

# **BULLETS OVER BALLOTS**

How electoral exclusion increases the risk of coups d'état and civil wars

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## ABSTRACT

Does banning opposition candidates from ballots increase the risk that they will turn to bullets instead?

Globally, since the end of the Cold War, blatant election rigging tactics (such as ballot box stuffing) are being replaced by ‘strategic rigging’: subtler procedural manipulations aimed at winning while maintaining the guise of legitimacy in the eyes of international observers. In particular, incumbents (in regimes stuck between democracy and authoritarianism) are turning to ‘electoral exclusion’, neutralizing key rivals by illegitimately banning certain candidates, in turn reducing the need for cruder forms of election day rigging.

I used mixed methods—combining insights from an original global dataset with extensive elite interviews conducted in five countries (Madagascar, Thailand, Tunisia, Zambia, and Côte d’Ivoire)—to establish that electoral exclusion is an attractive short-term election strategy for vulnerable incumbents that produces a much higher chance of victory but comes with high costs in the longer-term. Global probit modeling (using electoral exclusion as an independent variable and coups d’état and civil wars as separate dependent variables) suggests that, since the end of the Cold War, excluding opposition candidates from the ballot roughly doubles the risk of a coup d’état *or* quadruples the risk of civil war onset. In spite of these risks, incumbents fall into this ‘exclusion trap’ because of the shortened time horizon that frequently accompanies competitive multi-party elections. Vulnerable incumbents worry more about the short-term risk of losing an election than the long-term but ultimately unknown risk that political violence will ensue after the election.

Finally, the inverse corollary of these findings is that inclusion of opposition candidates during multi-party elections can be a stabilizing factor. Though it may seem counterintuitive, fragile ‘counterfeit democracies’ – and so-called ‘transitional’ regimes – may be able to stave off existential threats to regime survival by extending an olive branch to their fiercest opponents.

These findings combine to form the overarching argument of this dissertation: when opposition candidates are excluded from the ballot, they become more likely to turn to bullets by launching coups d’état and civil wars.

“To summarise: it is a well known fact that those people who most want to rule people are, ipso facto, those least suited to do it. To summarise the summary: anyone who is capable of getting themselves made President should on no account be allowed to do the job. To summarise the summary of the summary: people are a problem.”

-- Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*

*For Roy Grow and my parents, Paul & Barbara Klaas*

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This dissertation is dedicated to Professor Roy Grow and my parents, Paul & Barbara Klaas.

I did not leave the United States until I was 19 years old, which is funny to think about now since I spent much of the last four years exploring post-conflict zones in the company of rebels, coup plotters, and some very badly behaved politicians.

This long-time isolation in the United States did not match well with my prevailing interest in conflict-prone political systems. Countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia fascinated me because their politics were broken and tragic but need not be either.

As an undergraduate at Carleton College, I got the push I needed to explore these types of countries. I regularly sought guidance and advice from Professor Roy Grow and his wife, Mary Lewis. They counseled me—quite correctly—that life is lived best by embracing calculated risks, traveling extensively, and relentlessly chasing intellectual passions. In their living room, I decided to attend Oxford for my Masters and DPhil. With their encouragement, I set off around the world on field research (often to places that my Mom would question whether I had listened fully to their advice to take ‘calculated’ risks, or just risks). Roy and Mary Lewis are not only the reason why I decided to get a doctorate in political science, but they are also the reason why I believe so fiercely in the value of extensive travel and on-the-ground research. Most importantly, without them, I may have followed a different and less fulfilling path for my life.

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My Mom exposed me to my first political campaign, as I watched her win several hard fought (but certainly not rigged) victories to get elected to the local school board. My Dad drilled the

value of education into me relentlessly (and at times in ways that might be seen as a bit over the top in his own tongue-in-cheek way). Whenever I attended a professional baseball game with him during my childhood, he would point to the people selling cotton candy (known as candy floss in the UK) and say, “You see him? He got a B+ on a school report card once.” Even though I knew he was (sort of) joking, I am grateful that my parents emphasized the values of rigorous education and hard work. I never got a B+. My reward was the opportunity to continue my education in one of the finest universities in the world and a deep feeling of being forever indebted to my parents for the endless opportunities I’ve enjoyed. Their generosity—with time, money, support, and love—has shaped this DPhil for the better and has shaped me for the better. I can never thank you enough, Mom and Dad.

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## Introduction:

*“Today, Only Amateurs Steal Elections on Election Day”*

In 1992, Azerbaijan held its first (ostensibly) democratic elections in seventy years. Communism had collapsed, and the “New World Order” was supposedly rising. Central to this order was the conduct of regular, multi-party elections that afford citizens genuine choice in selecting their leaders. But Azerbaijan’s 1992 contest would demonstrate—as a parable for the post-Cold war world—that for many countries, elections would become regular and multi-party, but they would not afford citizens anything other than the illusion of genuine democratic choice. When former Azerbaijani premier Heydar Aliyev announced his intention to run for president in 1992, the regime reaction was swift: the constitution was changed to bar any candidate that was 65 years of age or older from running for the presidency (Guliyev 2005). Out of context, this age limit was mystifying; after all, a significant number of (successful) state leaders around the globe were older than this cutoff point and most countries only have lower limits for age qualifications. With context, however, it made perfect sense: Heydar Aliyev was 68 years old and would have been a formidable electoral foe. To neutralize that threat, Aliyev was excluded. His name did not appear on the ballot. Voting took place without him.

Almost exactly one year after the election, a splinter group of Azerbaijan’s military forces led by Suret Huseynov overran Azerbaijan’s capital, Baku. The mutinous force defeated loyalist government troops, toppled the elected government, and quickly installed Heydar Aliyev as president (Curtis 1995). Aliyev’s regime quickly got rid of the age limit for the presidency and took *de jure* control of Azerbaijan, where he then proceeded to exclude some of his rivals from future elections.

Would Azerbaijan’s political history have been more peaceful had Aliyev simply been allowed to run on the ballot, rather than taking power with bullets? This single example begs a larger question: are coups and civil wars more likely to occur after elections wherein the regime



has intervened to remove an eligible candidate from being able to compete? Moreover, why do regimes choose this form of election manipulation rather than other traditional methods, such as ballot box stuffing?

The Azerbaijani example is but one illustration that “Today, only amateurs steal elections on election day.”<sup>1</sup> The blatant electoral rigging and ballot box stuffing that initially swept in with the Third Wave of democratization is being replaced by a more subtle—and more effective—form of manipulating elections: electoral exclusion, or the practice of banning specifically targeted candidates from contesting elections in order to increase the incumbent’s chance of victory.<sup>2</sup> Currently, this form of election rigging is poorly understood, as are its effects.

This dissertation aims to address two unanswered questions that comprise important gaps in existing political science literature. First, why are a significant proportion of incumbents around the world using electoral exclusion as a tactic to manipulate elections? Second, does electoral exclusion destabilize countries by increasing the risk of future coups d’état and civil wars? Put differently, if incumbents ban opposition candidates from ballots, are those candidates (or their supporters) likely to turn to bullets?

These questions are critical to understanding not only how and why incumbents subvert ostensibly democratic elections to manufacture victories but also whether those manipulations provoke political violence. Given the prevalence of elections across the world, both questions are at the heart of political legitimacy everywhere, from sub-Saharan Africa to Southeast Asia, and are also key to understanding how elections can drive conflict—even well after the polls close and the ballots have been (mis)counted.

A mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative approaches offers the best approach to answer both questions. Relying solely on quantitative evidence would only demonstrate whether a relationship between election manipulation and violence existed, without

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<sup>1</sup> Top-level diplomatic source, unnamed here at his request, personal interview, 13 February 2013; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

<sup>2</sup> See Samuel P. Huntington, (1991), *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.

illuminating the pathways that play out in this poisonous relationship in national political contexts. Conversely, relying solely on qualitative methods would allow robust context-specific analysis of how electoral exclusion drives (or does not drive) violence in various contexts, but it would be unclear whether that causal trend was globally relevant. Therefore, to benefit from the analytical strengths of each methodological approach, this dissertation combines large-N regression analysis with theoretical insights drawn from nine fieldwork-based case studies conducted in five countries (Madagascar, Thailand, Tunisia, Zambia, and Côte d'Ivoire). The statistical analysis covers all national-level elections held between 1989 and 2010; the case studies span three political regions (sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East / North Africa, and Asia / Southeast Asia). Together, methodological triangulation—using the combination of global statistical trends with national-level process tracing—allows a better understanding of the generalized relationships surrounding electoral exclusion as well as the on-the-ground causal mechanisms that risk destabilizing a nation's politics by sparking coups d'état and civil wars.

Political science research has developed extensive literature surrounding these topics. Elections and democratization are a major focus of contemporary scholarship. Likewise, there has been a recent surge in civil war research as intra-state warfare has become increasingly common in the post-Cold War era. Those studies complement a long-standing strand of literature focusing on military incursions into politics, including coups d'état. All three literatures have various strengths and weaknesses. However, their largest collective weakness is that the three are too distinct; the overly demarcated intellectual silos of disciplinary 'subfields' artificially separate them. Elections and strategic political violence (particularly in the form of coups and civil wars) revolve around the critical question of who is in power and how they attain power, but scholars rarely build research bridges between the three isolated facets.<sup>3</sup> Election scholars are not usually also conflict scholars and vice versa. This dissertation aims to synthesize these

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<sup>3</sup> Notable exceptions include Cederman & Gleditsch (2013), Cheibub, Hays, and Savun (2013), Gaubatz (1991), and Wig & Rod (2014).

‘subfield’ literatures by linking election strategy to political violence, providing a theoretical and empirical explanation for how strategic interactions between elites during elections in ‘counterfeit democracies’ (conventionally referred to as anocracies) often tempts incumbents into excluding their opponents from their election in the short-term to guarantee victory, only to risk losing power or destabilizing their countries later by increasing the risk of a subsequent coup d’état or civil war. I call this phenomenon ‘the exclusion trap.’

Overall, this dissertation offers four major ‘new’ contributions to political science scholarship. First, I find that electoral exclusion is an effective way to rig elections while retaining international legitimacy because it inflates margins of victory while maintaining a reasonable chance of avoiding international condemnation. Second, I find evidence for a possible causal mechanism of the ‘coup trap’ in countries with multi-party elections, as I demonstrate that coups beget electoral exclusion and electoral exclusion begets coups. Third, my research demonstrates that electoral exclusion is a major driving force in substantially increasing the risk and probability of both coup and civil war onset after elections—particularly in ‘counterfeit democracies.’<sup>4</sup> Fourth, and finally, I find that coup risk after elections is relatively similar in both dictatorships and counterfeit democracies, while the costs of policing make civil war risk far more pronounced only in counterfeit democracies—a risk that is mitigated on both extremes, in consolidated democracies and dictatorships.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> As far as I know, the term ‘counterfeit democracies’ is not used elsewhere in the literature. The term is intended to be purely conceptual; it is never operationalized in the quantitative modeling (when I defer to the more traditionally accepted ‘anocracy’). I do believe that there are advantages to using a conceptual term in this case because it conveys, in direct language, the crucial aspect that these regimes share: pretending to be democracy even though they are decidedly not democracies. Furthermore, it fits best here because regimes that do not care about external perception of their democratic credentials are unlikely to use subtle forms of manipulation like electoral exclusion. Counterfeit money is only valuable insofar as others believe that the bank notes are real; counterfeit democracies operate on the same premise, hoping to dupe outside observers into believing that the regimes are something they are not. Throughout the manuscript, in quantitative terms, I use the traditional definition of anocracy—typically reserved for countries that score between -5 and +5 on the PolityIV scale, which is how I use the term in my quantitative modeling too. This is a broad category deliberately, because some largely authoritarian states (-5, -4 for example) may still try to appear democratic and use tactics that are also used by nominally democratic regimes (+4, +5 for example).

<sup>5</sup> As will be explained later in detail, truly democratic countries mitigate threats against the state through the legitimate political system and also are usually able to detect and stave off any remaining threats before they become openly violent; dictatorships may face considerable threats from within but often rely on a police state apparatus that can detect and deter threats, forcing an uneasy stability forged with repression. Counterfeit democracies have

To date, political scientists have not systematically studied electoral exclusion, likely because it is a relatively new phenomenon, only becoming commonplace since the spread of multi-party elections globally.<sup>6</sup> After the Cold War, creating at least a façade of democracy has become a necessary spectacle in almost every country in the world. Pure dictatorships have become scarce, as even autocrats have succumbed to international pressure to allow at least some form of election—no matter how flawed—to take place. As a result, between 1989 and 2010, there have been at least 1,481 national-level elections globally (Hyde & Marinov 2012). This works out to an average of roughly 70 national-level elections per year—a sharp increase from the past (Hyde & Marinov 2012).<sup>7</sup>

The quality of those elections varies substantially, year-to-year, and country-to-country. However, whether elections are sham contests or genuine reflections of citizen preferences, they serve as pivot points in national political history. They are a focal point for contestation and a critical hurdle that typically needs to be cleared successfully in order to maintain peace and build a legitimate government.<sup>8</sup> The study of elections in political science has therefore rightly become one of the major building blocks in the contemporary literature. There is, however, a near-complete lack of comprehensive studies that look at an increasingly common weapon in the arsenal of would-be election thieves across the world: electoral exclusion.

### *Definitions: Electoral Exclusion, Coups d'État & Civil Wars*

I define electoral exclusion as follows. Electoral exclusion—in my conception—refers to the illegitimate, targeted banning of a candidate from an election that they would otherwise be eligible to contest had the incumbent regime not actively sought to prevent them from

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none of these 'benefits': they face threats but are often impotent to police against them or mitigate them effectively once they break out.

<sup>6</sup> Electoral exclusion as defined here requires at least a veil of multi-party democracy; one-party states excluded rivals but that was distinct from the targeted exclusion discussed here, conducted under the guise of multi-party competition.

<sup>7</sup> Between 1945 and 1988, there were (at least) 1,497 national-level elections, 34 per year—less than half as many per year as between 1989 and 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Governments have successfully gained popular legitimacy without elections, but such examples are now scarce.

participating.<sup>9</sup> The word ‘illegitimate’ deliberately invites some subjectivity. It is nonetheless preferable to more objective terms, such as “illegal,” because incumbents in electoral authoritarian regimes or counterfeit democracies often use the law as a tool of political self-interest, making legal changes prior to an election specifically to exclude threatening challengers. When new laws or constitutional changes specifically target an individual candidate rather than enact general principles for unknown future candidates (e.g., banning candidates who are older than 76, when the main opposition rival is 77), the targeted removal would be illegitimate but not illegal. Such targeted exclusions undertaken with legislative backing are therefore included in this research (see Whitaker 2005). After all, in most countries where exclusion is used to manipulate elections, *de jure* authority is malleable, frequently bent by *de facto* power. This happens much more often in counterfeit democracies than in their genuinely consolidated democratic counterparts.

Figure 1: A selected typology of the forms of electoral exclusion

Type	Description	Examples
Exclusion by exile	The regime ensures that candidate(s) are not permitted to return home and then are excluded for procedural reasons related to their residency	Thailand 2011; Madagascar 2006; Togo 2005
Exclusion by age	A new candidate registration provision is adopted during the pre-election period aimed at excluding someone based on their age	Azerbaijan 1992, discussed in Tunisia 2014
Exclusion by citizenship	A legal ‘re-interpretation’ of someone’s ancestry leads to the revocation of citizenship and candidate eligibility in turn	Côte d’Ivoire 1995/2000; Zambia 1996
Exclusion by lustration	Specific members of the former ruling regime are deemed ineligible from contesting future elections	Libya 2011, Tunisia 2011, Iraq 2005, several post-Soviet cases
Exclusion by government intervention on procedural grounds	The government simply denies a registration application under the guise of procedural justifications, even if those justifications seem to be fabricated	Madagascar 2006 (a candidate who seemingly paid his application fee was denied on those very grounds); Belarus 2008 (candidate registration signatures that were valid were deemed invalid)

However, coding cases is not always perfectly straightforward. Often, the allure of exclusion is that it offers incumbents ‘plausible deniability’ so they can claim that they were not

<sup>9</sup> For the quantitative analysis, I use the definition from Susan Hyde’s NELDA dataset: “Were opposition leaders prevented from running?” “Yes” was coded when at least some opposition leaders were prevented from running and contesting the elections. For robustness, I independently coded all countries in sub-Saharan Africa from 2005-2010 and arrived at the same coding decisions 99% of the time as NELDA, suggesting our definitional interpretations overlap considerably.

involved in the decision to exclude a rival. As a result, there is some inherent murkiness in defining and coding exclusion; incumbents rarely take credit publicly for neutralizing their opponents with procedural manipulation. In many elections, the official reason that many candidates are excluded is an insufficient number of signatures in support of their candidacy. However, whether this is true or not is often impossible to verify after the exclusion takes place (for the documents are almost never publicly available). As a result, as I will outline in the methodology chapter below, I have used independent coding from another dataset (verified by internal coding validity checks and by my own spot checks) to ensure that the term was correctly being represented in data analysis.

These coding decisions are important because electoral exclusion is the primary independent variable considered in this dissertation. What happens after elections take place, and even go smoothly, but one of the major challengers was excluded from the ballot? Exclusion is surprisingly common. In just under 14% of all elections that have taken place from 1989-2010 (the 21 years after the Cold War ended), at least one opposition figure was illegitimately excluded from contesting an election—and voting took place without them (Hyde & Marinov 2012). In some regions, the figure is higher: 30% in Asia, close to 20% in sub-Saharan Africa—nearly one out of every three or one out of every five elections, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Aside from regional variation, exclusion takes place in about 21% of all elections that take place in ‘counterfeit democracies’ globally—more than one in five contests. In other types of countries, exclusion is rare; during the same period, just 2% of elections in OECD countries involved electoral exclusion. These trends vary not only across region but also by year. In 2010, one of every four elections globally featured exclusion; it is possible that this tactic is becoming more common.

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<sup>10</sup> 89 of 302 elections in Asia featured exclusion between 1989 and 2010; 66 of 386 elections in sub-Saharan Africa; 196 cases globally featured exclusion, whilst 1,266 others did not.

The effects of such exclusion may be severe. Carl von Clausewitz famously wrote: “war is a continuation of politics by other means.”<sup>11</sup> This dissertation examines whether that famous maxim holds true two centuries later, by testing if electoral exclusion increases the risk of political violence aimed at taking over the state *after* the election has finished. When candidates are sidelined from the legitimate avenue to power through an election, do they turn to civil wars or coups d’état as another means of taking office?

The terms ‘coups d’état’ and ‘civil wars’ also warrant definitions because they can be fiercely contested and politicized terms. For the purposes of this dissertation, a coup d’état is, drawing on the definition used by Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne (2011), an illegal and overt attempt by the military, certain members of the military, or political elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive using force or the threat of force.<sup>12</sup> Civil wars are also a contested concept, but are defined as a violent conflict between a government and an organized rebel group resulting in a substantial number of battle-related deaths.<sup>13</sup>

## Scope

It is important to acknowledge that electoral exclusion, coups, and civil wars all occur with significantly higher frequency in certain types of countries. The core argument of this dissertation applies significantly better to countries like Madagascar or Haiti than it does to Norway or Japan. This dissertation includes an analysis of all regime types, but focuses mostly on countries in between authoritarianism and democracy—what I call ‘counterfeit democracies’. This is where the ‘exclusion trap’ is most damaging. Thus, though I will argue that the causal mechanism is statistically significant globally, the relationship is most salient in countries that are *not* consolidated democracies. In consolidated democracies, electoral exclusion is highly improbable, and launching a coup or a civil war in response to it is even more unlikely.

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<sup>11</sup> See Andreas Herberg-Rothe, (2007), *Clausewitz’s Puzzle: The Political Theory of War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for a further discussion of Clausewitz.

<sup>12</sup> Powell’s definition is similar, but does not include reference to force, which is—in my view—crucial.

<sup>13</sup> Specific thresholds are discussed at length in Chapter Three during the quantitative analysis.

### *Previous Scholarship: Elections, Democratization, and Rigging*

There are three categories of political science literatures that are relevant to my research questions: election/democratization research (particularly scholarship related to election manipulation), coups d'état research, and civil war research. Each is extensive, and each offers critical insights into the causes and consequences of electoral exclusion.

The three literatures can be treated separately, because although there is some overlap, most scholars do not migrate between these subfields. The majority of research bridging the two subfields is related to electoral violence—violence immediately before, during, or after an election. Few scholars (such as Cheibub, Wig and Rod, Norris, Frank, and Martínez i Coma, and Gleditsch) have explored how short-term election strategy can affect the medium and long-term prospects for political violence, particularly strategic violence aiming to topple the incumbent regime. The nascent focus on these dynamics is a weak point in the literature because the two subfields are now inextricably linked: elections and political violence are the two primary avenues to power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The strategy, conduct, and outcome of elections inevitably influence the prospects for future violence just as political violence conditions the conduct of future elections.

The first major relevant subfield is elections and democratization research. Within this field, scholars have focused on flawed or illusory forms of democracy—an important precursor to my research. While Samuel Huntington's "Third Wave of Democratization" thesis gave birth to an endless queue of scholars creating their own new-and-improved typology for counterfeit democracies masquerading as something they are not (ranging from clunky terms such as competitive authoritarianism and electoral authoritarianism, to the snappier but obscure 'anocracy'), the most relevant portions of this literature explore electoral malfeasance, or the deliberate manipulation and rigging of elections, as well as the institutional rules as to who can



and cannot stand as candidates (Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002; 2005; 2010; Schedler 2006).

Not all types of election rigging are the same. Electoral exclusion is a type of election rigging, but it is certainly within a smaller subset of tactics known as ‘strategic rigging’, wherein electoral legitimacy (or perceived legitimacy) is a crucial factor for incumbents. In the last fifteen years, there has been an important elaboration not only of the types of election rigging available to incumbents but also the strategic logic behind each.

In order for scholars to start studying election rigging, it was important to systematically identify various tactics of election manipulation. In 2002, Andreas Schedler’s article “The Menu of Manipulation” provided a groundbreaking contribution by conducting a systematic survey of the types of election rigging that are available to incumbents.<sup>14</sup> Schedler identifies fourteen distinct ‘strategies of norm violation’ that incumbents use to manipulate elections; electoral exclusion is one type but it is not treated extensively.<sup>15</sup> Prior to Schedler’s article, there was no comprehensive survey of rigging tactics nor was there much discussions as to why incumbents may be drawn to certain methods over others; moreover, Schedler (along with Thomas Carothers that same year) highlighted the fact that the ‘transition’ paradigm was masking a deeper stagnation of (what I call) counterfeit democracies.<sup>16</sup>

Sarah Birch of the University of Glasgow and Susan Hyde of Yale University separately expanded Schedler’s ‘menu’, with their respective monographs on the subject of election manipulation. In particular, Birch’s excellent 2011 work, *Electoral Malpractice* is a comprehensive

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<sup>14</sup> Schedler’s analysis demonstrates that different types of manipulation are available in the proverbial toolbox of election rigging, but does not examine any single type in detail. In this way, the study of electoral exclusion builds on what Schedler identified as an important form of rigging by exploring its consequences. In my view, scholars should continue on this pursuit, filling in the details of Schedler’s excellent overview article.

<sup>15</sup> Of the fourteen, one (‘exclusion of opposition forces’) covers electoral exclusion, highlighting the fact that this type of election manipulation has been lost in a sea of other manipulation tactics. The fourteen tactics Schedler identifies are: limiting the scope of elective offices; limiting the jurisdiction of elective offices; restricting access to the electoral arena (includes what I call electoral exclusion); disorganizing electoral dissidence; restricting political and civil liberties; restricting access to media and money; legal suffrage restrictions; practical suffrage restrictions; voter intimidation; vote buying; ‘redistributive’ electoral management; ‘redistributive’ electoral rules; preventing elected officers from exercising their constitutional powers; and preventing victors from taking office (Schedler 2002, 39).

<sup>16</sup> See Carothers (2002), “The end of the transition paradigm.”

analysis of how incumbents cheat while adding crucial insights as to *why* they choose to cheat in certain ways. Most importantly, Birch's largest theoretical contribution as to the trade-offs of incumbent decision-making in election rigging comes with her highlighting the so-called "Fraudster's Dilemma": the inevitable push and pull choice that autocrats face: incumbents that do not cheat might actually lose a clean election, while incumbents that cheat too much may lose legitimacy. This Dilemma has become even more daunting as international pressure to form a legitimate elected government has become intense in the post-Cold War era. The costs of illegitimacy are now higher, for donors often condition future aid, trade deals, and investment on the verdicts of international election observation reports (Kelley 2009).<sup>17</sup> Therefore, solving the Fraudster's Dilemma—with ramifications in both domestic and international politics—requires a delicate balancing act (Birch 2011). Birch's theoretical scaffolding allows scholars to understand why certain types of election manipulation may be more appealing to incumbents than others, and why current trends may favor subtler forms of rigging over traditionally crude election cheating. When Birch's argument is viewed in the context of evidence from Kelley (2012), Hyde (2011), and Daxecker (2012) that international election observation is a critical aspect of incumbent strategic thinking, then it becomes even more clear that, all things being equal, incumbents favor strategies that guarantee victory while also minimizing the chance of being 'caught' or condemned domestically or on the international stage (Calingaert 2006). In other words, the last fifteen years of scholarship have progressed from cataloguing the 'menu' of manipulation to understanding why incumbents order certain strategies off that menu.

Electoral exclusion relates to the exclusion of individual candidates, but sometimes parties are banned outright. These bans usually exclude parties that are based purely on ethnic or religious allegiance. Such bans are related to, but distinct from, targeted electoral exclusion because they are based exclusively on a shared identity, not an individual threat to the

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<sup>17</sup> Kelley points out, quite correctly, that international observers are not immune from delivering verdicts based on the strategic interests of their donors. Even if the international observation community is biased, their verdicts still matter in critical decisions, and incumbents around the world—particularly in areas that are dependent on donors—worry about their verdicts in ways that condition strategic behavior.

incumbent's electoral prospects.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, candidates that are excluded from an ethnic party ban can still run in the election under the banner of a different, legally allowed party—a crucial distinction. However, party bans are not yet well understood. Their effects are still unclear as the literature is still developing. In some cases, ethnic and religious party bans have been stabilizing by reducing the electoral salience of potentially volatile divides in society; in other cases, such bans have been destabilizing (Basedau and Moroff 2011; Bogaards 2010; Moroff 2010). A recent study by Gleason (2015) copes effectively with measurement issues that previously plagued former studies and finds an unequivocal effect: allowing ethnic parties to compete in elections increases the risks of violence. Regardless of their effects, however, these bans are distinct from electoral exclusion in a key way: the *individuals* within these parties are still often allowed to compete in elections, albeit under a non-ethnically defined political movement. That difference is enormously important in conditioning the risk of future violence, as I will outline in Chapter One.

Cumulatively, existing scholarship provides an important overview of different election rigging strategies, develops a framework to understand *why* incumbents choose some rigging strategies over others, and offers preliminary insights into the effects of across-the-board party bans. However, while scholars have created this critical foundation, there has been (to my knowledge) only one study that directly examines electoral exclusion. Beth E. Whitaker's journal article on ethnic forms of political exclusion (2005) is an important contribution, but its scope is quite limited—only two case studies, both in Africa, with regard to only one type of exclusion (based on citizenship claims), and without any reference to quantitative evidence. Nonetheless,

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<sup>18</sup> For example, the Muslim Brotherhood was excluded from Egyptian elections for long periods based on an election law stipulating that 'political activity or political parties shall not be based on any religious background or foundation.' Individual candidates could legally contest elections were they not affiliated with the party (at least in theory, though Hosni Mubarak was not known for being inclusive). Nonetheless, this is clearly distinct from when an individual is targeted for exclusion, regardless of their party membership.

Whitaker's findings that exclusion can be destabilizing are important, and they provide an important research foundation that this study builds upon.<sup>19</sup>

Research on the causes and effects of social and political exclusion more generally is also related to, but distinct from, electoral exclusion. Scholars have effectively demonstrated that social and political exclusion can be destabilizing. In almost every country, certain groups are subjugated to others—in economic, social, cultural, or political terms. The most relevant scholarship relates to political forms of exclusion. For example, recent work on autochthony and exclusion highlights the resurgence of political exclusion based on ancestral origins (Geschiere 2009). As Peter Geschiere demonstrates, politicians in the developing and developed world have used the notion of uncertain or contested origins to deny citizenship to large swaths of the population—at times, for political ends. Sometimes, this is done to prevent opposition groups from voting or mobilizing; other times, it is done as a scapegoating tool. This citizenship/origin gambit can be an aspect of targeted electoral exclusion (as was the case in Côte d'Ivoire throughout the 1990s and 2000s), with politicians whipping up xenophobic sentiment generally as a precursor to disqualifying a specific candidate based on his/her national identity. The work of Geschiere (and others) on autochthony is, however, derived from anthropology rather than political science, and it is focused almost exclusively on the general social and political exclusion of citizens, not on targeted electoral exclusion of would-be political candidates—a crucial distinction.

Additionally, it has already been effectively established that horizontal inequality between distinct social, political, or ethnic groups can be destabilizing. The work of Frances Stewart and others comprising the CRISE network is insightful on this front. With a large cross-national analysis, they demonstrate that perceived deprivation of political status between groups can stir otherwise peaceful actors to incite violence (Stewart et al. 2011). This theory argues that

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<sup>19</sup> "In situations of underlying xenophobia, elite application of exclusive citizenship policies—even against just one individual—can legitimize calls for the exclusion of full groups, thus widening social cleavages. If the group whose member is targeted by this strategy is sufficiently large and alienated, the situation is likely to deteriorate into instability and even war" (Whitaker 2005, 48).

societies that are especially prone to divisions between ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ are also more vulnerable to destabilizing politics. Yet this important contribution is related to horizontal inequality in general, not exclusion or inequality surrounding elections. That being said, the work of the CRISE network on horizontal *political* inequalities does have a significant overlap with my work. The research group focuses on comparative deprivations in terms of “control over the presidency, the cabinet, parliamentary assemblies, the bureaucracy, local and regional governments, the army and the police” (Stewart 2011, 7). Certainly, these comparative deprivations are often—but not always—exacerbated when individual candidates are targeted for exclusion from a given election. However, broader political exclusion of certain groups is quite different from incumbents intervening to exclude candidates from a given election.

These types of analysis provide an important foundation, but they still leave critical gaps. Neither camp discusses the conditions that make exclusion more likely to be wielded as a deliberate political weapon; neither camp examines exclusion as an election strategy; and neither camp systematically examines the link between flawed elections and coups or civil wars (or any other strategic violence against the state). In other words, the democracy and election literature—and the surrounding literature relating to citizen exclusion and horizontal inequality—are informative but they do not directly address the two research questions here: why is electoral exclusion used and does its use spark coups d’état and civil wars?

### *The literatures on conflict: coups d’état and civil wars*

What triggers coups? What causes civil wars? The literatures on coups d’état and civil wars are critical to understanding whether flawed elections can provoke future violent conflict. There is a significant amount of literature related to electoral violence, but most focuses on the short-term effects of elections. Conflict scholars have the reverse blind spot: they tend to neglect electoral dynamics in their research. Instead, scholars have attempted to create typologies of both coups and civil wars while simultaneously isolating structural factors for

conflict or individual-level enticements that prompt would-be fighters to take up arms and launch violence. The top-down approach has sparked research attempting to isolate descriptive macro factors that account for why some countries are more coup or civil war prone than others (Belkin & Schofer 2003; Londregan & Poole 1990; Thyne 2010). The bottom-up approach offers explanations for individual-level micro factors that explain why certain people take the extraordinary personal risk of launching or joining coups and rebellions and others do not—even when faced with similar environments (Humphreys & Weinstein 2008; Justino 2009; Verwimp, Justino, and Bruck 2009).

However, both literatures share a crucial failing. Broadly speaking, neither literature provides robust, well documented, quantitative and qualitatively tested reasons at the meso-level (revolving around strategic elite interaction) that account for how institutional and actor-based behaviors provide the actual spark that ignites those forms of political violence. Few conflict scholars attempt to link the outbreak of coups or civil wars to election strategy (Wig and Rød 2014 are a recent exception). It is undeniably useful to know that poor countries are more likely to be hotbeds of instability (a fairly intuitive finding given the lack of coups in places like Luxembourg or Japan), but there are many comparatively impoverished countries that enjoy long stretches of domestic peace. What accounts for this variation? Both literatures need to be further developed to look not only at specific ‘triggers’ but also to account for the relationship (if any exists) between the only internationally-legitimate pathway to power (elections) and alternative illegitimate pathways (such as coups and civil wars)—particularly because elections are *the* focal point of contesting power in virtually every country in the world today, a key difference from the era when both literatures began in earnest.

In particular, coup research rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, as newly independent states (in Africa in particular) succumbed to wave after wave of military takeovers. Countercoups toppled governments that had previously come to power in a coup. As American diplomat George Ball put it (with just a hint of Western-centric imperialist hyperbole): “During

the years I was in the State Department, I was awakened once or twice a month by a telephone call in the middle of the night announcing a coup d'état in some distant capital with a name like a typographical error” (Ball 1968, 19).

When researchers sought to explain the motives behind coups, they had to go beyond the explicit justifications given by soldiers-turned-politicians. After all, most soldiers involved in coups are unwilling to admit that they were motivated by power or greed, even if they were. Some scholars took soldiers’ explicit justifications in post-coup speeches seriously, giving rise to the ‘grievance’ narrative of political violence. In certain cases, it is undeniable that the relative deprivations and injustices cited by the coup instigators contributed to their decision to take up arms against their government (Tilly 2003). Such deprivation can be economic, but it can also be related to normative judgments about the operation of the political sphere and the distribution of rights and privileges in a given society (Gurr 1970). People who are disgruntled about their lives—particularly those who blame the government—are more likely to support the downfall of that government (Decalo 1973; 1976; 1991; 1998). However, there are two problems with solely grievance-based explanations for political violence (such as—to name a few—the works of Decalo, Geschiere, the CRISE network, and Gurr).

First, grievances are widespread throughout the world, but coups and civil wars only break out in certain places. There may be more suffering in certain countries, but there is tremendous variation in levels of political violence even among the poorest countries with the most difficult living conditions on Earth. Why is Thailand home to dozens more coups and coup attempts in its history than Malawi?<sup>20</sup> Malawi is far poorer. On almost every objective measure of life quality, Malawians cope with more difficult conditions. In other words, even if the grievance narrative is at the heart of strategic political violence in many places, its usefulness in terms of predictive power is limited.

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<sup>20</sup> The 2014 Thai coup was the 12<sup>th</sup> successful coup the country has endured since 1932. The number of attempted coups in that time span depends on how you count them, but there is agreement that the total number of coups and coup attempts lies somewhere between 20 and 30 in that period.

Second, explicit grievances touted as justifications are often used to pretend that a power grab is a pursuit of loftier ideals: an antidote to corruption, or perhaps to reinvigorate a failing democracy (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh 2001, 162).<sup>21</sup> The world would be a lot more democratic if coup plotters professing to restore democracy actually did so once in power.<sup>22</sup> South African scholar Ruth First parodied the often overly polished (but implausible) reasons given as official coup justifications by saying: “It is as though, in the army books and regulations by which the soldiers were drilled, there is an entry: *Coups, justifications for*; and beside it, the felicitous phrases that coup-makers repeat by rote” (First 1970, 6). It is clearly inadequate (and naïve) to take such pronouncements at face value and accept them as genuine causal factors.

Scholars recognized this inadequacy and more sophisticated subsequent scholarship began to examine structural factors that correlated strongly with coup outbreaks, seeking objective variables rather than relying on carefully calibrated speeches. One of the first attempts was Samuel Finer’s influential 1962 study, *The Man on Horseback*—published just two years after a wave of de-colonization in Africa. He diagnosed coup proneness as a symptom of low levels of what he called “political culture” (Finer 1962). Aside from offering a nebulous concept, this study only highlighted structural deficiencies for coup proneness and lacked relative predictive power—an unfortunate weakness that many subsequent studies suffered too—as levels of ‘political culture’ do not change quickly. In other words, Finer’s explanation may help demonstrate which groups of countries generally have coups and which do not, but it does little to help predict where coups will next break out. Similar arguments (Thompson 1975a, Londregan & Poole 1990, O’Kane 1987, Desch 1999, etc.) simply describe the fact that a group of countries who have experienced coups tend to share a common characteristic (low “political

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<sup>21</sup> “Whenever coup-happy soldiers look at the disgraceful manner in which a country’s politicians are treating one another, they use the incidents to plot ‘acceptable’ grounds to wrestle power from them causing the numerous military takeovers that African countries continue to witness,” 162.

<sup>22</sup> There are of course exceptions. The military junta that took over Mali in March 1991, for example, peacefully transferred power to a democratically elected regime just over a year after the coup.



culture” in Finer’s case, prior coup history in Londregan & Poole’s case)—important findings but still incomplete for us to truly understand coup risk.

As coup scholarship has become more sophisticated, it has split into two general types of explanations: structural factors that increase coup risk generally, and ‘trigger’ factors that increase coup risk in the short-term. Of course, trigger factors are more salient in places that are already coup-prone; cutting military budgets is more likely to provoke a coup in a place that has a high coup risk (like Thailand) than in a country that is generally not likely to succumb to a military takeover (such as Germany). Scholars have already identified such distinctions (Collier & Hoeffler 2006).

For structural coup risk factors, Belkin & Schofer (2003) demonstrate how weak civil societies in places with low levels of government legitimacy and a prior history of coups are more likely to suffer a coup. Collier & Hoeffler (2007) also convincingly demonstrate that countries with comparatively low levels of gross domestic product (GDP) face elevated coup risk. Similarly, the presence of nominally democratic institutions appears to lower the risk of coups generally, as found by Rød (2012), Gandhi (2008), Gandhi & Przeworski (2006; 2007), and Boix & Svolik (2013). This realm of scholarship is critical to this dissertation, where I argue that electoral competition itself can provoke coups—albeit in places where democracy is neither consolidated nor robustly institutionalized.

Finally, the most important structural driver of coup risk seems to be the so-called ‘coup trap’: countries that have suffered recent coups or coup attempts are many times more likely to suffer another coup than a country that has no recent coup history. Bueno de Mesquita, Siverson, and Woller (1992) provide a simple but effective way to predict coup risk, by using the aggregated number of coups in the previous ten years in any given country as the causal variable to demonstrate future coup risk. Their strong findings build on the work of Londregan & Poole (1990), which was later strengthened by Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009). As I will outline later, I add to their findings, further verifying that this is a major factor in coup risk.

However, while such structural factors of coup risk are essential to understanding which aspects of politics make them more or less prone to democratic reversals by military intervention, they are less valuable as tools for short-term predictions of coup outbreaks. In other words, arguments such as Collier & Hoeffler's notion that poor countries are more coup prone do little to help us understand why a country might suffer a coup d'état *at a particular time*. The more interesting and essential question is: what actions cause some poorer countries that are already coup prone to suffer future coups while other coup prone countries do not.<sup>23</sup>

So, what sparks coups? Powell (2012) has provided the best insights on this question recently, arguing that crisis incidents (such as a surge in guerilla activity, a political purge, mass mobilization with riots and protests, or popular strikes, to name a few) increase the risk of coups in the short-term. Collier & Hoeffler (2006) also demonstrate that reducing military budgets—particularly with cuts focused on certain powerful people within the ranks—can be destabilizing and may spark coups. Both works demonstrate 'triggers' rather than structural factors, but do not explain *why* elite interaction prompts these triggers. Moreover, there is some randomness to 'trigger' events that scholars may never fully understand; coup prone countries may suffer a military takeover at any given time, and the trigger may be something as simple as the president or prime minister leaving the country for a diplomatic trip.<sup>24</sup> Yet I still aim to contribute to understanding triggers by demonstrating that certain elite behaviours during elections can act as triggers for coups d'état.

Wig & Rød (2014) provide the best insights to this phenomenon, treating elections in authoritarian states as trigger points for coup activity. Of all contemporary literature, this article overlaps most with my research. Wig and Rod suggest that elections (and post-election protests) yield information about opposition strength or weakness. They argue that, if the opposition has

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<sup>23</sup> Moreover, in policy terms there is little benefit to discovering that countries with low GDPs suffer from coups. Every government at the national and international level already focuses on improving its economy, so there is no potential new solution for coup prevention rising from that finding—though it is an important finding now that it is established as a clear correlation.

<sup>24</sup> This happened most recently in Burundi (May 2015), when a coup was launched while President Nkurunziza was in Tanzania on state business.

a strong showing in elections or there are riots and protests in support of the opposition around an election, then a coup is more likely (as prospective coup plotters interpret the election results as indication of support for a military overthrow of the incumbent regime). However, as I will argue, sometimes it is the complete lack of ‘information’ about the opposition that is a trigger point for coup activity. It is impossible to know how an excluded politician would have performed in an election, but that still may provoke a military takeover—even if there is a certain electoral calm before the coup d’état storm. Nonetheless, Wig & Rød’s contribution provides a compelling starting point to analyze elections as a trigger for coup risk. As I will argue, however, exclusionary elections are particularly important drivers of coup risk in counterfeit democracies (+5 to -5 on the Polity scale) and authoritarian states (below -5 on the Polity scale).

### *Macro, meso, and micro-level explanations for civil wars*

The civil war literature, like the coup literature, is comprised mainly of structural risk factors and micro-level analyses. The first camp relies on structural macro-level analyses of factors that make certain countries seemingly pre-disposed to rebellion due to the ‘feasibility’ of civil wars, while the second aims to explain why individuals (at the micro-level) ignore the high risks and individual toll of rebellion and take up arms against the state regardless.

These arguments are compelling. All things being equal, a higher probability of success should drive more people to act; few individuals volunteer for lost causes, especially when the consequence of failure is likely death (as it is in many failed coups and quashed rebellions). Several proposed feasibility factors have been explored in the literature, including low economic growth and economic crises (Collier & Hoeffler 2002; Miguel et al. 2004; Murdoch & Sandler 2002), high levels of rough, inaccessible, mountainous terrain (Buhaug & Gates 2002; Collier & Hoeffler 2002), population size (Raleigh & Hegre 2009), land area (Buhaug & Lujala 2005; Collier & Hoeffler 2004); resource curses (Brunnschweiler & Bulte 2009; Fearon 2005; Lujala et al. 2005) and ethnic fractionalization (Fearon & Laitin 2003; Montalvo & Reynal-Querol 2004).

Each of these has been found in various studies to contribute to the probability of success for rebellions; quantitative evidence establishes a link between the feasibility factors and civil war outbreak.

Each variable is accompanied by a causal theory. An economic crisis presumably cuts two ways, creating disarray politically (thereby weakening the ability of political elites to respond effectively to challenges to the state's power), while simultaneously providing an incentive for individuals harmed by the economic downturn to take up arms against the state that is failing to provide for their needs (Miguel et al. 2004).

Countries with mountainous terrain (or other inaccessible, rugged geography) are presumed to be more prone to rebellions because insurgents are better able to avoid detection and find sanctuary. Moreover, the costs of counterinsurgency rise as supply lines and support chains become cost prohibitive in rugged terrain for already weak, impoverished governments (Fearon and Laitin 2003).

The prospective allure of civil wars is also conditioned, to at least some extent, by the value of rents that can be captured by taking control of state power. Collier & Hoeffler's earlier work (1998), for example, argues that the concentration of natural resources in a given country increases that country's risk of civil war outbreak. Ross (2004) adds some nuance to the debate, arguing that some resources (such as oil) drive war outbreaks, while others (such as 'lootable' gems) simply prolong wars once they have begun. These are important factors to keep in mind when considering the rhetorical justifications that rebels use to explain their rebellion versus the economic drivers that they may never admit.

Additionally, larger populations—especially large populations spread across large areas of land—are more difficult to monitor, a problem that is again compounded for weak, impoverished governments (Raleigh & Hegre 2009). This makes it hard for the state to quash

rebellions, particularly because intelligence and policing costs are high.<sup>25</sup> For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the largest countries in the world and is home to nearly 70 million people. But it is also governed by one of the weakest governments in the world. The fragile government in Kinshasa cannot possibly be aware of—let alone counteract—any and all threats to the state throughout the territory.<sup>26</sup> The lower the feasibility for the state to maintain *de facto* control of its territory, the higher the feasibility for would-be rebels to take aim at the vulnerable regime.

Finally, like the ‘coup trap’, history seems to repeat itself with civil wars—past civil wars make future ones more likely. This pattern most likely occurs for two main reasons. First, volatility and frequent regime changes hamper the ability of a government to protect itself, in terms of planning, preparation, and defense, but also in terms of policing against threats. When the group in power changes frequently, the subsequent upheavals and transitions are times of immense vulnerability. Second, for those who may be keen to rebel against the ruling government, the existence of previous success stories (or even attempts) creates a stronger perception of ‘feasibility’ (Hegre & Sambanis 2006; Gleditsch & Ruggeri 2010). This is confirmed by Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009), who found that, “a leader who came to power irregularly is over three times more likely to lose power in an irregular manner.”

Together, these (and other) proposed structural causes of political violence form a reasonable theoretical scaffolding to help explain why civil wars break out in some places but not in others. However, these macro-level structural theories miss key parts of the story. They provide limited predictive power with reference to temporality. With the notable exception of structural economic models that argue that economic shocks trigger civil wars (Chassang & Padro i Miquel 2009; Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti 2004), most theories do little to explain why people actually decide *at any given time* to join insurgencies. Poor countries may be violence

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<sup>25</sup> Crucially, this is not true of coups, where the only institution that must be monitored is the military, and usually only in the capital city where most coups take place.

<sup>26</sup> See Herbst (2000) for further analysis of state weakness, particularly in Africa.

prone but they do not fluctuate drastically in their terrain composition or their natural resource wealth. Yet, they suffer coups on certain dates but not others. Perhaps the Democratic Republic of the Congo *is* particularly prone to conflict for structural reasons, but what explains the timing of that conflict? These questions are critical. Without answering them, we may know which countries are likely to experience violence, but we are essentially powerless to predict future violence. We are also powerless to mitigate risk; after all, domestic politicians and the international community cannot get rid of a country's mountains, whittle down populations, shrink the land area of countries, wipe the slate of history clean, or cure economic malaise overnight.

