percent), *protest* (thirty-one leaders, 4.0 percent), and *rebellion* (twenty-eight leaders, 3.6 percent). Note that the number of leaders to leave power in these ways will not perfectly align with the number of leaders to enter in these ways. For example, thirty-one leaders were forced out by protests but only four leaders entered through protest. A primary cause for this is democratization; those who enter after successful protests often democratize, and this is a dataset of nondemocratic leaders.

Our last two forms of leader removal are *assassination* (nineteen leaders, 2.5 percent) and *foreign overthrow* (twenty-four leaders, 3.1 percent). We consider both of these exit types to be different from the coalition-competing challenges listed above because neither is particularly deterred by leader strength. Assassination attempts that are not linked to larger conspiracies are not deterred by a leader's coalition strength because "lone-wolf" assassins have no intention of combating a leader's coalition of supporters. Foreign governments with the capacity to overthrow other states' incumbents are much stronger than their targets.

Control Variables

We anticipate any consequences of leader entry type to be tempered by the amount of time a leader has held power, so the models also include *leader tenure* measured in logged years, and some models also include multiplicative interactions of tenure with specific entry types.

Age is included so we can better separate the effects of tenure longevity from other time trends like waning health and perceptions of leader frailty. We include *logged per capita gross domestic product* (pcGDP) to capture a state's level of economic development, anticipating that states with a lower pcGDP will be more prone to irregular forms of leader change. *Economic growth* is measured as the annual change in pcGDP, and we expect higher rates of economic growth to decrease the risk of irregular forms of leader change. Both economic variables are drawn from the Maddison Project (Bolt and van Zanden 2014). Different nondemocratic political systems are likely to suffer different kinds of challenges. Using the data by Cheibub et al. (2010), we account for whether the regime is a monarchic, military, or civilian dictatorship. *Monarch* and *military dictator* are dichotomous variables indicating whether the regime's decision-making relies on family and kin networks or the armed forces within juntas. The base category in our analyses is a civilian dictatorship. In addition, we control for *party*, which is a dichotomous variable indicating whether there is any de facto party ruling the regime.

Conflict involvement is also linked to leader survival (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Goemans 2008; Chiozza and Goemans 2011; Debs and Goemans 2010), so we use several control variables to indicate the presence of conflict, a leader's role in the conflict, and recent performance in conflict. We include a dichotomous *civil war* variable that is equal to 1 when states are presently involved in a civil war, drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program/Peace Research Institute Oslo Armed Conflict Dataset v.4-2012 (Gleditsch Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, and Strand 2002; Themnér and Wallensteen 2012). We expect that ongoing war increases the risk of an irregular leader replacement. We also include *logged military personnel* to capture an additional aspect of state militarization (Singer 1987). Leaders are rewarded for success in international conflicts and may be punished for defeat (Debs and Goemans 2010), so we also include three measures of recent *victory, defeat,* and *draw* in prior conflicts. Following this work, we expect these effects to depreciate with time and capture this with a decay function. The original source of this data on qualifying crises and results is the International Crisis Behavior dataset (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 2000).

Analysis

Leaders confront simultaneous threats of many different forms of removal, and consequently the risk of one type must be evaluated relative to the risk of any others. Statistical models that predict the risk of only one form of leader exit are insufficient because they cannot provide adequate information about these competing threats. For example, a model that estimates the risk of removal by coalition competition could not differentiate between one leader who faces a low risk because they are very likely to stay in power and another leader who faces a low risk because they are much more likely to voluntarily resign, die in office, or be overthrown by a foreign power. Understanding leader exit requires an estimation strategy that is more sensitive to the simultaneous threats leaders suffer.

We overcome this problem by using multinomial logit models that predict the relative likelihoods of six possible outcomes each year a leader is in power: (1) staying in power, (2) removal by coalition competition, (3) removal by coalition circumvention, (4) removal by coalition collapse, (5) voluntary resignation, or (6) natural

death.[13] This method produces a unique prediction for each of the six possible outcomes for each year of a leader's tenure, and these predictions always sum to 1 (or 100 percent). We use *staying in power* as the base category and present the results for each of the five exit types.

In Table 4 we interact each entry category with the *log(tenure)* variable to see how each form of entry influences the risk of each form of exit during a leader's time in power. We use *irregular replacement entry* as our base category so that all estimates are relative to leaders who entered power in this way. A positive coefficient on another entry type means those leaders are more likely than a leader who entered through irregular regime replacement to experience that kind of leader exit in their first year in power. Our hypotheses would therefore expect strong positive relationships between the other entry types and coalition-competing removal with negative interactions between the other entry types and time in power (Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3). Meanwhile, we would expect there is no statistically significant relationships between each entry type and coalition-circumventing or coalition-collapsing removal (Hypothesis 2). As many implications of interaction terms can be difficult to diagnose from these coefficients alone, we graphically illustrate the effect of leader entry type on each exit type calculated as the first difference in Figures 1 and 2.

