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FAILED COUPS, DEMOCRATIZATION, AND AUTHORITARIAN ENTRENCHMENT: OPENING UP OR DIGGING IN?

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ABSTRACT

Long maligned as the largest threat to democratization, recent studies have suggested that military coups can act as important windows of opportunity for democratization in authoritarian regimes. It is argued that even failed coup attempts can roughly double the probability that an authoritarian regime democratizes in the next three years. We revisit these findings by assessing each case of a democratic transition occurring in a failed coup spell in Africa, using the standards of prior work. Our analysis points to a more pessimistic view of the influence of failed coups. Specifically, we find that the nature of these transitions, often being drawn out over several years, and the nature of the data previously utilized to test the association undermine the ability to observe a democratizing effect. Instead of failed coups providing a significant boost to democratization, we find they are more likely to reinforce the country's previous political trajectory. Failed coups serve incumbents with the dual benefit of both outing their opponents and providing a pretext for their removal, ultimately providing a policy boost for both democrats and autocrats.

IN CONTRAST TO THE TRADITIONAL VIEW that military coups are invariably harmful to a state's democratic prospects, recent studies have suggested that military coups can open the door for democratic transitions.[1] While the removal of a dictator can intuitively be seen as opening a

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1. See for example, Michael K. Miller, 'Economic development, violent leader removal, and democratization', *American Journal of Political Science* 56, 4 (2012), pp. 1002–1020; For more sceptical assessments, see Andrea Kendall-Taylor and Erica Frantz, 'How autocracies fall', *Washington Quarterly* 37, 1 (2014), pp. 35–47; George Derpanopoulos, Erica Frantz, Barbara Geddes, and Joseph Wright, 'Are coups good for democracy?', *Research & Politics* 3, 1 (2016), pp. 1–7.

window of opportunity for democratization, some evidence has emerged that even failed coup efforts can weaken autocrats and increase the prospects for democratization. Specifically, Clayton Thyne and Jonathan Powell argue that failed military coup attempts can send a credible signal that a dictator must reform or risk further attempts to remove them via force.[2] The findings would indeed provide an important part of the democratization story, given hundreds of failed coups have occurred globally in the post-World War II era, including over 100 in post-colonial Africa alone.[3]

We put forward an alternative argument for politics in the aftermath of failed coups, while demonstrating how coding peculiarities of source data led to false positives in the prior analysis. Agreeing that coups often provide important and credible information to their targets, we argue that failed efforts, instead of reversing a leader's behaviour, are more likely to consolidate whatever political path a leader has already chosen. Coups are, of course, not conducted in a vacuum. Failed coups, including recent cases in Turkey, Burundi, Burkina Faso, and elsewhere, are often responses to specific political efforts that regimes have either already implemented or are in the process of pursuing. Coup efforts often serve as attempted vetoes of those political efforts, and a failed veto serves the regime with the varied benefits of credibly outing its opponents, legitimizing the dismissal of those opponents from both the armed forces and civilian positions in government, and providing a pretext to purge political opposition who were not actually involved in the coup plot.

To illustrate our argument, we process-trace each case of a failed coup that was followed by a democratic transition in Africa, both in Thyne and Powell's replication data and in more recent cases meeting their criteria.[4] We focus on cases directly taken from their replication data in order to speak directly to prior results. While cross-national time series regressions have the advantage of controlling for a variety of confounding factors, we identify four important challenges for this method in the current context. First, some of these coup efforts did not act as catalysts for a transition,

2. Clayton Thyne and Jonathan Powell, 'Coup d'état or coup d'autocracy? How coups influence democratization, 1950–2008', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, 2 (2016), pp. 192–213. For clarity, the Thyne and Powell argument concedes that negative outcomes are a far more likely outcome and that democratization still occurs at a low rate.

3. Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne, 'Global instances of coups, 1950–2009', *Journal of Peace Research* 48, 2 (2011), pp. 249–259. The authors define a coup as 'illegal and overt efforts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive' (252). Failed coups are events in which overt effort was made to remove the executive (i.e. it was not an alleged or actual plot that never reached the executive) but the conspirators failed to maintain power for over 7 days.

4. More recent cases are identified from updates to the original data source, Powell and Thyne, 'Global Instances of Coups'. The data can be accessed from <https://www.jonathanmpowell.com/coup-detat-dataset.html>.

but instead represented attempts to veto a transition that had already been pursued by the incumbent. Second, failed coups followed by democratization often coincided with successful coups that are more likely to be catalysts for a transition. Third, we find that a state's political trajectory prior to the failed coup is bolstered by the event. States that were liberalizing continue to liberalize, while those that were becoming more autocratic move deeper into authoritarianism. However, our exploration of these cases suggests these failed coups are far from meaningless. These events provide both liberal-minded incumbents and would-be dictators with credible information on their opposition and a legal pretext to purge them, allowing them more freedom to pursue their policy objectives. Finally, these findings point to a larger challenge for large-N assessments of transition. Instead of capturing the initiation of a transition, available datasets capture the culmination of the transition, a process that often takes many years and is unlikely to be addressed by the commonly used one-year lag for sampling or regime type proxies.

We illustrate these dynamics in four parts. First, we briefly summarize relevant literature, while pointing to potential challenges in the data. Second, we explore the democratic transitions identified as following failed coup attempts in Zambia (1990), Mali (1991, 2012), Madagascar (1991–1992, 2009–2010), Burkina Faso (2015), and Ghana (1979). While this approach should act as a most likely case scenario for supporting the democratization argument, we find little evidence that democratization resulted directly from these failed coups. Third, we build from these cases to present a new explanation for post-coup political trajectories, while using an in-depth overview of the failed 1982 Kenyan coup as an illustration of the *autocratizing* potential of these events. Finally, we close with a brief discussion of the implications of this article for the literature, including a push for scholars to do more to identify the commencement of transitions instead of their culmination.

Coups as catalysts for democratization

The story of democratization in the aftermath of coups begins not in Africa, but in Europe's oldest dictatorship. The April 1974 Portuguese putsch removed the *Novo Estado* regime and allowed the state to transition to democracy in only three years, even ushering in democracy's global 'third wave'. The aftermath of the coup has been described as both implausible and unwitting: the former because coups are seldom regarded as harbingers of democracy, and the latter because democratization was not even a specific goal of the coup makers.[5] The idea of democratization-via-putsch is

5. Samuel Huntington, *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century* (Oklahoma University Press, Norman, OK, 1991), pp. 2–4.

perhaps counterintuitive at first consideration, but history has well-documented cases, Portugal's Carnation Revolution being but one.

