

Measuring change in source of leader support: The CHISOLS dataset

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Abstract

This article introduces the CHISOLS (Change in Source of Leader Support) dataset, which identifies which leadership changes within countries bring to power a new leader whose primary support is drawn from different societal groups than those who supported her predecessor. The dataset covers all countries of the world with populations greater than 500,000 from 1919 to 2008. We discuss the underlying rationale of our data collection, provide some brief information about the coding rules and procedures, and share some descriptive statistics. We find that changes in sources of leader support are more common in democracies than non-democracies, but also that changes in sources of leader support often occur without irregular leader transitions or large institutional changes, even within non-democracies. CHISOLS can be productively combined with other datasets like POLITY, Archigos, and DPI that provide information about political institutions, modes of leader transition, and placement on a left–right policy continuum, but CHISOLS also provides something new that was not previously available. These data allow researchers to study the extent to which different types of policy change are associated with all leader transitions, with changes in political institutions, or with changes in the set of interests that leaders most closely represent; CHISOLS facilitates comparing the effect of leaders, interests, and institutions on policy change across a wide spatial temporal domain.

Keywords

data, domestic politics, foreign policy, leader

Introduction

Some of the most significant changes in countries' foreign policies have occurred in the aftermath of domestic leadership changes that brought to power new leaders with different societal supporting coalitions than their predecessors. For instance, the 1969 transition from Christian Democratic Chancellor Kiesinger to Social Democrat Brandt paved the way for Germany's reorientation from a purely West-focused foreign policy toward rapprochement with socialist Eastern Europe. Similarly, the 2013 assumption of office of President Rouhani, a

representative of more progressive elements of the Iranian population who stand to gain from an economic opening, prompted the negotiation of a nuclear deal after years of obstinacy under the conservative Ahmadinejad government.

In both of these instances the international context played a role in the leader's decision, but foreign policy change was also motivated by changes in the domestic

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interests and preferences the leader was accountable to. Foreign policy change can occur after any leadership change but should be particularly likely when the new leader represents different domestic groups than her predecessor. While historical and contemporary examples of such domestically motivated foreign policy change abound, the examination of this phenomenon in large-N studies has proven difficult. One reason for this is that it is hard to measure the diverse sets of interests and preferences that exist within societies over a large spatial-temporal domain given that there is significant variation in the relevance of particular social cleavages across countries as a result of their different histories, cultures, and political systems. What is less difficult, however, is to evaluate when the interests that leaders represent change.

This article presents the Change in Source of Leader Support (CHISOLS) dataset, which provides information about which leadership changes bring to power leaders with different supporting coalitions than their predecessors for all independent countries with a population over 500,000 from 1919 to 2008. Our dataset introduces a new unit of analysis that falls between leaders and institutions in level of aggregation – the supporting group. Knowledge of changes in the leader's supporting group, the domestic institutional context, and leader characteristics can be used to develop a more nuanced understanding of when policy, including foreign policy, is most likely to change.

Below we explain the assumptions underlying the data collection effort and our data collection procedures and coding rules. We then provide some summary statistics and contrast CHISOLS to existing data sources on domestic political changes. We discuss the ways in which CHISOLS might offer a more promising data source for predicting domestically motivated foreign policy change, and we discuss how CHISOLS might be productively combined with existing data.

Leaders, interests, institutions, and foreign policy

In recent years, there has been great interest in examining the impact of leaders and leader transitions on foreign policy. Scholars have studied the effect of leader transitions on militarized conflict (e.g. Wolford, 2007), trade (e.g. McGillivray & Smith, 2008; Bobick & Smith, 2013), UN voting (Mattes, Leeds & Carroll, 2015; Smith, 2016), the breakdown of military coalitions (Pilster, Böhmelt & Tago, 2015), alliance termination (Leeds, Mattes & Vogel, 2009), and economic sanctions

(McGillivray & Stam, 2004; Krustev & Morgan, 2011). In some cases, arguments hinge on differences inherent in leaders themselves, for instance in their backgrounds or personalities (e.g. Horowitz, McDermott & Stam, 2005; Horowitz & Stam, 2014; Colgan, 2013). In other cases, arguments emphasize the role a leader has played personally in past events (e.g. McGillivray & Smith, 2008; Croco, 2011).