The first column of results in Table 4 shows how leader entry influences the risk of a coalition-competing exit (removal by rebellion, protest, or regime-changing coup). The positive and significant coefficients for *regular entry* and *irregular reorganization entry* show that, as predicted, leaders coming to power in these ways are significantly more likely than leaders who entered in regime replacements to suffer these kinds of challenges early in their tenures. Furthermore, in accordance with the third hypothesis, the negative coefficients on the interaction terms between these entry categories and leader tenure indicate this effect diminishes over a leader's time in power.

To visualize this, we plot the effect of irregular regime replacement entry on the risk of a coalition-competing exit across leader tenure in Figure 1. The effect of irregular regime replacement entry is calculated as the first difference, a change in the risk of a coalition-competing exit a leader would suffer when their entry type is switched from either regular or irregular reorganization to irregular replacement when all other variables in the model are held constant at their means or medians. We used Model 1 in Table 4 to estimate the first differences. As predicted by our first hypothesis, Figure 1 shows that leaders who enter through irregular regime replacements are less likely to suffer removal by coalition competition than either leaders who enter through regular (the left panel) or irregular reorganizations (the right panel) early in their tenure. This advantage, however, gradually wanes, and irregular replacement entry stops having a significantly negative effect after approximately nine (versus regular entry) or eight (versus irregular reorganization entry) years in power. This is congruent with our expectation that the way a leader entered office should become less relevant the longer the leader stays in power. Regarding the control variables, the results of the first column in Table 4 corroborate previous research that finds these kinds of threats to be less likely when states enjoy greater economic prosperity, more success in foreign armed conflicts, and either party-based or monarchical

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[13] As a robustness check, we run multinomial logit models by coding the natural deaths as censored cases. The results are reported in the online appendix and are consistent with the results shown in the main text.

Table 4. Multinomial logit analysis of manner of losing office in dictatorships

Dependent variable Exit manner	Model 1				
	Coalition Competing	Coalition Circumventing	Coalition Collapsing	Voluntary Resignation	Natural Death
Base category Entry manner	Irregular replacement entry				
Independent variables					
Regular entry	1.885***	−1.823	0.306	−0.198	−1.055
	(0.660)	(1.247)	(0.446)	(0.505)	(1.223)
Regular × log(tenure)	−0.510*	0.868	−0.358	0.379*	0.360
	(0.273)	(0.627)	(0.265)	(0.224)	(0.435)
Irregular Reorganization entry	2.575***	0.425	0.352	0.483	−0.743
	(0.535)	(1.021)	(0.533)	(0.466)	(0.954)
Reorganization × log(tenure)	−0.776***	0.209	0.424	0.108	0.334
	(0.287)	(0.720)	(0.311)	(0.267)	(0.429)
Foreign entry	0.741	−0.045	−14.380***	−2.638	−13.132***
	(1.806)	(0.955)	(0.745)	(2.301)	(1.498)
Foreign × log(tenure)	0.349	0.840	0.771*	1.104*	−0.399
	(0.851)	(0.672)	(0.422)	(0.664)	(0.485)
Log(tenure)	0.632***	−0.591	−0.507**	−0.453**	0.090
	(0.204)	(0.441)	(0.222)	(0.213)	(0.347)
Controls					
Ln(GDP/capita)	−0.354***	0.025	−0.209	0.116	−0.329
	(0.136)	(0.150)	(0.129)	(0.138)	(0.217)
GDP growth	−3.235***	−1.80	−0.172	−0.544	−0.030
	(0.867)	(1.686)	(0.600)	(0.777)	(0.224)
Military dictatorship	−0.082	0.252	0.714**	0.657***	0.056
	(0.300)	(0.501)	(0.340)	(0.251)	(0.527)
Monarchy	−2.082***	−0.497	−0.373	−0.777	1.476**
	(0.796)	(0.583)	(0.591)	(0.608)	(0.618)
Party	−2.057***	−0.428	−0.739**	1.058**	−0.284
	(0.399)	(0.547)	(0.339)	(0.429)	(0.672)
Ln(military personnel)	−0.166*	0.078	−0.074	0.048	0.135
	(0.096)	(0.151)	(0.075)	(0.061)	(0.118)
Civil war	1.861***	0.899*	0.392	0.250	−0.647
	(0.274)	(0.473)	(0.347)	(0.232)	(0.562)
War victory	−2.383*	−7.184**	−5.272	−2.305	1.180**
	(1.24)	(2.946)	(3.693)	(1.462)	(0.583)
War defeat	0.962*	3.095***	0.533	−0.010	0.710
	(0.513)	(0.587)	(0.725)	(0.689)	(0.565)
War draw	−0.569	−1.251	−0.813	−0.846	0.484
	(0.489)	(1.032)	(0.627)	(0.658)	(0.656)
Age	0.041***	0.048**	0.025**	0.045***	0.061***
	(0.013)	(0.021)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.012)
Constant	−3.682***	−7.130***	−2.565***	−7.388***	−6.529***
	(0.943)	(1.332)	(0.901)	(0.942)	(1.532)
Log likelihood			−1459.863		
Observations			3613		

Notes: (1) Robust country-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Statistical significance: $^*p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$. (2) We provide the first differences predicted from this model in Figures 1 and 2.

political institutions (Debs and Goemans 2010; Magaloni 2008; Kokkonen and Sundell 2014; Londregan and Poole 1990).