Recent scholarship has empirically demonstrated that coups in autocracies might provide a significant boost to a state's democratization prospects more generally. Leading in this effort is Michael Miller, who finds that wealth helps insulate both authoritarian and democratic regimes from coups.[6] However, if coups do occur in wealthy autocracies, they are substantially more likely to lead to democratization than in poorer autocracies. Nikolay Marinov and Hein Goemans subsequently find that aid dependence has increased the likelihood of post-coup elections after the close of the Cold War.[7] They argue that this trend results from the dramatic increase in aid conditionality, where aid dependent governments will be more responsive to Western actors' demands for regular elections and democratic rule. Thyne and Powell, meanwhile, find that both successful and failed coups provide a significant thrust toward democratization.[8] This study is important in that it moves beyond instances in which dictators are successfully removed from power and points to an important influence of what is otherwise an understudied phenomenon: failed coups.

Thyne and Powell argue that failed coups send a clear and credible signal that a leader's legitimacy as a ruler is in question and their days potentially numbered. Targeted incumbents, wanting to cling to power, face two potential prospects. They can attempt to ride out their tenures as illegitimate autocrats within a crumbling regime, vulnerable to future efforts to unseat them, or they can attempt to legitimize their rule by opening the political process. This does not assume leaders are true democrats at heart; rather, they would simply risk an election over pursuit of a status quo that had seen them targeted by regime insiders. The argument is tested with a cross-national dataset of authoritarian regimes for the years 1950–2008, finding that a failed coup in the previous three years roughly doubles the likelihood of democratization in the current year, robust across a range of modelling choices and the inclusion of a battery of control variables.

The dynamics of democratic transitions, however, bring with them a number of challenges for research design. Thyne and Powell first assess this association through a combined measure that does not distinguish whether a coup succeeds or fails. They then disaggregate the events by outcome, ultimately finding a near-identical trend for successful and failed coups.[9] However, two concerns arise. First, the source data do not

6. Miller, 'Economic development, violent leader removal, and democratization'.
7. Nikolay Marinov and Hein Goemans, 'Coups and democracy', *British Journal of Political Science* 44, 4 (2014), pp. 799–825.
8. Thyne and Powell, 'Coup d'état or coup d'autocracy?'.
9. Thyne and Powell, 'Coup d'état or coup d'autocracy?'.

identify when the transition began, and instead reflects the point at which the political system had witnessed sufficient change for a transition to be captured through observational datasets. Without identifying that key point in the process when the plan for democratization was implemented (or even conceived), the models inevitably run the risk of capturing an endogenous trend. Specifically, the models conflate democratization following failed coups with failed coup attempts that aimed to cease an announced transition. This is especially important given that the calling, scheduling, and holding of elections, as well as the power turnover, is a process that often requires years of planning.

Second, and related, failed coups are often the product of important political developments. This is especially true for a change in the executive, where failed coups often follow successful efforts. In Table 1, we show that of the 13 global transitions that occurred during 'spells' of failed coups, six were accompanied by a successful coup in the same period, and another five executives lost office through other means.

Before proceeding with the cases, however, it is important to clarify a few aspects of the data presented. Both coups and democratization are rare events, with the two coinciding yet rarer. A small number of cases alone is not indicative of a shortcoming of the Thyne and Powell argument. The data report transitions according to whether the country reached +6 on the Polity IV combined democ-autoc scale, which varies from −10 (least democratic) to +10 (most democratic). Polity ultimately reports fewer transitions than other democracy indicators. By our count,

Table 1 Cases of democratization following failed coups in Thyne and Powell

Country	*Transition*	*Recent failed coup*	*Recent success*
Haiti	1990	5 April 1989[a]	18 September 1988
Dominican Republic	1962	16 January 1962	None[b]
Panama	1989	16 March 1988	None[b]
Venezuela	1958	7 September 1958[a]	None[b]
Peru	2001	30 October 2000	None[b]
Bolivia	1982	27 June 1981[a]	3 August 1981
Argentina	1973	8 October 1971	22 March 1971
Portugal	1976	25 November 1975[a]	25 April 1974
Mali	1992	14 July 1991	26 March 1991
Ghana	1979	15 May 1979	5 July 1979
Zambia	1991	30 June 1990	None
Madagascar	1992	29 July 1992	None
Philippines	1987	6 July 1986	None[b]

[a]Denotes other failed coup attempts preceded the most recent within the coup spell.
[b]Denotes an executive was ousted via other means during the coup spell.

using the democracy indicator of José Antonio Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Vreeland[10] would increase the number of these transitions by over 60 percent.[11] We do, however, wish to remain as consistent as possible with prior treatment of the sample and dependent variable, so we focus on transitions as determined by Polity.

Table 1 indicates that 6 of the 13 transitions occurred during periods with both recent successful and failed coups, as coded by the Powell and Thyne dataset.[12] This suggests that successful coups, in which dictators were actually driven from office, could be weighing heavily on the results. This trend becomes even more pronounced when considering other forms of removal. Looking beyond Africa, aside from the failed coups captured as transition catalysts in Haiti, Bolivia, and Argentina being accompanied by successful coups, other cases saw ensconced dictators removed through other methods. The Dominican Republic saw its transition occur in the aftermath of Rafael Trujillo's assassination. Venezuela's 1958 departure from dictatorship was infamously tied to Marcos Pérez Jiménez being driven out by mass protests. This fate was shared by Ferdinand Marcos prior to the first of multiple coup attempts against his successor, Corazon Aquino, and the country's 1987 transition. Peru's 2001 transition followed Alberto Fujimori's removal by the Peruvian parliament after his contested effort to win a third term. In short, each of these cases of transition can be more closely associated with the ousting of a dictator rather than the signals sent via a failed coup.

Ideally, we would be able to gather and utilize data that captures the definitive start of these transitions as opposed to their culmination. On the surface it would seem one could capture factors such as the date elections were called, or the date when a leader vowed to liberalize the regime. However, it is impossible to validly determine the degree to which such promises were intended to be implemented. For example, Mobutu Sese Seko's mid-1991 overtures led to important political reforms in Zaire, including the appointment of long-time opponent Etienne Tshisekedi as Prime Minister that September. It would have been easy at the time to conclude such overtures were yet another case of the democratization movement then sweeping the continent. Mobutu, of course, had no

10. José Antonio Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Vreeland, 'Democracy and dictatorship revisited', *Public Choice* 143, 1 (2010), pp. 67–101.
11. This would yield 23 transitions following failed coups between 1950 and 2008, the timeframe of the Thyne and Powell study. These include the additional African cases of Guinea-Bissau (2000), Sierra Leone (1996, 1998), Ghana (1969), Nigeria (1979), and Comoros (1990). This approach classifies the Malagasy transition as occurring a year later, but otherwise agrees with the transitions coded by Polity.
12. This also occurs for notable cases captured by the Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland measure for democracy. Ghana's 1969 transition, for example, occurred following the coup against Kwame Nkrumah, with a failed coup attempt occurring in the interim period (17 April 1967).

intention of seeing true liberalization, even sacking his new prime minister just a month after his first appointment.[13] Further, as will be seen with the case of post-coup Kenya, an election itself could be a deliberate attempt by an incumbent to reduce opposition in the government. In short, it is imperative to consider case-by-case peculiarities in order to identify critical moments that prompted the transition. We detail such peculiarities in the following section.