This temporal failing is one of the most compelling critiques of the Collier/Hoeffler model of civil war outbreaks—which has been a major driving force in the literature since the early 2000s. While their research model has highlighted many of these ‘feasibility’ aspects of civil war, “the opportunity and means for the violent overthrow of civilian regimes fail to explain why soldiers [or rebels] actually do so in some countries and not in others” (Houngnikpo 2010). It is not particularly groundbreaking to establish that places where things are generally going in the wrong direction (*i.e.* high unemployment, low GDP, etc) are prone to instability; the lingering unknown question is: which events, elites behaviours, or circumstances spark civil wars in places where violence already is feasible?

On the opposite extreme from structural risk factors, micro-level civil war research has come a long way (particularly in the last decade and a half) in explaining why certain individuals join rebellions and others do not. Kalyvas is largely credited with launching this line of inquiry, arguing that civil wars are rational rather than irrational—and that political science must account for the rational reasons why an individual might feel compelled to take up arms against their government (Kalyvas 2006). Subsequent studies have examined recruitment and activation for rebellions, concluding that various factors affect individual-level calculations to join an insurgency or take up arms against the state. These factors include: individual exposure to

violence (Blattman 2009), ethnic geographic concentration as a primer for recruitment (Weidmann 2009), local conflict over land and resources (Autessere 2010), violence by the government against civilians (Wood 2003), and forced abduction and recruitment (Bellow & Miguel 2009). Cumulatively, these studies give a strong indication of various reasons why—in spite of collective action barriers and high costs to prospective participants—some individuals find it attractive and rational to join a rebellion despite the risks. These individual-level analyses are particularly important in weak states because small groups have sometimes proven successful at toppling regimes—meaning that even low levels of recruitment success may have important consequences for national peace and stability. Similar dynamics can affect coups d'état, as individual soldiers find the idea of a military mutiny wholly unfathomable while others are willing to launch an attack on the state (Sutter 2000).

It is clear, therefore, that for both coups d'état and civil wars, political science scholars have developed robust findings relating to macro/structural- and micro/individual-level causes. These contributions have done much to enhance our understanding of what drives conflict, but there is still a lingering gap that requires significantly more attention: how does strategic political action between elites affect the risks of coups and civil wars?

This is a crucial question for two reasons. First, structural risk factors and rebel recruitment strategies are not deterministic; savvy and stabilizing elite behavior may mitigate structural disadvantages, reduce the salience of recruitment efforts, and stave off a possible outbreak of a coup or a rebellion.<sup>27</sup> Second, focusing on strategic action at the meso-level is the most relevant research for policy prescriptions. For example, it is important to recognize that weak economies are more prone to coups and civil wars, but economic growth is already a cornerstone policy for every country in the world; there is little that the policy community can do to stave off coups and civil wars if such already agreed-upon universal policy goals are the only levers to enact change. The same can be said for most structural factors cited above—they are

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<sup>27</sup> See Phil Roessler, (2015), *In the Shadow of the Coup d'État: Elite Politics and Civil War in Africa*. Forthcoming.

either already explicit policy goals of (almost) every country (such as GDP growth) or they are virtually unchangeable (mountains, land area, population). Similarly, the micro-level analysis is either too specific (*i.e.* policymakers cannot shield everyone in the population from exposure to violence) or would occur too late to make a difference (once forced recruitment begins, not much can be done to stop a civil war from breaking out). On the other hand, if research demonstrates that the meso-level strategic behavior of political actors substantially contributes to political violence, those findings could be used by domestic *and* international actors to pressure political elites away from behaviors that increase coup and civil war risk and toward peace-building strategies.<sup>28</sup>

In sum, the literature on elections/democratization and the literature on conflict (and coup and civil war scholarship in particular) have come a long way in highlighting key aspects of rigged elections and drivers of conflict. However, there is not enough understanding between the two subfields as to how rigged elections may increase the risk of future conflict.

I argue that elite behavior surrounding elections can have a significant impact on future prospects for peace or violence. In particular, I bridge the gap between election scholarship and conflict research by demonstrating that the targeted exclusion of opposition candidates from multi-party elections increases the future likelihood of coups and civil wars—that removing candidates from ballots increases the risk that future political conflict will be resolved with bullets. I do not suggest that former studies that find other relationships or predisposing factors for election rigging or conflict are irrelevant or inaccurate; instead, I incorporate their lessons to build on existing scholarship by suggesting a causal mechanism that makes some violence-prone states succumb to conflict as a result of flawed elections while others manage to remain peaceful even when facing numerous structural or micro-level risk factors. Ultimately, my argument provides a new contribution to the literature by identifying an electoral ‘exclusion trap’ as

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<sup>28</sup> Roessler (2011) provides a crucial framework to understand how elite interaction conditions violence, though his work does not touch on election strategy).



vulnerable incumbents in ‘counterfeit democracies’ eager to ensure victory while maintaining the guise of legitimacy turn to electoral exclusion in the short-term, only to drastically increase the risk of a longer-term existential threat to their regime in the form of a coup d’état or civil war.

*Argument structure: Theory, quantitative testing, qualitative case studies*

There are three broad parts to my argument: theory and methodology, quantitative analysis, and process tracing case studies that test the hypotheses further with ‘on-the-ground’ real world political experience in diverse political contexts.

Chapter One outlines the theoretical framework that explains the proposed causal mechanism linking electoral exclusion to political violence. I elaborate on the reasons why the majority of incumbents around the world do not exclude opposition candidates; why (in the first stage of an election) incumbents who do choose to rig elections decide to exclude candidates rather than resorting to other manipulation tactics; why, once an opposition group is excluded from an election, some will choose (in the second stage of an election) to boycott the election while others may not; how incumbent and opposition interaction during these critical two stages conditions future prospects for political violence; and finally, why electoral exclusion may produce a higher risk of coups in some countries and a higher risk of civil wars in other countries, even though the elite incumbent and opposition interaction behavior may be similar. These theoretical suppositions provide the framework that is subsequently tested with quantitative and qualitative methods in the remaining chapters.

Chapter Two presents systematic quantitative testing of the theory proposed in Chapter One, using an array of statistical analysis techniques to examine whether or not the theory is valid on a global scale. This portion of the manuscript relies upon an original dataset (albeit one that draws extensively on existing data) comprising nearly 1,500 national-level elections between 1989 and 2010 and linking those election dates to later outbreaks of coups and civil wars. The data are used to analyze how electoral exclusion affects incumbent prospects for victory; how

often exclusion is effective at avoiding reputational costs for the incumbent regime; and whether or not electoral exclusion increases the risk of subsequent coups or civil wars.

Statistical inference is a valuable tool in establishing causality and unknown relationships between distinct variables, but it does not demonstrate the *process* by which one factor produces the effect that interests us. For that, national-level process tracing case studies based on extensive elite-level interviews can illuminate the ‘black box’ of causality, showcasing how the abstract 1s and 0s in the dataset actually interact in the real world.<sup>29</sup> Chapters Three through Six present five qualitative case studies in order to explore the different pathways that sometimes lead from exclusion to coups and civil wars and sometimes do not.<sup>30</sup>

Chapter Three is a comparative analysis of two distinct national election contexts – Zambia 1996 and Madagascar 2006 – that demonstrate how electoral exclusion may provoke a subsequent coup d’état. While these cases followed the same path in some ways (exclusion led to a coup being launched), they also offer a lesson about divergence within similar cases (Madagascar’s coup was successful while Zambia’s was not; Madagascar’s coup involved elite insiders acting behind the scenes while Zambia’s was led by ‘lone wolf’ soldiers acting without any elite political manipulation). In this way, the chapter illuminates the multitude of possibilities for real world outcomes even when the same elite behavior (electoral exclusion) produces a specific form of violent backlash (a coup d’état attempt).

Chapter Four takes the same independent variable from the Madagascar and Zambia case studies (electoral exclusion) and demonstrates that it can also spark civil wars by tracing Côte d’Ivoire’s descent from ‘Ivoirian Miracle’ to a two-time war zone. The Côte d’Ivoire case is helpful because it offers an internal control; the same candidate was excluded in the same manner in elections taking place in both 1995 and 2000, but only the latter election sparked a civil war. The Côte d’Ivoire case highlights a key theoretical distinction between coups and civil

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<sup>29</sup> For this dissertation, I have conducted roughly 200 elite interviews in five countries.

<sup>30</sup> The logic behind the selection of each of these cases is made explicit in the following chapter.

wars: mass mobilization is essential to launching rebellions, but it is not for coups d'état. As a result, the major change from Côte d'Ivoire's electoral exclusion in 1995 to 2000 was a shift from a 'sniper style' exclusion of a politician to a 'shotgun style' exclusion of the politician *and his supporters*, making mass mobilization behind a rebellion far more feasible. Côte d'Ivoire's case also underscores that exclusion can spark civil wars but that it is not deterministic; the comparative risk of civil war increases with exclusion, but most cases of exclusion will not result in a civil war.

Chapter Five takes a broader look at a distinct type of electoral exclusion: excluding the 'old guard' during political transitions. Drawing on extensive field interviews in Tunisia, I demonstrate how *inclusion* during their post-Arab Spring political transition was the single most important factor in ensuring a stable, peaceful transition to democracy. By contrast, Tunisia's eastern neighbor, Libya, instituted widespread purges of anyone even remotely affiliated with the toppled dictatorship of Muammar Gaddafi. With Libya as a contrasting foil for the potentially devastating effects of electoral exclusion during transitions, Tunisia's experience affirms that sometimes the best way to save democracy is by extending an inclusive olive branch to the remnants of a vanquished dictatorship. By dissecting these divergent transitions (or failed transition in the case of Libya), this chapter also takes into account the profound path dependency effects that exclusive transitions can establish during founding elections—ultimately prompting a greater risk of a democratic reversal.

Chapter Six is the final case study, using Thailand's volatile coup-prone politics as an example of a 'false positive' case (where exclusion occurred but it was not a primary factor in sparking the subsequent coup). Thailand has had more coups and coups attempts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than any other country in the world—a dubious distinction that has spanned eras of quasi-democratic elections and eras of single-party military rule. In recent years, however, the causal pathway has been inverted from the proposed theory; the *failure* to neutralize a popular politician using electoral exclusion forced the 'network monarchy' and the parallel 'deep state' of

Thailand to use military intervention to topple a genuinely popular incumbent. Moreover, the Thailand case helps reinforce the value of qualitative evidence buttressing quantitative correlations, as this case shows that statistical relationships can be misleading. Ultimately, Thailand's frequent volatility in modern times can be seen as a function of electoral exclusion, but in quite a different way from the theorized explanation that applies to the other cases.

Finally, I conclude by discussing the policy implications of my findings and by proposing avenues for further research. Because electoral exclusion is currently poorly understood, incumbents who use the tactic frequently outwit election observers who end up endorsing severely flawed elections. Drawing attention to this imbalance in the cat-and-mouse game between observers and the observed incumbents may help improve the quality of elections by highlighting not only how devastating electoral exclusion is for democracy but also how it drastically heightens the risk that a coup or civil war will break out in the wake of an exclusive election. Moreover, I hope that my research will help persuade election scholars and conflict scholars to collaborate more, as the two subfields have considerable, important, but underappreciated overlap; elections and conflict are frequently both about who comes to power and how they take power. In particular, I believe it is essential that conflict dynamics be traced more frequently to electoral strategies and that democratization researchers examine the impact of election strategies on future prospects for political violence *beyond* the 'electoral period,' since conflicts do not arise overnight and may germinate during elections only to sprout, quite tragically but perhaps not so unexpectedly, years later.

In the next chapter, I demonstrate one theoretical explanation for why these delayed effects take place, as incumbents exclude threatening rivals from the ballot, and *some* of those excluded opposition figures or their supporters respond by taking up bullets to launch a coup or civil war.

# CHAPTER ONE: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

## *Overview*

In the summer of 2012, I interviewed Kokhav Koné Abou Bakary Sidick, a public intellectual, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Just months previously, the former 'Ivoirian Miracle'—once one of the finest success stories of post-independence growth and stability on the African continent—suffered its second civil war in a decade, following a coup d'état in 1999. When I asked Mr. Sidick how countries like his could turn from 'miracle' to tragedy so fast, he summed up the three stages linking exclusion to coups and civil wars: "There are three steps. First, there is exclusion. Second, there is a bad election. Third, the excluded group takes power by force."<sup>31</sup>

This summary of stages provides a temporal breakdown that frames the theory tested in this dissertation. This chapter addresses two key questions. First, why do some incumbents exclude their opponents from contesting elections? Second, once electoral exclusion occurs, why and how, if at all, does that exclusion increase the risk of coups d'état and civil wars after the election?

These questions are not abstractions. In 2008, I published an article in *Africa Today* about Côte d'Ivoire's tragic descent into conflict (Klaas 2008). Any scholar of that country would be hard pressed to explain the onset of its multiple episodes of political violence without reference to political exclusion—and in particular, to the targeted exclusion of a single political candidate: Alassane Ouattara. I began to wonder: is this type of targeted exclusion widespread? If so, are its effects as damaging elsewhere as they were in Côte d'Ivoire?

In order to address those questions, I conducted five stints of extended field research across three political regions with the aim of developing a comprehensive theory that could explain this phenomenon. Building on the findings of previous literature (as outlined in the Introduction), I began to see why exclusion was used by incumbents to neutralize rivals and how

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<sup>31</sup> Sidick, Kokhav Koné Abou Bakary. Historian, geographer, public intellectual. Personal interview, 25 July 2012; Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

(some of) those excluded opposition challengers made the decision to take up arms against the state after being excluded. However, I also needed to be certain that exclusion was not simply a variable that occurred in tandem with other salient factors that drive conflict. Drawing on the research of scholars such as Nic Cheeseman, Paul Collier & Anke Hoeffler, Phil Roessler, Sarah Birch, Susan Hyde and Nikolay Marinov, Nancy Bermeo, Andreas Schedler, and Staffan Lindberg—to name but a few—I began my field research, with their ideas guiding my inquiry. This chapter presents my theoretical propositions (and methodological strategy for testing them), incorporating their strongest findings while grafting the intellectual insights of previous scholarship onto my fieldwork-based exploration of my key research questions.

In this assessment, I am most concerned with countries that are *not* consolidated democracies, as election rigging, coups, and civil wars are rare in those regimes. I argue that electoral exclusion makes coups and civil wars more likely in countries that lie between dictatorship and democracy (counterfeit democracies), while only coups are more likely when exclusionary elections are held in more authoritarian-leaning regimes.

This chapter outlines the theoretical basis for why electoral exclusion is an attractive and rational strategy for incumbents; how and why opposition figures are most likely to respond once they are excluded from an election; why this type of strategic interaction between incumbent and opposition is likely to increase the risk of coups and civil wars against the state; and which ‘triggers’ at the individual level make it more likely that armed individuals (soldiers for coups, prospective militias/rebels for civil wars) may attack the state.

More formulaically, I start by exploring the levels of analysis necessary to understand the crucial theoretical underpinnings of these issues. I then present a two-stage theory that examines how incumbents choose whether or not to exclude opposition candidates and, then, how excluded opposition candidates choose whether to be violent in response or not. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the dissertation’s mixed methods for testing these theoretical propositions.

## *Levels of Analysis*

To address the complex contours of how election strategy conditions future political violence, this study requires macro-level, meso-level, and micro-level analysis. Most elections research and most conflict literature only examine one of the three levels. The macro (structural) level is critical for determining which types of countries are most likely to experience electoral exclusion, and which types of countries are most likely to feature future political violence in the form of coups and civil wars once exclusion has taken place. This level of analysis is useful in providing insight into why countries like Japan are less prone to cycles of exclusion and violence than Thailand or Madagascar. The macro/structural level of analysis is not the focus of the dissertation because a substantial volume of literature exists already, though I do believe that my analysis—particularly in the quantitative section—makes key contributions to understanding structural risks and how those risks condition whether an election will be manipulated and whether that manipulation will spark violence. However, relying on macro-level analysis (as has often been the case in causal analyses of coups and civil wars) is insufficient to understanding flawed elections and violent conflict; structural factors provide limited insights into the behaviors, interactions, and strategies of political elites (who may choose to rig elections) or of the actual soldiers in the barracks or the would-be rebels in the hinterland (who may choose to take up arms against the state). I will not specifically explore this level of analysis in this chapter, because there is a substantial amount of literature that touches on structural risk factors for poor quality elections and violent conflicts (as already outlined in the Introduction).

The second level of analysis—which is, in my view, the most important and the least studied—is the meso-level of elite political strategy. This level of analysis provides the cornerstone of my argument: the dynamics of strategic political interaction between the incumbent and the opposition can form a toxic dynamic that leads from electoral exclusion to future coups and civil wars. Meso-level analysis makes it possible to solve the central puzzle in my research: why do elites sometimes exclude rivals from elections, and why are those strategies

often tragically destabilizing? Moreover, elite interaction is highly changeable in a way that structural factors are often not, meaning that policy interventions on the meso level aimed at mitigating the risk of violence or election rigging are more realistic.

The third level of analysis is the micro-level, examining why individuals who are not elites choose to behave in certain ways, particularly with relation to conflict participation. For the purposes of this research, the critical micro-level question relates to why individuals choose to launch rebellions or attempt coups d'état in spite of the high risks to their personal wellbeing and safety. While it is possible to quantify and measure certain factors that may make certain types of individuals *generally speaking* more prone to joining rebellions or taking part in coup attempts, it is more difficult—but perhaps more useful—to examine how individual perceptions and incentives actually interact on a case-by-case basis in order to build a more comprehensive theory about micro-level causality of coups and civil wars. In other words, perhaps it is the case (as has been suggested previously) that poor, less educated individuals, for example, are more likely to join rebellions. But why are the *instigators* of rebellions or coups enticed to launch violence in certain contexts but not others? It is almost certainly not because of relatively static considerations such as their level of education (and even if it were a factor, such findings cannot help political elites mitigate risks of conflict, because there will always be tens of thousands of people who fall into that 'risk' category). As a result, it may be useful to know that recruits often fit a certain profile once conflicts are launched but that knowledge does little to explain or help predict future outbreaks of violence. Instead, the micro-level analysis in this dissertation focuses on the moment at which individual actors are more or less likely to choose to attempt a coup d'état or launch a civil war. This analysis is mostly derived from the subsequent qualitative chapters that revolve around in-depth case studies, using process tracing as a means of broader theory building.

By examining the problem of electoral exclusion and its effects in terms of political violence on all three levels—macro, meso, and micro—I aim to propose a comprehensive theory



that accounts for which types of countries are most likely to experience exclusion and subsequent coups or civil wars (macro-level); why the key political elites in these high-risk countries behave in ways that make such tragedies more likely (meso-level); and why the individual non-elite level actors that are involved in the violence itself are drawn to launch violence or join in the early stages of it despite the enormous personal risks they face (micro-level).

Each level of analysis affects the other two. Structural factors constrain elite behavior. Elite interactions produce structural changes over time. Individuals respond to elite strategies. Cumulatively, with this framework of analysis, I hope that my research fills important gaps by demonstrating that election manipulation and the risk of future strategic political violence against the state are inextricably linked. To show this link, I first turn to the strategic interaction of political elites at the meso-level.

### *Meso-Level Election Strategy: A Two-Stage Game of Incumbents & Challengers*

I view the act of electoral exclusion as a two-stage process. First, the incumbent makes their move: to include their opposition in accordance with normal election procedures or to seek to exclude one or more opposition candidates (by changing the rules of the game or finding another way to keep them off the ballot). Second, *if* the incumbent regime chooses the latter (to exclude), then the opposition faces a choice about how to respond.<sup>32</sup> This two-stage game must be evaluated from both sides—incumbent and challenger. Separately, there is also a distinction that must be made between regime ‘insiders’ and regime ‘outsiders.’ This distinction does not always correspond perfectly to the divide between incumbents and challengers. Opposition leaders may have close relationships with regime ‘insiders’ in the military, for example, even if

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<sup>32</sup> There are several excellent studies of electoral violence that examine this interaction between incumbent and challenger (Boone & Kriger 2010; Klopp & Zuern 2007; Mueller 2008; Scarritt et al. 2001; Taylor, Pevehouse, and Straus 2013). As Taylor, Pevehouse, and Straus make clear, the majority of electoral violence is committed by incumbents. However, this type of violence rarely precipitates regime change in the same way that opposition-led coups and civil wars may.

they are not themselves part of the ruling government. These relationships are salient in the calculations that incumbents and opposition figures make once exclusion occurs. The evaluations of each side—incumbent vs. challenger and their respective relationships with regime insiders or outsiders—are analyzed in theoretical terms here in this chapter before being rigorously tested by quantitative and qualitative methods in subsequent chapters.

In broad terms, I argue that incumbents frequently fall into the tantalizing but poisonous ‘exclusion’ trap—pursuing the short-term (and highly effective) ‘strategic rigging’ tactic of electoral exclusion in order to guarantee their regime’s survival, while discounting the destabilizing longer-term effects of those strategies due to the shortened ‘time horizon’ that inevitably accompanies elections (Bates 2008). I demonstrate that electoral exclusion offers several alluring aspects that other rigging tactics on the ‘menu of manipulation’ do not—making it an even easier trap to fall into for vulnerable incumbents who worry immediately about being deposed in an election, *even if* that may mean an elevated risk being deposed by violence later on (Schedler 2002).

I then argue that opposition figures respond to being excluded based on a number of factors, notably their ability to mobilize their party’s support base against the regime. If the party support base and mobilization capacity is strong and they have no close relationships with regime ‘insiders’ (particularly officers or soldiers in the military), then they should be expected to boycott the election and have a heightened risk of launching a civil war, should the situation turn violent after the election. If the support base and mobilization capacity of the opposition party (or candidate) is weak, but they have close relationships with regime ‘insiders’ (particularly officers or soldiers in the military), then they are less likely to boycott the election but more likely to turn to launching a coup d’état, should violence arise after the election. Finally, I explore the

conditions that may entice individual level (non-elite) actors to launch or support a fledgling rebellion or to join in the planning of an attempted coup d'état.<sup>33</sup>

*Stage one: incumbents choose to include or exclude their opponents*

I contend that electoral exclusion is an attractive strategy for incumbents because it creates a high likelihood of electoral victory with comparatively low reputational costs in terms of international legitimacy. Incumbents seek to maintain power. Prior to the advent of (at least marginally-competitive) multi-party elections across most of the globe, many heads of state actually found that *inclusion* was far more advantageous for stability than exclusion.<sup>34</sup> Excluding strong groups from the center of power—particularly in a patronage state—virtually guaranteed an immediate and potentially devastating challenge to the regime's survival. Conversely, spreading the state's wealth to the key powerful groups within a given country was an effective way to buy off rivals and ensure a continuation of the regime; this key lesson sustained many patronage-based states for decades, allowing a cohort of post-colonial African strongmen (for example) the chance to rule for decades.<sup>35</sup> As Richard Snyder put it: “the more inclusive the regime's patronage network, the lower the risk of armed rebellion” (1998, 55-56).

Phil Roessler's insightful contributions in “The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups and Civil War in Africa” made more explicit and systematic use of this point to argue that inclusion and exclusion also dictated the types of violence that were more feasible for would-be usurpers. Coups can only be launched from *inside* the military, which is part of the state, while civil wars are attacks on the state from the *outside* (Roessler 2011). Disgruntled, powerful groups that are included as insiders of any given regime have access to the military (making coups feasible) while disgruntled, powerful groups that were excluded as outsiders of the regime did not have access

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<sup>33</sup> This is a distinct type of analysis from the recent scholarship on recruitment strategies for the participants once the violent attempt has already begun such as Humphreys and Weinstein (2008).

<sup>34</sup> Some authoritarian regimes held multi-party elections prior to the Third Wave, but they were not widespread globally (in nearly every country) until the fall of the Soviet Union.

<sup>35</sup> President Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire is a prime example of successfully using political patronage to eliminate rival threats; other leaders in the developing world were less effective.

to the military (making civil wars a more feasible option, should political violence arise). Either way, the ideal playbook to mitigate challenges to the regime prior to the onset of multi-party democracy was simple: include powerful groups (while ‘coup proofing’), keeping those groups happy for as long as possible, often with the strategic use of patronage to share state spoils (Arriola 2009).<sup>36</sup> Weak groups mattered less, because they would be unlikely to pose a major challenge to regime survival. As Roessler explains, this tactic allowed states that were vulnerable to the supposed risk-factors for civil wars and coups to avoid succumbing to political violence: “For example, though mountainous terrain, ethnic enclaves, large population, and a sparse state presence may increase the risk of conflict escalation, the regime is able to overcome these unfavorable structural conditions if it can develop strong political ties with powerbrokers from the area that aid the regime with local information and leverage” (2014, 48). This strategy to essentially buy off challengers was easiest in autocratic one-party states.<sup>37</sup>

The calculations that Roessler suggests do not make nearly as much sense in multi-party democracy or multi-party ‘competitive authoritarianism’ masquerading as democracy (Levitsky and Way 2002). The shift in incentives became an important distinction after the Cold War ended as international acceptance of one-party states faded abruptly, raising the comparative costs to autocratic governments (often through the loss of foreign aid or under the specter of international isolation).<sup>38</sup> Prior to the “Third Wave” of democratization, many authoritarian incumbents either did not hold elections or held single-party elections that were blatantly uncompetitive. At that time, Cold War jockeying tended to outweigh international pressure to

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<sup>36</sup> Green (2008) also demonstrates how national-level conflicts between groups can morph into local-level conflicts if decentralization is implemented. Green’s focus is on Uganda, where decentralization during the 1980s altered conflict dynamics at the local level between ethnic groups.

<sup>37</sup> It is important to note that some autocracies are (and have been) more straightforwardly repressive and do not include rivals, crushing opposition rather than suppressing it. For a discussion of this concept in Africa, Chris Allen, (1995), “Understanding African Politics,” *Review of African Political Economy*, 22(65), pp. 301-320.

<sup>38</sup> However, some autocratic states (such as Saudi Arabia, for example) do not face these same pressures to democratize because of their strong ‘linkages’ with patron states such as the United States. For a discussion of how these linkages with the West and leverage from international actors toward domestic political elites affects the prospects for a democratic transition beyond “competitive authoritarianism,” see Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, (2010), *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

democratize; each superpower was eager to attract allied states even if those allies had a tenuous commitment to the ideological preferences of their Soviet or American sponsor—a question of ‘leverage’ and ‘linkage’ (Levitsky & Way 2005). When it came to funding from the East or West, it often mattered more whose side the regime was on, rather than how they came to power—or even what they did once in power.

After the Iron Curtain collapsed, international pressure to democratize became much stronger. Single-party elections were no longer deemed acceptable, and most authoritarian governments started facing consequences if they did not at least go through the pageantry of democracy—especially holding multi-party elections. This change in international standards is key, because rational incumbents quickly recognized the much higher costs of pure autocracy in the 1990s: reduced foreign aid and the threat of international isolation topped the list (Levitsky & Way 2005).

This change also affected the incentives that incumbents faced with regard to excluding or including potential opponents. As explained above, the one-party era was largely characterized by a strong incentive to include powerful groups while excluding weak groups—mitigating the accompanying risk of coups from within by rotating ministers through cabinets, and ensuring that no single figure accumulated a sufficient power base to challenge the regime.<sup>39</sup> For the most part, however, excluding powerful groups would create a viable opponent to the regime (precipitating high costs), while excluding weak groups allowed incumbents the benefit of reducing the number of groups that received patronage without the risk of the regime being challenged (low costs). As a result, effective regimes tended to do exactly that: co-opt strong rivals while excluding (or ignoring) weak opponents.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Of course, important counter-examples exist, such as Nigeria failing to prevent the Biafran secession by relying on near-total-exclusion even of powerful groups. See Belkin & Schofer (2003), Makara (2013), Powell (2012), and Quinlivan (1999) for further discussion of ‘coup-proofing’ strategies.

<sup>40</sup> Incumbent exclusion and co-optation relates directly to the concept of authoritarian durability—how the contours of elite conflict and certain institutional arrangements either allow the persistence of authoritarianism or sow the seeds of genuine democratic transitions. Those discussions, however, have not been explicitly linked to exclusion. See Jason Brownlee, (2007), *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

With multi-party elections, the old playbook no longer made sense. Instead, the best way to rig an election was to get rid of any strong challengers who could win a ‘clean’ election while peppering the ballot with a splintered array of weak candidates who would almost certainly lose.<sup>41</sup> This strategy would ensure an incumbent victory but would also allow those incumbents to point to the plethora of opposition figures on the ballot as a showpiece for international pressure groups keen to support ‘competitive’ elections giving voters real choice in electing their leaders.

Elections also changed the incentives drastically for opposition groups that were not in power themselves. Powerful groups that previously had been co-opted by the regime now had an overt and legitimate way to challenge the regime’s monopoly on power: elections. In a short time span, it was no longer enough for incumbents to be just the patron and take care of clients; now there was a regularized system of choosing who the patrons would be—a tantalizing prospect for clients dependent on the goodwill of the state for their wellbeing.

The changed incentives for incumbents and opposition groups were now antagonistic. Incumbent groups were enticed to turn on the strong groups that they had previously co-opted with patronage at the same time that those strong groups grasped the seductive prospect that they could be the ones to dole out patronage rather than being dependent on patrons for the spoils of the state—so long as they could defeat their former patrons on the ballot.

Even as the incentives changed, however, excluding rivals is still a dangerous and costly game to play. Savvy incumbents surely realized the potentially destabilizing risks of exclusion that are inherent to any political system. Regardless, elections inevitably shorten the time

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Press. See also Steven R. Levitsky and Lucan A. Way. (2012). “Beyond Patronage: Violent Struggle, Ruling Party Cohesion, and Authoritarian Durability,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 10(4), December 2012, pp. 869-889.

<sup>41</sup> Madagascar’s 2006 election is a shining example of this tactic. The presidential incumbent (Marc Ravalomanana) excluded two major rivals but allowed 13 other weak candidates to contest the race; none received more than 13% of the vote, allowing Ravalomanana to coast to victory with just under 55% of votes.

horizon that incumbents must use when making decisions.<sup>42</sup> Previously, inclusion of powerful groups was a long-term strategy aimed at avoiding short-term, destabilizing challenges to the regime. With the introduction of multi-party elections to these one-party autocracies after the Third Wave, the game changed; short-term, possibly destabilizing challenges to the regime were made a regular, institutionalized part of political life in nearly every country, as the incumbent regime's survival was directly challenged by elections—even if they were uncompetitive—every few years. Incumbents began to discount the potential long-term destabilizing (but ultimately unknown) effects of excluding rivals in order to stave off the short-term threat of electoral defeat. This shift in the incumbent's time horizon—introduced by routine elections—is one key reason why incumbents use electoral exclusion even though it may eventually produce highly negative future consequences (Bates 2008). Incumbents can be reasonably certain that including strong rivals by allowing them on the ballot in elections guarantees an immediate threat to their power base.<sup>43</sup>

### *Why don't all incumbents exclude their rivals?*

Given these strong incentives, it seems that all rational incumbents should be drawn to exclude their rivals. Yet in the last 25 years, the overwhelming majority of incumbents have chosen not to (or have been unable to) exclude their rivals from elections. What is stopping them from engaging in a tactic that is effective and alluring?

I propose that there are four main reasons that explain why the majority of incumbents do not exclude their opponents in multi-party elections. First, many incumbents do not believe

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<sup>42</sup> For another example of how elections shift time horizons and determine state policy, see: Kim Yi Dionne, (2010), "The Role of Executive Time Horizons in State Response to AIDS in Africa," *Comparative Political Studies*, 44(1), pp. 55-77.

<sup>43</sup> There may also be a basic psychological drive for leaders to exclude when their power is threatened. In a fledgling subset of the psychology literature, several studies have established that leaders tend to exclude rivals when their grip on power is unstable. As Maner and Mead (2010) demonstrate, vulnerable leaders are innately prone to exclusion—responding “to unstable leadership by increasing the tendency to exclude the high-scoring [i.e. most threatening] group member” (2010, 487). This literature is unfortunately relatively undeveloped in psychology, but adds to the narrative that exclusion of rivals is a natural impulse to neutralize challengers (though it may be precluded based on other overriding incentives, as was previously the case in single-party patronage states).

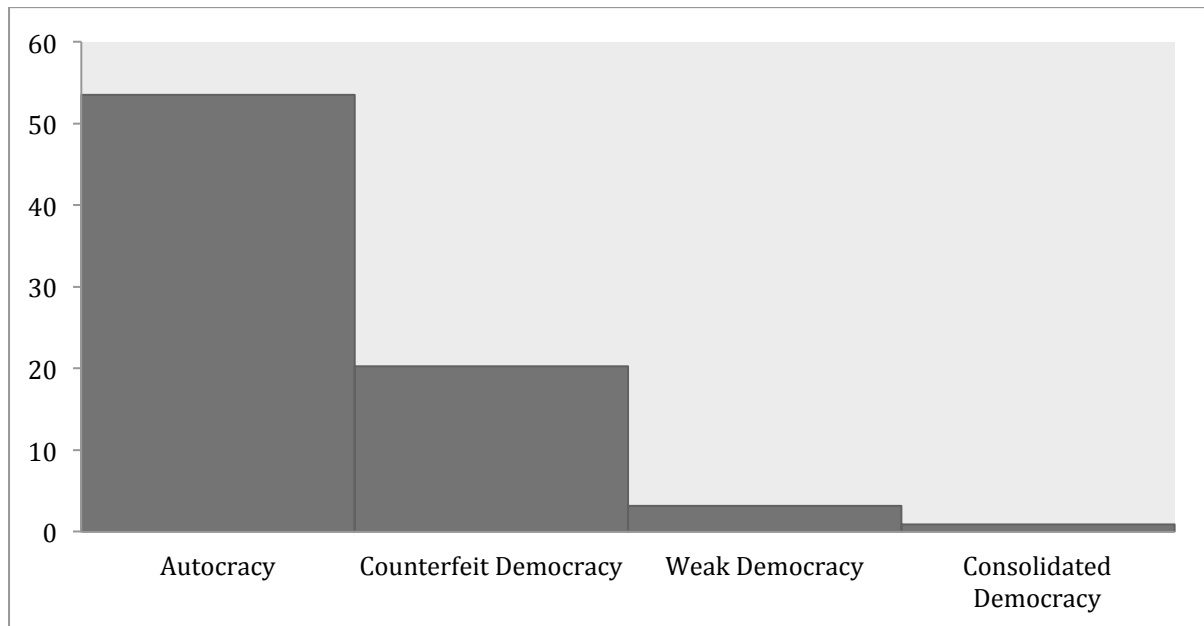
that they will lose. For leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) party in South Africa, for example, excluding rivals in the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA) makes little sense when it is obvious to everyone that the ANC will beat the DA in elections. When the incumbent is already confident of electoral victory, electoral exclusion is not an attractive strategy as it offers few rewards but many potential risks. Second, institutional constraints can preclude the use of electoral exclusion. If Barack Obama had wanted to exclude Mitt Romney from the 2012 presidential elections in the United States, it would have been impossible. There are institutionalized checks and balances in consolidated democracies that stop elites from behaving in certain ways, including engaging in electoral exclusion. As a result, as democratic consolidation increases, the use of electoral exclusion is expected to decrease. Third, incumbents may avoid using electoral exclusion precisely because it may provoke a violent backlash (or widespread, destabilizing protests) that challenge the regime's survival while imposing reputational costs on the incumbent's legitimacy. This aspect is, of course, difficult to measure because it relies on incumbent perceptions of risk, but it is likely a key factor in mitigating the use of electoral exclusion—particularly in non-institutionalized democracies or 'counterfeit democracies' where exclusion is possible, even if it is not the best strategic course of action. Fourth, and finally, some leaders simply choose to play by the democratic rules of the game even when the incentives line up in favor of exclusion. The 1991 Zambian election (wherein Kenneth Kaunda allowed full competition, did not rig the election, and lost) and the 2014 Tunisian elections come to mind as prime examples where the incumbents had sufficient latitude to manipulate the contest by banning their rivals from the ballot but they chose not to do so (Klaas & Dirsus 2014; Rakner 2003). This honorable behavior is even more difficult to study and theorize about, because it is a trait of leadership that is not easy to quantify, predict, or accurately capture with any modeling.

With these four deterrents in mind, and all things being equal—electoral exclusion becomes less likely as the quality of democracy improves. Similarly, some regime types are more



prone to using electoral exclusion than others, in a hierarchical structure. The figure below illustrates this theoretical proposition, with electoral exclusion being most likely in authoritarian states and least likely in consolidated democracies.

Figure 2: Percentage of elections, by regime type, featuring exclusion<sup>44</sup>



However, the figure above obscures a complexity for each regime type. Each regime type faces different incentives and constraints. In particular, I argue that there are two major factors that operate differently at each level: the robustness of institutional constraints on elite behavior and the relative importance of being *perceived* as a democratic state.

Institutional constraints matter far more in real democracies than in weak or counterfeit ones, but all three are unified by the need to ‘appear’ democratic. This is less important to blatantly authoritarian states; as much as North Korea may announce ‘official’ election results, dictatorships are likely aware that they are not fooling anyone. Yet dictatorships still hold elections for a variety of reasons (Boix & Svolik 2008; Gandhi & Przeworski 2006; Magaloni

<sup>44</sup> Autocracy is defined as regimes that lie between -6 and -10 on the Polity2 scale; Counterfeit democracy is defined as regimes that lie between -5 and +5 on the Polity2 scale; weak democracies are regimes that score +6 or +7 on the Polity2 scale; consolidated democracies are regimes that score +8 to +10. Moreover, keep in mind that my data only includes regimes that hold elections. Authoritarian regimes that do not hold elections are not included here.

2006). One key reason is that authoritarian regimes want to signal to rivals that their opposition to the regime is futile—that the margin of electoral victory is so wide that it is more expedient for opponents of the regime to give up than to continue resisting (Geddes 2005; Simpser 2005; Malesky & Schuler 2011). In other words, a convincing guise of democracy in dictatorships is precisely what dictatorships do not want; a genuine democracy may encourage opposition figures to mobilize, while severely rigged elections that seem hopeless for the opposition will potentially force those rival elites to either join the regime or abandon the prospect of challenging the dictatorship.<sup>45</sup>

This is quite different for regimes that care about being seen as democratic. In counterfeit democracies, it is critical that regime outsiders (and international observers, donors, and trade partners in particular) *perceive* that the regime is at least partially democratic in its conduct. Without that perception, the costs of elections rigging are much higher. This is also true, of course, for weak democracies and genuinely consolidated democracies—particularly because democratic expectations grow as the quality of democracy increases.

Yet each type of regime faces different levels of institutional constraints on elite behavior and, in turn, election manipulation. Consolidated democracies, by definition, have high levels of constraints on elite behavior. There are formal, institutionalized rules and guidelines that condition what elites can and cannot do. If a candidate in Sweden tried to blatantly and illegally rig a vote and was caught, they would likely go to jail. If a candidate in Canada rejected the official results of a vote and proclaimed him/herself the winner anyway, they would be laughed at rather than inaugurated. On the opposite end of the spectrum, absolute dictators like Kim Jong-un in North Korea face almost no formal institutionalized constraints on their behavior.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> In fact, Lust-Okar (2005) argues that dictatorships use exclusion and inclusion as a way to co-opt elites into the fold of the regime. By using ‘divided structures of contestation’, they are able to use the carrot and stick of inclusion and exclusion in order to force opposition groups to participate in the dictatorship rather than challenging it.

<sup>46</sup> In every polity, there are constraints on elite behavior. Dictators still have to behave in certain ways lest they be overthrown or lose their domestic support among the coalition of elites and the military that keep them in power; however, there are certainly fewer formal institutionalized constraints in these political systems.

Institutional constraints lie somewhere in between for weak democracy (medium levels) and counterfeit democracy (low levels).

The table below demonstrates my theoretical categorization of how the institutional constraints, importance of democratic perception, and risk of post-election violence condition the types of rigging that might be used in different regime types.<sup>47</sup> Throughout this chapter, I argue that electoral exclusion—and a subsequent outbreak of political violence in response to exclusion—is most likely in counterfeit democracies (-5 to +5 on the Polity scale). In the following section, I explain why these categorizations are coherent and sensible, and why incumbents choose ‘strategic rigging’ such as electoral exclusion over other forms of blatant manipulation such as ballot box stuffing, voter intimidation, or explicit vote buying.

*Figure 3: Regime type, institutional constraints, democratic perception, risk of violence, and rigging strategies*

<b>Regime type</b>	<b>Institutional constraints</b>	<b>Importance of democratic perception</b>	<b>Risk/type of violence</b>	<b>Rigging strategies &amp; scope</b>
Consolidated Democracy	High	High	Low	Very limited ‘strategic rigging’
Weak Democracy	Medium	High	Low/Medium (coups/civil wars)	Limited ‘strategic rigging’
Counterfeit Democracy	Low	High	High (coup); High (civil wars)	Widespread ‘strategic rigging’
Authoritarianism	Very low	Low	Low (civil wars); High (coups)	Widespread rigging of all types

As Figure 3 suggests, I argue that counterfeit democracies are most prone to falling into what I call ‘the exclusion trap’ of provoking future political violence with the use of electoral exclusion

<sup>47</sup> There are, of course, more factors at play here. The 2015 Nigerian election is an instructive example. The incumbent Goodluck Jonathan was operating in a country that was not a consolidated democracy (low constraints); he was not a committed democratic leader; and the risk of violence was high. However, he chose to be inclusive and ultimately lost. In this case, it is likely that a fragmented regime combined with a unified opposition and strong international pressure combined to deter President Jonathan from excluding his rival, Buhari. However, in the interest of being parsimonious, it is impossible to capture every eventuality for why some regimes exclude and others do not; the table above is an approximation that does not encompass the entire global set of variation on this front.

because: the incumbents face low institutional constraints; the incumbent must find a way to rig an election while maintaining the masquerade of democratic perception; and the risk of violence is high because the regime's control of the polity is weak. Levitsky & Way (2002) provide a compelling explanation for these risks in their assessment of 'competitive authoritarian' regimes, which certainly are included in the 'counterfeit democracy' category above. Levitsky & Way argue that "Authoritarian governments may coexist indefinitely with meaningful democratic institutions. As long as incumbents avoid egregious (and well-publicized) rights abuses and do not cancel or openly steal elections, the contradictions inherent in competitive authoritarianism may be manageable" (2002, 58-59). This façade of democracy is particularly dangerous because opposition groups begin to believe that contestation in elections is a possible avenue to power; when incumbent manipulation of the election is the ultimate reason why such contestation is fruitless, political violence becomes more likely. This is distinct from election manipulation in purely authoritarian regimes, when opposition groups are well aware that elections are shams and will never produce a regime change. In those instances, "the death or violent overthrow of the president is often viewed as a more likely means of succession than his electoral defeat" (Levitsky & Way 2002, 55).<sup>48</sup> This does not preclude the possibility that an election will spark political violence, but it does mean that electoral manipulation is expected and routine in authoritarian states.

I now turn to outlining my theoretical propositions on why, once incumbents decide to manipulate an election, they may choose certain forms of rigging off the 'menu of manipulation' over others.

### *A 'Menu of Manipulation' for Incumbents: No Rigging, Crude Rigging, or Strategic Rigging*

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<sup>48</sup> Levitsky & Way (2002) outline four arenas of contestation that, when viewed cumulatively, help define whether a regime is authoritarian, competitive authoritarian, or democratic: 'the electoral arena'; 'the legislative arena'; the 'judicial arena'; and the media.

There are many ways to manipulate an election. Why do some incumbents that choose to manipulate elections use electoral exclusion rather than another strategy? The first hypothesis presented in this dissertation is:

*H1: Electoral exclusion is a rational method of manipulating elections because it provides a strong probability of incumbent victory and inflated margin of victory with fewer reputational costs than most alternative methods.*

This hypothesis can be broken down into two sub-hypotheses for more parsimonious testing.

*H1a: Electoral exclusion provides a strong probability of incumbent victory.*

*H1b: Electoral exclusion inflates the incumbent's margin of victory.*

Incumbents may choose one of three main types of behavior for affecting the outcome of an election. First, they may choose to take no action and let the election take its course within the confines of legitimate conduct. Second, they may choose to manipulate the election with crude tactics such as ballot box stuffing, intimidation, electoral violence, or conjuring up vote tallies out of thin air. Third, they may resort to so-called 'strategic rigging,' in an attempt to change the outcome in their favor with subtle tactics – like electoral exclusion or gerrymandering – that reduce the likelihood of being 'caught' by external oversight groups (Beaulieu & Hyde 2009; Lehoucq 2003).

When is each strategy most likely? First, as outlined above, incumbents may choose to do nothing and let the election play out without manipulation or intervention in one of three main scenarios: when institutionally resilient consolidated democracy is the "only game in town" and exclusion would be unthinkable (in Norway or Japan, for example); when the incumbent is confident of victory and feels manipulation is unnecessary (South Africa ruled by the dominant ANC or Namibia ruled by SWAPO for example); or the regrettably less common but nonetheless admirable final scenario, when a leader committed to democratic reform is willing to risk losing office (or is simply unaware of the genuine risk of defeat) in pursuit of an inclusive

election (Benin's 1991 elections, for example when long-time incumbent Mathieu Kérékou suffered resounding defeats during inclusive founding elections; Gisselquist 2008). In any of these three scenarios, electoral exclusion is not an attractive option. It is unnecessary, or unwanted.

Regrettably, most of the world's polities do not conform to these scenarios. Incumbents are rarely confident of an easy victory; consolidated democracy is frequently *not* the only game in town; and principled and committed democratic reformers are not the most common types of people that take power. What is the decision-making calculus, then, for this wide swath of national-level incumbents in countries that fall in weak democracies or counterfeit democracies?