Many leader-based studies assume that leaders are fundamentally interested in staying in power, and that in order to do so, every leader depends on some set of societal actors to keep her in power. In Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (2003) terminology, this set of actors is the leader's 'winning coalition'. While there is variation in the size of the winning coalition across countries as a result of different domestic institutional rules, there are almost always multiple possible winning coalitions. For example, one democratically elected president might rely primarily on business owners and/or urban interests, and another might rely primarily on laborers and/or rural interests. One non-democratic leader might depend on a party cadre and another on the military. Because leaders wish to stay in power, they are likely to pursue policies favorable to the groups that provide their most important base of support.

Even within the same institutional structure, therefore, we may see domestic and international policy change when a leader who draws her support from different societal groups than her predecessor takes office. For example, different ethnic groups, regions, and economic interests within a state might have different international alignment preferences and different preferences over substitutable foreign policy tools like the use of force vs. economic pressure, multilateral vs. unilateral action, or the building of arms vs. the formation of external alliances (e.g. Fordham, 1998; Narizny, 2003, 2007; Milner & Tingley, 2015).

Our goal is to identify instances in which there is reason to believe that the new leader represents different groups with distinct interests and preferences than her predecessor. To the extent possible, the CHISOLS project focuses on collecting data on changes in the nature of supporting coalitions and not their size; we are trying to capture preference change not institutional change.¹ Note also that we do not prejudge what the dimensions of societal conflict are or should be within societies. We do not, for instance, require change to occur along a

¹ However, CHISOLS can easily be combined with Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (2003) data on the size of supporting coalitions.

single left–right dimension. As a result, we do not code the direction of change, but simply the existence of change. We do, however, provide supporting documentation for end users who would like to code additional information. Finally, we focus on changes in sources of leader support from one leader to another, not within an individual leader's single term in office. We thus do not systematically capture situations when leaders may have an incentive to change their policies during their term, only situations when new leaders may want to overturn their predecessors' policies. We expect changes in sources of leader support to be more frequent and more significant when the country transitions from one leader to another than under the same leader.

We suggest that the source of leader support (SOLS) within a country is a useful unit of analysis for understanding policy. In level of aggregation, this unit of analysis falls between the leader (since leadership change often occurs without SOLS change) and the institutional structure (since SOLS change often occurs within the same institutional structure). Our dataset allows users to evaluate the comparative impact of leader change, SOLS change, and institutional change.

Coding rules and procedures

We began with the list of effective rulers provided by the Archigos dataset (version 2.9, Goemans, Gleditsch & Chiozza, 2009) and extended it through 2008.² Because our goal was to code information about changes in sources of leader support (SOLS changes) independent of the policy change that might result from them, we used non-expert coders that we trained to follow detailed rules. Because we wanted to be able to evaluate the reliability of our coding, we collected all data independently at two different universities using graduate student and undergraduate student coders. We then compared the two datasets and investigated cases of disagreement. The intercoder reliability was 98% for all cases, and 91% for years in which there was at least one leadership change. To evaluate the face validity of our coding, we employed an advisory board of regional experts who reviewed our coding rules and our final data.³ In a few instances, advisory board members encouraged us to view cases differently in light of our rules. In general, however, the

advisory board felt that following our detailed rules resulted in coding with strong face validity.

Each coder also produced a written narrative of the history of the country, explaining all coding decisions. These narratives were then revised based on our intercoder reliability checks and our advisory board review. They provide more than 900 pages of discussion of our coding and should be useful for end users who would like to understand individual coding decisions or to code new information that we did not include in the dataset.