Democratization in the shadow of failed coups

Below we tell different stories of democratization in the shadow of failed coups. This includes the four cases of post-failed coup transitions in the replication data of Thyne and Powell, as well as relevant developments witnessed since the end of the timeframe of their study. We begin with Zambia's transition in the early 1990s, which can be seen as a potential 'type specimen' for democratization through failed coups. Second, we walk through what is likely Africa's most infamous case of democratization via coups, Mali's transition in the early 1990s. We further illustrate how Mali's more recent 2011 coups (one successful, one failed) and subsequent re-democratization offer a similar empirical challenge. Third, we consider two cases from Madagascar (1991–1992, 2009–2010) that parallel these methodological problems, with the more recent case conflating causation with an accompanying successful coup, and the earlier failed coup representing an effort to oust a leader who had ostensibly already initiated a transition.[14] Next, we consider Ghana's democratization in the early 1980s and Burkina's Faso's transition following the fall of Blaise Campaoré. Each of these cases demonstrates both the liberalization commencing prior to the failed coup, and also occurring in the aftermath of a successful coup attempt that played a more direct role in the transition.

Zambia (1990)

Kenneth Kaunda awoke in the early morning hours of 30 June 1990 to find mass gatherings celebrating his ouster in the streets of the capital. A faction of his military had earlier broadcast a message indicating they had seized power, prompting Kaunda's opponents, and a substantial segment of the public, to rejoice. Though the coup failed to unseat him, it perhaps contributed to a trajectory that would ultimately see him removed from

13. Tshisekedi was reappointed in August 1992 and lasted seven months in his second stint.
14. Below we also present evidence that the classification of the failed coup was likely due to erroneous reporting in its immediate aftermath. Later reports suggest that the event was undertaken by non-state actors.

power via an election just four months later. Thyne and Powell conclude the Zambian president had exhausted his options and shortly thereafter allowed multiparty elections that he and his United National Independence Party would lose by a wide margin. As Lee Habasonda writes, the failed coup 'was a catalyst for the reintroduction of multiparty politics that had been consigned to political oblivion for 17 years and is now associated with the return of democracy'.[15]

The coup itself was a response to a number of developments. Kaunda had long been criticized for his inability to get the economy on track, a dynamic that prompted prior business-supported coup plots against him on multiple occasions.[16] More proximate to this coup, international demands for the implementation of austerity measures led to a cut in food subsidies that resulted in nationwide demonstrations. These remained strong into the week of the coup.[17] Violence had steadily increased during this period, and the government eventually resorted to repression. By 29 June, over 500 protesters had been arrested and nearly 30 killed by the security services. Recognizing the deteriorating conditions and wanting to promote stability, Kaunda announced that he would let a national referendum determine whether Zambia would continue as a one-party state.

By the time the coup attempt was underway the next morning, Kaunda, at least in rhetoric, had already conceded to some degree of liberalization. It is impossible to verify the degree to which he would have followed through on a free and fair process in the absence of the coup attempt. What is known is that instead of a referendum on single-party rule, he instead allowed a direct multiparty election. It is also impossible to affirm the degree to which the coup prompted the change, or the unwillingness to rig the process, but it is worth noting that the failed coup occurred in the midst of substantial protests against the government that themselves had already prompted some concessions from Kaunda. This is not to disqualify the importance of the failed coup, but its role as a cause of Zambia's transition certainly cannot underplay the importance of prior civil resistance against the government. The case does, however, provide some evidence that a failed coup did in fact prompt a change in policy.

15. Lee Habasonda, 'The military, civil society, and democracy in Zambia', *African Security Review* 11, 2 (2002), pp. 6–16, p. 9.
16. Bizeck Phiri, 'Civil control of the Zambian military since independence and its implication for democracy', in Rocky Williams, Gavin Cawthra and Diane Abrahams (eds), *Ourselves to know: Civil–military relations and defence transformation in Southern Africa* (Institute for Security Studies, South Africa, 2003), pp. 3–16.
17. Neil Henry, 'Coup attempt foiled against Zambian leader', *Washington Post*, 1 July 1990, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1990/07/01/coup-attempt-foiled-against-zambian-leader/22b22e07-a1bb-41b0-99c3-4663ba9d5744/?utm_term=.b14376e228da> (25 August 2018); Jane Perlez. 'Failed Zambia coup weakens leader', *New York Times*, 1 July 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/07/01/world/failed-zambia-coup-weakens-leader.html> (20 August 2018).

Mali (1991, 2012)

As with the Zambian attempt a year earlier, the April 1991 coup against Malian president Moussa Traoré came on the heels of mass protests and the regime's subsequent use of repression. It would be difficult to overstate the degree of deterioration in this period, as around 300 were reportedly killed while protesting the regime.[18] Forces under the direction of Amadou Toumani Touré removed Traoré from power and began a political process that can be described as nothing short of remarkable. Aside from ending repression, releasing political prisoners, and quickly appointing an interim civilian government, Touré 'cleared the way' for the 1992 National Conference that saw around 2000 people from 'a broad range of society' contribute to the development of a new political system.[19] More important to this discussion, the coup quickly led to what were heralded as free and fair elections and a bona fide turnover of political power when Alpha Oumar Konaré was inaugurated as president in June 1992.

Mali's post-coup transition was not completely smooth, however. Prior to the transition's culmination, elements of the Malian military under the leadership of Interior Minister Lamine Diabira attempted to seize power in July 1991. Touré was clear in publicizing the motive, claiming the plotters acted because they opposed the plan to give power to an elected civilian government.[20] While not illustrating the potential for a *failed* coup to spur a transition, this narrative is important in that statistical assessments would have captured Mali's transition as occurring in the failed coup spell. In other words, the model would assume the failed coup aided in Konaré's rise to power.