The method of leader entry does not have a similar effect on irregular removal by coalition circumvention (assassinations and overthrows) and coalition collapse (internal reshuffles and legal removals), as evinced by the statistically insignificant effects provided in the second and third columns in Table 4. The first differences reported in Figure 2 also confirm this point.[14]

Leaders coming to power via irregular regime replacement are no less likely to suffer removal by coalition circumvention (the top row) or collapse (the bottom row) than leaders coming to power via regular processes (the left panel) or irregular reorganizations (the right panel). Though the difference of the risk of coalition-collapsing exit between irregular regime replacement and irregular reorganization entry is statistically significant after three years in power (see the bottom-right panel), the effect of irregular replacement entry is insignificant at the very beginning when we change entry manner from either regular or irregular reorganization to irregular regime replacement. We use Model 1 in Table 4 for the estimation.
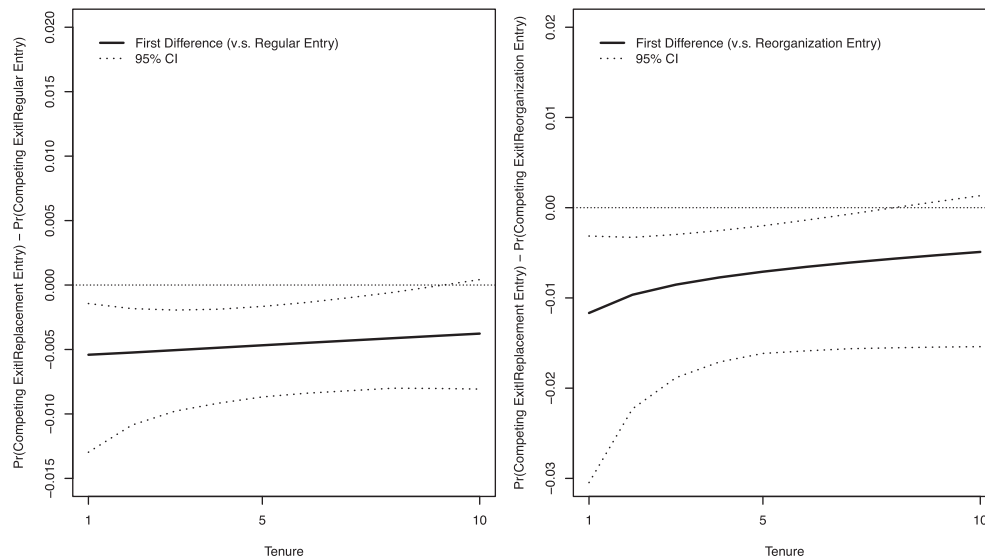
[14] The first differences in Figure 2 are calculated as the changes in predicted probabilities of coalition circumvention removal or coalition collapse removal

Figure 1. Effect of irregular replacement entry on coalition-competing removal
Note: We show the change in predicted probabilities of coalition-competing removal when we change entry manner from either regular (the left panel) or irregular reorganization (the right panel) to irregular *replacement*. We use Model 1 in Table 4 to estimate the first difference.
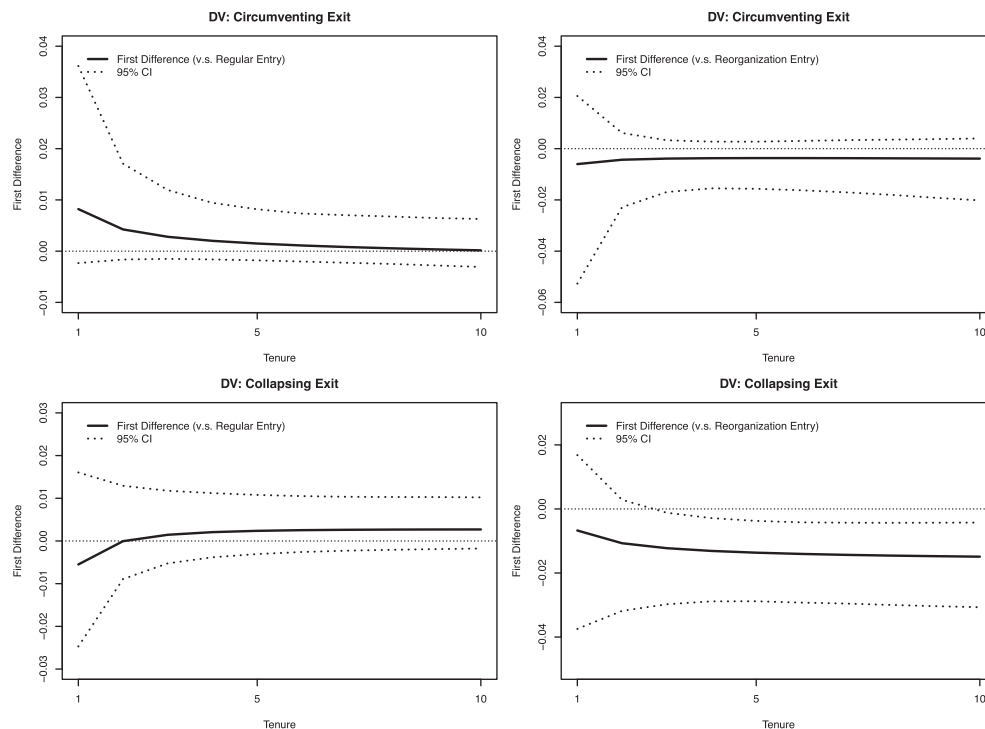