Our detailed coding rules are available in the CHISOLS User's Manual, but we do want to highlight some key aspects here.⁴ The rules for coding SOLS changes depend on the domestic political institutions in place, specifically on whether a country is a democracy or not. We identify democracies primarily based on the POLITY IV data; periods in which a state is coded a 6 or higher on the democracy scale are considered democracies (Marshall, Gurr & Jaggers, 2012).⁵ Within democracies, SOLS changes occur when the political party of the chief executive changes, with exceptions for interim (caretaker) governments for whom we code no SOLS change. So, for instance, we code a SOLS change in the United States in 1993 when President Clinton succeeded President Bush, but not for the 1989 transition between President Reagan and President Bush. In parliamentary systems, we also code 'minor' SOLS changes to capture cases in which the party of the chief executive stays the same but junior coalition partners change.⁶ Israel, for example, experienced many cabinet reshuffles during our observation period. For politically unaffiliated leaders, we examine country histories to determine whether the new leader is the predesignated successor of the prior leader, in which case we do not code a SOLS change. If the new leader is not a pre-designated successor, we evaluate whether the societal groups who voted for two consecutive leaders were similar or different. Based on this rule, we, for example, code a SOLS change in Ukraine in 1994 when Kuchma defeated Kravchuk in the presidential election.

² The CHISOLS dataset available for use matches Archigos 4.0, which was released later.

³ Members of the CHISOLS advisory board are: Jesse Driscoll, Barbara Geddes, Erik Herron, Allen Hicken, Mark Jones, Staffan Lindberg, Ellen Lust, and Lanny Martin.

⁴ The CHISOLS User's Manual is available at www.chisols.org and www.prio.org/jpr/datasets/.

⁵ We supplemented the POLITY IV data with data by Cheibub, Gandhi & Vreeland (2010). Additionally, we coded transition years as non-democratic if both the preceding and subsequent years were non-democratic.

⁶ We expect that minor SOLS changes in democracies have a relatively small impact on foreign policy change. Thus, we do not include minor SOLS changes in democracies as SOLS changes when we employ a dichotomous SOLS change variable.

In non-democracies, we first identify whether the state-year corresponds with one of the autocratic types identified by Geddes, Wright & Frantz (2014). While Geddes, Wright & Frantz provide data primarily for the post-1945 period, we have followed their rules to code non-democratic state-years before 1945 and non-democratic state-years involving countries with less than one million population. Geddes, Wright & Frantz's classification scheme is well suited to our project because their conceptualization of regimes is less about formal institutions and instead 'emphasizes the rules that identify the group from which leaders can come and determine who influences leadership choice and policy' (2014: 314).

Given the overlap between Geddes, Wright and Frantz's concept of regimes and our concept of source of leader support (SOLS), we code transitions from one autocratic type to another as SOLS changes. Within single-party systems and monarchies, we code SOLS changes only when the party or dynasty changes. Thus, we code no SOLS changes for the duration of the Communist governments in Eastern Europe or for countries like Saudi Arabia that have been continuously ruled by the same royal family. We also do not code SOLS changes while a single oligarchy controls the country, as in Panama between 1919 and 1930, or while a single continuous military regime is in place, as in Myanmar after 1988. For personalist country-years, we distinguish cases in which a new leader with his own clique comes to power, such as the transition between Uganda's Obote and Amin in 1971, from cases in which a personalist dictator is succeeded by a pre-designated successor. Pre-designated successors are leaders appointed by the outgoing leader, vice presidents, or close family members (e.g. brother or son). In cases like the transition from Heydar Aliyev to his son, Ilham, in Azerbaijan in 2003, we code no SOLS change.

