

Response Memo: Thesis Corrections Based on Viva Feedback

I wish to convey my profound gratitude to Professor Böhmelt and Professor Powell for their insightful and constructive feedback during my viva examination. Having thoroughly reviewed the examiners reports and the discussions held during the viva, I have implemented substantial revisions to address the concerns raised. This memorandum delineates the modifications made, directly referencing the feedback provided, and elucidates how these changes have enhanced the thesis in terms of focus, clarity, and analytical rigour.

1. Overview of Revisions

The thesis has undergone significant structural reorganisation, with a refined scope and strengthened core arguments. The following sections outline the revised structure and detail the specific amendments made in response to the examiners comments.

2. Revised Thesis Structure

To enhance the analytical focus, as suggested, I have removed the chapter on classical coup determinants (formerly Chapter 2). This adjustment enables the thesis to concentrate more

directly on autocoops and their comparative dynamics with coups. The revised structure is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Conceptualising and Analysing Autocoops (expanded from the original Chapter 3)

Chapter 3: Determinants of Autocoup Attempts (developed from a section within the original Chapter 3)

Chapter 4: Power Acquisition and Leadership Survival (revised from the original Chapter 4)

Chapter 5: Coups, Autocoops, and Democracy (new substantive chapter)

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Future Research Directions

3. Specific Revisions in Response to Examiner Feedback

Chapter 2: Conceptualizing autocoup and introducing dataset

Conceptual Clarification: The definition of autocoops has been refined to distinguish them more clearly from broader efforts at executive aggrandisement. The revised chapter underscores the extension of tenure through extra-constitutional means and provides a detailed rationale for this conceptualisation, thereby enhancing theoretical precision.

Dataset Refinement (Responding to Professor Böhmelt): Addressing concerns about potential post-treatment bias—specifically, the inclusion of leaders who initially assumed power via a coup and later conducted an autocoup—I have meticulously reviewed the dataset. Cases where leaders entered power through a coup have been excluded from the autocoup category.

Consequently, the dataset used in the survival analysis has been reduced from 110 to 83 events. While this reduces the sample size, it significantly enhances the analytical clarity and validity of the findings by maintaining a strict distinction between coup-installed and autocoup leaders.

Chapter 3: Determinants of autocoup attempts

Motivations of Personalist Leaders (Responding to Professor Powell): In response to the query regarding why personalist leaders might undertake an autocoup, I have clarified that regime-type coding (e.g., Geddes, Wright, and Frantz) reflects a leader's tenure and evolution over time. Many personalist regimes emerge through a process of consolidation following initial entry via party, military, or democratic means. Autocoups often serve as a pivotal mechanism in this transformation, enabling leaders to remove constitutional constraints and entrench their authority. To elucidate this, I have incorporated case studies, including examples from Russia and Belarus.

Chapter 4: Power acquisition and leadership survival

Inclusion of Non-Coup Leaders as Baseline (Responding to Professor Böhmelt): A new baseline category comprising non-coup leaders—those who assumed office through neither coups nor autocoups, typically via regular constitutional mechanisms—has been introduced. This refinement enhances the coherence of the survival models and provides a more robust analytical framework for assessing the effects of different modes of power acquisition.

Regime Type as a Covariate (Responding to Professor Powell): Following Professor Powell's recommendation, regime type has been incorporated as a covariate in the survival analysis.

The revised results indicate that, when regime type is controlled for, the method of power acquisition (coup versus autocoup) no longer exerts a statistically significant effect on leadership survival. This finding aligns with the literature, which underscores the importance of institutional context in shaping political outcomes, and reinforces the conclusion that regime type is a critical determinant of leader longevity.

Impact of Dataset Refinement: The exclusion of cases involving prior coups (as detailed in Chapter 2) further clarifies the analysis, enabling a more precise comparison between autocoup and coup leaders in the context of survival modelling.

Chapter 5: Coups, autcoups, and democracy

New Substantive Chapter: In response to recommendations made during the viva, a new substantive chapter has been incorporated to explore the broader implications of coups and autcoups for democratic institutions and their developmental trajectories. Drawing on longitudinal data, this chapter assesses their impact on democratic quality and institutional stability, as measured by Polity V scores. By situating these findings within the broader comparative politics literature, the chapter enhances the thesis's contribution to scholarly debates on regime transitions and democratic backsliding.

4. Additional Revisions

Engagement with the Literature: The literature review, particularly in the introductory sections, has been expanded and deepened to better contextualise the research and demonstrate engagement with existing scholarship.

Stylistic and Formatting Improvements: Bullet points within the main text have been reformulated into full narrative paragraphs to enhance the academic tone and coherence.

Clarity and Concision: The entire manuscript has been revised to improve readability, consistency, and professional presentation.

These revisions have been undertaken to address the feedback provided during the viva and in the examiners reports comprehensively. They aim to enhance the coherence, analytical depth, and scholarly quality of the thesis. I am deeply grateful to Professor Böhmelt and Professor Powell for their rigorous and detailed assessments, which have significantly strengthened the final manuscript. Should further clarification or additional revisions be required, I would be pleased to address them.