Figure 2. Effect of irregular replacement entry on coalition-circumventing and collapsing removal
Note: We show the changes in predicted probabilities of coalition circumvention removal (the top panel) and coalition collapse removal (the bottom panel) when we change entry manner from either regular (the left panel) or irregular reorganization (the right panel) to irregular regime *replacement*. We use Model 1 in Table 4 to estimate the first difference.

of a leader's tenure when the value of the information provided by a leader's entry should be the strongest. These results thus show that the insulating effects of leader entry by complete regime replacement are limited to coalition-competing forms of removal, and this is congruent with our expectations (Hypothesis 2). Assassins, foreign powers, and internal factions are not deterred by leaders who force their way into office with a credible show of strength. Instead, leaders who prove strength through irregular regime

replacement are only insulated from extracoalition threats that would require rivals to compete with and overcome the leader's strong coalition.

Our initial test collapsed many forms of leader entry into four theoretically relevant categories: regular entry, irregular regime replacement, irregular regime reorganization, and foreign installation. However, there could be important variation within these broader categories. Table 5 presents two models in which we disaggregate these entry types to

Table 5. Multinomial logit analysis of manner of losing office in dictatorships

Dependent variable Exit manner	Model 2					Model 3				
	Coalition Competing	Coalition Circumventing	Coalition Collapsing	Voluntary Resignation	Natural Death	Coalition Competing	Coalition Circumventing	Coalition Collapsing	Voluntary Resignation	Natural Death
Base category Entry manner	Regular entry					Irregular reorganization entry				
Irregular replacement entry										
Rebel entry	−2.135***	−0.319	−2.288*	1.837**	2.495**	−2.797***	−2.421**	−2.410**	1.223	2.406***
	(0.646)	(1.422)	(1.227)	(0.763)	(1.037)	(0.576)	(1.174)	(1.210)	(0.798)	(1.173)
Rebel × log(tenure)	0.470	0.038	1.100***	−1.262**	−0.423	0.727*	0.584	0.312	−0.988*	−0.428
	(0.388)	(0.634)	(0.353)	(0.564)	(0.479)	(0.416)	(0.673)	(0.347)	(0.579)	(0.497)
Regime-change coup entry	−1.836**	2.511*	−0.193	−0.376	−0.165	−2.524***	0.159	−0.221	−1.054**	−0.073
	(0.782)	(1.395)	(0.455)	(0.577)	(1.683)	(0.613)	(1.081)	(0.535)	(0.517)	(1.515)
Regime-change coup × log(tenure)	0.518*	−1.120	0.329	−0.138	−0.429	0.774***	−0.446	−0.470	0.122	−0.482
	(0.291)	(0.692)	(0.273)	(0.244)	(0.650)	(0.296)	(0.766)	(0.312)	(0.284)	(0.626)
Irregular reorganization entry										
Reshuffling coup entry	0.131	1.844	0.134	0.816**	−0.469					
	(0.833)	(1.296)	(0.557)	(0.378)	(1.371)					
Reshuffling coup × log(tenure)	0.158	−0.054	0.632**	−0.425*	0.064					
	(0.369)	(0.629)	(0.314)	(0.258)	(0.515)					
Forced selection entry	1.462**	3.594***	−0.205	0.463	0.408					
	(0.706)	(1.296)	(0.512)	(0.459)	(1.381)					
Forced selection × log(tenure)	−1.194*	−20.681***	1.148***	−0.094	−0.008					
	(0.676)	(1.466)	(0.300)	(0.313)	(0.482)					