We also code 'minor' SOLS changes in non-democratic systems. These occur in a number of instances identified in the coding rules. Some examples are cases in which Geddes, Wright & Frantz (2014) code a 'hybrid' regime type (e.g. single-party/personalist) transitioning to a pure component type (e.g. single-party) or vice versa (e.g. Guyana 1985), transitions from a military regime to an indirect military regime or vice versa (e.g. at various points in Guatemala's history), and transitions between distinct military regimes (e.g. in Benin in 1967 and 1969). While we distinguish these 'minor' SOLS changes from major SOLS changes for future users who wish to disaggregate the two, we consider both minor and major SOLS changes in non-democratic systems to

be meaningful, and thus in the descriptive statistics below, we aggregate major and minor SOLS changes in non-democracies and count both as SOLS changes.

There are 633 state-years in our dataset (6.5% of observations) that do not qualify as cases of consolidated democratic or autocratic rule. Some of these are periods of warlordism (e.g. Liberia 1990–96) or foreign occupation (e.g. Iraq 2003–04) during which no single domestic group has control of foreign policy. We do not code SOLS changes during these periods. Others are cases of caretaker governments, such as in the aftermath of Bulgaria's transition to democracy in 1990 when non-partisan Dimitar Popov took office. We do not code SOLS changes during periods of interim government.⁷ Cases that do not fit any of these criteria – that is, they are not democracies, but also are not characterized by any consolidated autocratic regime type, or warlordism, foreign occupation, or interim government – are coded based on a pre-designated successor rule. An example here is Cuba between 1919 and 1925. There are 207 (8.6%) leader transitions that are coded according to our pre-designated successor rule, and 141 (68.1%) of these leader transitions are coded as SOLS changes.

The resulting CHISOLS data are available in two formats: state-year and leader-level. In the state-year dataset, the key information provided is (a) the regime type as of 31 December (democracy vs. non-democracy plus subregime types like military, personalist, presidential, parliamentary, etc.), (b) the dates of leadership transitions, (c) an indication of which of these leadership transitions constitute SOLS changes, and (d) the dates of any minor SOLS changes. In the leader-level dataset, the key pieces of information are (a) whether the leader's entry into power is coded as a SOLS change or minor SOLS change, (b) whether there were any minor SOLS changes during the leader's term in office, and (c) whether the leader is an interim leader.

A closer look at the data

Our state-year data include 9,703 observations from 169 countries. Of these, 3,727 (38.4%) country-years are democratic, 5,961 (61.4%) are non-democratic, and 15 (0.2%) are transitional regimes. There are 1,871 state-years (19.3%) that experience at least one leader transition and, of the state-years with leadership changes, 922 (49.3%) also have at least one SOLS change. The

⁷ We have specific rules as to what constitutes an interim government, one of which requires that no interim government last more than 18 months.

Table I. Overlap of SOLS changes and regime transitions in CHISOLS state-year data

		<i>SOLS change</i>	<i>Other leader transition</i>	<i>No leader transition</i>	<i>Row total</i>
Regime transition (democratic to non-democratic and vice versa)	Yes	118 [12.8] (56.2)	17 [1.8] (8.1)	75 [1.0] (35.7)	210 [2.2] (100)
	No	806 [87.2] (8.5)	932 [98.2] (9.8)	7,755 [99.0] (81.7)	9,493 [97.8] (100)
	Column total	924 [100] (9.5)	949 [100] (9.8)	7,830 [100] (80.7)	9,703 [100] (100)
	χ^2 , Cramer's V	545.34, $p = 0.00$, 0.24			

Entries in the table are counts, with percentages out of row totals in parentheses and percentages out of column totals in brackets.

maximum number of leader transitions and SOLS changes in a year is seven and three respectively.⁸ As one would expect, countries vary significantly in the number of leadership changes and SOLS changes they experience.⁹ Overall, however, our data show that both leader transitions and SOLS changes are more frequent in democracies than non-democracies: 1,020 democratic country-years (27.4%) have a change in leadership and in 571 (56%) of these leadership-change-years we code a SOLS change for the same year; 844 non-democratic country-years (14.2%) experience a leadership change and 346 (41%) of these leadership-change-years coincide with a SOLS change.