Incumbents are presumed to worry about winning first and foremost, with concerns about international legitimacy a secondary consideration. After all, losers that play the game cleanly are still losers that no longer have access to state power, a crushing fall for an incumbent (for example, Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda played a noble game in 1991 and included all his opponents; when he tried to regain power in 1996, his opponents were less noble and excluded him—and Kaunda will remain out of power for the rest of his life). However, incumbents usually also care about international approval and legitimacy. Leaders prefer official international recognition (and its associated benefits) to international isolation and condemnation.

Therefore, incumbents must make a tradeoff calculation about the risks and rewards of various election strategies. These calculations are driven by two main factors: the incumbent's confidence that they will win the election without manipulation *and* the corresponding 'effectiveness' of various cheating strategies to ensure that they do win regardless of citizen preferences.<sup>49</sup> For incumbents who firmly believe they can easily win a 'clean' election, cheating is hardly an attractive option because it only offers prospective costs while not changing the

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<sup>49</sup> Some incumbents may not be satisfied with victory and may manipulate excessively—even after excluding opposition candidates—and even if they know that they will win by a wide margin. For example, the latest polls before Georgia's 2000 election put the incumbent ahead 52% to 19% over the strongest rival that was included in the election. Nonetheless, President Shevardnadze still manipulated heavily and went on to win with more than 80% of the official vote tally. See Alberto Simpser. (2008), "Cheating Big: On the Logic of Electoral Corruption in Developing Countries." *University of Chicago Working Paper*.

already favorable outcome of the vote. Vulnerable incumbents do not have this luxury; once they have realized that they *may* lose the election without rigging or manipulation, electoral malfeasance is far more likely—and then comes the difficult decision of deciding which form of rigging would be the most cost effective strategy.

All things being equal, if manipulation is necessary to stave off the specter of electoral defeat, then (from the perspective of the incumbent) the ‘worst’ cheating strategies provide only marginal insurance against defeat with a high risk of being caught. Conversely, the ‘best’ cheating strategies provide a nearly guaranteed probability of victory with a low chance of being caught and condemned.

*Figure 4: The hierarchy of election manipulation tactics with reference to impact and risk of detection*

Strategy type	Rigging impact	Risk of detection	Likely victory?	International legitimacy?
No manipulation	None	None	Unclear	Yes
Strategic Manipulation	High	Low	Yes	Likely
Blatant & Effective Manipulation	High	High	Yes	Unlikely
Blatant & Ineffective Manipulation	Low	High	No	Unlikely

Therefore, as Figure 4 highlights, the most desirable options for incumbents operating in a political system where international legitimacy has any meaningful impact are: 1) winning power in an election without having to resort to manipulation (ideal); 2) winning power with high impact, low-risk strategic manipulation that does not affect international legitimacy (acceptable risk, ideal outcome), 3) winning power but losing legitimacy due to detected but

effective manipulation (high cost, but remain in power); and 4) losing power and/or legitimacy with blatant but ineffective election manipulation tactics.<sup>50</sup>

Even when optimal strategies exist, incumbents make mistakes. As a result, even though it is often wiser to use subtle strategic manipulation, some incumbents have nonetheless chosen (and continue to choose) crude, effective, but easily detected election manipulation tactics. Such tactics—including ballot box stuffing, intimidation, and fake vote tallies to name but a few—were the most often used tools used in the toolbox of election manipulators prior to the end of the Cold War and throughout much of the 1990s. They persist, but are becoming less common (Birch 2011). Several options on the ‘menu of manipulation’ fall in this category (Schedler 2002). Why did election norms change progressively over time since the 1980s, and why have the costs of cheating since been raised?

#### *The end of the Cold War and the beginning of international election observation*

As the Cold War drew to a close, incumbent election thieves began realizing that perception and finesse mattered; many began to attempt to mitigate perceptions (both international and domestic) of an election being stolen. Exclusion had been used before (and effectively too) but it was not done the same way and the intent was not particularly strategic; in fact, for the majority of cases of electoral exclusion that occurred between 1945 and 1989, exclusions took place in wholly uncompetitive elections (with no more than one candidate). Most of those that allowed competition pre-1989 did so with ‘friendly opposition’ or token candidates that could not win.

*Figure 5: Electoral Exclusion and Uncompetitive Elections over Time*

	1945-1989	1989-2000	2001-2010
Number of Elections	1,497 (32/year)	764 (64/year)	667 (67/year)
Cases of Electoral Exclusion	449	96	83

<sup>50</sup> It is also likely that incumbents prefer to win non-manipulated elections, all else being equal, for the information benefits that elections provide. With manipulation, incumbents have less accurate information about citizen preferences because the results are clouded by the byproducts of electoral malfeasance. Information about citizen preferences is important, regardless of regime type. Even in dictatorships, accurate information about citizen dissent and opposition can be useful in maintaining power and perpetuating the regime’s survival.



Percentage of elections featuring exclusion	29.9%	12.4%	12.5%
Percentage of exclusionary elections that allowed any opposition to run	47%	81%	91%

As the Cold War ended, it became increasingly clear that uncompetitive elections needed to at least be packaged as competitive ones. For example, in 1988, shortly before the Soviet Union collapsed, Mexico held elections. The conduct of the Mexican authorities—particularly the ruling party—illustrates a key development in the evolution of election manipulation. In most previous elections, the authorities were not careful to avoid outright rigging. They always tried to make the pageantry look proper to outsiders (though there were rarely observers). But when power was up for grabs, they grabbed it. Mexico’s 1988 election was a watershed moment in starting a more sensitive style of election manipulation. The ruling PRI party (and President Miguel de la Madrid) anticipated an easy victory for their party’s chosen candidate, Carlos Salinas. Election night returns caught them off guard. Salinas was losing, and the PRI had not rigged the vote sufficiently to counteract the popular push to dethrone their party. Their grip on power was at risk (Greene 2007; Redding 1988; Simpser 2012).<sup>51</sup>

Unlike many prior counterparts, de la Madrid worried intensely about international perception, sensing that his party would face consequences if the election seemed stolen. As a result, de la Madrid and his cohort came up with a flawed solution aimed at creating a semblance of legitimacy. They faked a supposed computer malfunction and then released completely made up results—giving the PRI’s Salinas 50.7% of the vote. The number was deliberately picked as a low mandate so as to maximize the believability of the result; it was presumed that a landslide result would be recognized as fraud.<sup>52</sup>

In some cases, the opposition was able to document this fraud, or as Mexican slang referred to it, electoral ‘alchemy.’ In one district, the PRI won by a narrow margin, 137 to 99

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<sup>51</sup> “I felt like a bucket of ice water had fallen on me,” de la Madrid recalled. “I became afraid...that the PRI would lose the presidency,” quoted in: “Ex-President in Mexico Casts New Light on Rigged 1988 Election,” *New York Times*, 9 March 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

votes. Officials replaced that tally sheet with another that awarded over 1,000 votes to the PRI in the same district.<sup>53</sup> The international community sensed the fraud and condemned it, and even though the PRI ‘won’ the election and maintained power, their position in the international community suffered.<sup>54</sup>

At the meso-level of political action, such moments were watershed events in the development of incumbent strategy regarding electoral manipulation. The Mexican experience right at the end of the Cold War taught two lessons. First, times were changing, and international actors were now willing to impose potentially biting consequences on countries that held ‘bad’ elections (admittedly to an increasing degree over time; some atrociously undemocratic early multi-party elections were endorsed by the international community).<sup>55</sup> Second, incumbents that wanted to cheat and rig while maintaining international legitimacy needed to find ways to manipulate their elections subtly, in order to evade detection.

These lessons were reinforced as the collapse of the Soviet Union catalyzed the spread of international election observation as a crucial norm. Soon, elections without outside oversight by international observers were not deemed credible. During the five years after the Cold War ended (1989-1994), 72 countries invited international election monitors to observe 99 separate elections (Hyde 2011, 69).<sup>56</sup> This was a sharp surge; monitors observed more than double the number of elections in those five years than they had globally in the previous three decades (Hyde 2011, 8).<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the distribution of observed elections marked a sharp break with the past. While the Cold War skew made it far more likely that a country allied with the West (and the United States in particular) would invite international observers, the surge in post-Cold

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<sup>53</sup> “Indications of Mexico Election Fraud Mount,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 July 1988.

<sup>54</sup> Kenneth Greene’s influential work on the PRI decline in Mexico demonstrates the complex nuance beyond these dynamics. The PRI allowed opposition groups to make small gains in certain regions and at some levels of government in exchange for continued legitimacy and survival of the regime. In other words, the regime was used to buying off opposition groups. However, the 1988 elections proceeded in a new international context which precluded the success of these past strategies.

<sup>55</sup> For example, Kenya’s 1992 and 1997 elections, were declared largely “free and fair” by many members of the international community, despite rampant irregularities and electoral fraud.

<sup>56</sup> As noted previously, 41 elections were monitored by international observers between 1962 and 1988.

<sup>57</sup> Between 1960 and 1990, fewer than 5% of elections were monitored by an outside group or government.

War election monitoring was spread evenly, regardless of prior Cold War allegiances (or deliberate non-alignment). The international community often refused to reward countries holding severely flawed elections, particularly if they did not hold sway with regard to critical geo-strategic interests that could prompt international actors to ‘overlook’ such blatant election flaws (Carothers 2002).<sup>58</sup>

These changes meant that the costs of blatant manipulation were raised for most (but not all) countries; not only could incumbents lose crucial international support if their elections were condemned by international observers, but they could also light a tinderbox of internal opposition in response to reports of manipulation from observers (Daxecker 2012).<sup>59</sup> Of course, for ‘rentier states’ (such as Bahrain or Angola) with steady streams of income regardless of international support, or regimes that were insulated from international pressure due to their geostrategic importance (such as Saudi Arabia), these calculations were different—but the overall trend clearly demonstrates that international support is an important ‘carrot’ that most fragile regimes seek as they aim to avoid the ‘stick’ of international isolation (Levitsky & Way 2005).

Incumbents respond to incentives, so the rising costs of brazen fraud have corresponded to a surge in ‘strategic manipulation’ (Beaulieu & Hyde 2009).<sup>60</sup> Cheeseman argues that presidents in Senegal, Tanzania, and Zambia, for example, relied on strategic rigging because such “strategies could be implemented well before the arrival of foreign election observers and so they advantaged incumbents without inviting international criticism (2015, 149). This is the third choice available to incumbents in the run-up to elections; they can tilt the playing field in their favor and hope to get away with it by resorting to subtle tactics, sometimes even shielded

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<sup>58</sup> See Thomas Carothers, (2002), “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” *Journal of Democracy*, 13(1), pp. 6-21 for further discussion of how the discourse about democracy promotion has allowed Western supporters of democracy to be blinded to the fact that progress has stalled in most so-called democracies in “transition.”

<sup>59</sup> Daxecker establishes that post-election violence increases on the domestic level when fraud is exposed by international observers; this gives further incentive to incumbents to avoid detection when they use manipulation tactics. However, there were certainly exceptions to the rule as the international community has a mixed record on condemning rigged elections consistently. See Brown (2001) for an analysis of how foreign donors kept Daniel Arap Moi in power even after it became crystal clear that he was blatantly manipulating elections.

<sup>60</sup> Beaulieu & Hyde use this term and describe it as when incumbents “manipulate the election in ways that observers were less likely to catch or criticize.”

by legalistic excuses. Electoral exclusion falls squarely in this camp.<sup>61</sup> The strategy allows incumbents to potentially deflect international and domestic criticism but ensures that the electoral playing field will be firmly tilted toward another incumbent victory. Of the three options—doing nothing, effective but blatant manipulation, and strategic manipulation—the last choice offers the best cost/benefit ratio for incumbents keen to stay in power without losing international legitimacy for having rigged an election.

If these theoretical assumptions are correct, we should expect to see exclusion being used more frequently as countries move away from their ‘founding election.’ International observers are more likely to be cheerleaders than chastisers during a country’s first attempt at a democratic election—even if it involves severe flaws. Presumably, however, international scrutiny should be expected to be less forgiving after founding elections—creating higher costs for rigging in subsequent contests.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, a simple statistical analysis shows that this is precisely the case. In founding elections, incumbents chose to use electoral exclusion 12.9% of the time. In elections immediately following the founding election, that figure rises slightly to 14.1%. In subsequent elections (founding +2 or more), electoral exclusion was used in 18.7% of elections.<sup>63</sup> This finding provides some support (but not definitive proof) to the notion that as international pressure to hold clean elections increases, the attractiveness of subtler strategic manipulation such as electoral exclusion rises too.

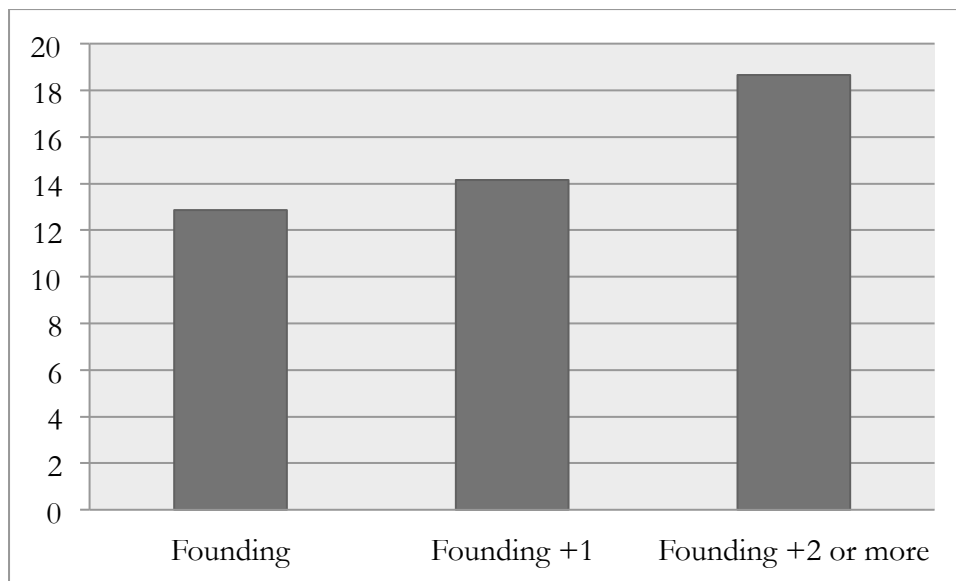
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<sup>61</sup> Similar manipulation tactics include gerrymandering (ideally using an “independent” districting commission), or slanting voter registration procedures so that opposition bastions are less likely to be on the voter rolls. These are in some ways even subtler (or at least less transparent) than electoral exclusion, and are certainly worthy topics for further research. Cheeseman 2015 provides a particularly good overview of how gerrymandering has been used in African elections to tilt the playing field in favor of the incumbent.

<sup>62</sup> For example, the international benchmark for acceptable election conduct was likely lower for a founding election in a country like Benin in 1991 than it is today, when they have been holding elections for more than twenty years. The definition of “founding election” comes from the NELDA dataset: This indicates when a country is newly independent is having its first elections, when a country holds the first multiparty elections after a significant period of non-democratic rule, or when a country transitions from single-party elections to multi-party elections. Multiparty means that more than one party is allowed to contest the election, and that at least some of the parties are both nominally and effectively independent of the ruling actors.

<sup>63</sup> This analysis is based on a sample of 106 countries that had founding elections during the period under review, 1989 to 2010. Consolidated democracies were not considered (Polity IV scores of 9 or 10) because the key statistic is the proportion of elections featuring exclusion in countries where manipulation would likely occur.

Figure 5: Percentage of elections featuring exclusion in relation to 'founding' elections



### *Why do incumbents use electoral exclusion over other strategic rigging tactics?*

Under the umbrella of “strategic manipulation,” electoral exclusion is just one possible tactic. Why do incumbents seem drawn to exclusion above other options? In my view, there are four reasons: electoral exclusion offers simpler logistics, allows incumbents to hide behind legalistic excuses (deniability / distancing themselves from rigging), allows them to ‘get away with it’ (rigging an election but still receiving international approval), and finally, it is extremely effective (substantially increased margin of victory). Each of these justifications alone would be enough to make electoral exclusion a tantalizing strategy, but the combination of all four makes it even more alluring.

First, logistically, exclusion can be more straightforward than other forms of manipulation. Electoral exclusion requires a legal rule change, a judicial ruling, or, even something as basic as a presidential decree. As outlined in figure 2 above, weak democracies and counterfeit democracies have fewer constraints on elite behavior than consolidated democracies; authoritarian regimes face virtually no formal, unbendable constraints on the leader’s behavior. For example, in counterfeit democracies, ‘independent’ electoral commissions are often not

‘independent’ at all, making exclusion even easier to achieve. In such regime types, cruder traditional tactics like rigging and ballot box stuffing are much more complicated and more uncertain—unless you can be sure that your logistical operation is sufficiently widespread to guarantee victory. Regardless, each type of nonstrategic rigging requires a national network of cronies to manipulate the election.<sup>64</sup>

Madagascar’s 2013 presidential election provides an illustrative example—something I saw first-hand when I served as an election observer. The island is nearly the size of France, with much more rugged terrain and far less developed infrastructure. There were 20,001 polling locations, and an average of 300 to 400 voters were registered at each polling location (Carter Center 2014). In order to make a substantial difference to the national tally of nearly four million ballots cast without putting so many ballots in each box that the count of voters exceeded the number of registered voters at the polling location, ballot stuffing would need to occur on a systematic small-scale in nearly every district throughout Madagascar. Even if the incumbent could successfully recruit enough cronies, there is uncertainty: what if they fail to stuff enough ballots to overcome an insurmountable public preference for the challenger? These logistical barriers have become higher as the risk of ‘getting caught’ by election observers has risen. Regardless, in Madagascar’s case, exclusion was logistically simple while ballot box stuffing was not, so the former was used and the latter was not.

Second, incumbents use exclusion because it allows them to hide behind legal justifications, providing a smokescreen defense if criticized by either domestic or international actors.<sup>65</sup> In fragile, non-institutionalized democracies, courts and legislatures are often far more malleable, particularly to the will of the ruling regime. In what I call ‘counterfeit democracies’, judges and election commissioners know that they are more likely to be rewarded in the future if

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<sup>64</sup> Even then, technologies aimed at preventing such fraud are proving effective: from the simple zip ties that prevent easy access to ballot boxes to the more sophisticated parallel vote tabulation procedure, attempted antidotes to more crude methods have had some success.

<sup>65</sup> Beaulieu & Hyde (2008) and Hyde (2011) provide an important analysis of how strategic rigging relies on avoiding detection by monitors in order to be successful.

they behave according to the interests of the ruling regime. As a result, incumbents are frequently able to push through a legal change that would outlaw a specific challenger before an election takes place, or pressure a purportedly ‘independent’ judiciary to bar the candidate from competing. Then, when observers or foreign governments examine the legal procedures prior to election day, the incumbent can ‘wash their hands’ of the exclusion process and attribute the manipulation to an ‘independent’ body rather than the whims of a self-interested incumbent. Traditional means of rigging such as intimidation, violence, and ballot box stuffing offer no similar benefits, nor do most alternative forms of ‘strategic manipulation’.<sup>66</sup>

Third, as a result of legal justifications and other ‘legitimations,’ electoral exclusion is a preferred tactic because incumbents routinely ‘get away with it,’ even under the watchful eyes of international observers. This phenomenon can be measured. Using data on all internationally observed elections between 1989 and 2010, I analyzed how often electoral exclusion occurred without corresponding international condemnation of the election (Hyde & Marinov 2012). In 45.3% of all elections that were observed during that period, elections that featured electoral exclusion received positive verdicts from international monitors (Hyde & Marinov 2012).<sup>67</sup> In other words, there was almost a 50% chance—a coin flip—that electoral exclusion would allow incumbents to have their cake and eat it too—neutralizing an electoral threat by excluding them from the election altogether but still receiving international praise for holding a ‘free and fair’ democratic election. Moreover, 45.3% is a conservative estimate, because some of the condemnations from observers are likely ‘false positives,’ wherein the election was condemned for other types of manipulation or electoral separate from electoral exclusion, such as crude

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<sup>66</sup> Gerrymandering is an important exception, particularly when commissions that purport to be representative of different political groups draw the district lines. In the United States, for example, gerrymandering is done in a wholly legal manner that includes both major political parties but is nonetheless a clear example of deliberate electoral malfeasance. However, it is important to remember that many of these elections in sham democracies are presidential, meaning that gerrymandering cannot help because the vote takes place throughout the country rather than in parceled up districts.

<sup>67</sup> Both are binary variables from the NELDA dataset; there were 95 elections during that period that both featured exclusion and were observed by election monitors. Of them, 52 were condemned and 43 were given a nod of approval.

rigging tactics or opaque campaign finance.<sup>68</sup> Undeniably, there is a reasonable chance that electoral exclusion can take place without international condemnation.

Moreover, incumbents ‘get away with it’ more in some places than others—which makes electoral exclusion an even more appealing election rigging tactic in some geographical areas. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, incumbents ‘got away’ with exclusion more than 60% of the time, better odds than elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> Part of this may be attributable to regional biases of observers, who set a different standard of ‘acceptable’ levels of democracy in different regions. In areas that have little or no democratic heritage, when they see cynical manipulations (like electoral exclusion), “foreign observers sometimes adopt the attitude, ‘Well, what can you expect?’” (Carothers 1997, 24).

The observers’ blind eye to exclusion is partly because of legal justifications but also partly because most international election observation missions use an array of criteria to evaluate an election; candidate registration is (understandably) just one component of their judgment amongst several other considerations. However, not all forms of manipulation are equal. For example, if a single polling place fails to open, or 400 voters do not receive their voter cards in time for the election (two common problems), that should surely be noted by election observers—but it is not comparable to the decision to exclude a key candidate from the election altogether. Far too often, reports seem to suggest that elections are events that can be scored and tallied up, with the overall judgment being made on the overall score across several separate aspects of election quality. However, excluding the most important opposition figure—for example—is such an egregious violation of democratic choice that no other amount of

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<sup>68</sup> In other words, even though just over 50% of elections featuring exclusion were condemned by observers, it is possible that many were condemned because of other types of manipulation. If an election featured exclusion but also featured voter intimidation and was condemned primarily for the latter, it would be an example of a false positive. Manipulated elections often have overlapping forms of rigging; therefore, the 50% estimate is quite conservative and observers may validate electoral exclusion itself far more frequently.

<sup>69</sup> 60.9% of the time, to be precise. This is an important finding that requires further research because presumably election observation standards *should* be uniform across all regions of the world. To ensure that this was not simply a fluke, I ran a probit regression using whether or not observers claimed that fraud took place as the dependent variable among the cases where exclusion happened, and sub-Saharan Africa was highly statistically significant—meaning the region is far less likely to be condemned for equivalent fraud compared to other regions—at least in that preliminary model.



positive aspects of election quality can swing the pendulum back toward the notion that the election was ‘free and fair.’ This is not always the way that observers see it. All too frequently, observer reports recognize and even condemn the exclusion of a major opposition figure, but still give the proverbial thumbs up to the election (Madagascar’s 2006 and 2013 elections are both prime examples). Regrettably, when this happens, it reinforces the effectiveness of exclusion because it creates a simple roadmap for incumbents to follow in the future: rig with exclusion, but dress up the other aspects of the election, and you can get away with it. Additionally, in many cases, the act of electoral exclusion is conducted in accordance with legal changes, so the observers do not condemn it at all in the first place—sacrificing the spirit of democracy to the letter of an easily bended law in non-institutionalized counterfeit or weak democracies. This has happened even in cases where it is clear that the legal change is targeted at a specific candidate, or where the change happens immediately before the election.

Part of this problem arises from the fact that observers put too much emphasis on election day, giving less consideration to long-term pre-election manipulation. As Thomas Carothers of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace put it in a biting critique of international election observers, “An overemphasis on election day often leads observers to produce overly favorable assessments of the electoral process. In many cases the mechanical aspect of the voting is reasonably fair but the pre-election period is plagued by numerous problems, such as obstacles to the registration of certain candidates...” (1997, 22).<sup>70</sup> Long-term observation is costly, complex, and nuanced. Short-term and election day monitoring is cheap and simple to evaluate, so observers typically cut corners.

Fourth, and possibly most importantly, electoral exclusion is appealing as a strategy for vulnerable incumbents because it works. In most cases, it not only guarantees victory, but it guarantees a much larger margin of victory—and the claims of a legitimate mandate that comes

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<sup>70</sup> Carothers cites Russia’s 1996 election as an example of a contest that was plagued by extreme flaws in just about every aspect *other* than the actual voting. It received glowing endorsements from international observers.

with it. According to my analysis (discussed in further depth in Chapter Two), in all national presidential elections (1989-2010), the average margin of victory was 30 percentage points higher when exclusion was used than when it was not. Some of this comes from severely skewed elections where exclusion results in a greater than 90% share of the vote for the incumbent. However, even if extreme landslide election outliers are removed (*i.e.* elections with a margin greater than 90%), the impact is still substantial, with exclusion increasing the average margin of victory by more than 20%. This strong effect has two implications. First, it means that rational incumbents *should* be drawn to exclusion because it has high impact (and the previous three reasons cited above also demonstrate that it is less risky than many alternatives). Second, the fact that electoral exclusion is producing drastic swings in victory margins suggests that, on average, the exclusion is not being used against minor candidates. Incumbents are targeting major challengers that pose a threat to their power—the most rational way to use exclusion if electoral victory is the primary goal.<sup>71</sup>

These four reasons provide a strong incentive for incumbents to exclude their opponents on both levels of the electoral game. In domestic politics, removing an electoral threat from the ballot provides an avenue for incumbents to virtually ensure victory before voting happens. On the international stage, incumbents can hide behind legal justifications and limit their exposure to criticism—minimizing the possibility of losing crucial international diplomatic and financial support. These benefits are complemented by the fact that exclusion is easy in logistic terms compared to other forms of rigging and that it is highly effective and it is not hard to understand why exclusion is now one of the favored tactics of strategic manipulation around the globe.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> I conducted a full review of all cases of exclusion from 2009-2010 to ensure that the majority of these cases involved major figures rather than sideshow candidates. In the vast majority of cases, from Turkmenistan and Tunisia (authoritarian), to Azerbaijan, Iraq and Haiti (counterfeit democracy), the excluded candidates were presumed by analysts to garner a major share of the vote if they had been allowed to compete.

<sup>72</sup> Obviously, blatant manipulation continues and there are other effective forms of strategic manipulation. The point here is not to establish that exclusion is the only viable form of manipulation but to demonstrate why it is viable and becoming more common.

## *An Excluded Opposition: Participate in a Flawed Process or Boycott the Vote?*

Having established the domestic and international calculations that draw incumbents toward exclusion, how are opposition figures likely to behave *if* they are excluded from an election? Should violence become more likely in those instances?

Opposition challengers, like their incumbent counterparts, seek political power. Most of the time, opposition movements in fledgling, fragile, frequently manipulated democracies face long odds; betting on the incumbent in these polities is usually a safe bet. As a result, it is reasonable to assume that these movements will most often seek the path of least resistance to power. This may not always be by winning elections (the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt before the Arab Spring did not stand much of a chance on the ballot, for example), but generally speaking, elections are viewed as the legitimate path to power in nearly every country.<sup>73</sup>

The choice of opposition movements to compete in elections is not always straightforward or obvious. In some cases—particularly in elections where extreme manipulation is likely—the opposition may opt to boycott rather than tacitly legitimate the process by competing and losing. Some recent scholarship has even suggested that the rise of international election observation has produced a corresponding rise in boycotts; the argument suggests that international scrutiny amplifies the effect of boycotts, offering a more visible and potent platform for opposition groups to actively discredit elections (Beaulieu & Hyde 2009).<sup>74</sup> Regardless, the role of boycotts in theoretical terms is an important consideration—particularly because it directly relates to the aforementioned paradox of presenting the same types of dynamics that Roessler (2011) highlights in arguing that inclusive strategies allow opposition groups access to the military, thereby raising the risk for coups, while exclusive strategies invite

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<sup>73</sup> However, even in places like North Korea, power is legitimated through elections. There are few countries that do not at least pay lip service to this principle.

<sup>74</sup> Beaulieu & Hyde also highlight the fact that sometimes opposition groups use boycotts as a sort of sour grapes approach to discrediting elections that they would not have won, even if they been completely free and fair. The opposing view to this thesis was presented in Judith Kelley, (2011), “Do International Election Monitors Increase or Decrease Opposition Boycotts?” *Comparative Political Studies*, 45(7), pp. 1527-1556, who argues that the correlation between observers and boycotts occurs simply because observers are drawn to more fraudulent elections—a problem of selection bias.

rebellion. In this way, the response of opposition groups to elections also conditions which types of violence are most likely should violence break out after a flawed election.

Many of the calculations that challengers make are directly affected by the behavior of the incumbent regime. When an incumbent allows the opposition to run for office (choosing a strategy other than electoral exclusion), the challengers have to decide whether to compete or not. If the opposition perceives that an election is unwinnable (either due to long-shot odds based on their popularity or the threat of extreme manipulation) then a boycott may seem more appealing than an inevitable defeat. Lindberg (2004) confirmed this hypothesis that the perceived quality of elections has a substantial impact on whether parties choose to boycott.<sup>75</sup> However, boycotts come with costs, so “opposition parties do not undertake the decision to boycott lightly” (Beaulieu & Hyde 2009, 397). Boycotts guarantee that the party will not be represented in the legislature (or presidency) and may produce long-term costs to the party’s credibility. If the legislature is involved in appointments to other offices, such as long-time judgeships, the implications of a boycott may last for a generation or more. These costs must be weighed against the potential upside of a boycott: imposing reputational costs on the election and the incumbent by tarnishing their legitimacy.<sup>76</sup>

Once excluded, it may seem reasonable to assume that the majority of opposition parties choose to boycott that election. Statistically, there is some overlap between electoral exclusion and boycotts—but the majority of time that exclusion happens, a boycott does not ensue in the same election cycle (be it presidential or parliamentary; Hyde & Marinov 2012).<sup>77</sup> Boycotts only make sense as an effective tool in certain circumstances. In established democracies, major political parties have established followings and comprehensive networks of supporters. This is

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<sup>75</sup> “Whereas all opposition parties participated in only 40-45 percent of the flawed elections, the equivalent rate hits around 90 percent in elections that were free and fair. This is presumably for good reasons yet it provides hard facts on what we have suspected: free and fair elections are a crucial factor in making all actors wanting to play along.” Staffan Lindberg, (2004), “When Do Opposition Parties Boycott Elections?” *The Dynamics of Electoral Authoritarianism*, CIDE, presented in Mexico, 2-3 April 2004.

<sup>76</sup> Of course, if manipulations are used to attack a party that is clearly the strongest political force (as will be explored in the chapter on Thailand), then there may be no incentive to boycott, as the party is confident of victory—even in a manipulated contest.

<sup>77</sup> Boycotts accompanied exclusion in only 25.31% of elections between 1989 and 2010.

not the case in many fledgling, fragile democracies—particularly ones where electoral competition is heavily manipulated by the incumbent regime. Instead, political parties sometimes are ‘empty shells’, revolving around an individual, and often with the promise of patronage rather than policy goals. Other times, the parties are more robust. After electoral exclusion happens, these differences matter.

On the one hand, if an excluded candidate is part of a robust political party that has a deep support base, strong organization, and the ability to galvanize its followers, then electoral exclusion is likely to produce a boycott.<sup>78</sup> Boycotts in this situation would be effective; they would substantially reduce turnout and call into question the legitimacy of the election (Beaulieu 2006). Moreover, these parties rarely have the chance to simply run another candidate; the exclusion usually takes place in the final certification of registered candidates rather than in a preliminary stage where parties have time to react and reorganize their strategy.

On the other hand, if an excluded candidate is part of an empty shell political party based on patronage, then electoral exclusion can effectively neutralize that candidate’s impact on the election. Boycotts are less likely to be effective in this scenario for two reasons. First, ‘empty shell’ candidates often do not have an institutionalized party structure to push a boycott effectively. This is particularly true in places that have a political heritage of patronage politics, because transactional relationships at the local level are key drivers of political action (or inaction). Second, with the head of the party shut out from the tap of power and state wealth (by being excluded), supporters are far more likely to ‘jump ship’ and seek another patron who can deliver on their promises.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, these types of candidates are less likely to engage in boycotts once excluded and more likely to look for some form of targeted/elite response rather than a mass-based challenge to the government.

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<sup>78</sup> This could also be true if the formal party structure is weak but the individually excluded candidate can draw on a strong support base at a mass level (*i.e.* a union, a former guerilla group, a cohesive ethnic group, etc.).

<sup>79</sup> This is less true when the exclusion is also directed toward the broader population because they feel that their fates are intertwined with their excluded political leader, as was the case in Côte d’Ivoire during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Sometimes, boycotts disintegrate into a complete withdrawal of the targeted opposition from all forms of legitimate politics—and incumbents may deliberately try to achieve this goal. Alberto Simpser (2008) argues that the prospect of forcing reduced opposition participation can be a tactic for incumbents that decide to engage in ‘cheating big,’ even if they know they will win the election. For example, Simpser cites Hugo Chavez’s unexpectedly large mandate (inflated by electoral manipulation) in Venezuela as sparking a demoralizing effect for the opposition, driving apathy but also driving extreme opposition elements underground away from the open sphere of political competition (where they realized they would never be pitted against an opponent that fights fairly).<sup>80</sup> The same can be said in Côte d’Ivoire, when supporters of repeatedly excluded candidate Alassane Ouattara stopped voting and started plotting rebellion. Just as Bates (2008) theorized broadly, supporters of Ouattara operating with a shortened time horizon related to the election realized that their opponent was not fighting fairly—and perhaps never would—and that playing the incumbent’s electoral game would end in perpetual defeat (with limited prospect for long-term returns). In that scenario, bullets became more attractive than challenging with ballots. But it begs the question: does that relationship between manipulated electoral politics and political violence hold true generally?

### *Does Electoral Exclusion Spark Coups d’État and Civil Wars?*

Is this tradeoff systematic? Exclusion clearly produces public discontent, as can be seen in how frequently riots and protests follow electoral exclusion. Just over 25% of elections between 1989 and 2010 featuring exclusion also experienced riots or protests surrounding the election (the figure is nearly identical for boycotts; Hyde & Marinov 2012). When an election features a boycott but no exclusion, riots and protests take place about 14.3%. And, when elections feature neither exclusion nor boycotts, riots and protests occur just 12.4% of the time. Clearly, exclusion is a major driver of riots and protests in a way that boycotts are not. *Ceteris*

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<sup>80</sup> See Michael Johnston, (2005), p. 25: “Where corrupt networks dominate politics, citizens will more likely respond in evasive ways—dropping out of politics or the mainstream economy.”

*parabola*, exclusion sparks greater discontent than inclusion in elections. General discontent does not spark coups or civil wars, but it may exacerbate their respective risk factors. Politicians or other opportunistic actors in the political sphere may attempt to harness this electoral discontent to launch a bout of post-electoral political violence—something that is less easy to do when people generally believe that the election was conducted properly and fairly for all parties involved.

How such political opportunists choose to harness discontent is dependent on context. Just as boycotts become comparatively more attractive before an election when the alternative is an inevitable electoral defeat, coups and civil wars become more attractive after the opposition is excluded from an election—making it impossible for them to compete in the legitimate political sphere. All things being equal, the opposition would prefer to topple the incumbent in that legitimate sphere, taking power by the ballot rather than with bullets. After all, there are few, if any, downsides to securing power by winning an election; democratic victories are usually rewarded by international recognition, a continuation of foreign aid, and a mandate of perceived legitimacy. Violent victories receive none of those benefits and come with substantial risks—failed rebellions and failed coup plots usually do not end well for the perpetrators, particularly under these (usually) unforgiving regimes. Imprisonment, torture, and even death are realistic consequences for those who plot failed attempts to seize the state violently (Humphreys & Weinstein 2008). As a result, in cases where the opposition deems electoral victory within reach, political violence should be less likely; even if they lose in any given election, they will at least have reason to feel invested in the legitimate system and maintain their credibility for future electoral contests.

When incumbents illegitimately exclude challengers, however, the opposition loses the possibility of a fairly won victory; you cannot win an election if your name does not appear on

the ballot.<sup>81</sup> By eliminating the legitimate pathway to power, electoral exclusion forces the opposition to change their thinking. In the wake of electoral exclusion, the two remaining options available to the opposition are either to accept the result (possibly with a boycott, court challenges or other strategies aimed at imposing reputational costs on the incumbent regime) and hope for a fairer shot in several years, or to seek power by an alternative pathway.<sup>82</sup> The most obvious alternative way to take power is by using bullets, usually by engineering a coup d'état or launching a civil war. This gives rise to the second set of primary hypotheses (H2a, H2b, and H2c) that will be tested in this dissertation:

*H2a: Electoral exclusion increases the risk of coups d'état.*

*H2b: Electoral exclusion increases the risk of civil wars.*

*H2c: Electoral exclusion increases the risk of civil wars, but only when the election also features an opposition boycott (an indicator of party mobilization ability).*

A coup d'état is the primary targeted, elite 'insider' way to overthrow a government (though coups *can* be instigated by politicians that have been excluded from an election—in an outsider-insider alliance, so long as the excluded group has a relationship or access to connections in the military or another similar group that wields such *de facto* authority with force).<sup>83</sup> By definition, coups are executed by the military, an organization that is paid by the state and therefore a part of the regime that it may overthrow. Coups can be instigated in two main ways, both made more likely by electoral exclusion. First, military officers may take matters into their own hands and launch a coup (for various reasons, ranging from ideological

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<sup>81</sup> Again, this is not true for extremely strong opposition parties that are not beholden to a single leading candidate. In those cases (such as in Thailand with the targeting of Thaksin Shinawatra), the exclusion of the candidate is ineffective at stopping the broader party from winning the election.

<sup>82</sup> This is similar to Robert Merton's 1949 concept of 'anomie' wherein illegitimate behaviors become more appealing when individuals are less likely to succeed in legitimate behaviors. The concept is one of the most influential ideas in sociology literature and has been used primarily to explain deviant behavior. However, it is equally useful to think of opposition elites in a similar way: when they cannot win an election, the alternatives become comparatively more appealing.

<sup>83</sup> Roessler (2011) provides important insight into this Catch-22 between "coup proofing" and "civil war proofing." He establishes that political inclusion of would-be enemies makes coups more likely by giving them access to the military, while arguing that political exclusion makes civil wars more likely by removing enemies from being connected to military officers. His analysis does not, however, touch on the role of elections, a critical missing part of the story.



motivations to opportunism). Second, disgruntled politicians who have connections to the military may use that access to instigate a coup d'état on behalf of their failed candidacy.<sup>84</sup> In the wake of exclusion, excluded politicians have a clear motive to launch a coup, as do officers within the military that are loyal to that politician (of course, other officers may support the decision to exclude certain politicians too). Other times, coup opportunism may be accelerated by exclusion when military officers perceive an opening—either due to discontent in the wake of an exclusion or due to an election that failed to confer legitimacy on the winner.<sup>85</sup> Either way, exclusion likely increases the risk of a coup d'état after an election.<sup>86</sup>

By the same logic, boycotts should not produce a substantially higher risk of coups d'état. Boycotts are about mass mobilization (or mass coordination of inaction, to be precise), not about mobilizing a small group of soldiers as in a military coup. A boycott is not launched to prompt the military to act; it is used to galvanize hundreds of thousands or millions of supporters to avoid voting.<sup>87</sup> Parties that can push boycotts effectively have a comparative advantage over parties that cannot, and that advantage may change their calculations when it comes to deciding whether or not to instigate violence.

In particular, I hypothesize that the combination of exclusion and a subsequent boycott is a destabilizing scenario that may correspond more closely to civil war outbreak rather than

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<sup>84</sup> This is difficult to demonstrate concretely because politicians responsible for coups are almost always seeking to do in clandestine ways; rarely do politicians admit that they sponsored a coup, but it is highly improbable that military coups are always instigated from within the armed forces. Moreover, even politicians that do not have overt connections to the military may precipitate a coup by stirring up enough popular discontent (as will be discussed in detail in the case study of Madagascar's 2009 coup).

<sup>85</sup> For example, this was the case in Zambia's failed 1997 coup plot in the wake of former President Kenneth Kaunda being excluded from the 1996 election. The incumbent (President Chiluba) accused Kaunda of instigating the coup, but there was no collusion; instead, the officers perceived an opening and used it to launch their attempt.

<sup>86</sup> This is directly opposed to Roessler's theory, which argues that exclusion should create civil wars, while inclusion heightens the risk of coups. His argument fits well in patronage societies with longer time horizons but does not fit as well in an electoral framework, because including strong groups in contested elections invites a serious challenge to regime survival (whereas co-opting strong rivals was previously a recipe for prolonged stability). In an electoral environment, exclusion of strong groups makes more sense; the violent pathway from there that is most likely is dictated by other factors (connection to the military, level of military support, feasibility of rebellion, type of exclusion, strength of party support in social enclaves, that are explored more in depth in the qualitative case studies that comprise future chapters).

<sup>87</sup> There are certainly cases where boycotts precede coups, but boycotts tend to correlate more strongly with civil war onset (pairwise correlation of boycotts and civil war onset within two years is .1132, and just .059 for boycotts and coups d'état onset, even though coups and coup attempts are far more frequent).

coup attempts. Civil wars—unlike coups but like boycotts—may be feasible without mass support but are unlikely to be effective. Rebellions need recruits first but are unlikely to be successful without a solid base of support within the population.

*Figure 6: How insider/outsider connection and party mobilization capacity condition feasible political violence*

**PARTY MOBILIZATION CAPABILITIES / INSIDER CONNECTION TO THE REGIME**

	INSIDER CONNECTION	NO INSIDER CONNECTION
WEAK MOBILIZATION CAPABILITY	Coup feasible	Neither boycott nor violence feasible
STRONG MOBILIZATION CAPABILITY	Boycotts, civil war and coup feasible	Boycott and civil war feasible

In the upper right quadrant of Figure 6, the excluded candidate comes from a weak party without any mobilization capacity and without any meaningful links to the military (in the form of strong ties to senior or mid-level officers). A boycott would be inadvisable and a civil war would not be feasible because the party is unable to mobilize large groups of people on its behalf. Moreover, a coup would not be plausible because they have nobody to call upon to launch the coup on their behalf. None of the options are available to the opposition party in this situation.

In the upper left quadrant of Figure 6, the excluded candidate comes from a weak party that cannot mobilize but has a meaningful insider connection to the military. However, given their inability to conduct mass mobilization, a boycott would be inadvisable and a civil war would not be feasible. They are left with one type of feasible violence: a coup d'état attempt. This does not mean that it will happen—only that it is plausible.

In the lower right quadrant of Figure 6, the excluded candidate comes from a strong party that is able to mobilize but one that does not have a meaningful insider connection to the military. As a result, challenging the state 'from within' with a coup d'état is implausible, but a

boycott and a civil war are both options because of their mobilization capacity. Of course, if the party has an incredibly strong mobilization capacity and will win in spite of the loss of its primary candidate due to exclusion, then contesting the election may still be possible and alluring.

In the lower left quadrant of Figure 6, everything is on the table. The party is strong and can mobilize supporters to boycott the election or actively support a civil war. Moreover, the party has meaningful connections to important figures within the military that could feasibly launch a coup. As a result, this type of party has the most latitude to respond to exclusion with boycotts (and possibly either form of political violence—a coup or a civil war). And, as with the previous quadrant, incredibly strong parties may choose to take their chances in the voting, even if their primary candidate has been excluded (this is rare, but see Thailand 2008, 2011 for key examples).<sup>88</sup>

Exclusion is therefore considered to be a causal factor (but certainly not close to the only causal factor), while boycotts are a permissive factor for civil war outbreak. In other words, boycotts themselves do not spark civil wars; they are just more likely to be chosen as a pathway for political movements that have a deep support base within society. When those parties choose to boycott, they are attempting to galvanize their supporters against the regime. They have also made a formal decision to exit/not participate in the legitimate process for choosing leaders: elections. In other words, the signal sent by a boycott is not that the opposition is cowed, but that they will find alternative methods of battling the regime—either until they can contest a future election *or* by exploring alternative ways to take power. Parties that organize boycotts are therefore signaling that they intend to use mass pressure against the regime rather than targeted elite pressure—and that they intend to continue their opposition *outside* the

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<sup>88</sup> This raises the possibility that this relationship is a non-linear one; parties may reach a ‘tipping point’ where they are so confident of victory at the polls that candidate exclusion will be insufficient to defeat them. In those instances, however, other forms of electoral manipulation may become more attractive to the incumbent since their ultimate goal is winning. This requires further research because there is currently no reliable global quantitative measure of party strength.

legitimate sphere. Therefore, if political violence breaks out in a post-electoral exclusion context, we should expect to see civil wars following exclusion with boycotts, but not following exclusion without boycotts. The inverse is true for coups; if a party is unable to muster an effective boycott, it is almost certainly going to be unable to muster an effective rebellion—which is more difficult and more costly to coordinate but also requires mass mobilization. As a result, when exclusion occurs and a boycott does not, violence is more likely to take the form of a coup d'état attempt rather than a mass-based rebellion against the state.<sup>89</sup>

### *Micro-Level: Can Elections be the Spark that Ignites Coups and Civil Wars?*

The discussion above is a meso-level theoretical explanation for why elite interaction during electoral cycles can increase the risk of a future outbreak of coups or civil wars. However, it is also important to understand why, on the micro/individual-level—once exclusion has taken place and all the other risk factors have all been considered—do actors in some countries launch a coup or a civil war while others do not? Coups and civil wars are both infrequent events; globally, only about 8% of all national-level elections were followed by a subsequent coup attempt or civil war between 1989 and 2010. That low rate is likely because the costs of failure are extremely high and the probability of success is often low.