Regular entry										
Regular first-election entry						−0.594	−1.654	0.172	−0.321	−0.670
						(0.727)	(1.221)	(0.529)	(0.409)	(2.178)
Regular first-election × log(tenure)						0.153	0.305	−1.071***	−0.015	0.189
						(0.356)	(0.714)	(0.308)	(0.250)	(0.762)
Regular election entry						−0.916	−3.021	−0.320	−0.839**	0.437
						(0.764)	(2.132)	(0.469)	(0.368)	(1.099)
Regular election × log(tenure)						0.452	0.966	−0.509*	0.520**	−0.186
						(0.411)	(1.019)	(0.303)	(0.248)	(0.392)
Foreign entry	−1.120	1.887	−16.387***	−2.397	−13.576***	−1.880	−0.564	−14.837***	−3.070	−11.955***
	(1.686)	(1.362)	(0.760)	(2.223)	(1.509)	(1.757)	(0.837)	(0.816)	(2.168)	(1.420)
Foreign × log(tenure)	0.847	−0.028	1.154***	0.714	−0.715	1.137	0.613	0.361	1.037*	−0.750
	(0.829)	(0.744)	(0.402)	(0.643)	(0.503)	(0.876)	(0.662)	(0.415)	(0.620)	(.519)
Log(tenure)	0.125	0.299	−0.866***	−0.069	0.459	−0.141	−0.362	−0.083	−0.337*	0.504
	(0.192)	(0.473)	(0.191)	(0.129)	(0.326)	(0.265)	(0.576)	(0.197)	(0.192)	(0.317)
Controls										
Ln(GDP/capita)	−0.354**	−0.014	−0.204	0.122	−0.325	−0.372***	0.022	−0.224*	0.070	−0.369
	(0.1380)	(0.159)	(0.127)	(0.139)	(0.219)	(0.135)	(0.163)	(0.130)	(0.141)	(0.226)
GDP Growth	−3.064***	−1.291	−0.153	−0.522	−0.005	−3.176***	−1.556	−0.152	−0.504	−0.013
	(0.850)	(1.755)	(0.633)	(0.775)	(0.181)	(0.866)	(1.733)	(0.584)	(0.770)	(0.194)
Military dictatorship	−0.147	0.032	0.688*	0.730***	0.745*	−0.116	−0.007	0.609*	0.818***	0.689
	(0.399)	(0.661)	(0.351)	(0.257)	(0.431)	(0.327)	(0.603)	(0.361)	(0.249)	(0.510)
Monarchy	−2.176***	−0.616	−0.287	−0.800	1.435**	−2.078***	−0.503	−0.360	−0.832	1.527**
	(0.815)	(0.623)	(0.585)	(0.595)	(0.671)	(0.792)	(0.579)	(0.581)	(0.549)	(0.735)
Party	−2.108***	−0.444	−0.688*	0.993**	−0.604	−2.042***	−0.334	−0.684**	0.925**	−0.528
	(0.409)	(0.572)	(0.351)	(0.427)	(0.751)	(0.417)	(0.566)	(0.332)	(0.395)	(0.835)
Ln(military personnel)	−0.152	0.085	−0.078	0.046	0.116	−0.178*	0.055	−0.080	0.006	0.109
	(0.095)	(0.154)	(0.076)	(0.062)	(0.131)	(0.096)	(0.156)	(0.077)	(0.062)	(0.149)
Civil war	1.857***	0.999**	0.425	0.215	−0.716	1.867***	0.951**	0.425	0.244	−0.691
	(0.272)	(0.473)	(0.347)	(0.232)	(0.536)	(0.275)	(0.483)	(0.350)	(0.232)	(0.539)
War victory	−2.311*	−7.464**	−6.110	−2.456	1.080*	−2.359*	−7.292**	−5.213	−2.174	1.153**
	(1.219)	(3.261)	(4.083)	(1.539)	(0.619)	(1.206)	(3.162)	(3.701)	(1.330)	(0.577)
War defeat	1.011**	3.608***	0.491	−0.178	0.679	0.943*	3.310***	0.656	−0.108	0.757
	(0.482)	(0.647)	(0.733)	(0.675)	(0.568)	(0.515)	(0.626)	(0.730)	(0.660)	(0.528)
War draw	−0.539	−1.625	−0.787	−0.801	0.463	−0.538	−1.330	−0.800	−0.806	0.445
	(0.496)	(1.241)	(0.626)	(0.651)	(0.605)	(0.483)	(1.100)	(0.640)	(0.659)	(0.626)
Age	0.039***	0.049**	0.022**	0.045***	0.067***	0.041***	0.048**	0.024**	0.049***	0.068***
	(0.013)	(0.024)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.022)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.014)
Constant	−1.716*	v8.879***	−2.148*	−7.600***	−7.795***	−0.969	−6.596***	−2.025*	−6.702****	−7.637***
	(0.947)	(1.942)	(0.988)	(1.118)	(1.608)	(1.002)	(1.659)	(1.081)	(0.994)	(1.662)
Log likelihood	−1441.7293					−1445.123				
Observations	3613					3613				