Further insight into the nature of leadership transitions can also be gleaned from our leader-level data, which identify 2,412 unique leader spells. Of these, 1,024 (44.4%) involve a SOLS change.¹⁰ We code a minor SOLS change for 80 (6.6%) democratic leaders, and 150 (6.2%) leaders experience at least one (and up to 17) minor SOLS changes during their tenure. Of the leaders, 210 (8.7%) enter office as interim leaders; these leaders are split almost equally among democracies and non-democracies. Interestingly, the assumption of office of interim leaders only rarely coincides with regime transition years in our data. Only 21 (10.1%) interim leaders

come to power in years of regime transition between democracy and non-democracy.

As one would expect, however, regime transitions between democracy and non-democracy often coincide with SOLS changes. In the state-year data, 56.2% of regime transition years and 87.3% of regime transition years that have a leadership change also experience a SOLS change. While there is overlap between regime change and SOLS change, Table I indicates that there are several cases in which a regime change occurs without a SOLS change.¹¹ Additionally, SOLS changes occur most frequently in years without any major institutional change – 87.2% of SOLS-change-years are not characterized by a regime change. These statistics suggest that we have been successful in our goal of differentiating changes in domestic sources of support from institutional changes to the extent possible.¹²

Comparing CHISOLS to existing datasets

Researchers interested in identifying when domestically motivated foreign policy change is most likely have been able to rely on several existing datasets. Most notable are the Archigos data (Goemans, Gleditsch & Chiozza, 2009) and the Database of Political Institutions (DPI) (Beck et al., 2001).

Archigos not only provides a comprehensive list of leaders, but also codes a host of additional variables, including the manner by which the leader comes to power. A leader's entry into office is classified as regular

⁸ In some cases, SOLS changes are connected to very brief tenure episodes. We code SOLS changes that last 30 days or less in a separate variable so end users who wish to ignore these very brief tenures (because leaders in power less than 30 days have little ability to engage in significant policy change) can do so. Our descriptive statistics focus only on SOLS changes that last longer than 30 days.

⁹ Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which both have a rotational system, have the most leader transitions (on average, one per year), while several countries, including Oman and Uzbekistan, experience no leader transition during the observation period. France sees the most SOLS changes (0.53 per year), while numerous countries experience no SOLS changes despite occasional leader transitions (e.g. Bhutan and Tanzania).

¹⁰ We do not code first leaders who came to power before 1919 or before the country was independent. We thus have information on 2,305 of 2,412 leader spells. This is the baseline for the percentages reported.

¹¹ In many of these cases the incoming leader is an interim leader, and we code a SOLS change when the next regular leader assumes power. In a handful of cases, we determined that the new leader represents similar interests as her predecessor, despite the institutional shift. For instance, while Bulgaria democratized in 1990, the elections were won by Andrey Lukanov of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), formerly known as the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), the party in charge of Bulgaria's single-party dictatorship.

¹² SOLS changes may still be associated with more limited institutional change that is not captured by our regime change variable.

Table II. Comparison of Archigos and CHISOLS, 1919–2008

	<i>All leaders</i>			<i>Democratic leaders</i>			<i>Non-democratic leaders</i>		
	<i>SOLS change</i>			<i>SOLS change</i>			<i>SOLS change</i>		
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Total</i>
Irregular entry	234 (53.8)	201 (46.2)	435(100)	20(54)	17(46)	37(100)	211(53.5)	183(46.5)	394(100)
Regular entry	786(42.4)	1,069(57.6)	1,855(100)	610(52.1)	560(47.9)	1,170(100)	172(25.3)	508(74.7)	680(100)
Total	1,020	1,270	2,290	630	577	1,207	383	691	1,074
χ^2 , Cramer's V	18.61, $p = 0.00$, 0.09			0.05, $p = 0.82$, 0.01			86.83, $p = 0.00$, 0.28		

Comparison based on Archigos 4.0. Democratic versus non-democratic leaders coded based on countries' regime type in the year the leader comes to office. 'All leaders' includes nine leaders where the regime type is transitional. 'Irregular entry' includes foreign imposed leaders. Entries in the table are counts, with percentages out of row totals in parentheses.