The major dialogue in conflict scholarship launched by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2002) on the one hand and James Fearon and David Laitin (2003) on the other has developed one of the most influential theories in recent conflict research, arguing that ‘feasibility’ is a major factor in the likelihood that a coup or civil war will break out. However, the feasibility factors outlined by their important line of research are, again, relatively static—access to possible state

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<sup>89</sup> There are obviously exceptions to these theoretical propositions (for example, coups sometimes take place even in places where the opposition can rely on mass mobilization and calls a boycott); the aim is to propose correlated relationships that can be tested quantitatively before delving deeper into the underlying political dynamics with process tracing in extensive qualitative case study testing.

rents, percentage of young men in the population, mountainous terrain, and low levels of GDP.<sup>90</sup> These factors may be important, but they do not help to explain the mystery of decision-making that leads to the outbreak of a coup or civil war *at a specific point in time for certain individuals*. In order to better understand the micro level, I categorize two main types of political violence against the state as elite-led and non-elite-led coups and civil wars. Sometimes, elites may choose to ‘rally the troops’ from the barracks, or sponsor a rebellion against the state, using their power and authority to incite others to act on their behalf. Other times, coups may be launched by mid-level ‘lone wolf’ officers who mutiny against their leadership or by generals who defy civilian political authority. Similarly, rebellions or militias may be formed in the hinterland of a country without elite sponsorship.

In both elite-led and non-elite-led coups or civil wars, I argue that *feasibility perception* is a major factor alongside the broader and more easily quantified ‘feasibility’ factors already outlined by Collier, Hoeffler, and others. Data analysis cannot reveal perceptions, but qualitative interviews can help develop a story of the decision-making process used by those that choose to incite violence. Most scholars who study conflict drivers at the individual level (scholars like Humphreys & Weinstein, for example; 2008) make a variation of the same general argument: involvement in a rebellion or a coup is an exercise in evaluating costs and benefits. I propose that, for any given actor to launch a coup or a civil war, that actor or group of actors must believe two propositions: first, that the prospective benefits of success outweigh the catastrophic risks of failure; and second, that ‘bandwagoning’ will take place, with others joining the cause—thereby greatly enhancing the prospects for success. Both perceptions are conditioned by other factors. If, for example, the spoils of a prospective victory are increased (by access to easily captured state resources, such as alluvial diamonds), then actors may be willing to act even with a lower probability of ‘success.’ Conversely, if success seems certain, actors may incite violence

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<sup>90</sup> Ansell & Samuels (2010) provide an interesting, compelling, but somewhat counter-intuitive finding that income inequality may actually promote democratization, which may in turn reduce the long-term likelihood of conflict.

even with comparatively low spoils; in that case the risks are low so even marginal gains are worth the risk. In any case, the perception of whether an act of violence can succeed or not is critical.

Although there are ideological extremists that form an important exception, generally speaking, even the most aggrieved or the greediest groups on Earth are unlikely to launch a coup or a civil war that they know is doomed to fail. Feasibility perception, generally speaking, is powerful, and I focus on this feasibility perception aspect in considerable depth using process tracing to analyze the key actors in each of the case studies. This micro-level analysis complements the meso-level strategic thinking outlined above to demonstrate how exclusive elections can change individual perceptions about the feasibility of violence against the state, exacerbating the risk of coups or civil wars.

In summary, the theory outlined above is an attempt to explain the manipulation strategy of electoral exclusion and its impact on a country's prospects for political violence from three levels: macro, meso, and micro. On the macro level, I use statistical modeling to demonstrate that certain 'types' of countries are more prone to electoral exclusion than others and that there are structural factors that certainly affect coup and civil war risk. This level of analysis is not the focus of this dissertation but rather an exercise in testing previous findings in existing literature to support or challenge conventional wisdom.

On the meso level, I see electoral exclusion as a two-stage game pitting incumbents against the opposition. In the first stage, incumbents often fall into the 'exclusion trap,' drawn in by the four enticing aspects that make electoral exclusion a particularly tantalizing form of 'strategic rigging' while discounting the future (but ultimately unknown) destabilizing effects of that campaign strategy. Once exclusion takes place, the opposition must decide how to respond—by trying to salvage what they can by competing in the other areas of the election that they are allowed to contest, by aiming to impose reputational costs on the incumbent, or by withdrawing from the legitimate realm of political action and starting to plot a violent attack

against the state. Frequently, the interplay of these two actor groups (incumbent and opposition) is highly conditioned by contextual factors such as the incumbent's perceived vulnerability in the election, the potential relationships that the opposition can draw upon with regime insiders, and the opposition party's mobilization capacity. However, in most cases and across the globe since the end of the Cold War, my theory holds that electoral exclusion is an attractive strategy for incumbents because it not only increases the chances of victory with minimal reputational risk, but it also substantially exacerbates the risk that unattractive consequences—a civil war or coup d'état—will be launched against the regime in the wake of that flawed election.

On the micro level, I propose that those who might act violently against the state must perceive a reasonable chance of success. That perception is improved when 'bandwagoning' seems realistic and worsened when actors believe that they will be acting alone without support from the general population or other armed individuals. There is an array of other micro level factors that can be used to predict 'risk factors' that make some individuals more likely to join in violence once it has begun, but here I am most concerned with the actual decision-making point: are exclusive elections an event that can tip the scales so that elites or non-elites are more likely to take up arms against the state by launching a coup d'état or civil war?

The theoretical assumptions on all three levels must be systematically and rigorously tested. I now turn to outlining *how* those assumptions will be tested in the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

### *Mixed Methods: Large-N Quantitative Analysis & Qualitative Case Studies*

I use mixed methods to test hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a, and H2b. Quantitative and qualitative methods each have strengths and weaknesses. Quantitative methods tend to demonstrate larger trends and general relationships on a broader scale that may otherwise be difficult to detect with single case studies or even comparative qualitative research. This is undeniably useful, but statistical relationships in isolation are not sufficient to demonstrate

causality. Statistical relationships showcase correlations but have limited usefulness in explaining the pathways of *how* one variable causes another in real world political dynamics. Statistical significance—no matter how robust—has little regard for contextualization and nuance. Conversely, qualitative methods are extremely well suited for opening up the ‘black box’ of causality and examining step-by-step processes, but they are ill suited for establishing generalized, global relationships. Taken together, each method compensates for the failings of the other while contributing something useful to hypothesis testing.

For this particular project, the key is to test what causes incumbents to exclude their opposition, and then to link that electoral exclusion to the onset (or lack thereof) of coups d’état or civil wars. For this reason, temporality is critical; it only makes sense if exclusion precedes political violence, and is an integral reason behind its outbreak (*i.e.* other possible confounding factors must be identified and controlled for in all models).

First, I test whether my theoretical propositions are confirmed by data modeling and regression analysis. Specifically, I have drawn on existing datasets and my own original data work to construct a new database that includes 1,487 national-level elections from 1989 to 2010, and puts those elections into context with subsequent episodes of violence.<sup>91</sup> This quantitative analysis is specified in great detail in Chapter Two, though the conclusion from the data is clear: electoral exclusion increases the risk of both coups and civil wars.

Second, in order to determine exactly why and how electoral exclusion leads to coups d’état and/or civil wars—and whether the theoretical assumptions outlined above are correct—I draw upon several qualitative comparative case studies. In Madagascar, Thailand, Tunisia, Zambia, and Côte d’Ivoire, I conducted extensive elite-level field interviews with top politicians, diplomats, rebels, generals and other military officers, journalists, academics, NGO personnel,

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<sup>91</sup> 1989 is chosen as a start year because it corresponds to a steep rise in the number of multi-party elections taking place globally at the end of the Cold War; 2010 is a cutoff date to ensure that the effects of the post-election aftermath can be adequately observed.



election observers, and political analysts.<sup>92</sup> This dissertation features a detailed analysis of nine election case studies held in these five countries.

*Figure 7: Number of interviews conducted during fieldwork for each case study (2012 – 2015)*

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of interviews conducted</b>
<b>Madagascar</b>	77
<b>Tunisia</b>	34
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>	18
<b>Zambia</b>	18
<b>Thailand</b>	20
<b>Total</b>	167

The cases vary across many characteristic variables of interest, including region, time, levels of democracy, previous history of political violence, previous history of electoral exclusion, institutional strength (of political institutions and military cohesion), opposition party strength, economic development, topography, and many others. Five of the cases come from three sub-Saharan African countries: Madagascar (2006), Madagascar (2013), Côte d'Ivoire (1995), Côte d'Ivoire (2000), and Zambia (1996). Two case studies are drawn from one Middle Eastern/North African country: Tunisia (2009) and Tunisia (October / December 2014). Finally, two case studies are from Asia: Thailand (2006), and Thailand (2014). I do not restrict my analysis to these five cases, but I use them as the core cases of interest to explore key topics that I uncovered during the course of my extensive time immersed in the political cultures and the political elites of each country.

I have attempted to follow the approach that Seawright & Gerring (2008) call 'diverse cases'. In their view (and mine), cases that vary widely allow the most penetrating analysis. If a trend between two variables can be solidly demonstrated in different contexts (such as Madagascar and Thailand), then one can reasonably infer that the proposed causal relationship is

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<sup>92</sup> I have done four stints of field research in Madagascar, and advised the Carter Center's international election observation team twice, most recently for their 2013 elections.

credible. Therefore, in addition to the key aspects in the relationship between the explanatory variable and the dependent variable, I chose cases to ensure variation on two critical factors: level of democracy, and pathway (or not) to violence.

The cases vary tremendously in terms of their democracy scores, from a low of -6 (Côte d'Ivoire 1995, which was making slow progress in the transition away from the entrenched one-party state) to a high of +7 (Madagascar 2006 and Thailand 2014: flawed democracies that were, at the time, doing many things right).<sup>93</sup> Anything below -6 makes less sense to include, as it would not have been a remotely competitive democracy to begin with, in which case exclusion would be nearly universal. Likewise, cases with entrenched sturdy democracies are less interesting for this analysis, as they tend to vary little on both the independent and dependent variables (Finland, for example, is not a suitable case because it is neither a hub of electoral exclusion nor a hotspot of coups and civil wars). Variation between these extremes is, however, essential. Without it, one could claim that coups, uprisings, and civil wars were simply caused by weak democracies or states with weak institutions. If, on the other hand, a causal relationship can be established (with variation between cases on key variables, such as levels of democratic consolidation), it can be established that exclusion wreaks havoc on the prospects for peace regardless of the country's level of democracy.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, the pathways to violence (or not) must be as diverse as possible to demonstrate the different ways in which exclusion leads (or does not lead) to violence. One could envision a case design that simply looks at cases with exclusion that lead to coups, or cases that feature exclusion and civil wars. That would be a mistake, as the effect of exclusion is not likely to be uniform. Additionally, the value of qualitative research to augment my quantitative analysis is to open 'the black box' of causality and see not only that there is a relationship, but

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<sup>93</sup> The democracy scores are, in my view, subject to 'grade inflation' in democracy scores; Madagascar (2006) and Thailand (2014) were very much 'counterfeit democracies,' not democratic, in my view.

<sup>94</sup> It is also worth noting that the dataset includes large variation on this variable, providing an important control. The cases included range from -9 to 10, one score shy of the range possible in the Polity IV database.

how that relationship functions in real-life political contexts. The cases that I have selected follow multiple pathways, allowing a diverse array of analysis.

Ultimately, there are drawbacks to any case selection design, but I have tried to minimize them. The primary *faux pas* highlighted by ample political science literature is “selecting on the dependent variable” (Geddes 1990; King, Keohane & Verba 1994). In this case, this would essentially mean that I had exclusively picked cases where civil wars or coups broke out shortly after exclusion happened, or had only selected cases that involved coups and civil wars. I have not done this. Instead, these nine cases were carefully selected by the independent variable—whether they featured electoral exclusion or not. However, it would have been pointless to examine an equal number of cases that had exclusion as those that did not (since it is the primary characteristic being studied).

Figure 8 demonstrates variation across key variables for each of the cases. As a result, the nine cases feature variation in terms of whether there was exclusion at all (Thailand represents a case where exclusion occurred but it was *not* the primary driver of political violence) *and* the cases also vary in terms of the type of exclusion that was used: one-party, targeted, mass-based, and across-the-board purges. Moreover, the variation in terms of dependent variable outcomes is considerable; some cases feature subsequent political violence (Madagascar 2006, Côte d’Ivoire 2000; Zambia 1996; Thailand 2006; Tunisia 2009; Thailand 2014) while others do not (Tunisia 2014; Côte d’Ivoire 1995; Madagascar 2013).

*Figure 8: Case selection rationale on key independent and dependent variables, with democracy scores*

Country (year)	Electoral exclusion?	Coup/civil War within 1 year?	Coup/civil war within 2 years?	Polity IV score	GDP per capita	Pathway to violence
Côte d’Ivoire (1995)	Yes	No	No	-6	\$773	None
Côte d’Ivoire (2000)	Yes	No	Yes	+4	\$664	Civil war
Madagascar (2006)	Yes	No	No	+7	\$293	Coup d’état

Madagascar (2013)	Yes	No	No	0	\$463	None
Zambia (1996)	Yes	Yes	Yes	+1	\$397	Failed coup
Tunisia (2009)	Yes	No	Yes	-4	\$4,162	Coup/revolution
Tunisia (2014)	No	?	?	?	\$4,316	None
Thailand (2006)	Yes	Yes	Yes	-5	\$3,143	Coup d'état
Thailand (2014)	Yes	Yes	Yes	+7	\$5,560	Coup d'état

This case design therefore allows the possibility of honing in on the salient characteristics of exclusion that really matter while also demonstrating that electoral exclusion is (quite obviously) not the only variable that affects a country's prospects for future coup or civil war outbreaks. However, as I am making the argument that exclusion causes violence, it would be myopic to simply ignore the preponderance of cases where violence occurred but exclusion did not. Therefore, to counteract and temper my eventual findings, I have attempted to explore four types of cases:

- 1) Exclusion occurs, and a coup or civil war follows (Côte d'Ivoire 2000, Madagascar 2006, Zambia 1996, Tunisia 2009)<sup>95</sup>
- 2) Exclusion occurs, and a coup d'état or civil war does not follow (Côte d'Ivoire 1995; Madagascar 2013)
- 3) Exclusion occurs, and a coup d'état or civil war follows but not because of the exclusion (Thailand 2006; Thailand 2014)
- 4) Exclusion does not occur and a coup d'état or civil war does not follow (Tunisia 2014)

The the most recent case has not *yet* resulted in a coup or civil war (Tunisia 2014) but the country may yet succumb to political violence. However, in my view, the possible unknowns do not outweigh the importance of exploring the political dynamics of a highly contemporary case (alongside the still unfolding case of Thailand 2014)—with the caveat that the future still may

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<sup>95</sup> I will, however, posit that Thailand 2014 is a 'false positive' wherein exclusion corresponded with an outbreak of a coup, but that the exclusion itself was not a primary driver in the coup itself.

turn out differently for Tunisia and Thailand. However, in Tunisia, I am confident that any bouts of potential future violence will not be driven by exclusion, as they have adopted an explicitly inclusive political framework.

Furthermore, while it may be unconventional to select two cases that are still changing, I believe that they offer more advantages than disadvantages. While it is true that they introduce uncertainty into this research, they also allow the possibility of examining debates over exclusion in real-time rather than simply asking parties to ‘read history backwards’ and recall what they were thinking at the time. For example, in Tunisia, I interviewed elites about the proposed controversial electoral exclusion law (the “Immunization of the Revolution Law”) while it was being debated in the National Assembly, not two decades later when they have the benefit of hindsight and more polished conceptions of their views (as was the case for my research into Zambia 1996 and Côte d’Ivoire 1995).

Moreover, because the findings of this dissertation have obvious implications for public policy (particular in terms of international election observation procedures), contemporary cases make sense—Tunisia’s post-Arab Spring elections represent a potential new frontier to explore electoral exclusion and the debate surrounding post-dictatorial regime purges vs. inclusion of the old guard. Even though these cases will be used simply to ‘test’ the lessons drawn from previous cases rather than original theory development (something that would be premature as they are still unfolding), casting such cases aside in favor of 1990s elections would be, in my view, a missed opportunity.

Beyond the still unfolding cases, the cases cover all necessary combinations in terms of the interplay between the key independent and dependent variables. There is variation on both the independent and the dependent variable, with several combinations between them. Moreover, there are internal controls created by using the same country twice (Côte d’Ivoire, Tunisia, Thailand, and Madagascar) over two different elections; this allows many aspects of the political context to be held constant, minimizing the static “noise” variation, while still examining change

on the independent and dependent variables. For example, Côte d'Ivoire's 1995 and 2000 elections both featured the exclusion of Alassane Ouattara, but a civil war only ensued after the 2000 contest.

In summary, I hypothesize that electoral exclusion is a two-stage process. The first stage begins with incumbent decision-making as the regime decides whether or not to exclude opponents from an upcoming election. If the decision is made to exclude, then the second stage of the process turns to opposition thinking as the banned candidate—along with their party and their supporters—subsequently decides whether to accept the result while trying to impose reputational cost on the incumbent regime or to try to take power using force. In subsequent chapters, I systematically test this proposed theory using quantitative and qualitative methods. I now turn to the former type of analysis—statistical regressions—to determine whether there is global evidence that opposition candidates that are excluded from ballots are more likely to turn to bullets.

## CHAPTER TWO: QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE

*Statistically testing the global relationship between electoral exclusion, coups, and civil wars*

### Data and model overview

Does the theory outlined in the previous chapter withstand statistical testing?

In this chapter, I test several distinct probit models that relate to each of the key questions raised by my theoretical propositions: why do incumbents exclude their rivals?; once exclusion is used, does the risk of a coup d'état increase?; and does electoral exclusion also increase the risk of civil wars? The models therefore correspond to each of the five key hypotheses. As a reminder, these are:

*H1a: Electoral exclusion provides a strong probability of incumbent victory.*

*H1b: Electoral exclusion inflates the incumbent's margin of victory.*

*H2a: Electoral exclusion increases the risk of coups d'état.*

*H2b: Electoral exclusion increases the risk of civil wars.*

*H2c: Electoral exclusion increases the risk of civil wars, but only when the election also features an opposition boycott (a proxy indicator of party mobilization ability).*

In order to test these hypotheses with statistical analysis, I use an original dataset—which draws extensively on the NELDA data compiled by Susan Hyde of Yale University—but also includes whether civil wars or coups began *after* election dates (with one year and two year cutoff thresholds). In other words, rather than determining whether political violence began in a given year, the data can be used to determine how much time elapsed between voting and political violence.<sup>96</sup> The dataset is comprised of 1,487 national-level elections (each individual cases) that were held between 1989 and 2010. This temporal demarcation was chosen for two reasons. At the front end, the 1989 cutoff point makes the most sense because it corresponds with a surge in multi-party elections in key regions of the world. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, there was minimal variation on the independent variable (electoral exclusion) prior to 1989; in most countries, one-party states dominated and electoral exclusion occurred in every election

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<sup>96</sup> Coups are more straightforward, as they occur on a precise date. For civil war onset dates, I used coding triangulation, drawing on a combination of the PRIO Armed Conflict Battle Deaths data, the PRIO Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, newspaper reports, and encyclopedic entries). Triangulation was essential because existing global datasets aggregate battle death annually, making temporality in relation to elections impossible to discern.

(Whitaker 2005).<sup>97</sup> After 1989, throughout the world, there is sufficient variation on the key independent variable, making robust statistical analysis more meaningful. Second, the 2010 cutoff point was chosen in order to ensure data availability and that the effects of the election could be accurately measured. Elections taking place in 2014, for example, are certainly relevant to this research (and are included in the qualitative case studies), but it is not possible to know what will happen within the two-year window necessary to form the dependent variable.

Because this dissertation is focused on the pathway to state power and subsequent attempts to overthrow incumbent national regimes, the unit of analysis is country-level elections. Countries with small populations (below 500,000) are not included in the data. Countries that did not hold elections during that time period are also not included in the data. Cumulatively, there are 159 countries that held 1,487 elections during the 21-year time window—an average of just over nine elections per country, 62 elections per year, or roughly one national-level election held every two and a quarter years in each country.<sup>98</sup> Problems of missing data forced a small reduction of viable cases, resulting in models that rely on 1,298 elections of the 1,487 in the original dataset (a loss of 12% of cases).<sup>99</sup> This is not ideal, of course, but the number of cases is still high and there is limited systematic bias in the dropped cases. Throughout the 21-year period, the distribution of elections in the models is nearly constant.<sup>100</sup>

The hybrid database used in the modeling below was built from a variety of sources, but electoral exclusion, election date, election type (parliamentary or presidential), boycotts, whether the election is considered a ‘founding’ election, whether there were riots and protests surrounding the elections, and whether the incumbent’s party lost the election or not, were all taken directly from the NELDA dataset (Hyde & Marinov 2012).<sup>101</sup> There are also several

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<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the election monitoring culture that cropped up after the fall of the USSR is crucial to understanding the modern logic of electoral exclusion as outlined in the theory chapter; even in places that held competitive multi-party elections in the 1960s, for example, the salient dynamics for ‘strategic rigging’ were less in play.

<sup>98</sup> Some countries, such as Ukraine, had up to 20 observations while several countries (Angola, Burundi, Cuba, Oman) had only one observation in the data. Some of those countries held more than one election but their second election was not included due to problems of missing data.

<sup>99</sup> Missing data were not imputed because it is highly improbable that such gaps occurred at random. Doing so would have added another level of uncertainty to the model.

<sup>100</sup> 1989-1994: 331 elections; 1995-1999: 310 elections; 2000-2004: 309 elections; 2005-2009: 291 elections; 2010: 57 elections (compared to an average of 62 per year during the 21 year period).

<sup>101</sup> I independently coded exclusion for all sub-Saharan African cases between 2006 and 2010 to ensure overlapping interpretation; in 99% of cases, the coding matched. I also coded elections as “founding+1”, “founding+2”, “founding+3,” and “founding+4 or more” separately based on the NELDA “founding” variable. Boycotts are coded positively when “at least some opposition leaders announced and carried out a public boycott of the election.” The NELDA coding process is generally reliable, as two independent coders were used and their overall rate of agreement on the two most key variables (exclusion and boycotts) was high (89% for exclusion; 91% for boycotts).



variables that are used as controls across multiple models: democratic quality (Polity IV)<sup>102</sup>, population size (logged; World Bank), economic prosperity (logged GDP per capita; World Bank), prior coup activity within 1 or 2 years of the election (compiled based on data from the Center for Systemic Peace, “Coups d’État, 1946-2013”), ethnic fractionalization (Ethnic Power Relations dataset), total number of excluded ethnic groups (EPR dataset), land area (logged; World Bank & CIA World Factbook 2013), percentage of country that is mountainous (Collier & Hoeffler 2004), and aid dependence (defined as aid dollars per capita; World Bank). These controls are drawn from prior mainstream scholarly explanations of coup and civil war onset, so they are critical to ensuring that any relationship between exclusion and strategic political violence is not simply capturing previously established causal relationships.<sup>103</sup> In several of the models, I also present results for regional fixed effects as a control to ensure that no single political grouping is driving global significance levels.

### **Dependent variables: incumbent party victory, electoral exclusion, coups, civil wars**

The two dependent variables related to elections (‘did the incumbent party win the election?’; and ‘were opposition candidates prevented from contesting elections?’) are drawn directly from the NELDA dataset (Hyde & Marinov 2012). They are relatively straightforward questions that have a high degree of consensus between the two independent coders.

I had to make more coding decisions related to the two dependent variables regarding the onset of political violence (coups or civil wars) using existing datasets and verified information sources. Each is tested with a two-year threshold; in other words: was there an outbreak of either a coup d’état or a civil war within two years of any given election?<sup>104</sup> Of these two types of political violence, both present tricky coding decisions, but coups are far more straightforward to code than civil wars.

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<sup>102</sup> The Polity2 variable from the Polity IV dataset is used as the control variable for democratic quality for two main reasons. First, it is plausible that electoral exclusion actually *increases* the quality of other aspects of any given election, reducing the value of election quality measures. To avoid reputation costs, it is likely that a significant proportion of incumbents in electoral authoritarianism will not resort to crude rigging once an election victory is guaranteed after pre-election procedural manipulation (Simpser 2008). Electoral exclusion makes other forms of rigging redundant. Since procedural manipulations like candidate registration are often just a small part of election observer evaluations, elections that feature exclusion may actually score *higher* on election quality measures than other similar elections. Second, the quality of democracy overall in a given country is more important than the quality of an election as a control variable for the purposes of this study, because the most salient characteristic is the institutional context surrounding the contested election. Election quality is not always a perfect reflection of democratic governance; it is essential to control for the overall character of democratic institutions beyond elections.

<sup>103</sup> For example: Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Roessler 2011.

<sup>104</sup> As a robustness check, I also used a one-year threshold and obtained similar significance levels for the key independent variables, though their p-value was slightly less strong. However, given the findings of my qualitative field research about lagged effects in some countries (Madagascar, Côte d’Ivoire, etc), I believe the two-year cutoff point is a more sensible threshold.

For the coup models, I rely on the Center for Systemic Peace’s dataset, “Coups d’État, 1946-2013.” This dataset codes coup activity on five levels of severity: no coup, alleged coup, planned coup attempt, coup attempt, and successful coup d’état (Center for Systemic Peace 2014). Three of these five categories are straightforward: no coup, coup attempt, and successful coup. It is obvious if a coup was launched and whether it succeeded or not. However, the remaining two categories are less straightforward (alleged and planned). The difference between the two comes with varying levels of certainty as to whether a coup plot was actually underway. As we will see in Chapter Five (a case study of Tunisia), incumbents sometimes use the pretext of an alleged coup d’état plot as an excuse to crack down on internal political opponents or crush domestic dissent (Klaas 2013). This produces considerable uncertainty and a major risk of false positives (such as an election where exclusion was used and the incumbent then also chose to concoct a fake coup attempt). Coup success and failure is an important question, but less central to the research questions explored here, because the critical question is what prompts the attempt—not the outcome. What makes a coup succeed or fail is not within the scope of this research; instead, this dissertation focuses on the factors that galvanize actors to attempt to seize state power regardless of their success rate—particularly because failed coup plots can also be extremely destabilizing forms of political violence. As a result, the dependent variable for modeling related to coup outbreaks is a binary dependent variable, with coup attempts and coup successes coded as ‘1’ and everything else coded as ‘0.’<sup>105</sup>

Civil wars are less straightforward, particular when it comes to determining their onset date in relation to an election. This is for two reasons. First, unlike coups, civil wars do not occur on a precise date; if a coup was launched on 17 May 2006, for example, it is quite uncontroversial to determine whether that date is within two years of a prior election day. Because political science scholars define civil wars by the number of battle deaths (usually 1,000 or more in a year), the precise date of when a conflict becomes a civil war is often unclear. Second, the number of battle deaths in a civil war is never certain. Conflict zones are hotspots of death and destruction. They usually take place in areas that lack a functioning bureaucracy. Record keeping is usually a distant concern for the perpetrators and victims of a civil war, which increases the uncertainty for coding. However, I have conformed to best practices in coding

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<sup>105</sup> For robustness, I also included ‘planned’ coup attempts in a binary measure and re-ran the regression models. The significance levels for all major independent variables were the same, so this coding decision does not affect the results considerably.

decisions wherever possible. I use the PRIO Armed Conflict Battle Deaths dataset as a starting point.<sup>106</sup>

The data in the PRIO compilation are, however, compiled annually rather than with reference to precise dates. This is sometimes not a problem; if a civil war began in 1994 with 2,500 battle deaths, then it would be a ‘positive’ case if the election took place in 1993 (one year earlier), and a ‘negative’ case if the election took place in 1991 (three years earlier). If, however, the election took place in 1992, then there is a substantial degree of uncertainty regarding timing—particularly if the election took place in the early months of that year. Moreover, if, in this example, the election also took place the same year as the battle deaths (1994), then it is impossible (from the PRIO data alone) to determine which came first: the election or the battle deaths? It is often the case that elections follow the resolution of armed conflict, so this ‘false positive’ would be quite worrying indeed—inverting the causality arrow in exactly the direction that I am seeking to avoid.

I tried to minimize this flaw using triangulation of sources (newspaper sources, encyclopedia entries of world events, and the PRIO Armed Conflict Location and Event Data) in order to eliminate as much uncertainty as possible. It is, however, impossible to completely eliminate the possible flaw of the occasional coding error. Any of these should be random, however, rather than systematic, and constitute an acceptable small flaw given available data—but it must be acknowledged nonetheless as a limitation of the data that are available for analysis.<sup>107</sup>

Figure 9 provides a brief overview of the six distinct regressions presented below, listed by their main dependent and independent variable(s).

*Figure 9: Overview of quantitative models presented in this chapter*

Model	Dependent variable	Key independent variable(s)
1a	Incumbent victory (yes/no)	Electoral exclusion
1b*	Presidential margin of victory	Electoral exclusion
1c	Use of electoral exclusion (yes/no)	Structural factors
2a	Coup d’état outbreak within 2 years	Electoral exclusion
2b	Civil war outbreak within 2 years	Electoral exclusion
2c	Civil war outbreak within 2 years	Electoral exclusion + boycott

<sup>106</sup> The dataset has three reported figures for battle deaths, a low estimate, a high estimate, and a “best guess” estimate. For the purposes of coding, I used the “best guess” estimates.

<sup>107</sup> Any coding errors should have a relatively equal chance of being coded as ‘positive’ cases or ‘null’ cases. As a broader point, it would be exceptionally useful for conflict researchers if future datasets attempt to follow the ACLED dataset by establishing dates and death counts (whenever possible) for specific dates rather than simply aggregating annual data. For now, however, the ACLED data are only available for a limited number of countries and do not lend themselves to global analysis as I am conducting here.

\*Model 1b is an ordered probit regression; the rest are binary probit regressions.<sup>108</sup>

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c all refer to the first ‘stage’ of this puzzle: whether the incumbent chooses to exclude a major rival or not. Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c all refer to the second ‘stage’: whether the exclusion prompts opposition groups in society to attempt to overthrow the regime with a coup or civil war. The story told by these numbers is a strong endorsement of the theory outlined in the preceding chapter. As I demonstrate in the models below, incumbents are drawn to exclusion because it offers significantly improved prospects for an electoral victory (with a substantially inflated margin of victory). However, that act of exclusion drastically increases the likelihood of a coup (with exclusion alone) or civil war (when exclusion occurs in tandem with a party boycott). Incumbents facing electoral challenges discount this longer-term risk because elections shorten elite time horizons (Bates 2008). Moreover, the *absolute* risk of a coup or civil war outbreak is low, even if exclusion makes violence *comparatively* more likely. As a result, incumbents frequently fall into the ‘exclusion trap,’ gambling that they may face a violent backlash later on in exchange for much better odds of staying in power immediately after the votes are counted.

### **H1a, H1b, H1c: Electoral exclusion provides a strong probability of victory for incumbents and increases their margin of victory in elections**

As Figure 10 demonstrates, exclusion is most likely in autocracies, likely in anocracies/counterfeit democracies, unlikely but still plausible in weak democracies, and unlikely in democracy.

*Figure 10: Frequency of exclusion by regime type (1989 – 2010)*

Regime type (Polity2 score)	Percentage of elections with exclusion
Consolidated Democracy (+7 to +10)	0.87%
Weak Democracy (+6 and +7)	3.21%
Counterfeit Democracy (-5 to +5)	20.27%
Autocracy (-6 to -10)	53.52%

With the caveat that these dynamics are more prevalent in less democratic regimes, I run three models that aim to test whether or not incumbents should be drawn to exclusion as a rational strategy for winning while also establishing which structural factors make exclusion

<sup>108</sup> As I explain below, I also conducted the regressions as a two-stage Heckman model. The results were nearly identical to the individual probit modeling, so I used the more parsimonious strategy and present them separately.

more likely in certain countries but not others. Model 1a tests whether or not electoral exclusion makes a statistically significant impact on the likelihood that an incumbent’s party will win any given election. Model 1b tests (for presidential elections only) whether or not electoral exclusion increases the average margin of victory for the incumbent. If both of these propositions are affirmed, it can be said that incumbents who choose to exclude their rivals are rational (at least in the short-term) because it does improve their prospects for remaining in power—and with the perceived mantle of an electoral mandate. Finally, Model 1c tests whether structural factors and path dependent prior effects can predict the use of electoral exclusion in any given contest (this is not related to any specific theoretical hypothesis, but helps explain why exclusion tends to occur in some countries but not others).

Figure 11: Model 1a—Predicting incumbent loss in contested elections (1989-2010)

Dependent variable: Incumbent party loss (binary; NELDA, Hyde & Marinov 2012)

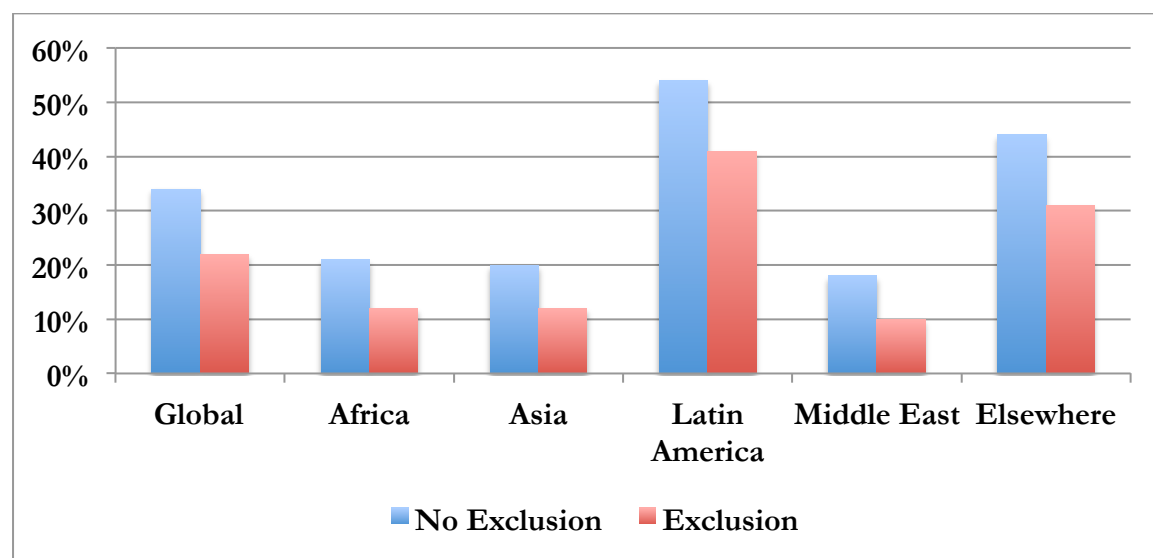
	Regional effects	No regional effects
Electoral exclusion	<b>-0.333 (0.167)*</b>	<b>-0.342 (0.168)*</b>
Boycott	-0.203 (0.146)	-0.211 (0.141)
Coup history	-0.214 (0.124)	0.058 (0.148)
Presidential election	0.048 (0.083)	0.091 (0.261)
Anocracy	<b>-0.561 (0.101)***</b>	<b>-0.618 (0.093)***</b>
Autocracy	<b>-1.067 (0.203)***</b>	<b>-1.222 (0.199)***</b>
Ethnic fractionalization	0.384 (0.211)	-0.088 (0.158)
Excluded groups	0.003 (0.111)	0.005 (0.011)
Founding election	0.044 (0.158)	-0.013 (0.154)
Latin America	<b>0.341 (0.115)**</b>	
Middle East	0.115 (0.190)	
Sub-Saharan Africa	<b>-0.401 (0.153)**</b>	
Asia	<b>-0.360 (0.123)**</b>	
Constant	-0.117 (0.094)	0.014 (0.080)
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.114	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.0943
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	N=1,155	N=1,155

Figure 11 (Model 1a) examines whether or not electoral exclusion decreases the likelihood that an incumbent (or the incumbent’s party) will lose a given election. Several of the significant variables are not surprising: incumbents are far less likely to lose elections when those

elections take place in an autocracy or an counterfeit democracy (anocracy).<sup>109</sup> This is important, because it highlights a point that I made in the introduction and theory chapters: electoral exclusion is most effective as a tool of manipulation in counterfeit democracies and autocracies (though it is less surprising that incumbents lose less frequently in autocratic elections). In genuine democracies, there are safeguards to mitigate the impact of it; even if exclusion occurs and boosts the chance of incumbent victory, there are institutional constraints that limit the ability of incumbents to tilt the playing field in their favour so clearly. Moreover, even taking into account these varying levels of democratic consolidation, we should expect some regional variation. The model affirms this, as incumbents are less likely to lose in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, but more likely to lose in places with a more robust democratic heritage such as Latin America. None of these findings are groundbreaking. However, it is important to note that the key independent variable being tested—electoral exclusion—is a statistically significant driver of an incumbent’s electoral prospects: all things being equal, incumbents that exclude their rivals win more often.

Electoral exclusion also has a large substantive effect. While the model predicts a 34% likelihood that an incumbent (or the incumbent’s party) will lose any given election during an inclusive election, that probability drops to 22% when exclusion is used—even taking into account several key control variables. As Figure 12 below outlines, these effects vary by region, but electoral exclusion makes incumbent defeat far less likely across all regions.

*Figure 12: Predicted probabilities of incumbent defeat (by region)*



<sup>109</sup> Democracy is the reference category. Autocracy is defined as any country that scores below a -5 on the Polity2 scale; anocracy is defined as any country that scores between -5 and +5 on the Polity IV scale, leaving +6, +7, +8, +9, and +10 to be categorized as democracies. Electoral exclusion was also significant for countries at +6 and +7, but not for consolidated democracy (+8 and above). This lends support to the blurred line of counterfeit democracy, as some of the weaker democracies that are often categorized as ‘democracies’ (i.e. +6/+7 on the Polity2 measure may actually be nonetheless vulnerable to electoral manipulation.

This finding validates the rationality of using electoral exclusion in the context of winning an election. If we assume, as I do, that the primary motivation of incumbent elites is to retain power, then any strategy that increases the likelihood of a victory is rational—at least in the short-run. However, it is also possible to determine whether or not victories that come from electoral exclusion yield substantially inflated margins of victory, or whether the incumbent is likely to simply ‘squeak by’ with a close contest. These differences matter for several reasons. First, higher margins of victory are appealing to incumbents because they correspond with the certainty that an election manipulation strategy will be effective and result in incumbent re-election. Second, higher margins of victory *may* be helpful at reducing international observer criticisms; observers may be more likely to discount the impact of election manipulation when they believe that it would not have changed the overall victor of the election (something that cannot be said for ‘close call’ elections or uncompetitive elections that were obviously rigged)<sup>110</sup>. For this analysis, it is most suitable to only analyze presidential elections because the idea of a national-level margin of victory for legislative elections only makes sense in electoral systems that award seats on a proportionality basis. The dependent variable (margin of victory) is calculated by subtracting the second place finisher’s percentage of the overall vote total from the victor’s percentage of the vote total; it is drawn from a variety of sources: encyclopedias, news coverage of final election results, and official election statistics (whenever available). I have then collapsed the data into a categorical variable with four distinct types of victory margins: “1” for ‘close’ margins that were determined by between 0.1% and 10% of the vote; “2” for ‘comfortable’ margins that were determined by between 10% and 25% of the vote; “3” for ‘landslide’ margins that were determined by between 25% and 90% of the vote; and “4” for ‘uncompetitive’ margins that were determined by between 90% and 100% of the vote. These are relevant categories because they are likely to condition how observers view the election.

Figure 13 (Model 1b) demonstrates the fact that electoral exclusion is a statistically significant driver of higher margins of victory, even when taking other key control variables into account.

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<sup>110</sup> This has not been systematically studied, but was something that I encountered repeatedly during informal discussions with election observers and is worth mentioning, even if it is not (yet) established in the literature.

Figure 13: Model 1b—Margins of victory in contested presidential elections (1989 – 2010)

Dependent variable: Presidential margin of victory over nearest rival (categorical variable)

	Regional effects	No regional effects
Electoral exclusion	<b>0.706 (0.225)***</b>	<b>0.815 (0.217)***</b>
Boycott	<b>0.587 (0.203)**</b>	<b>0.671 (0.207)***</b>
Coup history	0.053 (0.194)	-0.016 (0.179)
Anocracy	<b>0.584 (0.134)***</b>	<b>0.630 (0.128)***</b>
Autocracy	<b>1.172 (0.260)***</b>	<b>1.449 (0.234)***</b>
Ethnic fractionalization	-0.161 (0.279)	0.078 (0.214)
Excluded groups	0.005 (0.011)	0.008 (0.011)
Founding election	<b>0.386 (0.175)*</b>	<b>0.407 (0.171)*</b>
Latin America	<b>-0.364 (0.143)*</b>	
Middle East	<b>0.780 (0.295)**</b>	
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.146 (0.197)	
Asia	<b>0.439 (0.184)*</b>	
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.1494	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.1227
*p<0.05; **p<0.01;	N=462	N=462
***p<0.001		

The fact that exclusion makes a difference to margins of victory is fairly intuitive; incumbents would rarely make the effort to exclude an extremely weak rival—particularly given the potential of reputational costs (however comparatively low) that are associated with manipulating an election to their advantage. Furthermore, as explained previously in the preceding theory and methodology chapter, the average margin of victory – without any control variables considered – is significantly higher in exclusive elections.<sup>111</sup> However, such simplistic crosstabs do not control for regime type, or any other factors. The regression above, however, takes these factors into account and still demonstrates that exclusion is nonetheless a key driver of inflated margins of victory.

Furthermore, and critically, the likelihood of a close election plummets when electoral exclusion is used; conversely, the odds of a landslide victory are drastically increased. This is important for three reasons. First, incumbents in flawed ‘counterfeit’ democracies often claim excessively strong popular mandates based on their margin of victory in elections. A landslide victory that is accepted by the domestic and international community confers far greater political flexibility for an incumbent than a close, hard fought victory that is inclusive. As I demonstrate

<sup>111</sup> The average margin of victory is 30% higher across the dataset for exclusive elections, but that figure is somewhat skewed by the outlier ‘uncompetitive’ elections, where the incumbent won by 90% or more. If those are removed, the average margin of victory is still 20% higher than the average inclusive election.

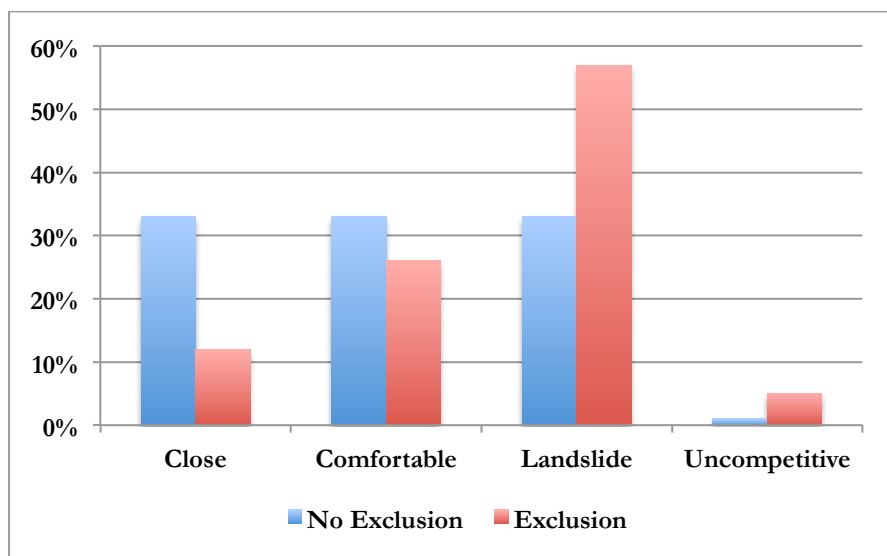


in Chapter Three (concerning Madagascar and Zambia), these artificially inflated margins of victory can translate into perverse incentives and worse outcomes.

Second, when observers monitor elections and do detect some manipulation, they are less likely to conclude that the entire election result would have been changed by that limited fraud when the margin is not close. In other words, small-scale fraud matters more to observers in an election with a 1% margin of victory than in one with a 30% margin of victory—particularly when there are no overt signs of rigging such as ballot box stuffing. Given the already highlighted fact that electoral exclusion is not condemned in a significant proportion of elections where exclusion is used, inflating margins of victory is an effective mechanism to reduce the risk of international condemnation.

Third, as Simpser (2008) demonstrates, incumbents sometimes hope to inflate margins of victory simply to deter future political opposition. Making electoral politics seem like a hopeless battle can sometimes be the explicit goal of some electoral authoritarian regimes who hope to run only against a ‘loyal opposition.’ Each of these three aspects adds credence to the hypothesis that electoral exclusion is a short-term rational strategy for incumbents since it increases the average margin of victory substantially. Figure 14 demonstrates the predicted probability that each type of margin of victory will occur, with and without the use of electoral exclusion.

*Figure 14: Predicted probability of various margins of victory with electoral exclusion*



These two regressions (Model 1a and Model 1b) make clear that exclusion is an effective, rational form of election rigging, yielding not only a higher chance of incumbent victory but also a much higher probability that the election will end in a landslide victory. These effects are

much more likely in counterfeit democracies and autocracy, but the effects may also be salient in weak democracies. Exclusion is both less likely and less influential in consolidated democracies. However, while these meso-level regressions (which look at enticements and incentives for incumbents to choose a certain form of strategic action) are important, it is also necessary to establish which structural factors make it more likely that exclusion will be used at all. Model 1c seeks to do precisely that, testing electoral exclusion as a dependent variable to examine path dependent effects and country-level structural characteristics that influence the use of that specific form of electoral manipulation.