The case thus presents two dilemmas: the influence of the failed coup is conflated with the influence of a successful coup, while the culmination of a transition is conflated with its commencement. A useful question is to determine whether these issues might plague other cases to the point of biasing large-N analyses. Indeed, this process has again played out in Mali. The state's two-decade old democracy was ended by the mutiny-turned-coup of Captain Amadou Sanogo in March 2012. Just over a month later, in part the result of lingering rivalries with the Green Berets, the elite Red Beret presidential guard unit attempted to unseat the coup-born regime.[21] They failed, leading to a massacre of their ranks. Under pronounced international and

18. Susana Wing, 'Mali: Politics of a Crisis', *African Affairs* 112, 448 (2013), pp. 476–485.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 477.
20. *Los Angeles Times*, 'Coup attempt foiled in Mali; 9 Arrested', 16 July 1991, <http://articles.latimes.com/1991-07-16/news/mn-2310_1_coup-attempt> (20 August 2018).
21. Sten Hagberg and Gabriella Körling, 'Socio-political turmoil in Mali: The public debate following the coup d'état on 22 March 2012', *Africa Spectrum* 47, 2–3 (2012), pp. 111–125.

domestic pressure, Mali returned to constitutional rule with the election of Ibrahim Keita to the presidency in 2013.[22] Coding this as a new transition would not only see a country in both a successful and failed coup spell democratize but would again boost a positive association in the model despite the failed effort having no true connection to the 'transition'.

Madagascar (1991, 2010)

Similar to, and less than two weeks removed from Mali's failed July 1991 putsch, Madagascar had seen President Didier Ratsiraka already begin a process of liberalization by the time putschists attempted to unseat him. The previous years had seen economic stagnation while a drought prompted demonstrations that resulted in the deaths of over 50 protesters. The masses responded, with over 400,000 marching on the Presidential Palace in the summer of 1991.[23] The failed attempt to remove Ratsiraka was preceded by developments including the lifting of censorship, the creation of a more inclusive cabinet, a new government, and ultimately the scheduling of presidential and legislative elections.[24]

Just a month prior to the polls on 29 July 1992, a small group of armed individuals took control of a radio station, broadcasting that they had seized power and had formed a 'Committee to Rescue the Nation'.[25] The attempt was quickly thwarted by loyal soldiers, and the already scheduled presidential and legislative elections were held.[26] As with Kaunda, Ratsiraka was humbled in the poll, gaining only 29 percent of the vote in the first round, and 33 percent in the run off. With the election and installation of Albert Zafy, Madagascar made the leap well into Polity's democracy category at +9. The incremental nature of the transition makes defining the point of Madagascar having 'democratized' incredibly difficult, but the liberalization process had clearly begun prior to the failed coup.

Another problem for the case is that the 1992 plot was not conspired by regime insiders. Early reports[27] referred to the putschists as 'soldiers', but subsequent coverage clarified the instigators were actually supporters of

22. Martin Van Vliet, 'Weak legislatures, failing MPs, and the collapse of democracy in Mali', *African Affairs* 113, 450 (2014), pp. 45–66.
23. *New York Times*, 'Deaths in Madagascar unrest put at 51', 13 August 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/13/world/deaths-in-madagascar-unrest-put-at-51.html> (20 August 2018).
24. Richard Sandbrook, 'Transitions without consolidation: Democratization in six African cases', *Third World Quarterly* 17, 1 (1996), pp. 69–88; *New York Times*, 'Soldiers in Madagascar claim power in a coup', 29 July 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/29/world/soldiers-in-madagascar-claim-power-in-a-coup.html> (20 August 2018).
25. *New York Times*, 'Soldiers in Madagascar claim power in a coup'.
26. *Ibid.*
27. See for example, *Los Angeles Times*, 'Soldiers seize radio, claim Madagascar coup', 29 July 1992, <http://articles.latimes.com/1992-07-29/news/mn-4674_1_soldiers-seize-radio> (20 August 2018).

radical preacher Michael Fety.[28] While it is unclear whether any of Fety's supporters might have been active members of the armed forces, the fringe nature of the plot's supporters was unlikely to provide a credible signal to Ratsiraka that his grip on power was weak. The case instead demonstrates further problems with the democratization via failed coup narrative, specifically the issue of sequencing.

Although the 1992 election of Zafy and the proclamation of the third republic marked Madagascar's transition into a new democracy, Malagasy politics would be far from stable. Though Zafy sought to institute and consolidate democratic reforms, disunity within his coalition, inept leadership, and corruption characterized his term in office.[29] Frustrated with his leadership amid accusations of corruption, Madagascar's parliament voted to impeach Zafy in May 1996, a decision that the Constitutional Court upheld.[30] Subsequent elections held in 1996 resulted in the return of Ratsiraka, who sought to consolidate his hold on power by initiating constitutional reforms that strengthened the presidency over the legislature.[31] These efforts were to come to a halt in the hotly contested 2001 elections that he lost to Marc Ravalomanana, a former mayor of Antananarivo.[32] Ravalomanana's tenure, however, led to a consolidation of the foundations for the 2009 successful coup and Madagascar's subsequent four-year political crisis.

Ravalomanana, like his predecessor, tried to increase his power through perfecting neopatrimonialism to weaken opponents.[33] Mass protests led by Antananarivo mayor Andry Rajoelina were countered by forceful government responses. On 16 March 2009, the military forced Ravalomanana to resign in what was viewed as a successful coup.[34] The coup plunged

28. *New York Times*, 'Coup Attempt in Madagascar Put Down, Government Says', 29 July 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/30/world/coup-attempt-in-madagascar-put-down-government-says.html> (25 August 2018).
29. Solofo Randrianja, '"Be not afraid, only believe": Madagascar 2002', *African Affairs* 102, 407 (2003), pp. 309–329.
30. Richard R. Marcus and Paul Razafindrakoto, 'Participation and the poverty of electoral democracy in Madagascar', *Africa Spectrum* 38, 1 (2003), pp. 27–48.
31. Bonar A. Gow, 'Admiral Didier Ratsiraka and the Malagasy socialist revolution', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 35, 3 (1997), pp. 409–439; Richard R. Marcus, 'Political change in Madagascar: Populist democracy or neopatrimonialism by another name?' *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, 89 (2004), pp. 1–20; Randrianja, '"Be not afraid, only believe": Madagascar 2002'.
32. Philip M. Allen, 'Madagascar: ''Impeachment as parliamentary coup d'etat', in Jody C Baumgartner and Naoko Kada (eds) *Checking executive power: Presidential impeachment in comparative perspective* (Praeger, London, 2003), pp. 81–94; Randrianja. '"Be not afraid, only believe": Madagascar 2002'.
33. Lauren Leigh Hinthorne, 'Democratic crisis or crisis of confidence? What local perceptual lenses tell us about Madagascar's 2009 political crisis', *Democratization* 18, 2 (2011), pp. 535–561; Richard R. Marcus, 'Marc the Medici? The failure of a new form of neopatrimonial rule in Madagascar', *Political Science Quarterly* 125, 1 (2010), pp. 111–131.
34. Antonia Witt, 'Convergence on whose terms? Reacting to coups d'etat in Guinea and Madagascar', *African Security* 6, 3–4 (2013), pp. 257–275; Siphamandla Zondi and Busisiwe