Notes: Robust country-clustered standard errors are in parentheses. Statistical significance: *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.
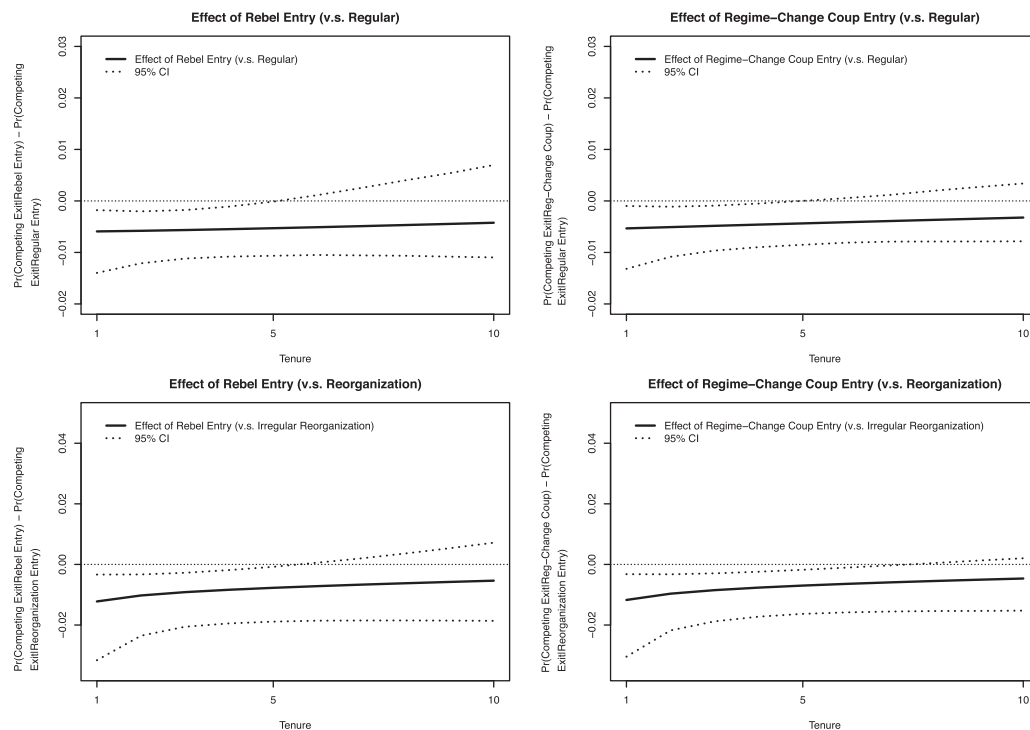
Figure 3. Effect of rebel and regime-change coup entry on coalition-competing removal
Note: We show the changes in predicted probabilities of coalition-competing removal when we change entry manner from regular or irregular reorganization entry to rebel or regime-change coup entry. We use Models 2 and 3 in Table 5 to estimate these first differences.

examine whether our findings are driven by anomalous results for a more specific means of taking power. Most importantly, we separate irregular replacements into two groups: regime-changing coups and successful protests/rebellions. Model 2 shows the effects of these specific entry types relative to regular forms of entry. Model 3 does the same but uses forms of irregular regime reorganization as the base category for comparison.[15]

The results of these tests provide very strong justification for categorizing these entry types according to the strength they convey to potential challengers. Beginning with the results for coalition-competing removal, we see very similar results for the two disaggregated forms of irregular regime replacement, and importantly, coalition-competing challenges are least likely to occur against leaders who took power in these ways. There is no meaningful difference between leaders entering through successful rebellions or protests and those entering through major regime-changing coups (the respective coefficients are −2.14 and −1.84 in Model 2, −2.80 and −2.52 in Model 3). In Figure 3, we chart the near identical effects of these two forms of irregular regime replacement on coalition-competing leader removal.

Figure 3 shows the changes in predicted probabilities of coalition-competing removal when we change entry manner from regular (the top panel) or irregular reorganization (the bottom panel) to rebel (the left panel) or regime-changing coup (the right panel). The effects of rebel entry and regime-changing coup entry look very similar and, as predicted by our first hypothesis, they are negative and significant during the first few years of a new leader's

time in power. In other words, the coalition-competing removals are least likely to occur against leaders who took power through successful rebellions or major regime-changing coups. These stabilizing effects of the disaggregated forms of irregular regime replacement entry, though, gradually diminish and leader entry has no statistically significant effect on the risk of a coalition-competing exit once a leader has spent approximately six to eight years in office.

The results for the two forms of regular entry are also statistically indistinguishable from each other (coefficients of −0.59 and −0.92 in Model 3). There is a larger difference between the two forms of regime reorganization, but this is not surprising. Leaders entering through forced election/selection (coefficient of 1.46, Model 2) have a greater risk of a coalition-competing removal than those entering through a reshuffling coup (coefficient of 0.13, Model 2) because reshuffles are responses to internal divisions while forced election/selection typically occurs when regimes are already threatened by burgeoning popular protests or insurgencies. Since many of these forced selections are desperate attempts to stave off an impending crisis, the very high risk of a subsequent coalition-competing challenge is to be expected.

The results also show that most leaders who enter through irregular regime replacement generally do not enjoy a similarly low risk of removal by coalition collapse or coalition circumvention. Leaders rising through rebellion are slightly less likely to suffer coalition collapse in their first year in power, though the statistical significance of this effect is relatively weak and derived from a small sample of leaders. Leaders entering through regime-changing coups are somewhat more likely than regular entry leaders to suffer coalition-circumventing forms of removal early in their tenures, but

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[15] Due to the extremely low number of leaders entering through successful protests, it is not feasible for us to further disaggregate this category.