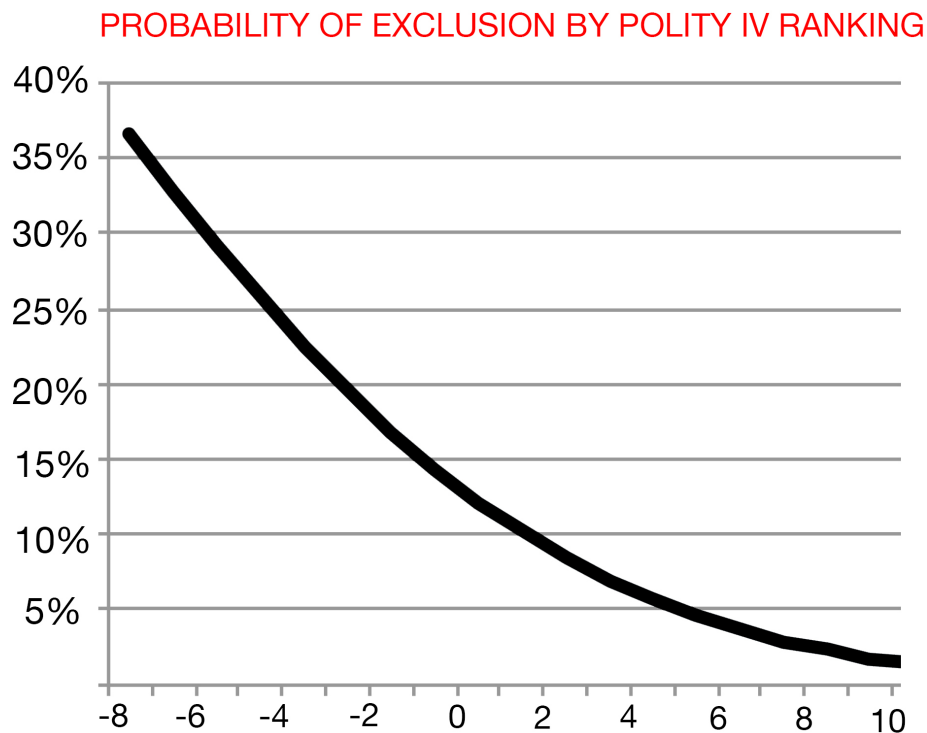
*Figure 15: Model 1c—Structural factors that increase the likelihood of exclusive elections (1989-2010)*

Dependent variable: Electoral exclusion (binary; NELDA—Hyde & Marinov 2012)

	Regional effects	No regional effects
Previous exclusion	<b>0.598 (0.155)***</b>	<b>0.667 (0.151)***</b>
Coup history	<b>0.427 (0.165)*</b>	<b>0.385 (0.165)*</b>
Presidential election	-0.214 (0.124)	-0.236 (0.124)
Polity IV	<b>-0.106 (0.011)***</b>	<b>-0.118 (0.101)***</b>
Population (ln)	<b>0.125 (0.059)*</b>	<b>0.146 (0.055)*</b>
GDP per capita (ln)	<b>-0.133 (0.067)*</b>	-0.091 (0.056)
Land area (ln)	-0.023 (0.055)	-0.017 (0.051)
Ethnic fractionalization	-0.084 (0.292)	-0.113 (0.241)
Excluded groups	0.017 (0.011)	0.013 (0.010)
Founding election	-0.258 (0.201)	-0.259 (0.211)
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.008 (0.228)	
Middle East	0.366 (0.208)	
Latin America	-0.229 (0.220)	
Asia	0.036 (0.175)	
Constant	<b>-2.291 (0.520)***</b>	<b>-2.477 (0.462)****</b>
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.319	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.312
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	N=1,262	N=1,262

Some statistically significant variables are fairly obvious: incumbents in poor, less democratic countries are more likely to engage in electoral exclusion than their counterparts in rich, consolidated democracies.

Figure 16: Probability of exclusion by PolityIV ranking, according to the above model



There are several intriguing findings embedded in this model. First, I find a strong relationship between the prior use of exclusion and its future use, even controlling for other structural factors. Two possible explanations seem likely for this relationship. First, a history of exclusion can create cycles of vengeance, as excluded opponents who eventually take power are more liable to ‘return the favor.’ Second, given my finding that exclusion is effective at increasing the margin of victory *and* that election monitors have a lackluster record in terms of condemning exclusion, a previous history of exclusion allows incumbents (or their successors) to learn from past experience—repeating a tactic that has been effective before. In substantive terms, the likelihood that electoral exclusion will take place in any given election is nearly four times greater if exclusion was used in the previous election cycle.

Moreover, prior coup history also drives electoral exclusion. Exclusion is roughly twice as likely in elections that take place within two years after a coup plot. This finding could explain the causal mechanism at the heart of the so-called ‘coup trap’ within the context of flawed multi-party democracy. Just as Roessler (2011) suggests, incumbents may attempt to exclude rivals in order to keep them away from the locus of military power. However, if incumbents make the mistake of trying to ‘coup proof’ with that strategy against strong rivals (who inevitably have *some* connections to the military), it is likely to backfire, stoking the likelihood of insider violence (coups). If H2a (the proposition that electoral exclusion increases coup risk) can be proven, it

would establish that coup history drives exclusion and exclusion also drives coups—creating a vicious ‘coup trap’ cycle of exclusive elections and destabilizing coup attempts.<sup>112</sup>

These three models—1a, 1b, and 1c—tell a compelling statistical story that affirms Hypothesis H1. Incumbents—particularly incumbents in counterfeit democracies and autocracies—are drawn to electoral exclusion as a rational strategy in the short-term because it increases the likelihood of victory, while also artificially inflating their margins of victory. With a time horizon shortened by the impending challenge at the ballot box, it makes perfect sense for an incumbent might to exclude key rivals from the vote...but at what price?

### **Hypotheses H2a, H2b, and H2c: Does exclusion cause coups d’état, civil wars, or both?**

Model 2a tests whether electoral exclusion affects the probability that a coup will break out within two years after an election.<sup>113</sup> Model 2b tests whether exclusion alone increases the risk of civil wars; model 2c tests whether exclusion—in tandem with a boycott—increases the risk of civil wars. Each of these relationships is presumed to be more likely to exist in countries that do not have strong democratic institutions.

Models 2a, 2b, and 2c are run as straightforward probit regressions and include 11 key control variables; 8 other controls were tested but removed from the final models because they had negligible impact.<sup>114</sup> By ensuring that both models account for other factors—economic, regional, demographic, historical, geographic, institutional, quality of democracy, and the presence or lack of unrest surrounding the election—it is possible to discern whether exclusion (in models 2a and 2b), or an interaction variable with exclusion and boycotts (model 2b), is actually driving coups or civil wars in causal terms. Otherwise it would be uncertain whether exclusion and boycotts were simply capturing other specious effects and showing statistical significance without reflecting a genuine causal relationship.

The data robustly support both hypotheses H2a and H2c but not hypothesis H2b. Exclusion alone is sufficient to produce a substantial increase in coup risk, while exclusion is only a salient factor for civil war onset when combined with strong party mobilization—represented here by a party-led boycott during the election period. Furthermore, I find that exclusion increases coup risk at all levels of democratic consolidation (though coups are highly

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<sup>112</sup> Further research is needed on this front, but the model results do raise one possible explanation.

<sup>113</sup> Center for Systemic Peace 2013 data. Again, alternative one-year cutoff points were tested for all models and were not found to affect the key results drastically.

<sup>114</sup> Model 2a also includes a fourth model to control for the effect of boycotts and exclusion together, to ensure that the effect is unique to civil wars. The other controls include: French colony (binary); total number of ethnic groups in society (Ethnic Power Relations); founding election +1; founding election +2; OECD dummy; 2 year average of GDP growth (World Bank); major oil exporter (binary); military spending (SIPRI; major problems with missing data); landlocked developing country dummy.

unlikely in absolute terms within consolidated democracies). Conversely, the combined variable of exclusion and boycotts primarily increases the probability that a civil war will break out in counterfeit democracies, such as ‘competitive’ or ‘electoral authoritarian’ states (Schedler 2006). This divergent effect is likely as a result of the different strategies and costs necessary to police and prevent each form of political violence (explained below).

### Models 2a/2b/2c: Predicting coup d’état and civil war outbreak based on electoral exclusion

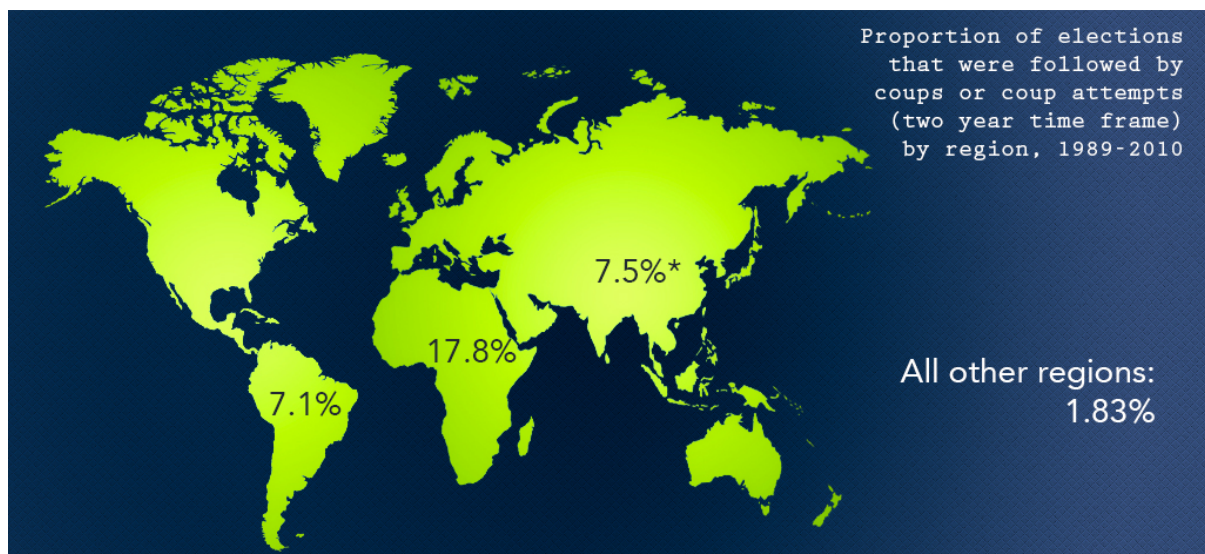
Figure 17: Dependent variable—Coup d’état, 2 years (Model 2); Civil war, 2 years (Model 3a/3b)

	<i>Model 2a</i> <i>Coups from exclusion</i>		<i>Model 2b</i> <i>Civil war from exclusion</i>	<i>Model 2c</i> <i>Civil war (exclusion+boycott)</i>
Electoral exclusion	<b>0.359 (0.170)*</b>		0.113 (0.185)	
Boycott	-0.006 (0.164)		0.198 (0.168)	
Exclusion + boycott		0.161 (0.118)		<b>0.371 (0.118)***</b>
Prior coup activity	<b>0.664 (0.143)***</b>	<b>0.665 (0.141)***</b>	0.108 (0.175)	0.052 (0.181)
Election type	-0.050 (0.118)	-0.047 (0.119)	0.166 (0.121)	0.179 (0.123)
Polity IV	0.007 (0.013)	0.003 (0.123)	0.006 (0.014)	0.024 (0.014)
Population (ln)	-0.115 (0.065)	-0.012 (0.063)	<b>0.209 (0.066)**</b>	<b>0.206 (0.068)**</b>
GDP per capita (ln)	<b>-0.318 (0.067)***</b>	<b>-0.318 (0.067)**</b>	<b>-0.183 (0.059)**</b>	<b>-0.195 (0.060)***</b>
Land area (ln)	0.015 (0.048)	0.015 (0.050)	0.111 (0.057)	<b>0.117 (0.057)*</b>
Ethnic fractionalization	0.167 (0.251)	0.174 (0.247)	0.101 (0.218)	0.121 (0.225)
Excluded groups	-0.017 (0.023)	-0.015 (0.028)	0.022 (0.012)	0.022 (0.012)
Founding election	0.102 (0.164)	0.100 (0.177)	0.023 (0.197)	0.071 (0.200)
Mountainous Terrain	0.029 (0.041)	0.034 (0.043)	<b>0.166 (0.051)***</b>	<b>0.169 (0.052)***</b>
Anocracy	0.138 (0.132)	0.096 (0.129)	<b>0.568 (0.142)***</b>	<b>0.560 (0.142)***</b>
Riots & protests	0.143 (0.143)	0.132 (0.140)	0.118 (0.152)	0.068 (0.156)
Constant	-0.455 (0.542)	-0.418 (0.498)	<b>-4.894 (0.592)***</b>	<b>-5.070 (0.620)***</b>
	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.170	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.166	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.184	Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> : 0.197
*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	N=1,290		N=1,290	N=1,290

Model 2 affirms hypothesis H2a: exclusion increases coup risk, while the combination of exclusion and boycotts does not—suggesting that exclusion is the salient factor. However, in

absolute terms, post-election coups remain quite uncommon. After cases were removed because of missing data, 7.7% (100 out of 1,298) of elections were followed by a coup or coup attempt within two years. When coups or coup attempts do follow elections, they are clustered in some regions but not others. Between 1989 and 2010, 54% of successful and failed coups were in sub-Saharan Africa, 21% were in Asia, 16% were in Latin America, leaving just 9% in the rest of the world. There were no coups attempts in OECD countries within two years of any election.<sup>115</sup>

*Figure 18: Proportion of elections followed by coups or coup attempts within 2 years of an election by region*



\*Note: Asia includes all countries defined by the United Nations as being in Central Asia, Eastern Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia but not Western Asia (which includes several countries in the 'Middle East')

Across all specifications of Model 2, there is strong evidence that electoral exclusion drastically increases the risk that a coup d'état will break out within two years of an election.<sup>116</sup> Not only is exclusion statistically significant, but it also predicts a large substantive shift in coup risk: the probability of a coup d'état attempt rises more than doubles, from 4.1% to 8.9%. This probability still means the event is unlikely in absolute terms, but any large comparative increase in coup risk should be cause for concern. Moreover, the probabilities are compounded by other risk factors—which have already been shown to be major substantive drivers of coup risk. For example, when electoral exclusion takes place in a country that has a recent coup history, the model predicts a 22% likelihood that a coup will take place within two years of an exclusionary election—almost one in every four elections. This is akin to playing electoral Russian roulette

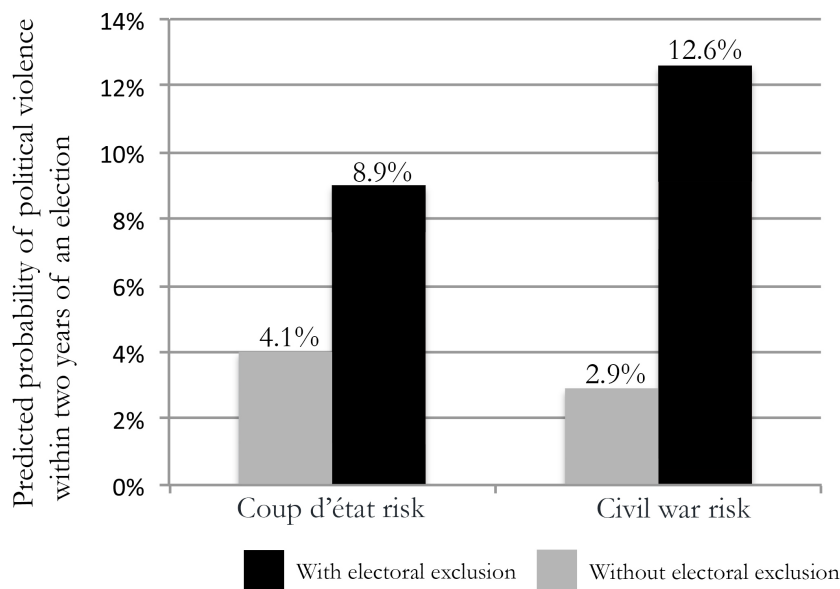
<sup>115</sup> Interestingly, the Polity2 scores in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa for election years during this period were similar (mean of 1.5 and 1.4 respectively), while Latin America had elevated coup activity in spite of its relatively high Polity2 scores (mean of 7.0).

<sup>116</sup> I also ran the regressions with a one-year cutoff point to check model robustness. The explanatory variable retained significance.

with one bullet and just three empty chambers. Given that, on average, national elections take place every 2.25 years in the countries modeled here, that toxic combination translates to a coup or coup attempt every 10 years—hardly a recipe for stable political growth. The evidence clearly allows us to reject the null hypothesis corollary of H2a that electoral exclusion has no effect on coup risk.

The civil war model affirms hypothesis H2c but not hypothesis H2b, because exclusion alone (Model 2b) is insufficient to increase the probability of a civil war outbreak. Instead, civil wars require mobilization. As a result, when boycotts (a variable showcasing the excluded party’s willingness to mobilize its supporters against the election) is added in combination with electoral exclusion (Model 2c), the risk of civil war more than quadruples: from a 2.9% risk when neither exclusion nor boycotts take place, to 12.6% when an opposition candidate is excluded and the party musters a boycott in response. In a more war-prone region, such as sub-Saharan Africa, the model predicts that the combination of exclusion and a boycott produces a 22.3% chance that a civil war will break out—an alarmingly high figure. That risk runs higher still if the country in question is a highly populated counterfeit democracy stretched over a large land mass.

Figure 19: Predicted probability of coup and civil war risk with electoral exclusion



These three latter factors (population size, counterfeit democracy/anocracy, and land area) are likely salient because civil wars are comparatively difficult to police and prevent compared to coups d'état. Coups take place from within the state and are almost always launched in the capital (Jackman et al. 1986). As a result, to police against coups, the state needs

to keep watch primarily on one state institution (the military) and generally only in one primary location (the capital city). Rebellions are different. They can be, and usually are, launched from the hinterlands of the country—far away from the police capabilities of the state nucleus (Roessler 2011).

Figure 20: How regime type, levels of opposition in society, and policing capability condition political violence risk

Regime type	Opposition to regime	Policing capability	Risk of political violence
Consolidated democracy	Low	High	Very low
Weak democracy	Low/medium	Medium/high	Coups unlikely; civil wars unlikely
Counterfeit democracy	Medium	Low	Coups & civil wars likely
Autocracy	High	High	Coups likely; civil wars unlikely

Policing large countries with large populations is both more difficult and more costly because would-be rebels have myriad places to hide and be sheltered by local civilians (Green 2012 provides a compelling argument related to the salience of population density with civil wars in Africa, for example). Authoritarian governments counteract this problem and mitigate civil war risk by devoting a larger share of state resources to internal policing (Koehler 1999; Scraton 1987). Even if prospective rebels might want to cobble together a coherent force, they are detected early on—foiling their subversive effort before it becomes viable. On the other extreme, consolidated democracies have credible institutional mechanisms for resolving internal disputes, which decreases the comparative attractiveness of launching a rebellion. Even absent state police, consolidated democracies are capable of policing their entire territory *and* face a lower risk of groups in society wanting to launch a rebellion in the first place. The states in between these two extremes, counterfeit democracies, tend to have neither benefit. Disgruntled elements in counterfeit democracies may find the allure of rebellion comparatively attractive—particularly when excluded from the legitimate pathway to state power (elections) *and* there are usually insufficient police capabilities to mitigate and monitor that potential threat (Gurr 2000; Salehyan & Gleditsch 2006; Mansfield & Snyder 2002). This, as Paul Collier et al. would put it, increases the feasibility of a civil war outbreak (Collier & Hoeffler 2004).

I completed several robustness checks across all models.<sup>117</sup> I also repeated the regressions as two interlocking two-stage Heckman models (Model 1c for the first stage and Model 2a for

<sup>117</sup> I conducted several robustness checks of the regression models including:

- Running the data with 1-year cutoff points rather than 2-year cutoff points.
- Running the civil war model with 100/500 as the battle death threshold cutoff point for classifying a conflict as a civil war.



the second stage in the first iteration; Model 1c and Model 2c together in the second iteration). That specification produced a selection model determining whether or not an incumbent would or would not choose to exclude opposition candidates, and if they did, whether the opposition would then respond with political violence. Statistically, the results were extremely similar with nearly identical significance levels as the separate probit modeling—so I chose to present the more straightforward and parsimonious probit models.

Moreover, I re-ran the regression with election-related riots and protests (a mobilization action) as the dependent variable to ensure that the modeling was not just capturing destabilized polities rather than strategic action on the part of excluded candidates and their parties. Again, exclusion was insufficient to provoke riots and protests but exclusion with boycotts was a statistically significant predictor of electoral riot outbreaks. Boycotts, the data suggest, are relatively good proxies for mobilization capacity.

With both types of modeling (probit and Heckman), the quantitative evidence is clear. Incumbents—particularly in counterfeit democracies and autocracies—exclude opponents because it is effective at inflating margins of victory with comparatively limited risk of facing international condemnation. Once the incumbent makes that choice in order to secure short-term victory in the election, the chances that the regime will face a coup d'état in the following two years doubles, *or* the risk of a civil war quadruples, depending on how the excluded opposition party chooses to mobilize in response—based on party strength and the ‘feasibility’—as established in previous literature—of specific pathways to political violence (Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2009).

### **Electoral exclusion: an enticing short-term trap with long-term but unlikely risks**

The models presented above provide the statistical storyline of the ‘exclusion trap’: trading a pyrrhic short-term election victory for a greater existential threat in the medium- to long-term. In affirming hypothesis H1, Models 1a, 1b, and 1c all combine to establish the fact that exclusion is a rational option for incumbents (particularly outside of consolidated

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- Verifying coding decisions for NELDA’s electoral exclusion variable by independently coding all cases from 2005-2010; I came to the same conclusion as NELDA’s coders 97% of the time.
  - Running Model 2 and Model 3a/3b with regional dummy variables.
  - Running all models with several other iterations of control variables to ensure that significance did not change (it did not).
  - Testing riots and protests as a dependent rather than an independent variable (i.e. testing the notion that riots and protests were one possible form of political violence rather than a possible cause of future political violence; the regression results for that regression are below and lend support to the notion that mobilization is a key factor).

democracy) in the short-term because it increases the probability of victory and inflates the eventual margin of victory in the election. This confers several benefits to incumbents that close elections do not provide while also acting as a more effective insurance policy against the uncertainty of election day rigging or inclusive elections absent any manipulation. Furthermore, exclusion is not only effective at generating victory—it is also effective at generating seemingly *legitimate*, internationally-sanctioned victory. This is the bait that draws incumbents toward the exclusion trap.

However, once they take the bait, the risk of political violence in the form of a coup or civil war rises considerably—doubling the risk of coups and quadrupling the risk of civil war outbreak. This risk of future political violence is insufficient to deter incumbents from excluding their rivals for two reasons. First, as is often the case, the choice to exclude offers incumbents the chance to deflect an immediate threat while increasing the risk of a longer-term, but ultimately unknown threat. There is inevitably an allure to a high chance of victory now versus an uncertain future risk that may never manifest. Incumbents discount future unknown risks (Bates 2008). Second, even though electoral exclusion has been shown to increase the comparative risk of both coups and civil wars, each type of event is still extremely uncommon in absolute terms. The 8.9% risk of a coup d'état and the 12.6% risk of a civil war in the wake of electoral exclusion means that roughly nine times out of ten, the incumbent will face neither a coup nor a civil war after they exclude a major rival (or major rivals) from an election. This is important, because many incumbents will only face re-election contests once or twice during their tenure in office. If an incumbent is facing electoral challenges only once or twice, the compounded risk of a coup or civil war is still low—even with exclusion. Admittedly, repeated iterations of electoral exclusion may increase both the odds of condemnation by international observers and the risk of violence, but these are, again, uncertain effects weighed against the very real risk of defeat at the ballot box.

Statistical models have limits. In spite of the increasing emphasis and methodological fetishization of quantitative modeling in political science, the models outlined above do *not* (and cannot) show the way in which incentives change over time to provoke incumbents to use exclusion, or how electoral exclusion itself affects the incentives facing would-be usurpers who then choose to launch or not launch a coup or civil war against the incumbent. To understand that elusive 'black box' of this causal relationship, I now turn to several qualitative process tracing case studies—in Madagascar, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Tunisia, and Thailand.

## CHAPTER THREE: BALLOTS AND THE BARRACKS

### *Electoral Exclusion and Coups d'État in Zambia and Madagascar*

While the quantitative evidence linking electoral exclusion to coups d'état is strong, it would be impossible to understand *why* that relationship exists and *how* the causal link functions without the complement of qualitative case studies. All five case studies—Madagascar, Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, Tunisia, and Thailand—rely on extensive elite interviews, conducted in each country with an array of politicians, military officers, diplomats, relatives of coup plotters, witnesses to the coups and coup attempts, academics, journalists, and former rebels. Each interview was semi-structured, meaning that the themes discussed were similar, as were several basic questions—though ultimately, the person being interviewed was able to steer the discussion as they saw fit. This format is far better suited for elites than rigidly closed surveys that might be used for mass citizen research (Aberbach & Rockman 2002).

In each case study, there are two questions that must be answered. First, why did the incumbent regime make the decision to include or exclude their main rivals? Second, did that exclusion increase the risk of a coup d'état or a civil war? If so, why did the country follow that specific pathway to violence rather than an alternative route? These questions match with the three hypotheses under the umbrella of H1 (H1a, H1b, H1c), and with hypothesis H2 (H2a & H2c)—which were all confirmed statistically in Chapter Two.

This chapter and the three subsequent chapters all use the same methodology—process tracing—in distinct political contexts. If a similar relationship can be teased out of political environments that are wildly different (or quite similar, but distinct on key variables, such as levels of democracy), then one can be reasonably confident that the casual link is genuine—particularly when bolstered by the quantitative data already presented. As David Collier (2011) makes clear: “As a tool of causal inference, process tracing focuses on the unfolding of events or situations *over time*.” This requires drawing inference based on how actors shaped the political context from one time period to another, and how that new political context prompted shifting elite motivations and actions. Here, I attempt to determine causal processes as a function of elite interaction.

In this chapter, I use information collected from 18 elite interviews from a month-long trip to Zambia in August/September 2012 and 84 interviews conducted during four different

trips to Madagascar between June 2012 and December 2013.<sup>118</sup> These interviews use two comparative case studies (Madagascar 2006 and Zambia 1996) to help demonstrate how removing opposition from the ballot can prompt ambitious challengers in varied circumstances to seek power with bullets, and one case study (Madagascar 2013) to establish that exclusion can breed future exclusion—even if it has not (yet) provoked violence.

I argue that incumbents are more likely to exclude their opponents if the following three conditions are met, but that the risk of exclusion still increases (to a lesser extent) if any of these three conditions or any combination of two of them is in place:

- 1) Incumbents perceive that an opposition candidate could pose a credible threat to the incumbent's chance of victory.
- 2) It is possible to exclude the challenger with the backing of a supposedly 'independent' third party, in a way that can provide plausible deniability and cover to the incumbent from the act of manipulation.
- 3) There is reason for the incumbent to believe that the exclusion of a rival candidate will not drastically damage their international legitimacy, or that any loss of legitimacy will not be associated with serious costs or sanctions imposed on the regime.

In both Madagascar and Zambia, these three conditions prompted incumbents to exclude rather than include their main opponents in the three elections covered here.

I also propose that there are two conditions that increase the likelihood of a coup d'état being launched, in addition to the effect of exclusion itself.<sup>119</sup> Specifically, coups become more feasible when coup plotters:

- 1) believe that there is sufficient dissatisfaction and resentment toward the regime within the general population that a coup could feasibly receive popular support.

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<sup>118</sup> The interviews in Zambia were all conducted in Lusaka during August 2012; the interviews in Madagascar were conducted in Antananarivo on trips in June/July 2012, September 2012, February 2013, and December 2013. I spent more time in Madagascar because I was a consultant to the Carter Center's election observation mission.

<sup>119</sup> Inevitably, some acts of violence—including coups d'état—are undertaken in non-rational circumstances. Sometimes coups are launched at times when they are doomed to fail by people who either wildly miscalculate the chances of success or simply discount the risks of that inevitable failure. Such outliers will always be elusive to study; these case studies presume that the actors involved were drawn to coup plotting because they believed it gave them a reasonable chance to take power and an acceptably low risk of being captured or killed.

- 2) believe that there is sufficient resentment toward the regime within the military such that both rank-and-file soldiers *and* high-ranking officers will join the coup once announced, guaranteeing its success. This second ‘feasibility’ criterion is especially important in cases where popular support is lacking. However, it can be overcome if the coup plotters can manufacture the illusion of support from high-ranking military brass, possibly using coercion (as was attempted in the Zambia case).<sup>120</sup>

The case studies presented below will demonstrate how each of the three causal factors necessary for electoral exclusion to be strategically attractive were fulfilled, and how the aftermath of that exclusion fulfilled the two causal factors to make a coup seem feasible to dissatisfied officers in the military—who then took up arms against the regime. These propositions demonstrate precisely why and how politicians may be tempted to fall into the ‘exclusion trap’ and how that trap ultimately can prove destabilizing by provoking subsequent political violence.

### *Madagascar and Zambia: Case Study Selection*

The 1996 presidential election in Zambia and the 2006 presidential election in Madagascar were watershed moments for both countries. They share several key traits. In both, the incumbent excluded a major challenger by manipulating the laws or playing games with procedural guidelines to ensure that their rival would not appear on the ballot. In both, the incumbent’s reward for using electoral exclusion was a massive margin of victory *and* international approval for the ensuing regime. And, in both cases, that landslide victory—and the falsely engineered supposedly “legitimate” mandate that it produced—caused the respective winning presidents to feel that they could get away with widespread abuse of power.

Zambia’s 1996 election and Madagascar’s 2006 election also followed similar pathways from exclusion to political violence. The anger produced by electoral exclusion—combined with the opposition created by the subsequent abuse of power—reduced support for the regime (both in the public and within the military), which in turn increased the perceived ‘feasibility’ of a successful coup d’état. And, in each case, a relatively junior-level group of officers opportunistically took advantage of the opening created indirectly by electoral exclusion to launch a coup d’état.

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<sup>120</sup> There are other reasons that coups break out, but in my view, these two are prerequisites for all other “triggers” or underlying “structural” causes; for a comprehensive review of the proposed reasons in other literature, see Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer, (2003), “Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 47(5), pp. 594-620.

The coup succeeded in Madagascar but failed in Zambia. Beyond this divergent outcome, Madagascar and Zambia overlap on several non-salient variables but diverge on critical factors. The interplay of overlapping factors and distinct contexts creates an excellent framework for comparative analysis.

Lusaka (Zambia's capital) and Antananarivo (Madagascar's capital) lie in the same region (Southern Africa) but are 1,200 miles apart. At the time of the cases, they were similar on several variables: GDP per capita, land area, population size, existence of prior coup history, presence of international observers, long previous histories of one-party rule (under Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia and Didier Ratsiraka in Madagascar).<sup>121</sup> Both were also presidential rather than parliamentary elections.

These two cases are therefore well matched to establish that exclusion is a causal factor in the outbreak of coups even in varying democratic contexts. While several variables overlap, Madagascar (+7) scored far higher on Polity IV in 2006 than Zambia did in 1996 (+1).<sup>122</sup> In other words, Madagascar was categorized as a democracy while Zambia was categorized as a weak anocracy / counterfeit democracy. Furthermore, Madagascar had successfully passed the so-called 'two-turnover test' while Zambia had not (Huntington 1991). As a result, the case comparison allows an examination of whether exclusion is a driver of coups even in countries with divergent democratic qualities.

Madagascar follows the more expected pathway as outlined in Chapter One, with an excluded opposition candidate/party being complicit with the instigation of a coup d'état. But Zambia followed another (common) pathway: exclusion provoking a coup d'état attempt even when the opposition was not directly involved in its planning or instigation.

This chapter aims to showcase why incumbent Presidents Marc Ravalomanana (Madagascar 2006) and Frederick Chiluba (Zambia 1996) chose to exclude their main rivals from the election, and how that exclusion provoked a coup d'état in the wake of the election. In each case study, the main actors that will be evaluated over time with process tracing are the incumbent, opposition groups, the international community, and the military (broken down into two sub-groups: the coup plotters and the military brass).

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<sup>121</sup> According to World Bank World Development Indicators: GDP per capita in constant 2014 US dollars, Zambia (1996): \$546, Madagascar (2006): \$346. Both values are well below the mean of the global sample, classifying them as impoverished countries. Madagascar's 2006 population (18.8 million) is more than double Zambia's 1996 population (9 million), but they are in the same band of middle-of-the-road countries in terms of population. Madagascar's land area is roughly 226,000 sq. miles, compared to 285,000 sq. miles for Zambia. Both had previous coup attempts, though Madagascar had been home to successful coups in its history, while Zambia had not suffered a successful coup since independence.

<sup>122</sup> The +7 score for Madagascar is an indication, of my view, of 'grade inflation' with democracies. Few observers of Madagascar politics would categorize the state as a genuine democracy at any point since independence. Nonetheless, they were substantially divergent on this measure.

## *Madagascar: An Island Rocked by Predatory Politicians, Poverty, and Coups*

Madagascar was rocked by a 2009 coup d'état in the aftermath of electoral exclusion in its December 2006 presidential election. The saga of Malagasy turmoil is stranger than fiction. The incumbent, a former yogurt magnate, was overthrown in a military-coup d'état by a former radio disc jockey who used radio broadcasts to stoke tensions and call for the removal of the incumbent.

Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island and one of the world's poorest countries. It is also particularly coup-prone; the country has suffered eight failed coup attempts of varying levels of seriousness between 1974 and 2012.<sup>123</sup> In 2001, Marc Ravalomanana, a rags-to-riches businessman who went from selling yogurt off the back of his bicycle to building a national dairy empire, defeated incumbent President Didier Ratsiraka in a controversial election. Ravalomanana declared victory after the first round, and established his government in the capital city of Antananarivo, even though the initial count showed that he had failed to clear the necessary 50% threshold to avoid a runoff election (Ploch & Cook 2012). Ratsiraka rejected the results and set up a parallel government in Toamasina, a coastal port in eastern Madagascar. Eventually, after several months of sporadic low-level fighting, Ratsiraka (and his entourage) fled in exile to France and Ravalomanana took power, uncontested (Marcus 2010). This was not abnormal; defeated politicians in Madagascar have often needed to flee to save their lives.

Ravalomanana's first term was regarded as a success by domestic and international observers, a critical asset that played in his later calculation to exclude his electoral rivals. Madagascar's economy had stagnated since independence. Yet, during Ravalomanana's first term, Madagascar's growth from 2001-2006 averaged 7.6%, one of the highest sustained rates of growth in the world (World Bank 2014).<sup>124</sup> Moreover, Ravalomanana's regime had modest successes in fighting low-level corruption, establishing the *Bureau Indépendant Anti-Corruption* (BIANCO) in 2004 (IMF 2006). His administration also made substantial investments in public infrastructure (though opponents argued that he only built roads if they would help his Tiko dairy empire transport goods faster, bolstering profits). This seemed to be the only major criticism of his regime on the domestic front at the time: "The space between the public and the private became blurred...between the two sectors in service to President Marc Ravalomanana and CEO Marc Ravalomanana" (Marcus 2010, 118). Indeed, the colors and branding images of

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<sup>123</sup> The coup attempts took place in 1974, 1982, 1989, 1990, 1992, 2006, 2010 and 2012.

<sup>124</sup> See "GDP Growth (Annual Percentage), 1980-2013," (2014), *The World Bank*. Available from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>

Ravalomanana's company and his political party were identical and the company name (Tiko) soundly remarkably similar to Ravalomanana's political party name (Tiako i Madagasikara, or "I love Madagascar").

In spite of the blurred boundaries between business and politics, the successes of Ravalomanana's first term put him in a strong position heading into the December 2006 election. Most Western governments and the World Bank supported Ravalomanana, which provided a crucial diplomatic shield for his regime.<sup>125</sup> They saw Ravalomanana's flaws, but perceived him as someone who was better than any alternative. Moreover, the new regime created new allies with an effort to 'decolonize' the Malagasy economy, providing contracts to firms that were specifically not French (their former colonial power).<sup>126</sup> In particular, Ravalomanana eagerly courted favor with firms from the United States, China, Germany, and South Korea among others.<sup>127</sup>

This diversion of contracts did not sit well with the French government, as French firms have long been considered to be "the true economic powers in the Malagasy economy."<sup>128</sup> This would be a crucial concern to any Malagasy regime; the island's political elite could not (and cannot) ignore French firms or the French government. Moreover, French companies in Madagascar were known "to have a direct line to President Sarkozy's administration in Paris" at the time.<sup>129</sup> In spite of their opposition to Ravalomanana, however, the French were constrained in acting against him—he had widespread support within the rest of the international community heading into the 2006 election. This diplomatic shield conditioned his behavior considerably.

### **Credible Threats: Why Ravalomanana Excluded General Fidy and Pierrot Rajaonarivelo**

There was nonetheless considerable domestic opposition to Ravalomanana's regime. In particular, blocs of the Côtier ethnic group—especially those that were partisans of former President Didier Ratsiraka—had not been won over by Ravalomanana, who was the first

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ravalomanana is widely believed to have mistrusted the French government, dating back to two formative events from his childhood. First, he was schooled by Anglophone missionaries, which informed and intensified his admiration of the US and other non-Francophone powers. Moreover, some have suggested that "Ravalomanana had a personality complex that made him uncomfortable doing business in his weaker language—French." (Zo Rakotoseheno, Editor-in-Chief, *Midi-Madagasikara*, personal interview, 6 July 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar). Second, Ravalomanana applied for a loan program from the French government when he sought to initially expand his business as a young man and was rejected; the World Bank eventually provided funding and his business took off.

<sup>127</sup> Ravalomanana's affinity for South Korean firms (particularly Daewoo) would eventually prove one of the causal factors in his eventual downfall from power.

<sup>128</sup> Zo Rakotoseheno, Editor-in-Chief of *Midi-Madagasikara*, personal interview, 6 July 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

<sup>129</sup> Top-level diplomatic source, unnamed here at his request, personal interview, 27 June 2012 & 4 September 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar.



ethnically Merina president of Madagascar.<sup>130</sup> In the months before the election, two major challengers emerged to President Ravalomanana: General Andrianafidisoa (known as General Fidy) and Pierrot Rajaonarivelo, who had served as Deputy Prime Minister under President Ratsiraka's second term (1997 – 2002).<sup>131</sup>

Both were credible threats. General Fidy did not have a large support base and was not on active duty, but he had close ties with the military (always a threat in the coup prone island nation); he had already played kingmaker in 2002. When he sided with Ravalomanana's camp during the post-electoral dispute, it swung clear control of the island to Ravalomanana and forced Ratsiraka to flee.<sup>132</sup> When General Fidy decided to challenge Ravalomanana in the 2006 elections, then, the threat could not be ignored.

Likewise, Rajaonarivelo—who had fled to exile in Paris as a result of a politically motivated conviction (the conviction was only announced after Rajaonarivelo had announced his plans to run for president)—had a national following and also posed a credible threat to Ravalomanana.<sup>133</sup> Rajaonarivelo had largely taken up the mantle of the main opposition party, former President Ratsiraka's AREMA party. With Ratsiraka still in exile in Paris, Rajaonarivelo pledged to return to Madagascar and defeat Ravalomanana. He was “widely believed to be the most serious challenger to President Ravalomanana.”<sup>134</sup>

Both candidates had domestic support but Rajaonarivelo also had international support: he had a cozier relationship with French firms and the government, as had been established during his dealings in Ratsiraka's second term. Even though they had a clear preference for Rajaonarivelo (or someone equally pro-French), the French government was not in a position to actively intervene. The international community was nearly unanimous in its support of the incumbent regime and defying the prevailing winds of the major international players was a risk that the French government was unwilling to take (Marcus 2010).<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The Merina people are Indo-Malay/Polynesian in origin and live in the Malagasy highlands—particularly around the capital, Antananarivo. Côtiers, as their name suggests, tend to live on the coasts and are descended from ancestral migrants across the Mozambique Channel. Ratsiraka, a Côtier, was president of Madagascar from 1975–1993 and again from 1997 to early 2002. Albert Zafy, also a Côtier (largely supported by the Merina), was president from 1993–1997. There is an unwritten norm in Madagascar that Côtier presidents will appoint Merina prime ministers and vice versa.

<sup>131</sup> “Madagascar: Hoping for fair, transparent, uncontroversial elections,” *IRIN News*, 15 November 2006.

<sup>132</sup> Alain Iloniaina, “Madagascar Hunts for Renegade General After Coup Bid,” *Reuters*, 19 November 2006 and Alain Iloniaina, journalist, digital interview, 20 August 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Rajaonarivelo was sentenced (in absentia and without evidence being presented) to 15 years of hard labor for “abuse of office,” a murky term that was often used in politically-motivated charges. “Presidential Election Report: Madagascar,” (2007), *Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa*, available from: <http://www.eisa.org.za/PDF/madeom2006.pdf>. Accessed 21 March 2012. See also Jean-Dominique Geslin, “Rajaonarivelo, Trouble-Fête,” *Jeune Afrique*, 16 October 2006.

<sup>134</sup> Richard Marcus, (Nov. 2006), “Madagascar: Semi-Annual Risk Assessment,” *FAST International / Swiss Peace*, 6.

<sup>135</sup> French diplomatic source, anonymous at his request, personal interview, 6 September 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Shielded from Western diplomatic intervention (and an extremely low threat of anemic African Union intervention), Ravalomanana faced two of the three criteria that entice incumbents to exclude their opponents: General Fidy and Pierrot Rajaonarivelo were both credible threats, and the incumbent was confident that he would face limited, if any, backlash over their removal from the election.<sup>136</sup> While one-party states previously sought to exclude weak opponents while including strong rivals, Ravalomanana's short-term electoral time horizon made it most enticing to do the exact opposite—allowing weak opponents to challenge him openly while excluding the strongest candidates.

The last remaining question was whether or not the regime could find a way to legitimize the exclusion with some form of legalistic mechanism, ideally through a seemingly 'independent' third party. Doing so would further inoculate Ravalomanana's regime from foreign and domestic criticism, a key feature of 'strategic manipulation'. Ravalomanana used different strategies for each rival threat. For General Fidy, who was already in the country and had not been arrested or convicted of any charges when he announced his intention to run for the presidency, Ravalomanana (ostensibly) chose to exclude him from the contest with a procedural denial of his paperwork—claiming that the General had not paid the 25 million ariary registration fee (roughly \$11,400 with 2006 exchange rates) before the registration deadline.<sup>137</sup> General Fidy appealed, insisted he had paid the fee, and claimed that the ruling was politically motivated. His appeal was rejected. The High Constitutional Court nullified his candidacy on October 16, 2006—less than two months before the December 3<sup>rd</sup> election.<sup>138</sup> Whether he actually paid the fee or not is of crucial importance to determining whether the election featured electoral exclusion; after all, democracies have registration guidelines, and candidates *should* be excluded when they do not follow them, so long as they are not targeted or unreasonable. It is impossible to be sure whether the fee changed hands or did not, but it is not unreasonable to suspect that political motivations were at play—as they were at play with almost every other aspect of the election registration process.

However, whether General Fidy was excluded illegitimately or not, Rajaonarivelo certainly was. Ravalomanana decided to use procedural registration laws to exclude his chief Côtier rival, the *dauphin* of Ratsiraka's AREMA political movement. Candidates are required by Malagasy law to sign their paperwork at the election registration office in Madagascar; it cannot be done in absentia. When the former Deputy Prime Minister attempted to return to his party's coastal stronghold of Toamasina on an October 7<sup>th</sup> commercial Air Austral flight from Paris via

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<sup>136</sup> This is bolstered by the findings in my quantitative analysis that leaders often 'get away' with exclusion.

<sup>137</sup> Iloaiaina, *Reuters*, 19 November 2006.

<sup>138</sup> Marcus, (2006), *SwissPeace*, p. 6.

the neighboring island of Réunion, Ravalomanana issued an order closing the airport of Toamasina for a period of three months.<sup>139</sup> The order provoked unrest; police had to use teargas to disperse “the thousands of protestors that had come to welcome the opposition leader to the airport.”<sup>140</sup> If Rajaonarivelo did not arrive by October 14, he risked being disqualified from the contest. Ravalomanana made it clear, however, that he would turn away any flight with Rajaonarivelo onboard, so Rajaonarivelo’s repeated efforts to fly home to register as a candidate were unsuccessful.<sup>141</sup>

On 16 October 2006, the High Constitutional Court (HCC) disqualified Rajaonarivelo (along with General Fidy and two minor candidates), though bizarrely ruled two days later that Rajaonarivelo nonetheless retained “full civil and political rights.”<sup>142</sup> In other words, the prevailing legal interpretation was that Rajaonarivelo was free to stand for office, but would not appear on the upcoming ballot because he had not signed his paperwork in person—a technicality engineered by Ravalomanana’s direct intervention in closing the airport and putting pressure on regional airlines to not allow him onboard. This was the archetypal definition of electoral exclusion: if Ravalomanana had not intervened, Rajaonarivelo would have been free to run in elections.

Ravalomanana faced credible threats. He neutralized them with electoral exclusion hiding behind an allegedly ‘independent’ body, which made it even less likely that he would face diplomatic consequences for his pre-election manipulation. All three criteria outlined above were fulfilled.

Exclusion worked. While the exclusion received limited press coverage in local and French media, there was no uproar. International donors—the World Bank and United States in particular—were willing to overlook the situation because they believed Ravalomanana was a reform-minded politician who would continue to govern effectively. The African Union and South Africa were silent on the issue. The French government, which was far more sympathetic to the plight of Rajaonarivelo because of their formerly cozy relationship, was constrained by prevailing international opinion and chose not to take any concrete action, even as they knew that another Ravalomanana term would likely damage their prospects for advocating on behalf of French firms operating on the island.

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<sup>139</sup> “Pierrot Rajaonarivelo, interdit de retour à Madagascar,” *Liberation*, 9 October 2006.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 9 October 2006: “La police a dispersé, à coups de gaz lacrymogène, le millier de manifestants venus accueillir l’opposant à l’aéroport.”

<sup>141</sup> Stéphanie Pailler, “Pierrot Rajaonarivelo évincé de la course présidentielle,” *Radio France Internationale*, 19 October 2006.

<sup>142</sup> “Le sieur Pierrot Rajaonarivelo conserve la plénitude de ses droits civils et politiques.” Haute Cour Constitutionnelle, Décision N° 19-HCC/D3, 18 October 2006.