Madagascar into a political crisis that attracted wide international condemnation.[35] International mediation proved limited, as Rajoelina undermined these efforts through various tactics.[36]

It was under such political circumstances that Madagascar was subject to another coup attempt on 18 November 2010. General Noël Rakotonandrasana and Colonel Charles Andrianasoavina, both of whom had aided Rajoelina to seize power in 2009, now sought his ouster, their pretext being the slow pace of resolving the political crisis and frustration with the internationally isolated Rajoelina.[37] Lacking support within the military ranks for their coup, the plotters surrendered on 21 November 2010.[38]

Southern African Development Community mediators were successful in getting the disputing sides to agree on an election timetable for 2013 and to exclude the participation of Rajoelina and Ravalomanana.[39] The December 2013 election, won by Hery Rajaonarimampianina, marked a return to a semblance of constitutional order.[40] The new order continues to hold, with Rajaonarimampianina surviving an impeachment attempt that the Court ruled to be unconstitutional and the military refraining from interfering in politics.[41] Following the December 2013 elections, Madagascar's Polity Score rose from +3 to +6, signaling a transition. However, it would be inaccurate to link this transition with the failed coup of 2010. Given that mediation efforts had been underway since 2009 and Rajaoelina was reluctantly supporting these international efforts, the failed 2010 coup was only a minor hiccup in Madagascar's return to constitutional order.

Khaba, 'The Madagascar crisis, SADC mediation and the changing Indian Oceanic order', *Africa Insight* 43, 4 (2014), pp. 1–17.

35. Witt, 'Convergence on whose terms?'; Antonia Witt, 'Mandate impossible: Mediation and the return to constitutional order in Madagascar (2009–2013)', *African Security* DOI: 10.1080/19392206.2017.1352397 (2017).

36. Laurie Nathan, 'Marching orders: Exploring the mediation mandate', *African Security* DOI: 10.1080/19392206.2017.1352393 (2017), pp. 1–21; Zondi and Khaba, 'The Madagascar crisis'; Dirk Kotze, 'Africa's concept of 'unconstitutional change of government' – How appropriate?', *Conflict Trends* 2013, 4 (2013), pp. 3–10.

37. Hanah McNeish, 'Madagascar coup attempt: rebel leaders appear to lose momentum', *The Christian Science Monitor* 18 November 2010, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2010/1118/Madagascar-coup-attempt-rebel-leaders-appear-to-lose-momentum> (20 August 2018); David Smith, 'Madagascar in limbo after coup', *The Guardian*, November 18 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/18/madagascar-limbo-attempted-coup-government> (20 August 2018).

38. McNeish, 'What Madagascar's failed coup attempt could mean for the fragile country'; *The Guardian*, 'Madagascar coup fails', 21 November 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/21/madagascar-coup-attempt-fails> (20 August 2018).

39. Gilbert M. Khadiagala, 'Road maps in resolving African conflicts: Pathways to peace or cul de sacs?', *African Security* 7, 3 (2014), pp. 163–180.

40. Witt, 'Mandate impossible: Mediation and the return to constitutional order in Madagascar'.

41. Naseem Ackbarallay. 'Madagascar: a new political crisis', *New African* July 10 2015, <https://newafricanmagazine.com/news-analysis/politics/madagascar-a-new-political-crisis/> (25 August 2018).

Burkina Faso (2015)

The 2014 removal of Blaise Compaoré had been preceded by mass protests from a public dissatisfied with his almost three-decade rule.[42] However, the ultimate trigger for the ouster was Compaoré's attempt to eliminate term limits during his second and final term in office.[43] Just as parliament was debating the controversial amendment on 30 October 2014, public protests erupted, forcing parliament to halt debate and Compaoré to publicly abandon his plan to eliminate term limits.[44] Within the next 24 hours, Compaoré had resigned reluctantly, having been forced out by a combination of the organized protests and a military that no longer supported him.[45]

The ousting of Compaoré opened the possibility of a democratic transition. With former ambassador Michel Kafando as president, and Isaac Zida, the deputy commander of the Presidential Guard, as the prime minister, the transitional regime organized elections for October 2015.[46] Despite presenting a seemingly cordial civilian–military transition authority with the shared goal of nursing a democratic transition, the military side was far from united. Two factions within the Presidential Guard emerged: one allied to Zida and another to General Gilbert Diendéré, former head of the Presidential Guard and a Compaoré loyalist.[47] Unhappy at having been excluded from the transitional regime and the new electoral code excluding Compaoré loyalists from vying for the presidency, Diendéré's faction attempted to seize power on 16 September 2015, arresting Kafando and Zida, announcing the dissolution of the transitional government, and suspending the October poll.[48]

Regional and international organizations condemned the illegal seizure.[49] As international pressure and domestic resistance mounted, the army again

42. Lila Chouli, 'The popular uprising in Burkina Faso and the transition', *Review of African Political Economy* 42, 144 (2015), pp. 325–333; Ernest Harsch, 'Blowing the same trumpet? Pluralist protest in Burkina Faso', *Social Movement Studies* 15, 2 (2016), pp. 231–238.
43. Chouli, 'The popular uprising in Burkina Faso'; Marie-Soleil Frère and Pierre Englebert, 'Briefing: Burkina Faso—the fall of Blaise Compaoré', *African Affairs* 114, 455 (2015), pp. 295–307.
44. Bettina Engels, 'Different means of protest, same causes: Popular struggles in Burkina Faso', *Review of African Political Economy* 42, 143 (2015), pp. 92–106.
45. Frere and Englebert, 'Briefing: Burkina Faso—The fall of Blaise Compaoré'; Harsch, 'Blowing the same trumpet? pluralist protest in Burkina Faso'.
46. Jesper Bjarnesen and Cris ano Lanzano, 'Burkina Faso's one-week coup and its implications for free and fair elections' (Nordic Africa Institute, Policy Note 10, 2015); Bjarnsen and Lanzano, 'Burkina Faso's one-week coup'; Chouli, 'The popular uprising in Burkina Faso and the Transition'.
47. Bjarnsen and Lanzano, 'Burkina Faso's one-week coup'.
48. Sten Hagberg, '"Thousands of new Sankaras": Resistance and struggle in Burkina Faso', *Africa Spectrum* 50, 3 (2015), pp. 109–121; Leo Zeilig, 'Burkina Faso: From Thomas Sankara to popular resistance', *Review of African Political Economy* 44, 151 (2017), pp. 155–164.
49. *Ibid.*