if the leader takes power in conformity with the country's institutional rules and norms, and it is classified as irregular if the leader assumes her position in a non-constitutional fashion, such as through a coup, revolt, or assassination, or if the leader is imposed by a foreign power. While an irregular leader transition should not, by itself, cause policy change, such a transition may be indicative of a break from politics as usual. Indeed, we find some overlap between irregular leader transitions and SOLS changes – the new leader has a different SOLS in 53.8% of irregular leader transitions. However, in close to half of irregular leader transitions (46.2%), the new leader represents the same domestic groups as her predecessor. These are cases in which, for instance, a military leader deposes a fellow junta member and thus is coded as taking power in an irregular manner, but both leaders are fundamentally accountable to the same corporate military interests. As Table II shows, we also find that the majority of SOLS changes are actually classified as regular leader transitions by Archigos. Not surprisingly, SOLS changes in democracies are particularly likely to involve constitutional leader transitions (610 of 630; 96.8%), but even in non-democracies many SOLS changes occur through regular processes (172 of 383; 44.9%).

The fact that many irregular leader transitions do not coincide with SOLS changes and that many SOLS changes occur during regular leader transitions suggests that *SOLS change* captures an underlying characteristic of leader transitions that is not fully accounted for by the manner by which a leader assumes power. *SOLS change* measures changes in the underlying social interests and preferences that the leader represents, while *entry* provides information on short-term disruptive events that accompany leader transitions. Because *SOLS change* and *entry* capture different aspects of leader transitions, researchers might choose to combine the two variables

to identify instances in which a leader transition involves a leader who represents fundamentally different societal interests and is willing to use non-constitutional means to achieve her goals.

CHISOLS and Archigos allow researchers to identify cut points at which countries' foreign policies might change, but neither provides insight into the sorts of policies that should be favored by particular leaders or the directionality of the change that we can expect as a result of a transition from one leader to the next. By contrast, the Database of Political Institutions (DPI) (Beck et al., 2001) uses the name of the executive's party and judgments by various sources regarding the agenda of the executive's party to code information on the government's position on the left–right economic policy scale as well as on a few other programmatic characteristics. This allows researchers to identify not only when a country's policies might shift, but also which sorts of policies – leftist or rightist – may be favored.

One limitation of the DPI dataset is its relatively short temporal coverage, which only starts in 1975. For many IR questions that focus on rare events, this period may not allow for enough variation. Another limitation is the fact that DPI lacks information on executive party orientation for a large number of observations – 44% of country-years between 1975 and 2008 have no information on the left–right orientation of the executive's party, are identified as having no executive, or coded as missing. This means that for a large subset of country-years DPI cannot be used to determine whether there was a change in the country's underlying policy orientation. It is particularly problematic that these country-years are not a random set – about 80% of these country-years are non-democratic.

As the comparison between DPI and CHISOLS shows (Table III), CHISOLS codes quite a few SOLS changes for country-years for which DPI lacks

Table III. Comparison of DPI and CHISOLS, 1975–2007

	<i>SOLS change</i>	<i>No SOLS change</i>	<i>Total</i>
DPI has no information	101 (5.2)	1,857 (94.8)	1,958 (100)
DPI codes no shift along left–right dimension	94 (3.5)	2,557 (96.5)	2,651 (100)
DPI codes shift along left–right dimension	150 (83.3)	30 (16.7)	180 (100)
DPI codes shift between no information and left/center/right	108 (65.9)	56 (34.1)	164 (100)
Total	453	4,500	4,953

Comparison based on DPI 2012. Entries in the table are counts, with percentages out of row totals in parentheses.