However, even without international uproar, electoral exclusion is always risky; excluded candidates can be unpredictable. As my theory would suggest, once excluded, AREMA and General Fidy had to decide whether to boycott. AREMA split, with part of the party advocating a boycott and other parts participating (jumping ship to put their own interests first, demonstrating the weakness of the party apparatus in cohesion and making clear that mass mobilization was impossible). The half-hearted boycott was a failure. Next, they faced the choice to either accept the results / challenge in court, or consider launching a coup; they eventually chose the latter, just over two years later.

General Fidy's reaction was much quicker. He knew that a boycott was not an option because he had no formal political party to mobilize (as would be expected given the theory developed in the previous chapter). Without plausible legitimate recourse, Fidy face the choice to either accept the result while aiming to impose reputational costs, or make an illegitimate, non-sanctioned challenge. Just one month after the HCC ruling was made, General Fidy launched a botched, ill-formed coup attempt two weeks before the election that was to proceed without him. While President Ravalomanana was en route back to Madagascar from a trip to France, Fidy took control of a military base and the Ivato international airport before dawn on 18 November.<sup>143</sup> After a brief firefight (which left one soldier dead and several wounded), General Fidy fled and escaped. Ravalomanana's airplane was diverted to Mahajanga on the northwest coast but he retained control.

While the coup attempt itself was poorly planned and executed, it became further evidence of the severe political dissatisfaction with Ravalomanana's regime among the opposition. On 22 November, 11 of the 14 official presidential candidates publicly sanctioned the 'legitimate' actions of General Fidy, saying that he was looking out for the best interests of the nation by attempting to force Ravalomanana from power.<sup>144</sup> While General Fidy would not be captured until nine days after the election (December 12), the botched coup attempt highlights two important points. First, exclusion can sometimes backfire, as a short-term strategy to ensure electoral victory may spark a near immediate backlash from the excluded candidate. Second, while the coup attempt by General Fidy would not be a 'positive' case in the quantitative analysis because it occurred *before* the election, it demonstrates that exclusion can sometimes be destabilizing immediately after *the decision* to remove a targeted candidate from the ballot has taken place.

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<sup>143</sup> Ilonaina, "Madagascar Hunts for Renegade General After Coup Bid," 19 November 2006. See also: "General Attempts Coup in Madagascar," *United Press International*, 18 November 2006.

<sup>144</sup> "Madagascar: 11 candidats de l'opposition jugent légitime l'action du général 'Fidy'," *Agence France Presse*, 22 November 2006.

Despite General Fidy's failed coup attempt, the election took place as scheduled on 3 December 2006. Absent any major challengers, Ravalomanana was re-elected in a landslide, clearing the 50% threshold needed to avoid a runoff. He won the election with 54.8% of the vote, 43.2% ahead of the second place finisher, independent candidate Jean Lahiniriko.<sup>145</sup> Better yet for Ravalomanana, the international community fully endorsed the election—a byproduct of diplomatic favoritism and the benefit of hiding behind an 'independent' body that excluded his rivals. The EISA (South African affiliated) election observation mission concluded—with a sentiment that was echoed in all international observer reports—that “the presidential elections of 3 December 2006 in Madagascar were largely conducted in a way that afforded the Malagasy people the opportunity to express freely their democratic choice.”<sup>146</sup> The Southern African Development Community (SADC) concurred, saying that the elections “were conducted in a free and transparent manner and afforded the Malagasy people the opportunity to freely elect leaders of their choice.”<sup>147</sup> This was not true, clearly, as two of the most popular opposition candidates were not on the ballot. The EISA report mentioned the exclusion of Rajaonarivelo and Fidy, but did not condemn it or suggest that it should have been handled differently.<sup>148</sup> The SADC report contained a section about candidate registration but made no mention of Rajaonarivelo or General Fidy; Ravalomanana faced no chastisement for illegitimately excluding his two main rivals from the election. Instead, the observers applauded the conduct of the election and praised the lack of any other forms of rigging. But for Ravalomanana, there was no need for further rigging once the names of both credible challengers had been erased from the ballot. Ravalomanana had his cake and ate it too—he received international praise while having effectively engineered his surefire victory before the voting even began. None of this could have occurred in a country that was a fully consolidated democracy with strong democratic institutions.

The opposition had limited recourse in the immediate aftermath of the election. General Fidy's coup attempt had failed. Rajaonarivelo was one of the few candidates that actually came from a party with a strong network of supporters and a nationwide presence, but he—and the party's patron, Didier Ratsiraka—were both in exile in Paris, which severely limited their options. As a result, Ravalomanana's exclusion created no major immediate costs, other than inviting General Fidy's misguided coup attempt.

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<sup>145</sup> “Madagascar Leader is Re-Elected,” *BBC News*, 10 December 2006.

<sup>146</sup> *EISA*, 2007, p. ix.

<sup>147</sup> “Presidential Elections in the Republic of Madagascar: 2006,” *SADC Parliamentary Forum Election Observer Mission Report*, December 2006, p. 29.

<sup>148</sup> *EISA*, 2007, p. 13.

The military had little incentive to act immediately before or after the election took place (as General Fidy's fizzled coup attempt affirmed). Solid economic growth for the island throughout Ravalomanana's term had spilled over into pay increases for military officers.<sup>149</sup> International support for Ravalomanana made it more likely that a coup would be met with stern condemnation and that any new regime would find itself isolated (even though there was no strong anti-coup norm within the AU; Williams 2007). And as the elections showcased, political opposition was splintered between factions in Madagascar and exiles beyond its borders. There *were* elements of the military that resented the conduct of the 2006 elections—but, at the time, most perceived that opposing Ravalomanana was a losing strategy, making the idea of a coup unfeasible.<sup>150</sup> In other words, Ravalomanana initially 'got away' with excluding his rivals.

### *Inflated Mandate, Corruption, and Abuse of Power: Ravalomanana's Second Term*

President Ravalomanana became significantly more corrupt and engaged in far worse abuses of power after winning the 2006 landslide victory. These behavioural shifts provoked the 2009 coup d'état that toppled his regime. In terms of process tracing, this behavioural shift was a sharp contrast to his first term. After narrowly winning the 2001 election, it would have been impossible for Ravalomanana to feel insulated from threats. However, after being inaugurated in January 2007, the situation was completely different. The opposition had been crushed—both in the election and by being outmaneuvered by Ravalomanana's strategic manipulation.

Ravalomanana took increasingly bold and controversial action to consolidate his power. These actions achieved their ostensible goal, but at a high cost: they heightened opposition to his regime substantially and added to the frustrations among those who felt left out of the political process, particularly after the conduct of the 2006 elections. As one top-level Ravalomanana adviser put it, "The exclusion and his actions after the election in particular created many frustrated people, many partisans against Ravalomanana."<sup>151</sup> These frustrations eventually exploded, due to a transformation of the incentives for three critical groups: the opposition (excluded AREMA politicians and Mayor of Antananarivo Andry Rajoelina in particular), the French government, and Madagascar's army. In terms of process tracing, these are the critical changes over time that explain the coup's outbreak—in March 2009.

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<sup>149</sup> General Désiré Philippe Ramakavelo, military general and former Minister of Armed Forces, personal interview, 2 July 2012 and 12 February 2013; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Maître Hanitra Razafimanantsoa, former Vice President of the High Authority of the Transition, current member of parliament, and chief Ravalomanana legal and strategic adviser, personal interview, 5 July 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

One of the first acts of Ravalomanana's second term was deliberately provocative. He appointed a new Prime Minister, Charles Rabemananjara, "daring to put a Merina prime minister in place," violating the long-standing unwritten agreement between the two ethnic blocs that Côtier presidents would name Merina prime ministers and vice versa.<sup>152</sup> This was not a constitutional or legislative requirement, but it was a direct provocation to the Côtier community, which had already been deprived of their main candidate(s) from the ballot. This decision not only heightened already robust opposition among AREMA partisans (who were still hoping for a resurgence and return of both Ratsiraka and Rajaonarivelo) but also began to sow divisions within the armed forces, as Côtier soldiers began to resent the decisions of the Merina president—increasing the perceived feasibility of a coup as envisioned in the first and second factors outlined at the outset of this chapter. These divisions were exacerbated when Ravalomanana broke another unwritten rule among the military elite and "created more enemies in the armed forces when he decided to name a woman to direct the [traditionally male-dominated] military."<sup>153</sup>

In addition to these cavalier moves, Ravalomanana began using ethnic loyalty as a determining factor in military career advancement. Promotions became dominated by ethnic allegiances; Côtiers, particularly those soldiers and officers who had advanced successfully under former President Ratsiraka, saw their careers stagnate during Ravalomanana's second term.<sup>154</sup> This created a further animosity toward Ravalomanana amongst some in the military—further increasing the feasibility of a coup. Ravalomanana certainly knew that these moves would create anger toward his regime, but, after engineering a landslide victory over his nearest opponent by more than 40% in an internationally endorsed election, Ravalomanana's level of 'political capital' was high.

Ravalomanana also decided to codify his stronger grip on power. Just four months after the beginning of his second term, Ravalomanana pushed an expansion of executive power with a hasty vote on a constitutional referendum. There was outcry from civil society that the process occurred so quickly that nobody other than a few political elites had read the proposed changes before the vote took place: "revisions were made available to regional leaders, but were not given broad print distribution and were not detailed on the radio."<sup>155</sup> Ravalomanana's campaign in

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<sup>152</sup> Jean de Dieu Maharante, current minister of public works / former Vice President of the High Authority of the Transition, personal interview, 10 July 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

<sup>153</sup> Maître Hanitra Razafimanantsoa, 5 July 2012.

<sup>154</sup> See Juvence Ramasy, (2012), "Les élites martiales malgaches et la démocratie," in *Ethnique, démocratie, et développement*, Acte du Colloque International Pluridisciplinaire, Université de Toamasina, Madagascar: Tsipika, pp. 164-174; also, Juvence Ramasy, academic expert on the Madagascar armed forces, digital correspondence, 19 October 2013.

<sup>155</sup> Marcus, (2010), p. 125.

favor of the constitutional changes was boiled down to the notion that a “yes” vote favored development while a “no” vote favored stagnation.<sup>156</sup> The wording on the ballot was deliberately biased in favor of passage; it asked voters: “Do you accept the constitution revision project for the rapid and sustainable development of each region to raise the Malagasy level of life?”<sup>157</sup> In reality, Ravalomanana’s proposed changes were far more controversial on both the international and domestic fronts. First, further antagonizing the French, who viewed Madagascar as an important member of *la Francophonie*—the community of French-speaking countries that have an attachment to French culture and corresponding ties to French business—the proposed changes added Ravalomanana’s preferred second language, English, as an official national language of Madagascar.<sup>158</sup>

Beyond symbols, however, the referendum also expanded presidential powers substantially. In particular, Ravalomanana’s proposed changes would allow him to bypass the legislature for any policies as long as he declared a state of emergency.<sup>159</sup> With little understanding of the proposed changes and a hastily held vote on biased language, the referendum passed with just over 75% support amid low turnout.<sup>160</sup>

Having consolidated his power while antagonizing crucial rivals with controversial, provocative acts, Ravalomanana expanded his abuses of power to expand his business and bolster his personal wealth. In June 2007, Ravalomanana used his executive authority to give an unfair advantage to his business interests in the port city of Toamasina, an AREMA opposition stronghold.<sup>161</sup> This further alienated the opposition and created new enemies for Ravalomanana’s regime. Diplomatic unease with Ravalomanana’s power grabs was mounting; the diplomatic shield that protected Ravalomanana under his first term was beginning to splinter.

As a result, when the mayoral elections for the capital, Antananarivo, arrived in December 2007, opposition to Ravalomanana—who himself had served as Antananarivo’s mayor prior to becoming president—was mounting too. Ravalomanana endorsed his party’s standard-bearer and incumbent in the election, Hery Rafalimanana. Nonetheless, an up-and-coming young opposition politician, Andry Rajoelina, posed a major challenge. Rajoelina owned an advertising company, which had reportedly been founded in 1998 using money from funds

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid, pp. 125-126.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

<sup>158</sup> Adding English as an official language was also a symbolic message that French firms would no longer have special treatment under the Ravalomanana regime. “Étes-vous choqué que Madagascar accepte l’anglais comme langue officielle?” *Le Figaro*, 6 April 2007.

<sup>159</sup> Marcus, (2010), p. 126.

<sup>160</sup> “Les malgaches disent ‘oui’ au renforcement des pouvoirs du président,” *Agence France Presse*, 7 April 2007.

<sup>161</sup> Marcus, (2010), p. 121.



backed by the exiled and excluded candidate Pierrot Rajoanarivelo.<sup>162</sup> Rumors began circulating that Rajoelina was Rajoanarivelo's man in Antananarivo, giving him instant credibility as an opponent of the regime (and establishing a link that would become important in the context of the 2009 coup d'état).<sup>163</sup>

Rajoelina won the mayoral election.<sup>164</sup> He tapped into the growing frustrations with Ravalomanana's regime for his own personal gain. Rajoelina used his position as a popular radio disc jockey to activate support among the general population by spreading the narrative that the president was abusing his authority while simultaneously seeking allies among those who had directly lost out economically due to Ravalomanana's use of public office for his corporate gains. As one Ravalomanana spokeswoman put it, "there were many economic interests at that time that could not stand the continuation of the Ravalomanana regime because they had lost out economically from his politics...he became the number one target."<sup>165</sup> This opposition would have been impossible without Ravalomanana's provocative actions, a critical change over time.

Rajoelina's victory should have been a warning sign to Ravalomanana. Instead, he doubled down on his power grab in following year. The president's provocative action reached their pinnacle of boldness in two decisions, both taken in November 2008 (four months before the coup).

First, he purchased a second presidential airplane, a Boeing 737 minted as "Air Force One II Madagascar." When it arrived at Ivato airport, the press exposed the fact that the new presidential plane had been paid for with state funds but was licensed directly to Ravalomanana and his Tiko company.<sup>166</sup> In a country with a per capita GDP of just over \$400 per year, the state expense on a \$60 million aircraft—converted into a 25 seat private jet for the president—was highly unpopular; its expense represented the annual wages of 150,000 Malagasy workers. Beyond domestic outrage over the purchase, the World Bank responded to this lavish state spending by freezing a \$35 million loan that Madagascar was slated to receive at the end of 2008.<sup>167</sup> This was a dramatic reversal; the World Bank had been one of Ravalomanana's closest allies during his first reform-minded term, but it was starting to distance itself from his executive abuses wrought in the wake of his 2006 engineered landslide victory.

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<sup>162</sup> Jean-Loup Vivier, (2012), *Madagascar: Une Île à la Dérive, les années 2007 – 2010*, Paris: Harmattan, p. 48.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, pp. 48-49.

<sup>164</sup> Bernard Yves, "Andry Rajoelina, nouveau Maire d'Antananarivo élu avec 63% des suffrages," *Témoignages*, 7 December 2007.

<sup>165</sup> Razafimanantsoa, personal interview, 5 July 2012.

<sup>166</sup> The fact that it was an American Boeing rather than an Airbus (which is headquartered in Toulouse, France), was a further provocative step toward French interests in the country. See: Rivonala Razafison, "Madagascar wants to sell \$60m presidential plane," *Africa Review*, 20 January 2012.

<sup>167</sup> "Madagascar: Sortir du Cycle de Crises," Rapport Afrique N°156, *International Crisis Group*, 18 March 2010.

Second, and perhaps more outlandish, news also broke in November 2008 that Ravalomanana had unilaterally agreed a 99-year lease with the South Korean firm Daewoo, giving them cultivation rights and effective ownership of 1.3 million hectares—half of the island’s arable land. Malnourishment was prevalent in Madagascar and the government as already importing food to feed its people, so this agreement further shocked and angered the population.<sup>168</sup>

Mayor Rajoelina promptly took to the airwaves to condemn both the new presidential plane and the Daewoo deal in particular. He insisted that Ravalomanana was running the country as a Tiko fiefdom and was selling off *tanindrazana* (the sacred land of the ancestors) to the highest bidder.<sup>169</sup> Although Ravalomanana had diminished credible opposition by keeping his major opponents in exile in order to win the 2006 election, his subsequent abuse of power created a new credible threat: Rajoelina.

There was, therefore, a rapid changing of institutional incentive for several key actors in December 2008 that primed the ‘feasibility’ of a coup d’état to unseat Ravalomanana. The French government’s patience with Ravalomanana was running low, and they were less constrained in their possibility of openly backing a rival, particularly as the Western diplomatic shield (including the World Bank) began withdrawing their support because of the regime’s recent actions. Divisions in the military became more profound, as most officers viewed themselves as the rightful protectors of Madagascar’s land—which was being sold to a South Korean company.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, sensing a change in the tides and a newfound vulnerability for Ravalomanana, the AREMA leadership in exile in Paris—which had been excluded from the 2006 election—issued a video directly calling for Ravalomanana’s ouster.<sup>171</sup> Unlike General Fidy, AREMA, Ratsiraka, and Rajaonarivelo bided their time, waiting for an opportunity to act. Ravalomanana’s abuse of power gave them a new opening. Their video called for a coup d’état to unseat the incumbent.

Rajoelina broadcast Ratsiraka’s video on his Viva TV station, a direct provocation to a regime that he was vociferously criticizing in parallel on the radio.<sup>172</sup> In response, Ravalomanana made a unilateral decision to shut down Rajoelina’s television station to silence his criticisms.<sup>173</sup> This backfired completely; Rajoelina became even more popular and Ravalomanana lost

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>169</sup> Ploch and Cook, (2012).

<sup>170</sup> General Ramakavelo, personal interview, 12 February 2013.

<sup>171</sup> Mathieu Pellerin, (2009), “Madagascar: Un conflit d’entrepreneurs?,” *Politique africaine*, N°113, pp. 152-165.

<sup>172</sup> *International Crisis Group*, 2010, pp. 2-3.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, pp. 2-3.

significant public support with this single misguided decision.<sup>174</sup> Correctly realizing the political costs of the closure, Rajoelina turned to other forms of media and issued an ultimatum that Ravalomanana resign by 13 January 2009.<sup>175</sup>

Rather than doing so, Ravalomanana issued his own ultimatum on 19 January in response to Rajoelina, ordering him to stop “inciting civil disobedience and undermining public confidence toward the institutions of the Republic.”<sup>176</sup> Rajoelina did not stop. On 24 January, Rajoelina used the airwaves to organize a mass protest; between 30,000 and 50,000 people gathered. During the protest, he insisted that the Malagasy people begin a general strike and continue it “until the government leaves.”<sup>177</sup> The strike became violent two days later when protestors burned down two state-run television stations (in direct retaliation for the closure of Rajoelina’s Viva TV). Other buildings were set on fire and 44 people died in a single building fire when the roof collapsed during looting.<sup>178</sup> Continuing the escalation of the confrontation, Ravalomanana issued a decree firing Rajoelina from his post as mayor and installing a replacement.<sup>179</sup>

### *The Yogurt Magnate Toppled by a Radio Disc Jockey*

At this snapshot in time—a key concept in process tracing—launching a coup d’état was significantly more feasible. Not only was Ravalomanana’s popularity at a lower point than it had ever been, but critical players—most notably the military and the French government—were beginning to become less constrained in acting against the regime. Pierrot Rajaonarivelo, still exiled in Paris after his 2006 exclusion, issued a communiqué to his supporters on 29 January 2009, calling for the “unconditional and immediate resignation of Marc Ravalomanana...and the return of all political exiles to Madagascar.”<sup>180</sup> Earlier that month (or in December, the exact timing is unclear), Rajoelina had “traveled to Paris to meet many political exiles including Rajaonarivelo and [former President and AREMA leader] Ratsiraka. It was then that he planned his coup d’état.”<sup>181</sup> Whether Rajoelina and Rajaonarivelo plotted the coup together during that time in Paris, it is clear that the two leaders definitely met right before the coup was launched.

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<sup>174</sup> Pellerin, (2009).

<sup>175</sup> *International Crisis Group*, (2009), p. 3.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>177</sup> “A Anakakely, Rajoelina appelle à la grève,” *L’Express de Madagascar*, 26 January 2009.

<sup>178</sup> “Madagascar deaths rise to 44, shops heed strike,” *Reuters*, 29 January 2009.

<sup>179</sup> “Madagascar opposition mayor fired,” *BBC News*, 3 February 2009.

<sup>180</sup> “J’appelle à la démission immédiate et sans condition de Marc Ravalomanana, tout comme j’appelle à la mise en place d’un régime de transition au sein duquel toutes les Forces vives de la Nation doivent être représentées, avec au préalable, le retour de tous les exilés politiques à Madagascar, ainsi que la libération de tous les prisonniers politiques encore enfermés dans les geôles du pouvoir.” “Communiqué de Pierrot Rajaonarivelo,” 29 January 2009, available from: <http://tetezamita.over-blog.com/article-28099708.html>, accessed 22 August 2014.

<sup>181</sup> Alain Iloniaina, Malagasy journalist formerly of *L’Express de Madagascar*, digital interview, 22 August 2014.

This was a case of exclusion coming full circle; the excluded candidate (Rajaonarivelo) banded together with the opportunistic Rajoelina to overthrow President Ravalomanana.

In early February, back in Antananarivo, Rajoelina “declared himself in charge of the country,” and began organizing a mass protest to march on the presidential palace in the center of the capital.<sup>182</sup> High-level diplomatic sources suggest that certain French firms—realizing that they had an opportunity to fulfill their primary ambition and replace Ravalomanana with a more pro-French ally in the presidential Ambohitsorohitra Palace—may have actively paid thousands of citizens petty cash to join the protests (a major shift in the international dimension to the Malagasy political context from 2006, again increasing the perceived ‘feasibility’ that a coup would be successful with the support of international allies).<sup>183</sup> This allegation is unconfirmed but around 20,000 protestors descended on the presidential palace on 7 February 2009. When they crossed the so-called *zone rouge* of the palace gates, Ravalomanana (or someone within his administration) ordered the presidential guards to fire live rounds at the protestors. Tragedy ensued. At least 36 people were killed and roughly 200 more people were wounded.<sup>184</sup>

The massacre caused the diplomatic shield to disintegrate, freeing the French to act. International support for Ravalomanana had evaporated. Rajoelina offered a credible alternative. But, it was also clear that Rajoelina’s freedom and his life were increasingly at risk. The former radio disc jockey sought and received refuge and sanctuary and went into hiding at the French ambassador’s residence on 6 March 2009, a clear international action in direct support of the opposition.<sup>185</sup> This action was critical; had it not happened, Rajoelina would almost certainly have been arrested or killed, striking a major blow against the opposition movement and protests.

Beyond international shifts, the massacre and its aftermath created significant new opposition within the Malagasy military. Internal military divisions and frustrations boiled over between 8 March and 16 March 2009. Earlier divisions that had been created by Ravalomanana’s abuses of power during his second term ruptured much further in the wake of the massacre of non-violent protestors on 7 February. Many soldiers viewed this as a clear signal that the political leadership had gone too far and needed to be changed—and that it was the responsibility of the army to “restore balance to the situation.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Top-level diplomatic source, unnamed here at their request, personal interviews, 27 June 2012 and 4 September 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

<sup>184</sup> *International Crisis Group*, (2009), p. i.

<sup>185</sup> “Madagascar opposition leader in hiding,” *Agence France Presse*, 7 March 2009 and “France Protects Madagascar Rival,” *BBC News*, 9 March 2009.

<sup>186</sup> General Ramakavelo, personal interview, 4 September 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

On 8 March, a group of 600 soldiers at Camp Capsat—a military base on the outskirts of the capital—mutinied and refused to accept further orders from the country’s political leadership.<sup>187</sup> The soldiers had correctly discerned that their action would receive popular support among the public and at least a tacit endorsement from the top-level military officers, who replied “We have no intention of doing that,” when asked whether they would use force to stop the mutiny from spreading.<sup>188</sup> As insurrections in the military spread, the army chief, General Edmond Rasolomahandry, issued an ultimatum to Ravalomanana and the opposition to find a resolution to the crisis in the next 72 hours.<sup>189</sup> With little leverage remaining, Ravalomanana issued an order firing the army chief in response, which the army chief (and the rest of the military) ignored. Over the next few days, the situation deteriorated rapidly as political elites and military leaders defected away from the regime and sought to distance themselves from the withering power of the president; it was clear that his presidency was a sinking ship, and a coup d’état started to seem like a much more sturdy flotilla in comparison. This is what would be envisioned by the two coup feasibility factors proposed at the outset of this chapter.

Ultimately, the incentives of multiple actors aligned to favor a coup. The French wanted a change of leadership; the rest of the international community was unwilling to constrain them. The military had fractured into a divided group of disgruntled soldiers and officers, many particularly angry at Ravalomanana’s abuses of office and what they viewed as the debasing of their duty by being ordered to kill civilians. Rajoelina wove these angry strands together and created a foundation for action. With a credible leader, an angry population eager for change at the top, and a divided military, a coup d’état became not just highly feasible but also inevitable. Electoral exclusion sparked this tragic chain of events: it built the scaffolding for Ravalomanana’s abuses of power but also prompted each of the excluded candidates to plot the incumbent’s overthrow.

On 16 March 2009, the military stormed the presidential palace. Ravalomanana was not there, but he was found soon afterward. On 17 March, he was forced to ‘resign’ at gunpoint. The next day, the military announced a direct transfer of power to Rajoelina, who had almost certainly promised pay increases and promotions to the leaders of the coup d’état (both of those promises were soon fulfilled).<sup>190</sup> Thus, in one of the strangest plotlines of any recent coup, a 34 year-old former radio disc jockey toppled a businessman who had started his empire selling

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<sup>187</sup> Alain Iloniaina, “Madagascar soldiers mutiny, opposition head hides,” *Reuters*, 8 March 2009.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> “Madagascar army’s crisis deadline,” *BBC News*, 10 March 2009.

<sup>190</sup> “Le problème chez nous, c’est que quelqu’un peut simplement acheter les militaires. Rajoelina l’a fait avant le coup.” Maître Hanitra Razafimanantsoa, personal interview, 5 July 2012.

yogurt off the back of a bicycle. Ravalomanana, like Ratsiraka and Rajaonarivelo before him, fled into exile (this time in South Africa, affirming his personal disdain for the French)—where he has remained since.

Rajaonarivelo, whose exclusion in 2006 had paved the way for the coup, welcomed Ravalomanana's removal. The day after the coup, he admitted: "I'm with Rajoelina; we've met. We have a sort of deal and I'm among the people behind him..."<sup>191</sup> He returned to the island in April, and was appointed as Madagascar's Minister of Economy and Industry in March 2011 before being named the Minister of Foreign Affairs six months later—less than five years after being excluded.<sup>192</sup> Ravalomanana had fallen into 'the exclusion trap': trading short-term electoral victory for a higher risk of long-term destabilization and the loss of power, which, in his case, was realized.

This case proceeded as expected under the theory. The excluded opposition—and subsequent allied opposition in the form of Rajoelina's movement—were the driving force behind the coup in March 2009. Had they not used their political influence to stoke the flames of anger toward Ravalomanana's regime, it is unlikely that he would have been toppled. Ravalomanana set the opposition smoldering in December 2006; in the next 27 months, the spark of exclusion grew into blazing popular anger that was fanned by the formerly excluded opposition to burn up the incumbent regime.

### **Exclusion Begets Exclusion: from coup d'état to electoral exclusion in 2013**

The ramifications of the coup were severe for Madagascar. After Rajoelina took power as president and established the "High Authority of the Transition," Madagascar was expelled from its membership in SADC and the African Union. Madagascar was also suspended from its participation in the American program, the African Growth and Opportunity Act. The loss of the program caused the loss of 150,000 related jobs.<sup>193</sup> All international aid, which had previously accounted for 40% of the government's budget, dried up almost overnight.<sup>194</sup> The economy contracted severely, and lawlessness prevailed in the south with the government effectively losing control of a wide region of its territory.<sup>195</sup> Social services, especially education

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<sup>191</sup> James Mackenzie, "Exiled Madagascar Politician Urges New Elections," *Reuters*, 18 March 2009.

<sup>192</sup> "Madagascar: le nom des membres du gouvernement Beriziky," *Madagate.com*, 21 November 2011.

<sup>193</sup> "Madagascar: Textile Industry Unravels," *IRIN News*, 24 February 2010.

<sup>194</sup> "A Cosmetic End to Madagascar's Crisis?" *International Crisis Group*, Africa Report N°218, 19 May 2014, p. 16.

<sup>195</sup> Brian Klaas, "The Curse of Low Expectations: Lessons for Democracy from Madagascar's Election," *Foreign Policy*, 27 November 2013.

and health care, deteriorated to such an extent that the country became a hotbed of the largely eradicated medieval scourge, bubonic plague.<sup>196</sup>

While the people suffered, Rajoelina did not. The transition “lasted longer than it should have because elites were able to find alternate, often illicit, income despite international isolation.”<sup>197</sup> The regime persisted while Madagascar stagnated.

However, Rajoelina was in no hurry to call elections. He found himself in a Catch-22. The international community had made it clear that they would not accept elections if Rajoelina was a candidate but Ravalomanana was banned. However, if Rajoelina allowed Ravalomanana to return, he knew that he risked being defeated; after all, many Malagasy that suffered intensely under the withering stagnation of Rajoelina’s post-coup regime began to overlook Ravalomanana’s failings and yearn for the old stratospheric growth rates of the businessman’s first term. With Rajoelina in a strategic bind, announced election dates were repeatedly scheduled, re-scheduled, and then canceled.<sup>198</sup>

Finally, after two and a half years of sustained, focused international pressure (and mounting pressure from the domestic constituency), Rajoelina signed a roadmap to elections in September 2011. The roadmap was intended to resolve the issue of Ravalomanana’s exile and clear the way for him to return to Madagascar and contest elections. As explained by the International Crisis Group’s 2014 report:

Article 18 of the roadmap called for “blanket amnesty for all political events which happened between 2002 and 2009, except for crimes against humanity, war crimes, crimes of genocide, and other serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. Article 20 confirmed that the transitional government would “allow all Malagasy citizens in exile for political reasons to return to the country unconditionally, including Mr. Marc Ravalomanana”. However, Rajoelina insisted Ravalomanana’s actions immediately prior to the coup, particularly allegations he ordered the military to fire on unarmed protesters, killing fifty, were too severe to fall under the amnesty provision. Ravalomanana dismissed the findings of the tribunal that found him guilty in his absence as illegitimate and claimed that he therefore did not need amnesty.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> “Bubonic Plague Outbreak Kills 32 in Madagascar,” *Associated Press*, 20 December 2013.

<sup>197</sup> This illicit income was most often coming from illegal kickbacks and bribes related to mining contracts and the illegal harvesting and export of protected rosewood; investigated journalist unnamed here at their request, digital interview, 21 February 2014. See also *International Crisis Group*, (2014), p. 16.

<sup>198</sup> Rajoelina announced on 12 July 2009 that elections would be held by the end of the year. In May 2010, the elections were slated for 26 November of that year, but that date also came and went. See *International Crisis Group*, (2014), p. 3.

<sup>199</sup> *International Crisis Group*, (2014), p. 3.

In other words, even though the Roadmap was signed with the hope that it would pave the way for inclusive elections, Rajoelina continued to refuse to allow Ravalomanana to return, fearing the consequences for his grip on power.<sup>200</sup>

After the impasse lingered for months, the international community began to coalesce behind the so-called “ni...ni” (neither/nor) option, which envisioned elections to be held with neither Ravalomanana nor Rajoelina as candidates. In a gesture of good faith (and to put further pressure on Rajoelina), Ravalomanana announced on 12 December 2012 that he would not stand as a candidate in future elections, aiming to force Rajoelina to do the same.<sup>201</sup> The international community ramped up its insistence that Rajoelina follow suit, which he did on 16 January 2013, saying “it is better that I sacrifice myself than our entire nation of more than 22 million.”<sup>202</sup>

It is unclear whether Rajoelina ever intended to make good on this commitment or not, but, given the extent to which he was willing to go to modify the constitution, it seems unlikely. At the time, it was widely presumed that both candidates would withdraw symbolically but present proxy candidates that were effectively puppets for the two men. This view was proven correct on 15 April 2013 when Marc Ravalomanana announced that his wife, Lalao, would stand as a candidate in his stead—violating the spirit if not the letter of the unofficial “ni...ni” agreement.<sup>203</sup> Rajoelina used this as an excuse to renege on his commitment and announced on 4 May that he would contest the elections after all.<sup>204</sup>

At this point, two of the three incentives that make electoral exclusion strategically attractive were in place: First, Ravalomanana (and his wife) were a clear threat; they had a following and were a viable alternative to Rajoelina’s presidency. Second, Rajoelina had easy recourse to remove both Ravalomanana candidacies behind the guise of an independent, legal decision. All that remained was to ensure that the costs imposed on the regime by the international community as a result of the exclusion would not be so severe as to deter Rajoelina.

Unfortunately for President of the Transition Rajoelina, as soon as it became clear that Rajoelina intended to stand as a candidate (while Ravalomanana would not), the international community withdrew their support for the election.<sup>205</sup> For the next several months, there was an

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<sup>200</sup> “Rajoelina is in no hurry to hold elections that he might lose. He has access to state resources and illegal sources of funding. Ravalomanana could beat him. Why would he be in a rush to risk losing everything?” Top-level diplomat unnamed at his request, personal interview, 12 September 2012; Antananarivo, Madagascar.

<sup>201</sup> Tuma Abdallah, “Madagascar: Step One for Peace,” *Tanzania Daily News*, 12 December 2012.

<sup>202</sup> “Andry Rajoelina renonce à la présidentielle”, *L’Express de Madagascar*, 16 January 2013.

<sup>203</sup> “Ousted Madagascar leader names wife for presidential race”, *Africa Review*, 15 April 2013.

<sup>204</sup> “Rajoelina adamant to run for Madagascar presidency”, *Mail & Guardian*, 14 May 2013.

<sup>205</sup> The lack of support was more than a symbolic problem as the international community had pledged tens of millions of dollars to cover the cost of elections. See: “Donors pull plug on Madagascar”, Agence France-Presse (AFP), 23 May 2013.



impasse and the absurd situation wherein the Special Electoral Court (CES) had not yet ruled on candidate eligibility even as the election date came and went without any vote.

The withdrawal of international support was a major blow to Rajoelina's calculations, as the entire point of holding elections was to allow Madagascar to return to the fold of the international community and allow the regime to tap back into the flows of foreign aid. The international community had done something that they had not done in Madagascar's 2006 election: they made the costs of one-sided exclusion so high that it became an unappealing option to the incumbent president.

Then, in mid-August, the CES issued a surprise ruling, demonstrating a rare and risky bout of independence in a country known for a cowed judiciary. The Court ruled that both Rajoelina and Lalao Ravalomanana were ineligible for office; Rajoelina was barred because he had supposedly registered his paperwork too late, Ravalomanana because of the predictable reason that she had not fulfilled a residency requirement—precisely as was engineered by Rajoelina's electoral exclusion strategy.<sup>206</sup>

This is an excellent demonstration of the potential pitfalls and risks of electoral exclusion; attempting to proceed when the three incentives are not yet in place can sometimes backfire. In this instance, the CES—emboldened by the international community's stark message that they preferred a “ni...ni” approach and would not recognize an election that took place without a Ravalomanana representative but with Rajoelina—decided to act against the regime rather than as a docile tool of it.

The election proceeded with proxy candidates. Rajoelina's proxy won the runoff election in December 2013 and was inaugurated in January 2014. The international community gave the election its blessing and promptly began reintegrating Madagascar into the international fold. Aid resumed again. No international election observation mission seemed at all perturbed by the nature in which Lalao Ravalomanana was excluded from the election, in spite of the fact that the constitution had been changed in order to ensure that her participation would not be valid—a targeted rather than general approach to candidate eligibility law, which violates international standards.

Once again, in Madagascar, electoral exclusion hit its target. Even though Rajoelina himself became a victim of his own strategy, the election produced the desired result as his anointed *dauphin* took power after internationally sanctioned elections. The 2013 Malagasy

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<sup>206</sup> Rajoelina changed the constitution to ensure this would happen. Exiled former President Didier Ratsiraka of the AREMA party was also barred in the decision; even though by now he had returned to Madagascar, he had not been in the country long enough to fulfill the six-month residency requirement. See: “Madagascar court bans president and rival's wife from standing for election”, Associated Press, 18 August 2013.

presidential election is therefore a qualitative example of the statistical findings in the H1c statistical model: exclusion begets exclusion, as those in power may perceive threats—and the strategic ways to neutralize those threats—in similar ways so long as the three key incentives highlighted at the beginning of this chapter remain in place.

My statistical modeling suggests that the risk of a coup in Madagascar remains high in 2015 and 2016. A military general was promoted to the office of Prime Minister just a year after the election. The parliament voted in May 2015 to impeach the elected president and there is currently a major political standoff simmering. However, one key aspect has changed that could block a coup: the anti-coup norm in Africa has evolved and strengthened in the last several years; this could tip the scales away from a coup, even if it will be insufficient to push Madagascar toward a stable democratic government (Souaré 2014).

### **Zambia 1996: Captain Solo and the “Coup that Was Not”**

Zambia’s path from 1996 electoral exclusion to 1997 failed coup attempt deviated more from my theoretical assumptions than Madagascar, as the opposition played no role in organizing the coup attempt.

In the early morning hours of October 28, 1997, Captain Steven Lungu (who would refer to himself by the moniker Captain Solo) and his co-conspirator, Captain Jack Chiti, launched a coup d’état attempt that rocked Zambia less than a year after President Frederick Chiluba had won a massive landslide victory in a manipulated November 1996 election. Chiluba had illegitimately excluded former President Kenneth Kaunda from the ballot. While Solo and his co-conspirators successfully managed to take over the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) offices and broadcast on the radio for more than three hours uninterrupted, the coup was quashed shortly thereafter by loyalist commandos. One soldier amongst the coup plotters was killed during the attempt. The remaining participants were arrested. Many were tortured and later sentenced to death, though those sentences were never carried out.

What prompted this coup attempt, and why did Captain Solo and Captain Jack Chiti feel that their action was feasible, with a reasonable chance of success? This case study also uses process tracing to understand how motivations changed over time from the pre-election period (and President Chiluba’s decision to exclude Kenneth Kaunda in 1996) to the coup’s aftermath in late 1997.

### *The Incumbent Sizes Up His Opposition: Frederick Chiluba's Zambia (1991 – 1996)*

Between 1991 and 1996, much of the Western international community considered Zambia to be a democratic transition success story. Long-time President Kenneth Kaunda—who had presided over a largely one-party state in Zambia since 1964—stepped down after being defeated by the opposition Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) in the 1991 landslide election. Kaunda's loss of power by the ballot sent a strong signal that electoral verdicts now mattered in Zambia.<sup>207</sup> Upon taking office, Frederick Chiluba, Kaunda's replacement, claimed that he was a champion of change and reform. To some extent, his claim matched his actions; Zambia experienced modest economic reforms and limited corruption during his first term.

In particular, Chiluba made two symbolic gestures. First, “for the first three or four months, he never used to sit down in order to demonstrate that he [Chiluba] was establishing a working government.”<sup>208</sup> Second, ministers were instructed to leave Lusaka every Friday and travel widely to explain government priorities, policies, and initiatives to their constituents.<sup>209</sup> This ostensible commitment to a new era of political reform created the perception that Zambia was on track to growth and prosperity.

Throughout Chiluba's first term, his administration hoped that the emphasis on political and economic reform would cause support for political opposition to evaporate. That hope was short-lived, however, as Chiluba ushered in crippling structural adjustment policies that began to squeeze most Zambians with an IMF vice.<sup>210</sup> These policies created “significant social dislocation that took place with many people losing their jobs, many people who were marginalized.”<sup>211</sup> As the country drifted further from the prospect of a new Zambia ushered in by the 1991 multi-party elections, Chiluba's regime confronted a rise in popular opposition, with the 1996 elections looming.

The vanquished former president, Kenneth Kaunda, was the individual most likely to benefit from the newfound resentment toward Chiluba. Even though Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) had suffered an embarrassing defeat only five years previously in a dramatic and forceful rebuke of autocratic one-party rule, it still stood alone as the most viable alternative to Chiluba's MMD party. As MMD Secretary General Major Richard Kachingwé

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<sup>207</sup> Frederick Chiluba received 75.76% of votes according to official results, compared to just 24.24% of the votes for the long-standing President Kaunda. See Dieter Nohlen, Bernard Thibaut, & Michael Krennerich, (1999), *Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>208</sup> George Chomba, Reporter for the *Zambian Daily Mail*, personal interview, 24 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>209</sup> Eric Silwamba, former top Chiluba adviser and jurist, personal interview, 30 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>210</sup> See Lise Rakner, (2003), *Political and Economic Liberalization in Zambia*, Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute.

<sup>211</sup> Dr. Fred Mutesa, President of Zambians for Empowerment and Development political party and former presidential candidate, personal interview, 27 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

acknowledged, the difficulties posed by the IMF-led reforms that Chiluba had endorsed meant that “the time of Kaunda began to be viewed comparatively better during the mid-1990s because it was a very difficult time for average Zambians.”<sup>212</sup> Kaunda began to rise from the ashes of his 1991 defeat and it became clear to Chiluba: “He [Kaunda] was a threat. He had a following in 1996. UNIP was not annihilated. Kaunda was viewed by the Chiluba government as the main opposition.”<sup>213</sup> For those who were more skeptical that Kaunda could win, it did not matter; exclusion still seemed to make sense. “The view in the Chiluba government was ‘we couldn’t leave anything to chance.’ Even if there was a small risk of him winning, it was still worth banning him.”<sup>214</sup> This perception that Kaunda was a viable challenger fulfilled the first crucial aspect that makes electoral exclusion a strategically enticing tactic for incumbents: Kaunda was an opposition candidate that posed a credible threat to Chiluba’s re-election.

Chiluba quickly came up with a way of hiding behind a third party for the exclusion of Kaunda from the election, as a means of deflecting blowback from the electoral manipulation. Chiluba established an “independent” Commission of Inquiry that toured the country collecting ideas for possible changes to the Constitution. Unsurprisingly, when it came back, it reported that it had received many suggestions that involved adding provisions that would bar UNIP opposition leaders from contesting the 1996 elections, specifically by barring Kaunda based on the nationality of his parents.<sup>215</sup> When the Commission attempted to show true independence and suggested a popular referendum on the constitutional changes, Chiluba’s government showed how independent the Commission really was: Chiluba rejected their suggestion and referred the proposals he liked to the loyal MMD-dominated parliament.<sup>216</sup> The parliament took up the issue and began incorporating the proposed changes—which undoubtedly benefitted Chiluba by excluding key opposition figures—into a controversial bill. Chiluba’s regime had fulfilled the second key necessary component to make exclusion an attractive option: they found a third party (or two, the Constitutional Commission and a docile MMD parliament) to enact the changes and deflect blame from the presidency.

However, the third and final component—‘getting away with it’ without consequences from the international community—proved more challenging. Kaunda’s UNIP party fought the proposed changes aggressively. They successfully raised awareness of the exclusionary effort,

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<sup>212</sup> Personal interview, 24 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>213</sup> Ben Mwila, Chiluba’s Defense Minister, personal interview, 31 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>214</sup> Silwamba, interview, 30 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>215</sup> Jan Kees van Donge, (1998), “Reflections on Donors, Opposition, and Popular Will in the 1996 Zambian General Elections,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36(1), p. 86.

<sup>216</sup> “They [the Commission] proposed instead that the new constitution should be debated in a constitutional assembly followed by a referendum. Government refused this proposal. This became the main point of conflict among the opposition and the NGO community,” *Ibid*, p. 86.

eventually enlisting international support from donors, NGOs, and allies in regional governments.<sup>217</sup> In a largely unprecedented act of donor coordination, bilateral donors—a group of countries that mattered greatly to Zambia’s state coffers—threatened to remove their support if Chiluba pushed forward with the planned changes to the constitution, specifically the provisions related to candidate eligibility. This threat is not only an outlier; it also would have been a real deterrent to Chiluba: the proposals created severe “problems with Zambia’s reputation in the international community.”<sup>218</sup> Nonetheless, Chiluba played different donors off each other and (correctly) discerned that the aid threat was neither broad enough to be effective nor long-term enough to be sustained. He took a rationally calculated gamble on the international front and plowed ahead with the efforts to change the rules of the game for presidential candidates. Chiluba’s risky, but calculated move would pay off—even as bilateral donors briefly withdrew aid payments to Zambia’s government over the change, multi-lateral donors (specifically the World Bank) released an additional \$45 million in balance-of-payments support just a month before the election, completely crippling the efficacy of any donor coordinated effort to pressure the Chiluba regime over its constitutional “reforms.”<sup>219</sup> Indeed, overall support to the Zambian government *rose* after the election, with a small increase between 1996 and 1997.<sup>220</sup>

As a result, electoral exclusion was strategically attractive to Chiluba in 1996: 1) he faced a credible threat, 2) he could exclude that threat (and other smaller threats) with a simple legal change, cloaked in the actions of an ‘independent’ third party, and 3) he wagered that the international damage would be tolerable, limited, and ephemeral. With all three conditions fulfilled, the incentives facing Chiluba made clear that electoral exclusion was not just *a* pathway to win the election, but probably *the* most rational and guaranteed pathway to victory—especially for an incumbent, like Chiluba, who put retention of power above democratic principle.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid, pp. 87 – 90 in particular.

<sup>218</sup> Edith Nawakwi, Minister of Finance in Chiluba’s government at the time, personal interview, 28 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>219</sup> Rakner, (2003), *Political and Economic Liberalization in Zambia, 1991-2001*, p. 144.

<sup>220</sup> The Zambian government received a net total of \$608 million in “official development assistance and official aid received” in 1996; in 1997, the figure rose modestly to \$609 million. See “Official Development Assistance and Official Aid Received, 1980 - 2013” *World Development Indicators*, World Bank Data. Clearly, the objective pressure on the government’s purse strings was limited in spite of donor threats. Whether Chiluba’s decision-making would have been different if donor pressure had been more robust is unclear, but those higher costs may have made other avenues of manipulation comparatively more attractive.