took the side of the protestors.[50] Diendéré negotiated the terms of his surrender and Kafando returned to power on 23 September.[51] November 2015 saw the election of Roch Marc Christian Kaboré to the presidency, the first time in nearly a half century that a Burkinabe leader came to power through a process other than a coup.[52] The election was both heralded as having few irregularities and resulted in a freely elected coalition government, as Kaboré's People's Movement for Progress only secured 55 of the parliament's 127 seats. With a jump from 0 to +6 on the Polity scale, Burkina Faso qualified as a democracy by the close of 2015. However, the case reflects another false positive in which a failed coup's impact is both conflated with an accompanying loss of power for the executed, and occurred after a democratic transition was already in progress.

Ghana (1979)

As with the previous cases, the Ghana case also sees failed and successful coups precede the transition. By the time Dr Hilla Limann was popularly elected to the Ghanaian presidency in 1979, his country had seen no fewer than six coup efforts, ignoring unravelled plots that never reached the execution stage. Limann's election can be seen as the culmination of a process that began with the National Redemption Council's coup against Ignatius Kutu Acheampong in July 1978. Acheampong had been unable to effectively manage the economy, and his effort to perpetuate military rule through his Union Government referendum had many questioning the legitimacy of the regime.[53] His ouster did bring with it a commitment to hold an election within the next year, a period that also saw the legalization of Nkrumah's Convention People's Party and Busia's Progress Party as well as the release of political prisoners.

However, the mutiny by Flight Lt. Jerry John Rawlings in May 1979 would at least temporarily derail this process. The coup bid saw Rawlings arrested and a subsequent second coup effort attempted to free him. The second coup was successful, and Rawlings and the newfound Armed Forces Revolutionary Council took several steps to purge the government of what they considered to be threats to the state.[54] The new government's

50. Bjarnsen and Lanzano, 'Burkina Faso's one-week coup'; Hagberg, 'Thousands of New Sankaras'.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Adrienne LeBas, 'Term limits and beyond: Africa's democratic hurdles', *Current History*, 115, 781 (2016), pp. 169–174.
53. Emmanuel Hansen and Paul Collins, 'The army, the state, and the 'Rawlings Revolution' in Ghana', *African Affairs* 79, 314 (1980), pp. 3–23.
54. Carey Winfrey, 'Rebel officers in Ghana say they are in firm control; 'Housecleaning' is planned', *New York Times*, 6 June 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/06/06/archives/rebel-officers-in-ghana-say-they-are-in-firm-control-housecleaning.html> (20 August 2018); Hansen and Collins, 'The 'Rawlings Revolution' in Ghana'.

'house cleaning' efforts included the arrest and execution of prior military leaders Acheampong, Frederick Akuffo, and A.A. Afrifa, numerous judges of the supreme court, and hundreds of others. Despite the repressive aftermath of the coup, the elections went on as planned, with Dr Limann ultimately winning the presidency.

As with cases such as 1991 Mali, 1991 Madagascar, and 2015 Burkina Faso, the failed coup occurred at a point when the then-government had already adopted a number of liberal reforms, already had planned elections, and had taken a number of steps in fulfilling a bona fide transition. To the degree that Rawlings and his supporters could be interpreted as 'democratizers', it would have been the successful coup that swept him into power that had played the pivotal role, and not the failed effort that saw him arrested. Any trajectory initiated by the failed coup effort would have been ended when the leader it would have influenced, Acheampong, was ousted, eventually executed, and ultimately played no role in the country's subsequent politics.

Political consolidation in the shadow of failed coups

In spite of the challenges noted, case evidence does suggest that failed coups could still have an important role in the democratization story. Instead of prompting the decision to liberalize, failed coups can provide the incumbent with either an explicit legal justification or pretext to oust opponents. This includes elements of the armed forces that would wish to derail a transition, as seen with failed coups during transitions in 1991 Mali and 2015 Burkina Faso. In the case of the latter, the failed effort by the Burkinabe Regiment of Presidential Security allowed the parliament to quickly pass legislation dissolving the unit. This perk, however, is not limited to would be democratizers.

Having discussed democratization in the aftermath of failed coups, we now illustrate a definitively non-democratic political trajectory with Kenya's abortive 1982 coup attempt. This case is a useful counter to the prior narratives demonstrating a dramatically different and autocratic reaction following a failed coup, despite having the incumbent face a similar challenge as the leaders discussed above. And while the case demonstrates a deterioration of any democratic institutions that may have existed at the time of the coup attempt, the incumbent in the case utilized the failed coup in a manner similar to other incumbents that oversaw democratic transitions. While the goals and outcomes may have varied, the attempt ultimately allowed a similar use of power to consolidate the incumbent's rule. The case further implies that failed coups can reinforce the current political trajectory, regardless of whether that trajectory is democratization or autocratic entrenchment. While Kenya's August 1982 coup was seen as surprising given the previous 19 years of relative tranquillity, it also marked the justification of Daniel Arap Moi's consolidation of the party-state, a process he

had nominally started to institute following his accession to the Kenyan presidency.[55] The decade following this attempted coup was to be the most authoritarian in the post-colonial political history of Kenya.