Table 6. Logit analysis of coup exit in dictatorships

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Dependent variable				
Exit manner	*Regime-change coup*		*Reshuffling coup*	
Base category				
Entry manner		*Noncoup*		
Independent Variables				
Regime-change coup entry	−2.375**	−1.767**	−0.065	0.099
	(0.924)	(0.792)	(0.556)	(0.416)
Regime-change coup × log(tenure)	0.394		0.150	
	(0.406)		(0.308)	
Reshuffling coup entry	−0.082	0.186	0.275	0.795**
	(0.785)	(0.609)	(0.505)	(0.363)
Reshuffling coup × log(tenure)	0.215		0.478	
	(0.389)		(0.293)	
Log(tenure)	0.178	0.265	−0.576***	−0.417***
	(0.220)	(0.194)	(0.174)	(0.115)
Controls				
ln(GDP/capita)	−0.509***	−0.520***	−0.225	−0.207
	(0.188)	(0.190)	(0.151)	(0.158)
GDP growth	−0.319	−0.372	−0.365	−.365
	(1.088)	(1.129)	(0.852)	(0.953)
Military dictatorship	−0.169	−0.110	0.612	0.675*
	(0.530)	(0.529)	(0.388)	(0.393)
Monarchy	−2.443***	−2.429***	−0.240	−0.205
	(0.832)	(0.829)	(0.635)	(0.630)
Party	−2.866***	−2.860***	−0.823**	−0.803**
	(0.479)	(0.488)	(0.389)	(0.373)
Ln(military personnel)	−0.223*	−0.220*	−0.073	−0.075
	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.088)	(0.087)
Civil war	1.537***	1.544***	0.483	0.474
	(0.387)	(0.386)	(0.333)	(0.327)
War victory	−2.124	−2.196	−4.991	−4.943
	(1.536)	(1.540)	(4.808)	(4.600)
War defeat	0.065	0.181	0.111	0.091
	(0.972)	(0.905)	(1.017)	(1.013)
War draw	−2.139**	−2.107**	−1.199	−1.196
	(1.012)	(1.011)	(0.769)	(0.777)
Age	0.040**	0.040**	0.018	0.017
	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Constant	−0.613	−0.728	−2.239**	−2.538**
	(1.247)	(1.234)	(1.081)	(1.105)
Log likelihood	−189.0286	−189.41068	−271.83226	−272.8182
Observations	3613	3613	3613	3613

Note: Parentheses contain robust country-clustered errors. Statistical significance: $^*p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$.

there is no similar effect vis-à-vis leaders who came to power through irregular reorganizations.

Coup Entry and Coup Exit

Our findings seemingly challenge the well-known coup trap hypothesis, which is the idea that a coup greatly increases the chances of a subsequent coup attempt (Londregan and Poole 1990; Belkin and Schofer 2003; Powell 2012). This argument implies that leaders who enter office via coup are more likely to be removed via coup. In contrast, our analysis shows that leaders who come to power by a regime-changing coup are significantly less likely to fall in another regime-changing coup, especially in the first few years after they take power. Here, we show that we can reconcile these complementary findings.

Table 6 presents the results from four slightly different logit models. Models 4 and 5 examine whether leaders entering through regime-changing and reshuffling coups face different risks of being overthrown in a regime-changing coup. Models 6 and 7 instead examine the effects of two types of coup entry on the risk of being overthrown in a reshuffling coup. To evaluate the substantive effect of each type of coup entry, we also calculate the first difference of the risk of being ousted via each type of coup when we change entry manner from noncoup entry to either regime-changing coup or reshuffling coup entry in Figures 4 and 5.

The results in Table 6 show leaders who enter in a regime-changing coup are exceptionally unlikely to lose power in a regime-changing coup; the coefficients on *regime-change coup entry* (Models 4 and 5) are negative and significant.
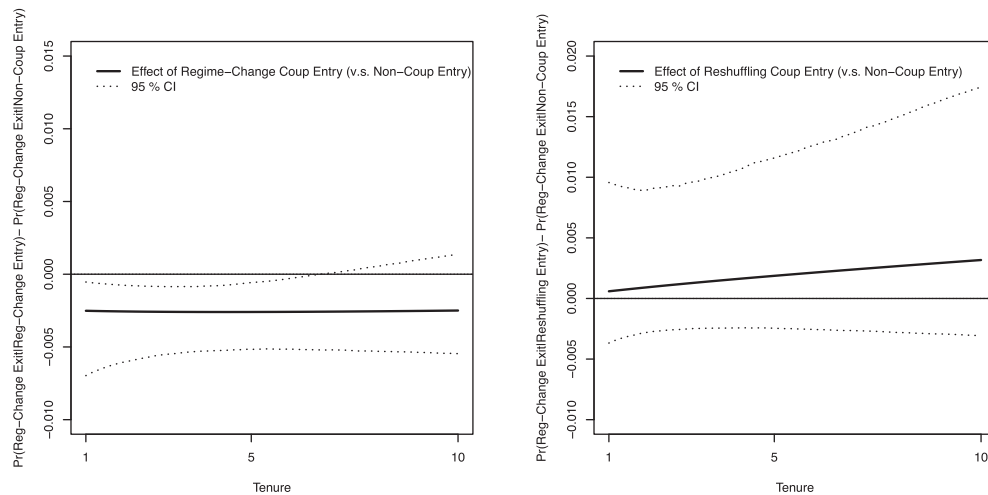
Figure 4. Effect of different types of coup entry on regime-change coup exit
Note: We show the changes in predicted probabilities of regime-change coup removal when we change entry manner from *non*coup entry to regime-change coup or reshuffling-coup entry. We use Model 4 in Table 6 to estimate the first difference.
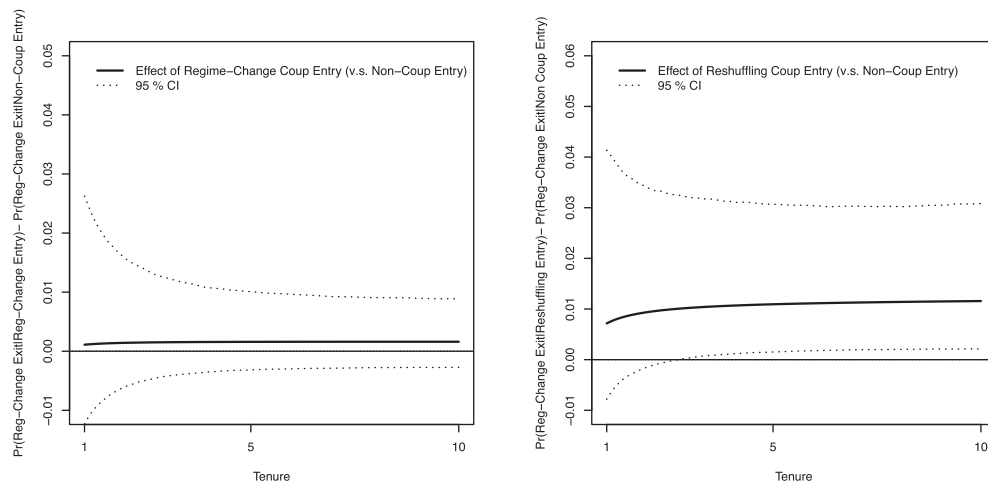