<sup>221</sup> That being said, Chiluba likely was too blatant in his exclusion of Kaunda; it was a high-profile event in Zambia, and his attempt to hide behind ‘independent’ third parties was not believed by the international community or domestic observers. Clearly, for some elites, international perception is only as important as the objective costs that come with reputational damage.

On 22 May 1996, the MMD-dominated parliament at State House (with Chiluba's backing) passed the Constitution of Zambia Act.<sup>222</sup> This act specifically restricted candidate eligibility for the office of the presidency. In particular, candidates were required to "be a Zambian citizen born to parents who are Zambian by birth or descent and that the person not be a tribal chief. These requirements appeared to be precisely tailored to disqualify specific opposition leaders from running for president, including former president Kenneth Kaunda."<sup>223</sup> In addition to the clauses about being 'truly' Zambian, the changes barred candidates who had twice been elected as president to stand for office—a provision that left no doubt to its objective: Kaunda. To eliminate any lingering doubt that the legal changes were targeted, the government released Kaunda's birth records publicly shortly after the law was passed.<sup>224</sup> The provision relating to tribal chief eligibility was not happenstance either; it ensured the targeted exclusion of the UNIP Vice President, Chief Inyambo Yeta—ensuring that UNIP's top two leaders would not appear on the ballot.<sup>225</sup> With the stroke of Chiluba's pen on May 28 (just months before the election would take place) the main opposition candidate—Kenneth Kaunda—was specifically targeted and barred from the ballot.

### *An Engineered Landslide, Confidence in the Mandate, and Abuse of Power*

Once excluded, UNIP weighed their options. They had few. Kaunda appealed to the international community to pressure Chiluba to delay the elections. When that failed, UNIP announced a complete boycott of the election, an attempt to increase pressure on Chiluba's regime.<sup>226</sup> Yet unlike most boycotts, UNIP's strategy was *not* to fully withdraw from the legitimate pathway to power (the election), but to pressure the regime into reversing their

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<sup>222</sup> The Act was passed with MMD support; MPs from the National Party and UNIP walked out of the vote in protest. Some MMD members actively opposed the measures, in particular Dipak Patel, a Zambian of Asian descent who was affected by the proposed changes as Kaunda. See "Final Report: The November 18, 1996 National Elections in Zambia, a Post-Election Assessment Report," *National Democratic Institute*, Washington DC, November 1996, p. 3.

<sup>223</sup> Kaunda's parents could not prove their Zambian citizenship and were likely born in Malawi. The issue raised extensive questions about nationality-based eligibility based on uncertain and murkily demarcated borders in the colonial period. See: "Zambia: Elections and Human Rights in the Third Republic," *Human Rights Watch*, 8(4), December 1996. The Human Rights Watch report also points out that "Some of the new restrictions appeared to violate the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Zambia is a party. Articles 25 and 2 of the covenant guarantee to citizens the right "to be elected at genuine periodic elections" without "unreasonable" restrictions and without distinctions" such as birth, national origin, or political opinion. The disqualification of all but second or third generation Zambians from office appeared unreasonable, especially in light of the transparent political motivation to exclude UNIP leaders from the race."

<sup>224</sup> Silwamba, personal interview, 30 August 2012.

<sup>225</sup> National Democratic Institute, November 1996, p. 4.

<sup>226</sup> Kees van Donge, (1998), p. 72.

decision and allowing Kaunda to stand.<sup>227</sup> These efforts culminated in Kaunda calling in President Nelson Mandela, who contacted Chiluba directly and attempted to “mediate and arrange a postponement just before the elections took place but after the boycott was announced.”<sup>228</sup> This effort was “politely but resolutely” refused by Chiluba, who again cloaked his self-interest in a guise of legal claims, arguing that “constitutionally, elections had to be held as his [Chiluba’s] term was over, and that there was legally no possibility of postponing them.”<sup>229</sup> Thus, even these extraordinary attempts to push Chiluba to include Kaunda on the ballot were stymied, and Kaunda (and UNIP) were left off the ballot, having already played the only card they seemed to have left: a half-hearted boycott. It was particularly ineffective because UNIP’s main support base at the time was in the Eastern Province rather than with a national following.

That weakness was affirmed as the boycott was unsuccessful and failed to force a reversal of Kaunda’s exclusion. Moreover, overall turnout was largely unaffected by the boycott; 1.25 million people voted in 1996, compared to 1.28 million in 1991.<sup>230</sup> As a result, the MMD dominated the new legislature. Kaunda and UNIP had limited recourse. Even though Kaunda believed at the time that Chiluba “was mentally sick since he loved power for the sake of power, and he wanted to destroy effective opposition by any means at all,” Kaunda had exhausted legal channels of opposition.<sup>231</sup>

With legal channels exhausted, illegal channels of opposing the incumbent are always possible—including violence. These were unattractive to Kaunda for three reasons. First, it would have eliminated the reputational costs that Kaunda was hoping to inflict on Chiluba, as any illegal opposition activity—particularly violence—would have shifted the debate in international and donor circles to the flaws of the opposition rather than the flaws of the regime. Second (and probably more importantly), Kaunda built his legacy on a philosophy of peace and non-violence that he espoused consistently as president. Engaging in power politics with violence to push Chiluba out would have desecrated Kaunda’s personal view of his legacy to Zambia.<sup>232</sup> Finally, the army had little reason to side with Kaunda at the time—Chiluba was still fairly popular, and Kaunda was on the outside looking in with little to offer them.

In spite of Kaunda’s resistance to violence, the controversial exclusionary constitutional amendment did provoke an immediate violent backlash. Two days after the amendment was

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<sup>227</sup> This is a critical difference; the situation in Côte d’Ivoire was distinct, illustrating that qualitative nuance in *how* a boycott is used provides more depth than a quantitative correlation between boycotts and certain types of political violence.

<sup>228</sup> Kees van Donge, (1998), p. 72.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Nohlen, Thibaut, and Krennerich (1999).

<sup>231</sup> Kenneth Kaunda, former President of Zambia (1964-1991), personal interview, 30 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>232</sup> Kenneth Kaunda, personal interview, 30 August 2012.

passed, three bomb scares shook Lusaka, as a shadowy group calling itself the “Black Mamba”—the same moniker used for Kaunda during his fight for Zambia’s independence—called in bomb threats to various businesses and announced targets that were to be killed.<sup>233</sup> Their threats related specifically to people, primarily in the media, who wholeheartedly embraced the exclusionary constitutional change ushered in by Chiluba’s regime.<sup>234</sup> While the Chiluba regime quickly pointed fingers at UNIP for the bomb scares (and several subsequent explosions that killed one and seriously injured several others), there was no evidence to suggest any connection. Nonetheless, eight senior UNIP officials—including the recently excluded Chief Yeta—were arrested and charged with treason and murder, charges that were dropped only after the election.<sup>235</sup> Subsequent scholarship has suggested that the Chiluba government and the MMD perpetrated the attacks in an effort to justify their exclusion of UNIP—and mitigate the political blowback.<sup>236</sup> Whether true or not, the “Black Mamba” incident in the pre-election period is further evidence that exclusion creates heightened risk of instability of violence (even if that violence is perpetrated by the state in the guise of the opposition). The incident foreshadowed a much more major event: a coup d’état attempt that would take place less than a year after ballots were cast.

As in Madagascar, exclusion worked. The incumbent was re-elected, winning more than 72% of the vote—nearly 60% more than the second place finisher. Likewise, because of the UNIP boycott, Chiluba’s MMD party won 131 of the 150 seats in the Zambian parliament.<sup>237</sup>

As would later be the case in Madagascar’s 2006 election, the landslide victory—engineered with manipulation in the form of electoral exclusion—would heighten Chiluba’s sense of having an overwhelming mandate that would allow him to rule with impunity. The subsequent and almost immediate increase in the government’s abuse of power created a climate ripe for the onset of political violence against the state. However, the boycott’s inability to mobilize large numbers of Zambians—as well as Kaunda’s general ideological commitment to peace—made it far less likely that any violence would be directly organized by UNIP or be mass-based (such as a civil war).

Chiluba’s interpretation of the victory was at odds with the feelings of many Zambian citizens; “people were very upset by UNIP’s boycott and the results of the election because they

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<sup>233</sup> Joel Chilaizya, “Zambia Politics: Bomb Scare Rocks Capital,” *Inter Press Service*, 24 May 1996.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> “Zambia: Elections and Human Rights in the Third Republic,” *Human Rights Watch*, 8(4), December 1996.

<sup>236</sup> Gero Erdmann and Neo Simutanyi, (2003), *Transition in Zambia: The Hybridisation of the Third Republic*. Llongwe: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

<sup>237</sup> Tom Lodge, Denis Kadima, and David Pottie, (2002), “2002 Compendium of Elections in Southern Africa,” *EISA*.



wanted a credible opposition.”<sup>238</sup> However, in the immediate wake of the 1996 elections, social discontent was simmering rather than boiling. As one prominent political journalist put it: “Before the election, MMD had not learned to steal yet.”<sup>239</sup>

Chiluba learned quickly after the election. Ministers were no longer expected to travel outside of Lusaka on the weekends, and personal raiding of state accounts or contracts became much more common. After the election, “independent media outlets that published about that corruption were harassed. People in the government began to help themselves.”<sup>240</sup> Everything was different from the 1991 wave of hope and the pre-election period. Suddenly, Chiluba had a large mandate (however illegitimate) and was not facing another election until 2001. Public abuse of office had fewer constraints. The government “became progressively more corrupt as it moved away from the election. He [Chiluba] had fully established himself, so he was able to transform the political system to his advantage.”<sup>241</sup>

Kaunda and UNIP, on the other hand, were in a severely weakened position. Kaunda spoke out about “Chiluba’s corruption in every sense of the word,” but felt that he had limited options given his commitment to not damaging his reputation or legacy.<sup>242</sup> Kaunda was further constrained financially, as he had done little to line his own pockets during his time in office and was left living on an ever-shrinking financial subsidy from the state.<sup>243</sup> UNIP would not organize a coup attempt, but public discontent and the political legitimacy crisis brewing under Chiluba was starting to make a coup more feasible.

Feasibility in coups is often predicated on the perception that success is possible. Coups are inherently risky. Failed usurpers are usually imprisoned or killed. This aspect is underappreciated in the coup literature, which has recently become too often bogged down in the greed versus grievance debate. Whether greedy or grievance-stricken, coup plotters rarely believe they are embarking on a lost cause. As several scholars (Hibbs 1973; Luttwak 1968; Finer 1962) have hypothesized, a domestic political crisis provides a possible ‘trigger’ for military actors to launch a coup. In Zambia, then, if a coup attempt was going to take place in the wake of the election, the plotters had to have reasonable reason to believe that they would succeed.

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<sup>238</sup> Marja Hinfelaar, fellow of the Southern African Institute of Policy and Research and a senior official with the National Archives of Zambia, personal interview, 23 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>239</sup> Zarina Geloo, personal interview, 21 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>240</sup> Dr. Fred Mutesa, personal interview, 27 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Kenneth Kaunda, personal interview, 30 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia. This is, of course, an internal constraint that cannot be measured or expressed in any objective way. This nuance is obviously non-theoretical, but it would be misleading to avoid mentioning and opting instead to stick with a purely ‘rational’ approach; all analysts agree that Kaunda was not a leader bent on retaining power *no matter* the personal, political, or public cost.

<sup>243</sup> The stipend decreased after the election, further evidence of Chiluba’s strategy to neutralize Kaunda as a threat. Neo Simutanyi, (2006), The Contested Role of Former Presidents in Zambia, Cape Town: HSRC Press, p. 257.

That belief is most frequently derived from general resentment toward the ruling regime *and* the belief that the military brass and rank-and-file soldiers would join a coup attempt once it is announced.

Zambia's growth rate was improving in 1996, but the economy was weak.<sup>244</sup> Structural adjustment policies continued to provoke substantial social dislocation. Adding to these tensions, word of widespread corruption continued to leak through the media, in spite of the regime's harassment. The 1996 election was a further important blemish on the Chiluba's regime during that critical moment; it contributed to a sense that "democracy itself was under threat during that period."<sup>245</sup>

Chiluba's efforts to consolidate power—including his manipulation of the election—provided an opening for two men within Zambia's army: Captain Steven Lungu (later known as Captain Solo) and Captain Jack Chiti. Chiti worked for the Zambian Army Corps of Education (ZACE), a special political education wing of the army; Solo was a mid-level officer in the regular army. Chiti and Lungu were friends, and in the months after the election, their families heard them "frequently talking about the government being corrupt during that time."<sup>246</sup> As one of Lungu's sons, Enock, recalls, his father would respond to news of the government's post-election conduct the same way, saying: "This is not supposed to be like this, it should not be like this...He [Lungu] talked frequently about corruption, abuse of authority, and conduct of the government. The rumours about the manipulation of the election certainly played a role."<sup>247</sup> Another son, Chibale, remembers what his father said on the day of the elections: "You want to wake up early and go vote and you expect things to change but it doesn't work like that under Chiluba. Whatever you do, Chiluba will still get away with what he really wants in elections"—a clear reference to his belief that change through elections (the legitimate pathway) was no longer possible given the conduct of the Chiluba regime in the 1996 contest.<sup>248</sup>

There were probably many in the Zambian military that felt this way, just as there were staunch—even radical—regime opponents in the general public. What caused Chiti and Solo—these two men specifically—to launch a coup attempt on October 28, 1997? Why did they believe it could succeed, and why did it ultimately fail? The answers to these questions are not certain. However, it seems clear that there were two contributing factors that account for the coup plot's timing.

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<sup>244</sup> During the three years (1994-1996), Zambia's economy contracted by an annual average of 4.5%, though the growth rate was positive in 1996. See "GDP Growth: Annual Average Percentage, 1980-2013" World Development Indicators, *World Bank*.

<sup>245</sup> Dr. Fred Mutesa, personal interview, 27 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>246</sup> Chibale Lungu, son of Captain Steven Lungu, personal interview, 27 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>247</sup> Enock Lungu, adopted son of Captain Steven Lungu, personal interview, 30 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>248</sup> Chibale Lungu, son of Captain Steven Lungu, personal interview, 27 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

First, several weeks before the coup (the precise date is somewhat unclear), Chiluba announced that he would be disbanding the political education units in the army, forcing Chiti to re-train as an ordinary soldier. His son recalls Chiti arriving home despondent: “When Chiluba announced there would no longer be politics in the army, he wondered what he [Chiti] could do for a living.”<sup>249</sup> Ironically, one of Chiluba’s attempts to consolidate power—by eliminating political threats from brewing in the army within ZACE—may ultimately have been one the primary sparks that prompted the coup. Certainly, the decision channeled Chiti’s abstract anger about corruption and abuse of power into a personal conflict that directly affected his wellbeing.<sup>250</sup> His anger is in line with previous scholarly explanations of coup ‘triggers’, which include personal grievances of military officers (Decalo 1976; Farcau 1994; Thompson 1975; 1980).

Second, Kaunda—who by all accounts had absolutely nothing to do with the coup planning—made a statement the day before the coup that *may* have primed the two officers to finally act (this is speculation, but is worth mentioning because of its coincidental timing). In the October 27, 1997 edition of *The Post*, Kaunda “warned of an explosion soon unless there is genuine dialogue between the MMD and opposition parties.”<sup>251</sup> He continued, saying “Something big will come and of course MMD will blame UNIP for that...but it won’t be UNIP. It will be the people of Zambia who are going to act.”<sup>252</sup> Kaunda, by all accounts, did not know Chiti or Lungu and neither of the officers were members of UNIP. However, the timing is highly coincidental, and Kaunda’s remarks were widely publicized. Even so, unlike in Madagascar, there is no evidence to suggest that elite political opposition played any role in Zambia’s coup attempt.

Kaunda’s remarks do reflect two aspects that were relevant to the outbreak of the coup. First, Kaunda himself and UNIP partisans more generally were extremely disgruntled with the Chiluba government at the time, having sat on the sidelines of politics since Kaunda had been excluded from the November 1996 elections. Exclusion itself ripened the mood among UNIP partisans for a change of government—a fact that would have been hard to miss for Chiti and Solo when assessing the feasibility of the coup. Second, whether the immediate personal spark for Chiti and Solo was related to Chiti’s job loss or not, both men were stirred to action by two

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<sup>249</sup> Chileché Chiti, son of Captain Jack Chiti, personal interview, 30 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>250</sup> Supporters of the “greed” thesis of political violence would certainly view this as argumentative ammunition in support of their theory. I do not disagree, but believe that principle played a role here and that “greed” and “grievance” worked in tandem, only becoming relevant given the perceived “feasibility” of the coup’s eventual success that was created in the wake of electoral exclusion.

<sup>251</sup> “Misrule of Law: Human Rights in a State of Emergency (Zambia),” *Amnesty International*, 2 March 1998, p. 12.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.* See also “Major Wezi Kaunda Speaks Out on Coup,” *The Post*, 29 October 1998; this article is about Kaunda’s son, Wezi, but includes analysis of Kaunda’s remarks prior to the coup attempt.

critical perceptions: that Chiluba was corrupt and abusing his power *and* that those abuses of power meant that the public and military colleagues would welcome, even join their attempt to overthrow the regime.

The coup plot that ‘Captain Solo’ and Captain Chiti executed on October 28, 1997 reflects this perception and their strategic analysis of what was necessary to succeed. There were to be two operations in the plan. First, they planned to kidnap the commander of Zambia’s army, Lieutenant General Nobby Simbeye, from his home and force him to join the coup. Second, they would take control of the Zambia Mass Media Complex and force Simbeye to announce on ZNBC, the nation’s radio station, that a coup had taken. Using Simbeye reflected their (ultimately correct) intuition that the coup could only succeed if other officers rallied behind it—a prospect made more likely with the public legitimation of the coup by the high-ranking army commander. Moreover, the mass media broadcast of the coup reflected their belief that ordinary people would back their decision to take power. As Captain Solo explained in one of his few post-coup interviews, “I thought there would be this groundswell and everyone would rally around us, but I would trigger it.”<sup>253</sup> The plotters also explained to their families privately after the coup that they had been “confident of success” when they decided to act.<sup>254</sup> Clearly, the coup’s “feasibility” had been thought through, and the aforementioned contributing factors were critical in their perception—even though the events on the day of the coup would prove that they had miscalculated. The recipe that produced the coup attempt started with electoral exclusion, mixed with an engineered landslide mandate, stirred by the subsequent abuses of power and corruption wrought by an overly confident incumbent—and the two immediate actions that propelled Chiti and Solo to act in the belief that their coup would be embraced and succeed.

With that belief, Chiti and Solo ordered the troops under their command to join them “on a mission” before dawn on October 28, 1997.<sup>255</sup> One group walked to General Simbeye’s house near Arakan Barracks, aiming to capture him and lead him to the radio station to announce the coup. When they arrived, Simbeye fled, barely managing to escape over the fence surrounding his property; the soldiers reportedly missed capturing him by a matter of seconds.<sup>256</sup> Several of the men intimidated Simbeye’s wife but then relaxed and began celebrating (a bit

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<sup>253</sup> A prominent Zambian journalist, Zarina Geloo, interviewed Solo but much of the interview went unpublished. I interviewed her. This is her description of what he said during the conversation. Zarina Geloo, personal interview, 23 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>254</sup> Enock Lungu, personal interview, 30 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>255</sup> “Solo’s Coup,” *The Post*, 29 October 1997, p. 6.

<sup>256</sup> Ben Mwila, Chiluba’s minister of defense, personal interview, 31 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

prematurely) with Simbeye's supply of imported Windhoek beer.<sup>257</sup> Unfortunately for the coup plotters, the plan with Simbeye would ultimately backfire—when he escaped, he alerted Zambia's political and military leadership to the events, setting a response into motion faster would have happened otherwise.

Shortly after the failure with General Simbeye, Captain Solo led another group of soldiers under his command to secure the Mass Media Complex and gain access to ZNBC. There was virtually no security to bypass—it was a Tuesday morning before 6:00 am at a radio station. Around 6:00 am, Marian Chibwedele, one of the morning news anchors on ZNBC Radio 2, received a warning from the central control room. “Different military men—with guns and pistols” had arrived at the station, rather than the usual unarmed security detail.<sup>258</sup> She locked the door, but was forced to open it at gunpoint by Captain Solo and two other men with AK-47s. Once they were inside, she recalls, “I took my headset, put it on his head, and he began announcing the coup.”<sup>259</sup>

Captain Solo's rhetoric was rambling and disorganized, but it was laced with charges of corruption and abuse of power. In explaining the coup and the Redemption Council it purported to establish, Solo insisted that, “We don't require Chiluba, we don't require his dirty and stinking government to kill the nation... We had to come in. If we didn't come in, this nation was going to collapse, completely collapse. We didn't want to bring another Mobutu in Zambia... There is total corruption in the government right now.”<sup>260</sup> While political scientists have long since learned that coup rhetoric is little more than an attempt to put window dressing on political violence, in this case it is relevant because it speaks to the factors deemed most likely to incite other Zambians to ‘rally around’ the coup, as Solo later suggested he expected. Whether Solo and Chiti launched the coup as a result of genuine concerns about Zambia's welfare is impossible to discern and largely irrelevant; rather, it is important to note that without Chiluba's abuses of office wrought by the engineered mandate in the wake of electoral exclusion, it would have been difficult to imagine Chiti and Solo believing that the political climate was ripe for a “groundswelling” of support for their coup.

Captain Solo continued to broadcast until roughly 8:00 am, when Zambia's most elite military commandos (who were based in Ndola but were in Lusaka by happenstance for a training exercise) stormed the complex. In the ensuing brief firefight, one soldier involved in the

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid. See also “Solo's Coup,” *The Post*, 29 October 1997, p. 6.

<sup>258</sup> Marian Chibwedele, ZNBC Broadcaster, personal interview, 28 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> “Captain Lungu's National Address,” transcribed from the October 28 broadcast, *The Post*, 29 October 1997. The reference to Mobutu is a direct comparison to the kleptocracy in neighboring Zaire; Mobutu had fled the country earlier in 1997 and died six weeks before the coup attempt in Zambia.

coup was killed. By 8:36, Lieutenant Colonel Siame announced on the radio that the coup had been suppressed and that the government was in control. Captain Solo was found shortly thereafter, hiding in a trash container in the hallway of the station. President Chiluba made an address to the nation on the same radio station several hours later urging calm and a return to normal.<sup>261</sup>

After just three hours, the coup plot had failed. While the coup strategy itself was unsophisticated and poorly planned, it failed for three reasons, all of which could have been reversed. Had events unfolded slightly differently, Solo and Chiti may have succeeded. First, the near-miss in capturing General Simbeye made Solo's broadcast at ZNBC seem less credible and less certain to succeed, diminishing the prospect that other soldiers—and the public—would rally to support the coup. Second, the fluke presence of the commandos in Lusaka meant that the military brass did not have to choose sides. If they had, more divisions may have been showcased, hampering efforts to quash the coup. Third, the speed of the response was such that the coup was over before many people had eaten breakfast. The “groundswell” Captain ‘Solo’ hoped for did not have time to form. Coups and coup attempts succeed and fail for various reasons, but it is certainly plausible that Zambia's current history may have been drastically different had General Simbeye been just a little slower at fleeing his house and the elite commandos had been back at their home base in Ndola. Such events are the contingencies of history.

After the coup failed, all opposition parties (including UNIP and Kaunda himself) issued statements condemning the coup plot.<sup>262</sup> Nonetheless, the Chiluba government immediately sought to discredit the failed coup in two ways.

First, they suggested that it was the work of misguided soldiers who were drunk and high, an attempt by the regime to diminish and belittle the notion that legitimate opposition existed. This government account is still the prevailing narrative in Zambian history, but Marian Chibwedele—who was held at gunpoint by Solo at first, and then spent nearly two hours with him while he broadcasted—says that he was lucid, calm, and “definitely not drunk, though he did ask for tea.”<sup>263</sup> This coup attempt has been dismissed as a drunken whim and most Zambians still believe that it was; that narrative is false and should be corrected.

Second, Chiluba accused UNIP (and Kaunda) of organizing the plot. A series of UNIP officials were arrested. Kaunda was arrested and sent to a maximum-security prison, before being relegated to house arrest after pressure from regional allies and the international

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<sup>261</sup> “Zambia: No Model for Democracy,” *Human Rights Watch*, 10(2), May 1998.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>263</sup> Marian Chibwedele, personal interview, 28 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

community.<sup>264</sup> There was no evidence to support the theory that UNIP had any prior knowledge of Chiti and Solo's existence, let alone their coup plot, but the arrests and detentions persisted. The only evidence presented by the government came from accusations leveled by the coup plotters themselves, who implicated top-level opposition figures during the anguish of torture; Chiti, for example, was "suspended from a metal bar, 'the swing,' and beaten while police told him to admit" that opposition leaders were behind the failed coup d'état.<sup>265</sup> After being tortured, Chiti and Solo insisted that they acted alone—until their respective deaths in 2004 and 2012. It was clear that the Chiluba government sought to pin the blame for the coup on the political opposition—particularly UNIP and Kaunda—through whatever means necessary.

Ultimately, the coup leaders had "misread the level of discontent and it created the 'coup that was not.'"<sup>266</sup> In spite of their misreading and the coup's failure, as former Chiluba MP Eric Silwamba put it, "The issues around the election probably inspired the failed coup d'état...quite clearly the forum was ripe for a coup attempt."<sup>267</sup> The coup has now become a blip in Zambian history.

### **Conclusion: Supporting the Hypothesis that Electoral Exclusion Increases Coup Risk**

In both the Madagascar and Zambia cases, electoral exclusion created a 'critical juncture' for coup risk; elite-level interaction at the meso-level produced a political context that was ripe for coup plotting. Madagascar and Zambia are divergent on key variables; Madagascar was considered a democracy at the time of its 2006 election while Zambia was considered a weak 'counterfeit democracy' at best during its 1996 contest. In spite of this key difference, both countries suffered exclusionary elections that provoked a subsequent coup attempt—which succeeded in Madagascar but failed in Zambia.

Both cases presented here affirm the theoretical propositions outlined in Chapter Two. In the first stage (incumbents deciding whether to include or exclude their rivals), the incumbents in each case sought to sideline a rival who posed a credible threat using a supposedly 'independent' third party legalistic shield to deflect criticism and blame. Both incumbents 'got away with it,' as the international community gave an unequivocal endorsement of both Madagascar elections and a lukewarm but tolerating reception to the 1996 Zambia contest—an affirmation of the hypothesis that 'strategic rigging' is used to navigate the so-called 'Fraudsters

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<sup>264</sup> "Misrule of Law: Human Rights in a State of Emergency (Zambia)," *Amnesty International*, p. 8-9.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>266</sup> Mbinji Mufalo, public intellectual, personal interview, 23 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

<sup>267</sup> Eric Silwamba, former top Chiluba adviser and jurist, personal interview, 30 August 2012; Lusaka, Zambia.

Dilemma'. The incentives aligned in favor of exclusion rather than inclusion for Ravalomanana and Chiluba.

In the second stage (the opposition deciding to accept the result or respond with political violence), Madagascar and Zambia followed divergent pathways from election to coup attempt. In both, the landslide victory engineered as a result of electoral exclusion sparked a chain of events that made elements in the military perceive that a coup attempt would be successful due to widespread support in the population and key elements of the military. However, Madagascar's political elite actively engineered the coup attempt in 2009, while UNIP in Zambia were passive observers to the 1997 Captain Solo coup attempt. In both cases, electoral exclusion was a critical turning point. This affirms the theory that electoral exclusion is a salient driver of coups *even when the excluded opposition does nothing to support the coup*. Regardless of pathways, the qualitative evidence from Zambia and Madagascar both support the hypothesis (H2a; tested statistically in Chapter Two) that electoral exclusion increases the risk of coup d'état.

In subsequent chapters, I explore hypotheses H2b and H2c (whether electoral exclusion increases the risk of civil wars, with and without boycotts) and how those dynamics overlap and differ from the coup pathways outlined here; whether inclusion can be a stabilizing force if exclusion is destabilizing; and what happens when electoral exclusion is used but is insufficient to neutralize the political influence of the targeted group. Each chapter draws on qualitative evidence, using case studies to further probe the statistical evidence.



## CHAPTER FOUR: FROM ‘MIRACLE’ TO NIGHTMARE

### *Electoral Exclusion and Civil War in Côte d’Ivoire*

Electoral exclusion led to coups d’état being launched in Zambia and Madagascar, but exclusion may also provoke civil wars. In this chapter, I use process tracing to show how electoral exclusion caused Côte d’Ivoire, the former poster-child for successful African development, to spiral into two tragic, violent civil wars.

Unlike Chapter Three, I do not compare Côte d’Ivoire to another country but rather to itself. In both 1995 and 2000, incumbents in Côte d’Ivoire chose to exclude a major rival, Alassane Ouattara, in order to guarantee electoral victory. In the former instance (1995), the exclusion did not provoke political violence. In the latter instance (2000), the exclusionary dynamics established by electoral strategy were a key spark that ignited the first Ivoirian Civil War (2002 – 2007). By exploring why one act of exclusion provoked violence while the other did not—with most other variables held relatively constant—Côte d’Ivoire offers an opportunity to understand the sometimes lagged effects that are produced by electoral exclusion. In other words, even though I argue that electoral exclusion increases the risk of subsequent violence generally, Côte d’Ivoire teaches the important lesson that repeated bouts of electoral exclusion may compound that risk, derailing even the most robust success story and leading to a train wreck of sustained violent conflict in the form of a civil war.

The theoretical propositions that I test in this chapter are nearly identical to those tested in Chapter Three, concerning Madagascar and Zambia. However, there is one key change: these ‘feasibility’ factors are used to predict civil war risk rather than coup risk. The same three conditions that were presumed to increase the likelihood that exclusion would take place in Zambia and Madagascar are applied identically here, supplemented by two similar conditions that are believed to increase the likelihood that a civil war (rather than a coup d’état) will take place.

As a reminder, I argue that electoral exclusion is more likely to happen when:

- 4) Incumbents perceive that an opposition candidate could pose a credible threat to the incumbent’s chance of victory.
- 5) It is possible to exclude the challenger with the backing of a supposedly ‘independent’ third party, in a way that can provide plausible deniability and cover to the incumbent from the act of manipulation.

- 6) There is reason for the incumbent to believe that the exclusion of a rival candidate will not drastically damage their international legitimacy, or that any loss of legitimacy will not be associated with serious costs or sanctions imposed on the regime.

These conditions functioned nearly identically in Côte d'Ivoire (1995 and 2000) as in Zambia (1996) and Madagascar (2006). However, unlike in Zambia or Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire's election in 2000 precipitated a civil war rather than a coup d'état. This chapter is devoted to testing whether electoral exclusion was the key factor that caused Côte d'Ivoire to descend into open warfare. It is also critical to understand why the country gravitated toward a civil war rather than coup or another form of political violence, testing the hypotheses presented in Chapter One (quantitative analysis). Based on more than thirty elite interviews with politicians, party officials, former rebels, diplomats, journalists, academics, and military elites conducted in Abidjan during July 2012, it seems that two conditions heighten the risk of civil war in the wake of electoral exclusion:<sup>268</sup>

- 3) Civil war is more likely following electoral exclusion if the political party that has been excluded is able to mobilize its supporters effectively, translating political exclusion into a mass response.
- 4) Civil war also becomes more likely when that mobilization is able to tap into sufficient shared dissatisfaction and resentment toward the regime within the general population (beyond just the excluded candidates themselves) that prospective rebel movements believe they could draw on for support, recruits, sanctuary, and/or financial backing.<sup>269</sup>

As with the theoretical underpinnings of my argument, Côte d'Ivoire's 1995 and 2000 elections unfolded as two distinct two-stage games separated by five years, with the opening move made by the incumbent choosing to exclude Alassane Ouattara, and the following stage being

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<sup>268</sup> These conditions are in addition to the factors outlined in Chapter One, relating to the overarching theory of why exclusion provokes conflict. In other words, this chapter will certainly demonstrate the notion that mass-based mobilization is critical for civil wars (which is a key difference with coups), while also exploring underlying conditions that may affect the incentive structures and motivations of individual-level actors who finally decide to take the risk inherent in launching a rebellion.

<sup>269</sup> As established in previous scholarship, it is possible to circumvent this condition if external sponsors provide mercenaries and financial backing, but in this dissertation I am focusing primarily on 'homegrown' rebel movements. This proposition does not challenge the findings of Collier & Hoeffler that there are certain conditions that increase the 'feasibility' of conflict; rather, this proposition complements that perspective by arguing that electoral exclusion is one such 'feasibility' factor that has, until now, been overlooked in the literature.

embodied in the excluded candidate and party's subsequent decision to either accept the outcome or mobilize its supporters into violence against the state.

Côte d'Ivoire is an archetypal example of electoral exclusion provoking subsequent political violence. Analysts of the Ivoirian conflict would struggle to explain the two Ivoirian civil wars last decade without reference to ethno-political exclusion, particularly around elections.<sup>270</sup> In broad terms, the country's deterioration was not exclusively due to this exclusion, but the electoral tactic accelerated a downward spiral and transformed an ailing nation into a violent, war-torn one.

For both the 1995 and the 2000 elections, I analyze five key groups through the lens of their motivations, their constraints, and the incentives they faced drawing them toward or away from various courses of action. These five groups were: the incumbent preceding each election (Henri Konan Bedié in 1995, General Robert Guéï in 2000); the main opposition party and its leader (Alassane Ouattara of the *Rassemblement des Républicains* in both 1995 and 2000); other rival opposition groups (notably Laurent Gbagbo and his *Front Populaire Ivoirien* party); the international community (primarily represented by France and the United States); and finally, the broader general population of northern Côte d'Ivoire (at times symbolized by youth leader turned rebel Guillaume Soro). These are not the only five groups of actors that mattered in Côte d'Ivoire's tumultuous political history from the 1990s into the early 2000s, but they are the central protagonists. Tracing their shifting incentives over time helps shed light on the causes and consequences of electoral exclusion and its bloody aftermath.

After outlining a brief political history of Côte d'Ivoire's transition from one-party state to dysfunctional multi-party 'counterfeit democracy,' I argue that electoral exclusion was a destabilizing force in both 1995 and 2000, but that the targeted sniper-style electoral exclusion in 1995 was insufficient to provoke a civil war, while the shotgun-style ethno-political exclusion used in 2000 to disqualify the same candidate galvanized the population sufficiently to make a civil war feasible. As New York Times journalist and Ivoirian political commentator Howard French put it, "The exclusion of Ouattara was the key event—it was the striking of the match—the country was primed over time but the striking of the match was political exclusion."<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Most cases are not so neat. Sometimes electoral exclusion is a contributing factor to violence that clearly played a role but is not the proverbial 'smoking gun' the same way it was in Côte d'Ivoire.

<sup>271</sup> Howard French, former Abidjan correspondent for the New York Times and political commentator, personal interview, 16 July 2012; Abidjan.

### *The Ivoirian Miracle Begins to Crumble: Prologue to the 1995 Election*

During the colonial period, Côte d'Ivoire was the jewel of France's empire in West Africa. Abidjan was known as the 'Paris of Africa.' After obtaining independence from France in 1960, Ivoirian prosperity was largely unparalleled throughout the continent. During the 1960s and 1970s, Côte d'Ivoire averaged 7.3% annual GDP growth (Hecht 1983). It was considered by many economists to be the fastest growing economy in the world during that period. For that reason, Côte d'Ivoire earned the reputation and the label of 'the Ivoirian Miracle' (Klaas 2008; Langer 2005). It was the poster child of peaceful, successful post-independence development on a continent known for strife, turmoil, and a seemingly endless string of post-independence violence during that same period. The country's successes were largely attributed to the effective management of the Ivoirian economy and political sphere by longtime strongman—and master of political patronage—President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who ruled from 1960 until his death in 1993.

Understanding the roots of Houphouët-Boigny's Ivoirian Miracle is crucial to understanding Côte d'Ivoire's dysfunctional politics during the 1990s, which ultimately led to electoral exclusion, sparking a coup d'état in 1999, and two civil wars in the 2000s.

The Ivoirian Miracle was built on four main pillars. First, Côte d'Ivoire had immensely fertile land—particularly in the western region—but not enough farmers to till it. With rising global cocoa prices, it was obvious to Houphouët-Boigny that a surge in productive labour entering the country would also lead to a surge in state income through cocoa exports (Colin & Ayouz 2006; Grootaert 1997). As a result, in March 1967, Houphouët-Boigny announced a decree that 'land belongs to the person who brings it into production, providing that usage rights have been formally registered' (McGovern 2011). This decree became known as the *mise en valeur* ('put to good use') policy. Soon, migrants began to flood into Côte d'Ivoire, notably from Burkina Faso and Mali, neighbouring countries north of the border. The government did not enforce the 'formally registered' provision of the decree, and in *de facto* terms, farmers were considered to own any land that they occupied and used to cultivate agricultural products—mostly cocoa and, to a lesser extent, coffee (Chaveau 2000; Chaveau & Richards 2008). These incoming farmers were valuable both politically and economically to the ruling president: they contributed to the state's revenue stream but they also usually supported Houphouët-Boigny politically, since he allowed them to come and make their livelihoods in Côte d'Ivoire.

Second, in order to ensure that farmers would be more willing to take the risk of cultivating the land, the Ivoirian government established a *caisse de stabilisation*, or Caistab, which provided guaranteed price supports in order to insulate farmers from minor price variations on

the global market. By guaranteeing payments to farmers, Houphouët-Boigny created an even stronger enticement to lure entrepreneurial types from around West Africa to join in the Ivoirian cocoa boom, adding to the nation's 'Miracle' (Chaveau 2000; Losch 2000; McGovern 2011). Caistab would be able to sustain minor price volatility but was not equipped to cope if the price completely bottomed out, as it later would.

Third, unlike many less forward thinking regimes in Africa at the time, Houphouët-Boigny reinvested a large share of cocoa profits into social services—notably in health care and education (Toungara 1990). This does not suggest that graft was not rampant—it was—but there was some sense of social investment and future planning tied to the cocoa boom during this period of the 'Ivoirian Miracle.'<sup>272</sup>

Fourth and finally, the Ivoirian Miracle could never have been sustained without President Houphouët-Boigny's advanced, sophisticated political patronage network. The president was masterful at 'sharing the spoils' of the cocoa boom while also rotating ethnic rivals through his inner circle as a means to ensure not only that everyone got a slice of the Ivoirian Miracle pie, but also to be certain that no single group could amass enough wealth, power, or influence to pose a serious challenge to his regime's grip on power (Crook 1989; Sylla 1985). This political patronage network would later become a crucial liability with the onset of multi-party elections, as inclusion of rivals within the patronage network—which was once an effective means of managing and mitigating political challenges—suddenly became a surefire way to guarantee an electoral challenge to the incumbent regime. However, during the post-independence decades, the president's carefully crafted political patronage machine kept the economy humming against the backdrop of stable, inclusive politics.

The Ivoirian Miracle's boom times in the 1960s and 1970s gave way to an unraveling of the economic aspects of the miracle in the 1980s. A price shock in 1978—which sent ripples throughout Côte d'Ivoire's economy and set off alarm bells for international economists (notably those at the International Monetary Fund)—set the economy back considerably but was not sufficient to provoke a true crisis. However, it foreshadowed what was inevitable; cocoa prices were on a steady decline. In 1981, Côte d'Ivoire's government signed its first Structural Adjustment Programme agreement with the IMF. The IMF conditionality attached to the series of loans made to the Ivoirian government focused on two reforms, both of which would compound rather than solve the country's economic problems. First, the Ivoirian government

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<sup>272</sup> For more on graft under Houphouët-Boigny, see McGovern 2011, pp. 164-165. "Under President Houphouët-Boigny, the government learned that the most lucrative rents could be extracted from the robust cocoa and coffee economy. The President's 'sovereignty account', sometimes called the '*caisse noire*' was connected to the cocoa *filière* through complex financial transactions...While some in Côte d'Ivoire complain that the rate of skimming has accelerated to unseemly levels, the basic technique was perfected by *Le Vieux* (Houphouët-Boigny) himself," 165.

was directed to invest even further in cocoa, creating even more of an economic dependence on a single primary export commodity than was already the case (Klaas 2008). Second, the government was instructed to reduce social spending, particularly on health and education (Logan & Mengisteab 1993). However, these two changes came at the worst possible time. In the 1970s, cocoa would routinely be sold at more than \$3,000 per metric tonne on the global market. By the early 1990s, a metric tonne of cocoa was fetching just over \$1,000—an enormous reduction, particularly for an economy that was almost completely reliant on cocoa (IMF 2007). The combination of enormous loans and falling cocoa prices (combined with the reduction of social spending as a safety net) created a substantial surge in Ivoirian debt, which was estimated to be 231% of Ivoirian GNP by 1994 (Klaas 2008; World Bank 2007).

By 1993, the government of Côte d'Ivoire was facing a severe crisis. The economy was in shambles with falling cocoa prices and high debt at the same time that the international community began to increase pressure on the one-party state of Houphouët-Boigny to liberalize politically, opening the door to multi-party competition and competitive elections. This critical juncture, it turned out, happened to be the year that the longtime president died (in December 1993). At this time, there were several risk factors simmering below the surface. First, national economic woes increased pressure on the political elite. Second, battles over land ownership were beginning to become more salient, as economic scarcity created a stronger incentive for people to dispute land ownership. Third, even though Houphouët-Boigny had kept a lid on tensions between different ethnic, religious, and regional communities that were simmering on a low boil, his death removed that lid and those tensions threatened to boil over.

In the context of these ensions, *Le Vieux's* death briefly induced a succession battle. For a moment, it appeared that there would be a power struggle between the deceased president's handpicked successor, Alassane Ouattara, and the constitutionally ordained successor, Henri Konan Bedié.<sup>273</sup> However, after just two days of tension, Ouattara voluntarily stepped down, and Bedié assumed the presidency (Akinde, Moussa & Gnangadjomon 2010).

This transitional era (1994-1995) was the critical period that needs to be analyzed to understand the varied incentives facing the new incumbent heading toward Côte d'Ivoire's first truly multi-party elections, scheduled for October 1995. During this period, the incentives facing the five key groups were varied, but the incentives interacted in such a way as to make exclusion both a strategically attractive choice for the incumbent president and violence an infeasible strategy for the excluded candidate and his supporters.

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<sup>273</sup> “The post of prime minister was created for Ouattara—so as Houphouët-Boigny's health failed, it was Ouattara running the show.” Joe Bavier, Reuters journalist, personal interview; 20 July 2012, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

## *Multi-party elections and the first exclusion of Alassane Ouattara*

### **Stage one: to exclude or include? The politics of *ivoirité***

Henri Konan Bedié was a vulnerable incumbent. He had ascended to office at a time of volatility when allegiances were far more fluid than they had been during the reign of Houphouët-Boigny, the charismatic ‘big man’ of Côte d’Ivoire (Bach 2011). Moreover, there was mounting pressure coming from the international community to allow genuine competition in the upcoming elections—as was the case across the continent at the time. Surely, Bedié was aware of examples of the power of elections to unseat incumbents—perhaps most notably the warning sent by Mathieu Kérékou’s resounding defeat in Benin’s 1991 election, just 550 miles away from Abidjan in Cotonou. It quickly became apparent that Bedié’s job security was in doubt, and political observers (and Bedié’s advisers) unanimously agreed that the most robust electoral challenge would come from Houphouët-Boigny’s former prime minister, Alassane Ouattara, a northern Muslim candidate. As a result, “Bedié was most afraid of Ouattara in 1995.”

Just as Bedié wanted to retain power, Ouattara wanted to take it. Ouattara, having been so close to the political epicenter at the end of Houphouët-Boigny’s reign, flirted with the idea of forcing a succession struggle before deciding against it. Elections offered a new opening to take power. However, elections legitimized power differently from Ouattara’s previous ascension; in the early 1990s, Ouattara became a political dynamo through his relationship with Houphouët-Boigny; now he needed to assemble a mass-based political machine and win votes rather than riding on the patronage coattails of the now-deceased charismatic strongman. Ouattara’s eventual political party, the *Rassemblement des Républicains*, was formed after Houphouët-Boigny’s death but well before the subsequently scheduled 1995 multi-party elections—in mid-1994. When the party was formed, it was already apparent that Ouattara would be the RDR’s standard-bearer (Coulibaly 2007).

At the same time that Ouattara was aiming to transition his insider prestige into a political party, another opposition figure—Laurent Gbagbo—was also ramping up his efforts to contest the 1995 elections. His party, the *Front Populaire Ivoirien*, had previously contested the 1990 elections against the ever-popular Houphouët-Boigny and lost badly—garnering just over 18% of the vote (Chirof 2006; Crook 1997). That experience taught Gbagbo and the FPI that opposition movements faced an uphill battle in Côte d’Ivoire. Gbagbo quickly realized that he would have little to gain by attacking Ouattara, as both candidates shared an interest in defeating

Bedié—a political heavyweight if for no other reason than the fact that incumbency provided considerable benefits under such a fledgling, flawed multi-party democracy (particularly because Bedié could capitalize on the political machine of the PDCI, Houphouët-Boigny's party). As a result, Gbagbo and Ouattara formed a loose alliance, focusing on unseating Bedié rather than combatting one another.

While Gbagbo was a serious candidate, it was clear that Ouattara would be the biggest challenger to Bedié's reelection. Ouattara could not only claim a legitimate link to the legacy of Houphouët-Boigny, but he also was in a position to capitalize on regional and sectarian divides that had been kept below the surface due to the former president's calibrated patronage network. Gbagbo, at the time, had no such advantages. In the pre-election period, therefore, two challengers (Gbagbo and Ouattara) faced a common rival: the incumbent Bedié. The challengers both had the same incentive—to take power from Bedié—while the incumbent sought to retain power.