The coup began in the early morning hours of 1 August 1982, when a ragtag group of junior non-commissioned officers of the Kenya Air Force took over several state institutions, including the General Post Office, the international airport, the central bank, and the national broadcaster.[56] Following their take-over of the national broadcaster, the self-styled Peoples Redemption Council announced on radio that they had overthrown the government of then president Daniel Arap Moi. The plotters went on to list their motivations for overthrowing the government, including rampant corruption, tribalism, nepotism, mismanagement of the economy, and the incumbent government's erosion of civil rights and liberties over the preceding few years. Within hours of this address it became clear that the coup attempt was amateur at best, lacking coordination and displaying more looting than strategy, allowing loyalists to prevail.[57] By the end of the day, president Moi announced that the coup had failed.[58]

The defeat of the coup galvanized Moi to strengthen his hold on power and eliminate most of the vestiges of democracy in Kenya. While Kenya was a *de facto* one-party state between 1966 and 1982, the system still enabled the electorate to have voice.[59] By 1980 this veneer of popular democracy started to come undone, first with increasing episodes of suppression of political dissent and later the banning of all ethnic-based welfare societies.[60] In June 1982, the government proposed and ensured the passage of a constitutional amendment that made Kenya a *de jure* one-party state with the Kenya African National Union (KANU) as the sole legitimate party.[61] While these anti-democratic moves had in part

55. Jennifer A. Widner, *The rise of a party-state in Kenya: From 'Harambee!' to 'Nyayo!'* (University of California Press, CA, 1993).
56. Anver Versi, 'Kenya: The anatomy of a failed coup', *New African* 181 (1982), pp. 25–27.
57. Kate Currie and Larry Ray, 'The Pambana of August 1—Kenya's abortive coup', *The Political Quarterly* 57, 1 (1986), pp. 47–59; Peter Anyang Nyong'o, 'The decline of democracy and the rise of authoritarian and factionalist politics in Kenya', *Horn of Africa* 6, 3 (1983), pp. 25–34; Jendayi Frazer, *Sustaining civilian control: Armed counterweights in regime stability in Africa* (Stanford University, unpublished Dissertation, 1994).
58. *New York Times*, 'President of Kenya announces crushing of attempted coup', 2 August 1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/02/world/president-of-kenya-announces-crushing-of-attempted-coup.html> (20 August 2018).
59. Dirk Berg-Schlosser, 'Modes and meaning of political participation in Kenya', *Comparative Politics* 14, 4 (1982), pp. 397–415; Vincent B. Khapoya, 'Kenya under Moi: Continuity or change?', *Africa Today* 27, 1 (1980), pp. 17–32; David Throup, 'Elections and political legitimacy in Kenya', *Africa* 63, 3 (1993), pp. 371–396.
60. Widner, *The rise of a party-state in Kenya*.
61. Joel D. Barkan, 'Kenya: Lessons from a flawed election', *Journal of Democracy* 4, 3 (1993), pp. 85–99.

motivated the coup attempt in August 1982, the failed coup bequeathed Moi with clear justification for the need to strengthen his position.

Moi's reaction to the coup was to further squash any elements of political opposition to his rule. Targets included the press, university student leaders and faculty, and known opposition leaders who had called for more political space in Kenya.[62] The main opposition leaders detained included Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, first vice president of Kenya and an early opponent to the one-party state, his son Raila Odinga, who was suspected of having provided support to the coup plotters, and Koigi Wamwere, an outspoken member of parliament.[63] In addition to these opposition figures, Moi's government limited the parliament's ability to check the executive by revoking parliamentary privilege that enabled the legislature to obtain information from the president's office.[64]

Along with squashing the opposition, Moi began replacing elites closely tied to the previous Kenyatta government with his own loyalists. Many holdovers, mainly ethnic Kikuyus, continued to maintain tremendous political clout in the Moi government and were suspected of failing to combat the coup despite having intelligence of its planning.[65] The first casualties were heads of the air force, police, and paramilitary police, all of whom were arrested and dismissed following the coup and replaced with non-Kikuyus deemed loyal to Moi.[66] The more prominent casualties included Charles Njonjo, a one-time ally of Moi with tremendous political clout, as well as his allies.[67] Having served as the first Attorney General of Kenya and later as Minister for Constitutional Affairs in Moi's first government, Njonjo 'had accumulated sufficient political power, as chief of several branches of the country's internal security operations, to constitute a threat to the presidency'.[68] In the aftermath of the coup, between December 1982 and June 1983, Moi used cabinet and parliamentary intermediaries to insinuate that Njonjo was a traitor out to overthrow his

62. Charles Hornsby, *Kenya: A history since independence* (IB Tauris, NY, 2012); Bethwell A. Ogot, 'The politics of populism', in Bethwell A. Ogot and William R. Ochieng (eds) *Decolonization and independence in Kenya, 1940–93*, (EAEP, Nairobi, 1995) pp. 214–238.
63. Pal D. Ahluwalia, *Post-colonialism and the politics of Kenya* (Nova Publishers, NY, 1996); Hornsby, *Kenya: A history since independence*; *New African*, 'Kenya: Still picking up the pieces', 183 (1982), pp. 26–27.
64. Kamau Mutungi, 'Moment of bravado that changed Kenya', *Daily Nation*, 31 July 2012, <https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/dn2/How-1982-coup-changed-Kenya/957860-1467488-13vl42az/index.html> (25 August 2018); Widner, *The rise of a party-state in Kenya*.
65. Hornsby, *Kenya: A history since independence.*
66. Hornsby, *Kenya: A history since independence;* David Throup and Charles Hornsby, *Multi-party politics in Kenya* (EAEP, Nairobi, 1998).
67. Ahluwalia, *Post-colonialism and the politics of Kenya*; Kate Currie and Larry Ray, 'State and class in Kenya–Notes on the cohesion of the ruling class', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, 4 (1984), pp. 559–593.
68. Widner, *The rise of a party-state in Kenya'*, p. 148.

government.[69] Njonjo was then suspended from Moi's cabinet, expelled from the ruling party, resigned his parliamentary seat, and was subject to a judicial inquiry into his seditious activities.[70] Njonjo's fall weakened his remaining allies in the cabinet and parliament, ensuring that Moi's next step of consolidating his power was effectively guaranteed.[71]

The final steps in Moi's consolidation of his power was through the snap elections of 1983, which would legitimize his 'break' from Kenyatta and Njonjo and restructure KANU as a tool of government. The September 1983 elections were meant to 'purge the system of Njonjo supporters and to promote a new leadership which would owe its loyalty directly to Moi, rather than to intermediaries'.[72] The weakened Njonjo allies found themselves vulnerable to challengers, some of whom were overtly promoted by KANU officials in their respective constituencies.[73] While not all Njonjo allies were defeated, many key supporters lost their seats.[74] With the election result, Moi was finally given 'the opportunity to pick a cabinet that was no longer in the image of Jomo Kenyatta nor influenced by the once powerful Charles Njonjo'.[75] Just as Turkish president Erdogan responded to his own failed coup as a 'gift from God' in July 2016, Moi was able to rapidly consolidate his own power to a degree that would have been impossible in the absence of the failed putsch.