information, and close to two-thirds of these 101 SOLS changes are in non-democracies.¹³ In the majority of cases in which DPI codes no change along the left–right dimension and in which DPI codes a left–right shift, CHISOLS concurs (Cramer’s V for the second and third rows of Table III is 0.69). Some of the exceptions are accounted for by a few coding decisions that are systematically different between CHISOLS and DPI. The two datasets disagree on who the leader is (following Archigos, CHISOLS codes the actor who dominates foreign policymaking, while DPI emphasizes other criteria), whether participation of the same party in the coalition suggests continuity or not (DPI coding suggests it does, while CHISOLS codes a SOLS change if the leader’s party affiliation is different irrespective of whether the previous leader’s party stays on as a cabinet member), and whether to provide information on all leaders in a given year (CHISOLS codes all leaders, while DPI focuses on the leader in office on 1 January). Most importantly, while the DPI coding is useful for identifying shifts along the left–right dimension, CHISOLS codes any kind of shift in underlying domestic interests from one leader to another.¹⁴ Thus, it is not surprising that CHISOLS codes more SOLS changes than DPI codes shifts along the left–right dimension. The fact that CHISOLS covers a longer temporal domain, contains more systematic information on domestic interest shifts in non-democracies, and uses a broader definition of what constitutes a shift in underlying policy orientation means that CHISOLS may be more appropriate than the DPI data for some research endeavors or may be used in conjunction with it for others. Combining CHISOLS

and DPI might be especially useful for scholars who want to assess the effect of changes in sources of societal support in a broad set of country-years and then examine directional effects of SOLS changes on the left–right dimension for a subset of cases.¹⁵

The popularity of the Archigos and DPI datasets is one indicator of the demand for information about leaders and their ideological positions. CHISOLS does not subsume either dataset, and should not be seen as a replacement for either. It is, however, a complement to both. The spatial-temporal domain is much larger than DPI, and there are far fewer missing data, in part because we do not require change to occur on a single left–right dimension. While CHISOLS includes less information about the leaders themselves than Archigos, CHISOLS adds information about the groups most responsible for keeping leaders in power. CHISOLS also indicates which leaders served in caretaker roles and presided over changes in governing coalitions. Finally, the extensive country narratives provided with the CHISOLS data make it possible for researchers to code additional information that interests them.

Conclusion

Over the past decade or so, the leader unit of analysis has become the focus of renewed attention by IR scholars. Numerous publications investigate the role of leaders and leader transitions in countries’ foreign policymaking. What has been missing, however, is a dataset that examines the societal basis of support of individual leaders and identifies which leaders represent fundamentally the same domestic interests as their predecessors and which leaders are accountable to a different societal support base. While many studies focusing on single issue areas or small sets of countries have emphasized the importance of the interests of a leader’s supporting coalition

¹³ For the set of cases in the bottom row of Table III, DPI lacks information about either the prior leader or the current leader, and thus judging change is difficult.

¹⁴ DPI also provides information on whether the party is nationalist, regional, religious, or rural. However, in only nine of the 94 cases in which CHISOLS codes a SOLS change but DPI has no left–right shift does the executive party change on any of these other dimensions.

¹⁵ Scholars might also combine CHISOLS with data on party policy positions in democracies from the Manifesto Research on Political Representation (MARPOR) project (Volkens et al., 2015).

in explaining policy change, there are significant advantages to having comparable data spanning a large spatial-temporal domain. It is only across a wide swath of history that we can gain the necessary variation in institutional structures, leader characteristics, and domestic interests to draw conclusions about the relative importance of each in influencing policy in a wide range of issue areas. The CHISOLS data will allow scholars to investigate the effect of SOLS changes on diverse (and often rare) phenomena such as the termination of rivalries, wars, and territorial claims, treaty violation, the outbreak and termination of civil wars, the imposition and removal of sanctions, decisions to provide or withdraw foreign aid, and decisions to join or exit international organizations or coalitions. We hope that our data will prove useful to these and other research endeavors in the future.

Replication data

Replication files for this article can be found at <http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets> and <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~leeds> as well as on Dataverse. The CHISOLS data are available at <http://www.chisols.org>.

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