Figure 5. Effect of different types of coup entry on reshuffling coup exit
Note: We show the changes in predicted probabilities of reshuffling-coup removal when we change entry manner from *non*coup entry to regime-change coup or reshuffling-coup entry (Model 6, Table 6).

We illustrate this result in Figure 4. Meanwhile, leaders who enter in reshuffling coups are neither more nor less likely to suffer a regime-changing coup relative to leaders who entered in other ways (right panel of Figure 4). This finding rebukes the established wisdom regarding coup traps, at least as it applies to regime-changing coups.

But the same is not true of reshuffling coups (Models 6 and 7). Here, we see that, while leaders entering in regime-changing coups are no more likely to fall in a reshuffling coup than leaders entering in a noncoup manner (see Figure 5, left), leaders who come to power in reshuffling coups are significantly more likely to suffer this type of threat (see Figure 5, right). Though the effect of reshuffling coup entry is insignificant in the first two years of leader tenure, it becomes positive and significant for the remainder of a leader's time in power (Figure 5, right).

Taken together, the results reported in this section reveal that, while regime-changing coups deter subsequent regime-changing coups as our theory predicts, reshuffling coups encourage subsequent reshuffling coups. In accordance with prior literature, leaders who come to power via

a reshuffling coup are significantly more likely to be overthrown via a reshuffling coup. By disaggregating coups by type, we find that the coup trap is the result of successive waves of reshuffling coups. Our argument is thus consistent with the coup trap argument; leaders who enter in major regime-changing coups are much less likely to be overthrown, yet the coup trap greatly increases the chances that leaders rising in reshuffling coups will be targeted by subsequent reshuffling coups.

The Rise Predicts the Fall

About 60 percent of the nondemocratic leaders who come to power via coup, civil war, or protest are still in power three years later. Their survival rate is not significantly different than that of nondemocratic leaders who were elected or selected in regular constitutional processes. Yet, this similarity obscures an important difference: leaders with regular entries are more likely to be removed by rival coalitions. Those who took power by removing their predecessor's entire governments are more likely to voluntarily resign. This

provides some support for Machiavelli's observation that those who overcome the greatest difficulty in coming to power are those who have the least trouble keeping it. We show that this classical insight is consistent with the modern literatures on coordination and signaling; leaders who convey the strength of their supporting coalitions at the dawn of their tenures prove more resilient against similar challenges once in power.

Our analysis shows that, after controlling for relevant political and economic factors, leaders who rise to power by coup, civil war, or protest are several times less likely to suffer these kinds of irregular regime changes compared to nondemocratic leaders who came to power by other means. We attribute this pattern to the show of strength that occurs when a new leader takes office with the explicit support of a strong, loyal, and risk-acceptant coalition of supporters. This demonstration of support helps leaders deter potential threats more effectively than leaders who came to power in ways that do not convey a strong coalition.

This article highlights what we can learn by looking beyond the constitutionality of nondemocratic leader transitions and focusing more on the causes and consequences of specific forms of transition. We show that some forms of entry more explicitly convey the level of support a new incumbent enjoys. We also show that some types of challenges are more likely to be dissuaded by this kind of information. These insights should allow for more accurate predictions of war and coup in at-risk states, and they should also improve our understanding of how dictators choose to placate or repress political opposition. Future work should continue to refine this argument and consider factors that were not included in this study, such as how ethnic cleavages or the level of violence in a previous transition might affect subsequent political stability. If some entry types deter challenges, then leader entry could also affect levels of repression and concessions including public goods provision and political reform.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary information is available at the *International Studies Quarterly* data archive.

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