The coup was thus instrumental in Moi's effort to become 'a classic example of 'big man' rule'.[76] Moi's strategy included placing sub-national and national-level party machinery under the control of State House.[77] Given that under the one-party system only party members could vie for electoral seats, local KANU branches and the national party executive, both under Moi's influence, could meddle in local party nominations and favour candidates viewed to be pro-Moi.[78] This meddling of the state on party nominations effectively rendered the independence of parliament moribund.[79] Additionally, the Moi government required all civil servants to be members of KANU, transforming KANU membership as a means of upward mobility within the civil service, and further enmeshing the state apparatus to that of the party. By the time of the 1988 elections, six

69. Alan Cowell, 'Kenya's president calls early elections', *New York Times* 18 May 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/05/18/world/kenya-s-president-calls-early-elections.html> (20 August 2018); Widner, *The rise of a party-state in Kenya'*.
70. Hornsby, *Kenya: A history since independence*; Khapoya, 'Kenya under Moi'.
71. Currie and Ray, 'State and class in Kenya–Notes on the cohesion of the ruling class'.
72. Hornsby, *Kenya: A history since independence*; Khapoya, 'Kenya under Moi', p. 409.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 411.
74. *New African*. 'Moi's men replace the Kenyatta clan', 182 (1983), pp. 11–13.
75. *Ibid.*, 11.
76. Joel D. Barkan, 'Kenya after Moi'. *Foreign Affairs*, 83 (2004), pp. 87–100, p. 89.
77. Widner, *The rise of a party-state in Kenya'*.
78. Throup and Hornsby, *Multi-party politics in Kenya*; Widner, *The rise of a party-state in Kenya'*.
79. Throup and Hornsby, *Multi-party politics in Kenya*.

years following the coup, the Moi party-state was complete as *Nyayo*, the slogan Moi had used to show Kenyan citizens he was following Kenyatta's footsteps, now came to mean 'everyone following in Moi's footsteps'.[80]

Moi had begun moving toward increasing his own power and decreasing that of his opponents well before the ill-fated coup attempt. These efforts, however, were years in the making. The failed coup, which failed to generate support in spite of Moi's efforts, ultimately did little more than provide Moi with the pretence to purge his armed forces and government from potential opponents, while re-stocking these entities with his own partisans. And while Moi did quickly allow an election in the aftermath of a coup, the election was by intent and design an effort to do nothing beyond further consolidating his own power.

Conclusions: looking to the future

Though declining in frequency, coups remain an important part of political life, particularly in Africa. Having various influences on states' political trajectories, failed coups are commonly overlooked in the academic literature. The seminal study by John Londregan and Keith Poole, for example, deliberately ignored failed efforts on the grounds that there is no such thing as 'half a coup'.[81] This attitude is perhaps widely shared, as the phenomenon has received scant attention from scholars. Recent years have seen an influx of studies on the phenomenon of coups more generally, but failed efforts remain woefully understudied and misunderstood. Our analysis points to three important points for the study of democratization.

First, failed coups do matter. Thyne and Powell represent a unique effort to better systematically understand the aftermath of these events. Our assessment disagrees with their ultimate conclusions, though we do agree that failed coups do in fact have an important impact on political trajectories. Specifically, we find that failed coups are most important in that they out a regime's opponents and provide a pretext for the removal of both those opponents and other perceived opposition. Instead of helping prompt the decision to initiate a transition, we find that these events can allow democratizers to rid regime insiders who might otherwise attempt to unravel a transition from within.

Second, would be dictators can similarly benefit, as in the case of post-coup Kenya. Perhaps the most obvious global example of this in recent years can be seen with Turkish president Erdogan, who in the immediate aftermath of Turkey's abortive July 2016 coup attempt publicly remarked, 'This uprising is a gift from God to us because this will be a reason to

80. Throup and Hornsby, *Multi-party politics in Kenya*, p. 38.
81. John Londregan and Keith Poole, 'Poverty, the coup trap, and the seizure of executive power', *World Politics* 42, 2 (1990), pp. 151–183, p.160.

cleanse our army'.[82] The subsequent actions of the government stretched well beyond the military. Within days of the ill-fated putsch, thousands of members of the armed forces, judiciary, and political opposition had been rounded up, and thousands of university employees dismissed from their jobs. Erdogan is not alone in such tactics. Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza's efforts to seek a third term culminated in a failed coup attempt in May 2015. General Godefroid Niyombare's failure to unseat the autocratizing Nkurunziza likely increased the latter's ability to entrench himself. Though the immediate aftermath of the coup saw the focus placed on targeting dozens of senior military officials purportedly involved in the plot, the response gradually expanded to a larger crackdown. The aftermath of the coup has seen mass purges of Tutsi soldiers, executions, and a veritable war on journalists, seen with the destruction of all independent Burundian news agencies.[83] As the International Crisis Group has summarized, Burundi has seen the 'evolution of the security forces into a partisan militia, the leadership's manipulation of ethnic rhetoric and the determination to abolish the compromise Arusha settlement'.[84]

A review of the basic facts surrounding these cases reveals a common tendency for failed coups to see an amplification of the incumbent's prior efforts. These findings are important not only as a corrective of the academic literature but has important implications for both domestic and international politics. For the former, the lessons resulting from this assessment suggest failed efforts to remove dictators can lead to swift and dramatic deterioration of not just political freedoms, but human security more generally.

Third, our analysis raises several important questions about the more general study of democratization. At the most basic level, future studies can do more to identify when transitions truly commence, such as when elections or constitutional conventions are called. Future efforts should also do more to distinguish a transition's commencement from its culmination. We anticipate that identifying critical events that act as catalysts for transitions will be immensely important. Unfortunately, to the degree those catalysts are widely identified in the literature, they are generally only observed when they eventually lead to a demonstrable transition. Had Diendéré's coup succeeded in Burkina Faso, for example, scholars of

82. David Golan and Gulsen Solaker, 'Turkey rounds up plot suspects after thwarting coup against Erdogan', *Reuters*, 15 July 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-primeminister/turkey-rounds-up-plot-suspects-after-thwarting-coup-against-erdogan-idUSKCN0ZV2HK> (20 August 2018).
83. Voice of America, 'VOA on the frontlines of political crisis in Burundi', *Inside VOA*, 13 May 2015, <http://www.insidevoa.com/a/crisis-in-burundi-voa-has-it-covered/2766373.html> (20 August 2018).
84. International Crisis Group, 'Burundi: A dangerous third term' (International Crisis Group, Africa Report No. 235, 20 May 2016).

democratization would have given little attention to the efforts of the transitional regime. The factors that influence whether a state, once a transition is purportedly undertaken, successfully reaches its destination of democracy are important to our understanding of politics. However, quantitative assessments in particular treat such aborted transitions the same as regimes in which no transition was ever pursued. We argue that these distinctions are important, and, perhaps counterintuitively, failed coups that target transitioning regimes may play a role in helping those regimes consolidate.