In this two vs. one rivalry, the population base of the northern portion of Côte d'Ivoire was an important but not yet politically polarized force. Ouattara knew that he could count on significant support from the region—particularly as the only major prospective Muslim candidate—but he was by no means a beloved figure in the same way that Houphouët-Boigny had a nationwide support base. Instead, Ouattara, or ADO as he was known colloquially, was not yet a household name, primarily due to the fact that he had spent several years prior to the election in Washington working for the IMF rather than campaigning in Côte d'Ivoire. As the former spokeswoman for the *Forces Nouvelles* rebellion put it, looking back at the 1995 election: “In the early and mid-1990s, ADO was a bit like a political zombie, living on after the demise of Houphouët-Boigny; he was an outsider. Nobody knew him. He didn't study here. He had worked abroad.”<sup>274</sup> This was a crucial fact. It meant that Ouattara had a natural support base for an election, but the strength of their support for him as a candidate was not intense—he was relatively unknown even if he was the standard-bearer for the party that grew out of northern Côte d'Ivoire. This lukewarm level of support from the masses would be a critical factor—not only in Bedié's decision to exclude Ouattara, but also in the future prospects for mass-based political violence after Ouattara was excluded in the 1995 election vs. the 2000 election.

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<sup>274</sup> Affoussy Bamba, personal interview, 24 July 2012; Abidjan. ADO stands for Alassane Dramane Ouattara, his full name. Ouattara completed his undergraduate degree at the Drexel Institute of Technology (now called Drexel University) in Philadelphia before continuing on to finish a masters (1967) and doctorate (1972) at the University of Pennsylvania.



Finally, the international community (and in particular the United States and France) is the fifth and final actor included in this process tracing analysis.<sup>275</sup> There were two main driving forces for international interests in the 1995 Côte d'Ivoire contest: political (democratization) and economic (stability and continuation of existing trade relations). As discussed in the Introduction chapter, the end of the Cold War precipitated a major shift on the international stage in terms of the external pressures that African governments faced; the Soviet Union's demise gave the United States significantly more unchecked influence in countries like Côte d'Ivoire (Levitsky & Way 2005).<sup>276</sup> Without an ideological counterweight, the United States government was free to pursue a more aggressive pro-democracy agenda in countries across the 'developing world,' and it did so. Democratization was (at least officially) the major political foreign policy goal for the majority of Western governments that had a diplomatic presence in Côte d'Ivoire prior to the 1995 election (Toungara 2001). For France, however, the prevailing interest was economic.<sup>277</sup> The lingering *Françafrique* foreign policy of the Quai d'Orsay had a strong preference for continuity; Houphouët-Boigny had proven himself to be one of the most reliable allies for the French on the continent, and the government was not keen for a political upheaval. Varied levels of economic interest created a hierarchy of incentives for foreign actors. For some countries, such as the United States, who had a relatively minor economic interest in Côte d'Ivoire, the priority was to hold multi-party elections as a step toward democracy. For other countries, such as France, that had a larger interest in Côte d'Ivoire's economy, the imperative was economic stability and a continuation of existing relationships. However, regardless of whether foreign partners put political or economic concerns first, there was relatively little external pressure on Côte d'Ivoire heading into the 1995 election.<sup>278</sup> Even for the

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<sup>275</sup> The 'international community' is a loaded term that often is (incorrectly) used to represent only the Western international community. In this instance, the West is the most important actor to consider because Western governments exerted the most pressure on the majority of sub-Saharan African countries at this time (particularly because the end of the Cold War essentially eliminated the influence of Russia, even though the Soviet Union had been a major player on the continent. Moreover, the 'international community' is by no means a unitary actor. Norway may have had different attitudes toward Côte d'Ivoire than Germany; however, I isolate the United States and France here as a proxy for the prevailing attitudes of the 'international community' here because they largely do represent the key interests of a cluster of countries: democratization and economic stability.

<sup>276</sup> Levitsky's point differentiating between leverage and linkage is particularly insightful here.

<sup>277</sup> French economic interests in Côte d'Ivoire were paramount, and more valued than economic relations with most other African countries. This was a longstanding relationship; "Boigny was a priceless ally for the *Françafrique* project as he not only secured economic interest in Côte d'Ivoire but also a strategic position in the West African sub region, helping to topple leaders unfriendly to the project. Such unfriendly leaders include the late Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso and President Olympio of Togo – both assassinated by their successors, with French support." See Popoh 2011.

<sup>278</sup> Howard French, personal interview, 16 July 2012; Abidjan.

United States government, the signals seemed to be that clear: a multi-party election was necessary but there would be limited pressure beyond that.<sup>279</sup>

For Bedié, then, his thinking was clear. He faced two opposition candidates who wanted to unseat him, a broader opposition population base that was not showing itself as a mobilized force, and an international community that was not insisting on much other than that he hold multi-party elections and preserve foreign economic interests. For electoral exclusion to be strategically attractive according to my theoretical assumptions, Bedié needed to believe that Ouattara (or the Ouattara/Gbagbo alliance) posed a credible threat (he/it did) and that Bedié had a realistic chance of ‘getting away’ with electoral manipulation (he apparently did, particularly given the lukewarm international interest in the 1995 contest). The last remaining piece of the puzzle was to find a way to eliminate Ouattara, his main rival, under the guise of some sort of ‘independent’ authority so that Bedié’s regime could deny manipulating the election.

As a result, Bedié began a cynical political strategy aimed at disqualifying and excluding Ouattara from the election. To do so, the regime—and its allies in the media—began drumming up a campaign against Ouattara based on concept of *ivoirité*, or the notion of being truly Ivoirian. *Ivoirité* was not a new concept; it was originally coined in 1974 by the writer and artist Diudonné Niangoran Porquet, but applying the concept as a negative political concept rather than a celebration of Ivoirian culture was novel (Fofana 2009). Indeed, this was a direct reversal of the inclusivity of President Houphouët-Boigny’s regime; a multi-ethnic cabinet was one of the ways in which Ivoirian “Big Man” patronage politics had functioned seamlessly for decades.<sup>280</sup> Now, state run media began to suggest that Ouattara was a foreigner, accusing him of having allegiances to Burkina Faso—where, the media alleged, his family came from. This public opinion campaign served as a precursor to a legal push to invalidate Ouattara’s presumptive candidacy (Whitaker 2005, 113). This tactic was successfully codified with a constitutional change, ushered in quickly with pressure from the Bedié regime. The “crowning act was made by a law adopted by the PDCI-RDA the 23rd of November, 1994, with a new law affecting the electoral code.”<sup>281</sup> There were three changes, each aimed squarely at Ouattara. Candidates had to prove that both of their parents were native born Ivoirians; candidates could not have dual nationality; and candidates were required to have lived for the previous five years in Côte

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<sup>279</sup> Western embassy political analyst in Abidjan, unnamed here at their request, personal interview, 22 July 2012; Abidjan.

<sup>280</sup> Laurent Akoun, Secretary General of the *Front Populaire Ivoirien*, personal interview, 31 July 2012; Abidjan. ““Dans tous les gouvernements de Houphouët-Boigny— entre 1960 et 1993—Houphouët-Boigny a nommé environ 97 ministres Baoulés, 55 ministres Malinké, 31 ministres Bété, 29 Ané, 22 Abouré, 19!Gueré, 15 Yacouba, 14 Senuofo.” This behavior is precisely what would be expected under the patronage frameworks explained by Cetinyan 2002 and Roessler 2011.

<sup>281</sup> Sidick, Kokhav Koné Abou Bakary. Historian and public intellectual. Personal interview, 25 July 2012; Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire.

d'Ivoire. All of these were targeted rather than general procedural changes. As Aimé Mann of the daily newspaper, *La Voie*, noted with irony: "It would have been more courageous on the part of the regime to put it in black and white and write into law that 'M. Alassane Dramane Ouattara; former prime minister of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, of a Burkinabé father and Ivoirian mother, having obtained the nationality of another state and not residing in a continuous fashion in Côte d'Ivoire during the five preceding years to the upcoming election due to his post at the IMF in Washington since 1994 cannot be president of the republic.'"<sup>282</sup>

Ouattara was excluded from the 1995 contest on the basis of his allegedly dubious citizenship and his lack of uninterrupted residency.<sup>283</sup> Ivoirians "had to do some intellectual gymnastics to accept that a former prime minister isn't an Ivoirian citizen any longer."<sup>284</sup> Just as with Kaunda's exclusion in Zambia, someone who had held an executive position of power was no longer deemed a citizen of that same country.

Bedié's mechanism of electoral exclusion was effective. The legal change neutralized Ouattara as a threat but was done in a way that lessened international criticism; Bedié's regime could point to the legality of the decision even if it was illegitimate. In other words, Bedié had found a way to achieve the third necessary condition to make exclusion a particularly strategic tactic: there was a clear threat, legalistic exclusion offered a means to eliminate that threat while still hiding behind a third party 'shield' of deniability, and doing so would not imperil Bedié's standing in the international community. Electoral exclusion was an alluring form of strategic election manipulation, so Bedié used it to get rid of Ouattara less than a year before the vote would eventually take place. This ended the first stage of the electoral game; Bedié chose to exclude Ouattara—and there were no real costs imposed on him for doing so.

### **Stage two: the opposition responds to Ouattara's exclusion**

Ouattara would not go quietly. At the first RDR party conference (held 2-3 July 1995), supporters—primarily from the Muslim north of the country—formally picked Ouattara to represent the party on the ballot in the elections, scheduled for late October that same year (Coulibaly 2007). This was largely a symbolic move, as it was already clear from the constitutional change that Bedié would not allow Ouattara's name to be printed on the forthcoming ballots. However, with Ouattara removed, the other major opposition candidate—Laurent Gbagbo—faced a tough choice. Without Ouattara, Gbagbo was almost certainly

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<sup>282</sup> Fofana 2009, 184.

<sup>283</sup> Alain Lobognon, former *Forces Nouvelles* spokesperson and current Ivoirian Minister of Youth, Sports, and Culture, personal interview; 17 July 2012, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

<sup>284</sup> Venance Konan, editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Fraternité Matin*, personal interview; 19 July 2012, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

doomed to repeat the political disaster of five years previously, losing badly in a more or less one-on-one contest against the incumbent. Again, then, just as the two men had shared an alliance against Bedié before Ouattara's exclusion, they now faced a common goal—to cast aspersions on electoral procedure once it became clear that neither of them could win the manipulated election. Both men commanded a reasonable support among the population and both the FPI and the RDR had nascent political machines; as a result, a boycott was a feasible and attractive option. Therefore, Ouattara and Gbagbo again became allies of convenience, joining together in a boycott. Gbagbo even explicitly condemned Ouattara's exclusion from the election, calling it “liberticidal, racist, xenophobic, and dangerous.”<sup>285</sup>

The boycott proceeded, and so did the election. Bedié sailed to victory in a vote that was a foregone conclusion since both major rivals boycotted the election (Ouattara being excluded anyway, Gbagbo voluntarily joining in). That left just one minor candidate on the ballot, Francis Wodié, who garnered only 4% of the vote. There was little criticism of the election from international voices. A multi-party election had taken place (in accordance with the low expectations pushed by Western governments, such as the United States), and Bedié's victory signaled more of the same for a French government eager for continuity. Furthermore, there was no coup attempt and no civil war after the election. Consequently, at least in the short-term, electoral exclusion had proven itself an extremely effective electoral manipulation strategy for Bedié—he won an election in a landslide and did not face international costs or a further domestic challenge to his grip on power.

At first glance, it may seem puzzling that the election did not precipitate a civil war outbreak: an election had taken place, electoral exclusion was used, and the excluded candidate launched a deliberate boycott. According to my theory and quantitative analysis, those factors are key drivers of civil war risk. However, there are several reasons why the seemingly ‘null’ case of the 1995 election in Côte d'Ivoire actually reinforces the theory and affirms the quantitative analysis. First, even though the statistical evidence points to exclusion combined with a boycott as a significant driver of civil wars, it is still a relatively uncommon occurrence; we should not expect the vast majority of elections that involve exclusion and boycotts to end in civil war outbreaks. Second, as highlighted at the outset of this chapter, two conditions increase the feasibility of a civil war: if the excluded candidate is able to mobilize their supporters and if there is sufficient discontent and resentment within the population (so that the rebellion would have ample supply of recruits, financing, and support). The former condition was in place (as

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<sup>285</sup> Balint-Kurti (2011). Gbagbo's feigned outrage would be inverted completely once he later attained power and viewed *ivoirité* as an expedient and shrewd political tactic, following in the footsteps of Bedié.

evidenced by the boycott) but the latter was not. As Howard French put it, “Ouattara did not have a machine of comparable depth to challenge really in 1995—the northerners were not yet in a position to challenge directly with violence.”<sup>286</sup> Or, as former rebel spokeswoman Affoussy Bamba explained, “In 1995, they hadn’t yet stigmatized a part of the country—it was just a politician.”<sup>287</sup> This underscores the feasibility aspect of civil war outbreaks; it is not enough to antagonize a candidate by excluding her or him. In 1995, it is likely that a civil war did not break out because the exclusion strategy was aimed squarely at Ouattara rather than the broader northern population, which would have been needed to launch and sustain a rebellion.

If a civil war was less feasible, why didn’t Ouattara’s political movement attempt a coup d’état? Could it have been possible for Ouattara and the RDR to launch a targeted military takeover of Bedié’s regime? It would have been possible. However, the commanding general at the time, Robert Guéï, refused to intervene in politics either way. When Bedié asked him to prepare troops to protect against any form of challenge from Ouattara, Guéï responded that “The army does not intervene unless the republic is in danger” (Busby 2002). It was clear that the military brass was not primed to intervene either way, decreasing the risk of a coup. In the end, a coup was plausible but did not take place.

The 1995 ‘null’ case underscores a crucial point: electoral exclusion combined with the capability to mobilize masses of supporters from the broader population is a key risk factor for predicting civil war outbreak, but civil war remains unlikely unless the broader population feels directly implicated in the political battle being fought over a given candidacy. Without that sentiment, recruitment, support, and financing of rebellion become less feasible. In this case, Ouattara was the standard-bearer but not a political ‘darling’ of the northerners and they had not yet felt personally excluded or attacked politically. As a result, the election proceeded but political violence did not ensue.

### *Trading the sniper rifle for the shotgun: political exclusion (1995-1999)*

#### **Ivoirité in Bedié’s second term**

After securing a second term, Bedié doubled down on the strategy that had afforded him an easy victory at the polls and turned, yet again, to *ivoirité* as a political weapon. Despite the exclusionary constitutional change introduced prior to the 1995 elections, Alassane Ouattara was not willing to disengage from the Ivoirian political scene. Instead, he vowed to contest future

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<sup>286</sup> French, interview, 16 July 2012; Abidjan. Olivier Monnier, journalist for Bloomberg, agreed: “L’ivoirité n’était pas encore au sein de la mentalité en 1995; il était trop frais.” Personal interview, 19 July 2012; Abidjan.

<sup>287</sup> Bamba, personal interview, 24 July 2012; Abidjan.

elections. As a result, Bedié still (rightly) saw Ouattara, and the RDR more generally, as a major threat. Bedié realized that he would need to reinforce the notion of *ivoirité*—particularly given that the strategy dovetailed conveniently with another political problem that he was facing: economic scarcity. Côte d’Ivoire was no longer an economic miracle, as plunging cocoa prices and soaring debt combined to create severe economic instability (Chaveau 2000; Crook 1997; McGovern 2011). Bedié realized that *ivoirité* could be used not only to neutralize Ouattara’s candidacy but also to demonize the RDR support base, further jeopardizing the opposition’s prospects for taking power should they field another candidate in the 2000 elections (Klaas 2008). If Bedié could paint the RDR as a party of foreigners and migrant labor at a time when much of the nation was searching for an economic scapegoat, he could further diminish the RDR’s political appeal while simultaneously defusing some of the political tension that was being directed toward him due to the country’s ongoing economic woes.

As a result, Bedié’s rhetoric became more aggressive. It became a matter of standard strategy for Bedié: “If someone poses a threat or supports someone who might take power, they are excluded. That’s why Bedié invented political *ivoirité*.”<sup>288</sup> The state apparatus began a deliberate campaign of harassment against foreigners and alleged foreigners. There was no question that there were a sizeable percentage of foreigners in Côte d’Ivoire; the official census figures estimated that 26% of the population had migrated into the country by the late 1990s—something accelerated drastically by Houphouët-Boigny’s *mise en valeur* land tenure policy (Chirot 2006, 66). However, persecution also extended to a large number of Ivoirian citizens too. That happened partly because, as was the case in most of the post-colonial world, borders had been fluid over the colonial era and it was not always clear if someone was native-born.<sup>289</sup> The question of nationality became even thornier with cases like Ouattara’s, where candidacy was predicated not only on the birthplace of the candidate but of their parents too. For Bedié’s government, the distinction was not particularly crucial; painting native-born Ivoirian citizens in the north as foreigners was politically expedient, caricaturing them as economic scapegoats while demonizing their political party with the same brush stroke. As a result, persecution became centered on superficial characteristics rather than genuine claims about nationality or citizenship: “If you had a northern patronym or you wore a boubou, it was assumed you were from the north and therefore a partisan of the RDR even if you had never been involved in politics.”<sup>290</sup> As Laurent Akoun, the former Secretary General of Laurent Gbagbo’s FPI party argued, “The

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<sup>288</sup> Sidick, personal interview, 25 July 2012; Abidjan.

<sup>289</sup> For further discussion of this issue with an in-depth case study of contested citizenship and nationality in the Great Lakes region see Mamdani (2002), pp. 493-506.

<sup>290</sup> Lobognon, personal interview, 22 July 2012; Abidjan.

migrants from other countries spoke French; they sometimes have the same surname; they don't self-identify as being foreigners. How could the government tell if a person named Coulibaly was an Ivoirian Coulibaly or a Malian Coulibaly?"<sup>291</sup>

With such blurred dividing lines, political *ivoirité* was deliberately transformed from a tactic aimed at excluding Ouattara alone to a strategy to exclude an entire region of the country; "it became recurrent, it made life difficult for most of the population of the north."<sup>292</sup> Reports surfaced frequently that government officials (including soldiers) were engaged in intimidation tactics, including tearing up passports or other proof of citizenship on buses and issuing foreign residency permits in their place (McGovern 2011). For others—including people who had lived in Côte d'Ivoire for generations—security forces and the police shook down residents of the north for bribes in order to avoid further harassment (McGovern 2011). Those that did not pay bribes would sometimes have their national residency cards torn up in front of them, making it impossible for them to vote in upcoming elections, and tapping into a larger debate over who was and who was not an Ivoirian citizen (Bah 2010).

Ouattara and the RDR condemned this treatment vocally, arguing that Bedié was relegating the northern half of the country to second-class citizen status simply in a cynical bid to secure his power base. This indignation did nothing to slow Bedié's strategy; instead, a further restriction was codified into law in late 1998—making it illegal for anyone to own land in Côte d'Ivoire unless they could prove that they were a citizen of 'full' Ivoirian nationality (Chaveau 2000).<sup>293</sup> Proof was harder to come by, of course, if a citizen no longer had their documents, after a soldier tore them up, for example. In 1998 and 1999, the harassment intensified. "It was a poison; regularly, we were interrogated: 'Who's your father?' 'Who's your mother?'"<sup>294</sup> Even groups that were unsympathetic to the RDR's political aims began to take note; as former Gbagbo adviser Tiburce Koffi admitted in a July 2012 interview, "I did not agree with the RDR, but it is true that life was difficult for northerners in the late 1990s."<sup>295</sup>

*Ivoirité* was a crucial pivot in tracing the incentives of the key actors. The RDR's support base, which was surely disappointed but not rebellious after the 1995 election, was now being directly implicated by political battles fought in Yamoussoukro (the political capital) and Abidjan (the *de facto* economic capital). It was no longer just about Ouattara, or a political party; it was about daily life and the northerners' legitimate place in Ivoirian society. In other words, by

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<sup>291</sup> Laurent Akoun, personal interview, 31 July 2012; Abidjan.

<sup>292</sup> Bamba, personal interview, 24 July 2012; Abidjan.

<sup>293</sup> This was a complete reversal from the *mise en valeur* policy under Houphouët-Boigny, which had basically granted land ownership to anyone—regardless of nationality—who was willing to cultivate the land.

<sup>294</sup> Lobognon, personal interview, 22 July 2012; Abidjan.

<sup>295</sup> Interview; 26 July 2012; Abidjan.

tracing the evolution of incentives in the wake of the 1995 election, it is clear that the broader support base of Ouattara and the RDR was being ‘activated’ by relentless harassment and marginalization.<sup>296</sup>

Against this backdrop of an agitated northern population, Ouattara re-launched his political aspirations in anticipation of the presidential elections, slated for late 2000. On 28 September 1999, Zoro Bi Ballo, a judge—who may have been a partisan of the RDR (it is still unclear)—ruled that Ouattara was in fact an Ivoirian citizen (Pape & Vidal 2002). Judge Bi Ballo issued an official certificate of nationality to Ouattara (Fofana 2009, 87). This ruling, which affirmed Ouattara’s parentage and therefore his eligibility as a candidate, ostensibly paved the way for the RDR to finally have its standard-bearer appear on the ballot. If Bedié were not behind the machinations to exclude Ouattara, this ruling should have made a limited splash in Ivoirian politics.

Instead, the backlash was immediate and aggressive toward Judge Bi Ballo. Pro-government media outlets across the country accused the judge of being in the pocket of Ouattara. Rumors spread that there were assassination plots in the works against him (Pape & Vidal 2002). He also allegedly received specific threats from Ivoirian authorities (Lobognon, personal interview, 22 July 2012). Bi Ballo eventually fled Côte d’Ivoire in the middle of the night in early November 1999 (first to Bamako, then to Paris), just weeks after issuing the order that would have reinstated Ouattara’s candidacy for the 2000 elections. Evidently, Bedié was not taking any chances with Ouattara’s renewed political prominence; challenging the president’s second attempt at electoral exclusion forced Bi Ballo to flee in order to save his life. In tandem with this intimidation of the judge, Bedié also formally began the process of nullifying the certificate of nationality for Ouattara in November (Fofana 2009; Fall 2004). At the same time, his government jailed several prominent RDR officials, an apparent backlash or ‘warning shot’ to Ouattara’s movement that Bedié was serious about excluding them from the elections (UNHCR 2000). This was a clear case of incumbent intervention to manipulate the election by excluding his most formidable opponent.

By December 1999, the country was highly polarized and tensions were running high. Northerners saw the crackdown against Bi Ballo and the high-profile effort to discredit Ouattara (while jailing top-level RDR officials) as a clear sign that the 2000 election was likely to be an even worse incarnation of the exclusion wrought in the 1995 contest. Bedié plowed ahead nonetheless with his strategy of excluding Ouattara (and his northern supporters) justified by the

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<sup>296</sup> See the work of Frances Stewart and the CRISE network for further analysis on how ‘horizontal inequality’ within society was exacerbated by this political strategy.



concept of political *ivoirité*. Over time, “political *ivoirité* acted like a nuclear power plant that was always overheating but nobody knew when it would explode.”<sup>297</sup>

The meltdown occurred on Christmas Eve 1999, as the ‘Ivoirian Miracle’ ended abruptly when a group of mutinous soldiers launched a successful coup d’état. The soldiers took control of Côte d’Ivoire while President Bedié was away in his hometown celebrating the holidays and they began negotiating with top defense officials. The soldiers—who were ostensibly acting without the backing of the military brass or any political party—demanded that the RDR prisoners be released and called for General Robert Guéï to take control of the country from Bedié (Pompey 2009). Guéï was caught completely off guard, as he was reportedly “in the middle of decorating his house for Christmas” in his western hometown of Kabacouma when he was approached by the soldiers, imploring him to take power. “He didn’t want to go to Abidjan, at first” (Pompey 2009). Nonetheless, Ivoirians who watched television that night saw General Guéï in military uniform addressing the nation with the caption “General Robert Guéï: Président de la République de Côte d’Ivoire.” *Ivoirité*, the weapon aimed at Ouattara, the RDR, and the RDR’s supporters, had backfired on Bedié; he lost power after falling into the ‘exclusion trap,’ pursuing an effective election strategy but increasing the risk of political violence as a result.

Now, it must be said that there is not a direct link between the 1995 elections and the ‘Christmas coup’ of 1999. The events took place four years apart, which is a long time to justify a direct causal link. Ouattara and the RDR appear to have played no role in the coup itself. However, the trajectory of Côte d’Ivoire—from fledgling multi-party democracy in 1993 to yet another country in sub-Saharan Africa mired in the risk of military takeovers—could not be explained without the pivotal election strategy of exclusion that Bedié began pursuing in 1995 and was continuing to pursue up until the moment he lost power. In this sense, the ‘null’ case of Côte d’Ivoire’s 1995 election again underscores the broader argument: electoral exclusion is destabilizing, even when the effects are lagged and even when the act itself does not provoke an immediate slide into violence.

### **From Guéï to Gbagbo: the second exclusion and the onset of civil war**

Before Bedié was deposed, his prevailing motivation as the incumbent was clear: to retain power. Guéï, the new incumbent, inherited that motivation. Initially, like many before him who came to power in coups elsewhere, Guéï claimed that he did not want to retain power for himself, saying he had only accepted the job to “come to the house with a broom” and sweep out Côte d’Ivoire’s political problems (and its leaders who were responsible for them;

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<sup>297</sup> Lobognon, personal interview, 22 July 2012.

UNHCR 2000). And, just like many others before and after him, Guéï soon walked back that lofty rhetoric, reversing course, and announcing his intention to run for president in snap post-coup elections that were still on course to be held in late 2000 (Banégas & Losch 2002). Suddenly, with his sights set on retaining power, the political landscape looked the same to Guéï as it had to Bedié: Ouattara and the RDR posed a credible threat, with Gbagbo and the FPI waiting in the wings hoping to capitalize on any divisions or weakness. As a result, Guéï took Bedié's tactic of excluding Ouattara one step further. On 23 July 2000, Guéï's junta implemented a change to Côte d'Ivoire's constitution that was clearly aimed at definitively removing the RDR's leading presidential candidate from the political equation. The change to Article 23 of the constitution now stated that presidential candidates: must be "Ivoirian by birth, born of a father and a mother themselves Ivoirian by birth."<sup>298</sup> Without Judge Bi Ballo's certification of nationality, Ouattara had no possibility of standing for office in the upcoming elections that were to be held three months after the constitutional change was ushered in by Guéï's ruling regime. For Guéï, the sharp edge of political *ivoirité*—which had likely sparked the coup bringing him to power in the first place—looked far less objectionable from the lens of a political incumbent seeking to win an election. He used exactly the same tactic to tilt the electoral playing field in his favor that Bedié had used five years previously. Now, the discourse of electoral exclusion was enshrined in Côte d'Ivoire's constitution.

For Gbagbo and the FPI, the exclusion of Ouattara offered the opportunity to change the electoral dynamic considerably—creating a divergent incentive structure from the one he faced heading into the 1995 election. In 1995, Bedié was in a strong position as the incumbent. There was not yet severe resentment toward the government from major segments of the population. But in 2000, the game had shifted. The government was not only highly unpopular, but it could also not claim to be legitimate; Guéï had taken power from the barracks (or at least in uniform from a house freshly decorated for Christmas). Moreover, Gbagbo knew that he would have to split the anti-Guéï vote with Ouattara, should the RDR's candidate be included in the election. As a result, Gbagbo, driven by the primary goal of taking power from Guéï, was instrumental in the drive for the constitutional change to Article 23. Indeed, Gbagbo and his FPI party aggressively pushed for the wording to be unequivocal, pressing for the language to insist on being born to an Ivoirian mother *and* father, rather than an Ivoirian mother *or* father (Fofana 2009). The intent here was to ensure that no judge could ever fathom ruling that Ouattara was a citizen. This was a sharp shift from Gbagbo's actions in 1995, when he sternly

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<sup>298</sup> "Constitution de la République de Côte d'Ivoire du 23 Juillet 2000." Available at [http://democratie.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/Cote\\_d\\_Ivoire.pdf](http://democratie.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/Cote_d_Ivoire.pdf)

condemned Ouattara's exclusion; in 1995, Gbagbo had more to gain by banding with Ouattara against Bedié, who was likely to win the election without Ouattara's involvement. In 2000, Ouattara's exclusion would breathe life into Gbagbo's prospects to unseat the vulnerable incumbent, General Guéi. Therefore, Gbagbo turned against his former ally and joined forces with the government to keep Ouattara off the ballot for the impending vote. Gbagbo's flip-flop demonstrates how process tracing can identify how the same actors might behave differently over time, as the institutional and incentive context changes.

However, Ouattara was not the only victim of electoral exclusion in the 2000 contest. In a bit of what may have seemed like poetic justice at the time, Bedié tried to run for the seat that he had lost in the coup—and was excluded from doing so. On 6 October 2000, just sixteen days before the election, a Supreme Court handpicked by Guéi ruled definitively that neither Ouattara nor Bedié was eligible to run. With that ruling, the vote was a showdown between the incumbent general and Gbagbo, the sole major opposition force left as an eligible alternative. Guéi did not seek to exclude Gbagbo because he (incorrectly) perceived him to be a minor threat.<sup>299</sup> The shift in incentives and the changed calculations ushered in by the coup created a strange political arrangement: Bedié and Ouattara—bitter former rivals—were joined together in their mutual exclusion from the election while Gbagbo and Guéi united in their shared interest of electoral exclusion even as they prepared to square off against one another in the upcoming election.

The international community—and France in particular—could have done more to pressure Guéi to be inclusive toward his rivals. However, the French government privately sent clear signals that they were hoping for a Gbagbo victory, so they were not firmly opposed to electoral 'changes' that would improve the prospects of that taking place. As the *New York Times* reported, "privately, foreign diplomats had said that a victory by Mr. Gbagbo would have helped the Ivory Coast re-establish ties with the West and international donors."<sup>300</sup> This was particularly true for France, which offered direct reassurance that it would not withdraw support and valued continuity in their relationship above all else.<sup>301</sup> In other words, there was a relatively clear signal that there would be no major backlash against electoral exclusion from the international community.

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<sup>299</sup> Tiburce Koffi, former adviser to Laurent Gbagbo, personal interview, 26 July 2012; Abidjan.

<sup>300</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, "Ivory Coast Ruler Declares Himself Winner," *New York Times*, 25 October 2000.

<sup>301</sup> "France, the only former colonial power to have maintained strong ties to its ex-possession, worried that the end of personalized power under long-ruling dictators would open the region up to influence from others, notably the United States, and upset its interests in everything from oil fields to military bases." Howard French, "Why Things Fall Apart: A Slow, Preventable March into Crisis," *The New York Times*, 29 October 2000.

The prospect of no international backlash was the final component that needed to be in place for electoral exclusion to be a strategically attractive form of election manipulation for Côte d'Ivoire's incumbent. Each of the three conditions was fulfilled in this case study. The first condition, as set forth above, is that the incumbent must perceive a clear threat from a rival. Ouattara clearly continued to pose a threat—perhaps even more so given the antagonism toward the regime embodied in his support base after years of harassment. The second condition is that the incumbent will be more likely to exclude rivals if the regime can find a way to 'hide' behind an independent commission. In this case, the constitutional reform committee was that smokescreen for Guéï. Third, and finally, the incumbent is more likely to exclude a rival if the former two criteria were met *and* they can be reasonably confident that exclusion will not usher in a serious diplomatic backlash against the regime. In 2000, that the diplomats spoke loudly in condemnation of Guéï's actions but they relayed a different message more quietly through backchannels and informal signals. Ultimately, the three conditions were fulfilled, and Guéï excluded two rivals in a rational strategic action aimed at winning the imminent election.

Ouattara and Bedié had little to lose themselves by calling for a boycott of the vote, particularly because each now had a robust party support base and a sufficient political machine to mobilize it (into not voting). The second stage of the electoral game for these excluded opposition figures shifted; it was no longer possible to win the election, so they now aimed their sights on discrediting the election—with the hopes that such reputational costs would force the incumbent to include them in a subsequent, more inclusive vote. As a result, Bedié and Ouattara each called on their supporters to stay home from the polls (Toungara 2001, 64).

The theoretical assumptions and quantitative evidence presented previously suggested that the combination of electoral exclusion with a widespread boycott would make the risk of civil war more likely. Both conditions were fulfilled in this case, and the population was primed for mobilization.

On 22 October 2000, polls opened. But due to the boycott, "lines at voting booths were thin in neighborhoods [in Abidjan] like Adjame or Abobo, considered strongholds of the Rally of the Republicans. Many stations were deserted" (New York Times, 23 October 2000). Just 37% of registered voters showed up to vote; in absolute terms, only roughly two million ballots were cast even though the population was about fifteen million.<sup>302</sup> Because of the exclusion of Ouattara and Bedié, it quickly became clear that the majority of ballots—as expected—were split between Gbagbo and Guéï, with a small portion going to two minor candidates (Francis Wodié and Théodore Mel; Ayangafac 2009, 38).

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<sup>302</sup> In 1995, turnout was 45.33%; in 2010, it was 81.12%.

The initial tally announced by the electoral commission showed that Gbagbo was leading by 11 percentage points over General Guéi (New York Times, 25 October 2000). At that point, Guéi's regime saw the contest slipping away and rushed to act. The independent electoral commission's president, Honoré Guie, "was taken away in a sport utility vehicle by soldiers. Shortly afterward, at the Interior Ministry, a mid-ranking electoral official, Daniel Bamba Cheik, said that the commission had been dissolved" (New York Times, 25 October 2000). That same official announced—presumably under pressure from Guéi's regime—that the commission had made a mistake and that "its conclusions were worthless." Bamba Cheik then announced new 'official' results from the junta, showing Guéi with a lead, 53% to 48% over Gbagbo. Hours later, Guéi declared himself the winner on national television.

Gbagbo, Bedié, and Ouattara all cried foul, refusing to accept the 'official' result. Their supporters reacted angrily: "Thousands took to the streets late this afternoon, marching through several of the city's working-class neighborhoods, setting up roadblocks and burning tires. Gunfire punctuated chants of "Guei, thief!" Soldiers fired shots in the air and tear gas at protesters who had approached the national radio building" (New York Times, 25 October 2000). The violence spread. Molotov cocktails and machete attacks caused the casualty figures to balloon, reaching more than 100 (estimated) deaths in total before Guéi was forced to flee on 25 October to Gouessesso, near the Liberian border, in the face of overwhelming popular anger about the blatantly manipulated election result.

Gbagbo declared himself president shortly thereafter, but Ouattara and Bedié refused to accept that either. They called on the international community to pressure Gbagbo to hold new, inclusive elections. Critically, however, "France, the former colonial power and the biggest foreign power broker here, said it was satisfied with the results of Sunday's election and called for legislative elections to be held as scheduled in December. Mr. Gbagbo, a socialist, has close ties with the Socialist Party in France" (New York Times, 27 October 2000). This diplomatic cover for the rigged election was a key factor in solidifying Gbagbo's victory and installing him as president of Côte d'Ivoire in the highly contested and exclusionary 2000 elections (McGovern 2011, 18).

Gbagbo, like Guéi and Bedié before him, now saw the country through the lens of incumbency. Again, the major threat came from Ouattara and the RDR. Shortly after Gbagbo took power, a shallow mass grave was unearthed in the Yopougon neighborhood of Abidjan. The grave contained 57 bodies, all of RDR supporters originally from the north (McGovern 2011). Whether Gbagbo-affiliated cronies were behind this attack or not, it signaled a continuation and intensification of using political *ivoirité* at whatever cost to neutralize the threat

of Ouattara and the RDR. Harassment of northerners continued unabated and even worsened in some regions.

After Gbagbo's ascension to the presidency started to crystallize, the old maxim 'Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me' captures the sentiment in Ouattara's camp after he had yet again been excluded from an election. There were no longer any illusions in Ouattara's camp that waiting for the next vote would be an adequate or effective strategy to take power.<sup>303</sup> And, unlike in 1995, Ouattara and the RDR were in a much stronger position to challenge the regime using an illegitimate pathway; the ballot box was not going to work, so violent alternatives became comparatively more attractive. This time, rebellion was also feasible: a sizeable portion of northerners were primed to support and even fight for a prospective civil war. After years and years of harassment, *ivoirité* and electoral exclusion were no longer just about Ouattara the candidate. They became symbolic reminders of systematic persecution from the central government—a government that Gbagbo now controlled, with no indications that he would be any different from his predecessors. The boycott made clear that the RDR was capable of mobilizing supporters; the long campaign of harassment made clear that those same people could likely be mobilized to act outside the confines of the legitimate 'democratic' process. Both conditions for a rebellion to be feasible were fulfilled.

On 19 September 2002, the rebellion was launched. On the first day of fighting, an estimated 270 people were killed in Abidjan alone (New York Times, 21 September 2002). The rebels quickly took control of Bouaké, the largest city in the northern half of Côte d'Ivoire; it would soon become the rebellion's capital, as they controlled roughly 50% of national territory, in a line more or less evenly separating north from south. The rebellion linked itself explicitly to Ouattara's aspirations, further evidence that electoral exclusion was a driving force behind the violence.

The fighting continued for several more years, despite a series of failed peace deals. Côte d'Ivoire was *de facto* splintered into two separate territories for five years, with the south under the control of Gbagbo's government forces and the north under the rebel *Forces Nouvelles*. On the devastating coattails of electoral exclusion and the heavy costs of *ivoirité*, the so-called 'Ivoirian miracle' had become the Ivoirian nightmare—a new reality that would plague the country even beyond the 2007 peace deal that ended the conflict, as the Second Ivoirian Civil War would later break out in the aftermath of the 2010 presidential election.

Explaining Côte d'Ivoire's descent into violence with a coup d'état and two civil wars would be impossible without reference to the politics of exclusion surrounding Ouattara's

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<sup>303</sup> Lobognon, personal interview, 22 July 2012; Abidjan.

contested candidacy. While it is always the case that every conflict germinates from a variety of different seeds, electoral exclusion caused Côte d'Ivoire's political dynamics to grow into an aggressive weed of ethno-regional civil war. There is no guarantee that Côte d'Ivoire would have been a bastion of peace, stability, and economic growth throughout the 2000s if the 1995 and 2000 elections had both included Ouattara as a candidate. Such counterfactuals are impossible to accurately examine. However, it is undeniable that the risk of civil war would have been reduced if electoral exclusion—and the mass harassment of northerners linked to it—had not been pursued relentlessly as a tool of cynical government strategy under successive incumbents, from Bedié, to Guéï, to Gbagbo. Ultimately, the case of Côte d'Ivoire provides an illustrative affirmation of H1 and H3; electoral exclusion is often a strategically rational but myopic short-term strategy to win elections that creates a long-term cost because it drastically increases the risk of a post-election civil war.

I now turn to another region—the Middle East and North Africa—to examine whether electoral *inclusion* in Tunisia was a stabilizing force, given that electoral exclusion is destabilizing.

## CHAPTER FIVE: INCLUSION AS A STABILIZING FORCE

### *Saving democracy and peace in Tunisia with an inclusive olive branch to the ashes of a dictatorship*

The previous two chapters have only featured cases in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet regional differences are important, particularly to highlight the universality of the relationship between electoral exclusion and subsequent political violence. Moreover, it is important to recognize that electoral exclusion does not function identically across all political contexts; in some cases, exclusion (or lustration) can be seen as a normatively positive force. For example, Egypt's decision to bar Hosni Mubarak from contesting elections after his downfall during the Arab Spring uprisings was widely viewed as an important step forward for democracy, even though he may well have garnered a significant portion of votes from segments of the Egyptian people who were eager to go back to 'the old days' before the instability and volatility of the (now failed) democratic 'transition'. Candidate exclusion is not always a cynical ploy to neutralize electoral threats. However, during transitions, regimes must make a critical choice—either to be inclusive or to be exclusive. If they choose the latter, they must choose the extent to which they will exclude and restrict political rights: who will be excluded?; for how long?; will it be a partial ban or a full ban from political life? This choice is particularly important when dealing with the vestiges of an old regime, which may be deeply unpopular during transitions but also tends to possess the bulk of expertise and experience with actually running the country—particularly when longstanding authoritarian regimes are toppled. In these instances, the decision to include or exclude certain types of candidates creates serious implications for the long-term viability of a fledgling democracy.

In this chapter, I conduct process tracing of Tunisia and its drastic shift from 1) exclusive authoritarian politics in the 2009 elections, to 2) a mostly inclusive but imperfect founding 'Arab Spring' election in 2011, and finally, to 3) its landmark and fully inclusive 2014 vote which ushered in a peaceful transfer of power. I argue that the same incentives that drew incumbents to exclude their rivals elsewhere (notably in Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, and Madagascar) were in place in Tunisia. However, the post-Arab Spring elites in Tunisia resisted the 'easy' victory won with exclusion and manipulation and instead took the more difficult inclusive path—a path that ultimately cost them power but earned Tunisia functioning democratic institutions. Tunisian elites resisted strong incentives to the contrary. I conclude this chapter with a brief comparison between transitions in the region—notably Iraq and Libya—that took an alternate tack from Tunisia, opting for exclusion rather than inclusion. The lesson from this



comparison is clear: electoral exclusion was one of the key drivers of violent conflict in Libya and Iraq, while inclusion was a major force for stability and democratic consolidation in Tunisia. Ironically, then, in each of these three countries across the Middle East, an inclusive olive branch to the tattered remnants of a toppled dictatorship helped save democracy and forge peace during the transitional period.

In addition to affirming the broader argument that electoral exclusion is a destabilizing force (and the corollary that inclusion can therefore be a stabilizing force), the Tunisian case also highlights several other important dynamics that could not be captured by statistical analysis alone. First, the combination of exclusion and boycotts—as shown in the quantitative chapter—only seems to increase the risk of civil war outbreaks in ‘counterfeit democracies’ (anocracies). Tunisia’s 2009 election (and several prior ones) involved the exclusion of a major party candidate followed by an electoral boycott in a repressive autocracy. A civil war never broke out because the sophisticated authoritarian police state made it impossible for threats against the regime to coalesce into a feasible challenge to state authority. Second, while exclusion itself is statistically more likely to exacerbate the risk of coups d’état, regimes *can* successfully ‘coup proof’ with certain strategies—strategies that Tunisian President Ben Ali mastered during his long tenure in the Carthage Presidential Palace. However, as explained in the Madagascar / Zambia chapter, there is a point where widespread popular support for regime change can nonetheless shift the incentive structures of the military, prompting soldiers who were formerly invested in the incumbent’s system to mutiny against the existing authoritarian structure. The Tunisian case traces three important processes related to electoral exclusion and the likelihood of violence before, during, and after major political transitions: why the 2009 exclusion combined with a subsequent boycott did *not* end in a civil war; why the military *did* engage against the regime shortly after the 2009 instance of electoral exclusion (during the Arab Spring uprising); and how the subsequent decision to include remnant figures from the ‘old’ regime drastically improved Tunisia’s prospects for a lasting, stable democracy even in the face of myriad violent threats.

### **Tunisia under Zine El Abidine Ben Ali: exclusion and electoral authoritarianism**

Zine El Abidine Ben Ali came to power in a 1987 ‘medical coup,’ taking the presidency when doctors declared his predecessor (Habib Bourgiba) medically unfit to continue in his duties (Alexander 2010).<sup>304</sup> From that point forward, Ben Ali consolidated power strategically, and at times, ruthlessly, using a sophisticated ‘political economy of repression’ (Hibou 2011, 3-4).

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<sup>304</sup> This coup underscored that ‘triggers’ can be as simple as the absence of the president from the country, or medical illness, or in this case, both.

Others referred to it as ‘stalled democracy’ or establishing authoritarian legitimacy using ‘economic mechanisms and techniques’ (Bellin 2004, 1; 2005, 27). These are euphemisms; Ben Ali’s Tunisia was an authoritarian state. Regardless of terminology, much about the state’s institutions in Ben Ali’s Tunisia—from its political police to its state-backed enticements (often even using direct coercion) to formally join the ruling political party—was built around repression aimed at ensuring the continuation of the regime. In an embodiment of the authoritarian survival apparatus outlined by Bellin (2004), Ben Ali successfully staved off challenges because his regime repressed its people with powerful institutions in every facet of life, produced economic gains that nurtured the illusion of popular legitimacy, and received substantial international cover and support from foreign governments, notably the United States—particularly after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 (Hibou 2011; Congressional Research Service 2010). Each of these political shields, in turn, reduced the feasibility of political violence against the state.

However, beyond all of these systemic advantages that helped ensure authoritarian stability, Ben Ali also came to power in the midst of the ‘Third Wave of Democratization’, at a time when the pressure of norms to hold elections was sweeping across the world (Huntington 1991). Tunisia, unlike some of its more ‘traditional’ or ‘conservative’ Arab counterparts (in the Gulf, for example), held elections even after Ben Ali took power. However, these elections were neither free nor fair; there was (by design) never a remote possibility that anyone other than Ben Ali would prevail, and prevail by a wide margin (Alexander 2010). The ruling party was not intended to be a party that could cobble together a coalition big enough to win; it was designed to be the only party that *could* win. In 1994, for example, Ben Ali ran unopposed and received an official count of 99.91% of all ballots cast. The election, like many others before and after, was a farce; there was even evidence that some of the votes had been ‘cast’ by people who were, in fact, dead (Chrisafis 2011). Uncompetitive multi-party elections also took place in 1999, 2004, and 2009 (just over a year before the Arab Spring was sparked in Tunisia). The history of these elections and the repression tactics of Ben Ali, even from an early stage, are critical to understanding the 2009 election and the transition during and after the Arab Spring uprisings.

Elections under Ben Ali were uncompetitive partly because of severe repression (based on exclusion) and partly because of a shrewd tactic aimed at creating an exclusively loyal opposition that would truly be little more than a puppet of Ben Ali’s regime. In 1988 and 1989, Ben Ali crafted a ‘National Pact,’ a document aimed purportedly at instituting a gradual opening of the political system in exchange for the loyalty of the opposition political parties to operate within the confines of the regime’s approved version of politics (Alexander 1997; Anderson

1991; Sadiki 2002). Most of the opposition parties agreed to the pact; they were co-opted by the regime as they waited patiently for genuine democratic competition—a wait that would be in vain until the Arab Spring uprising in late 2010 and early 2011. Yet even with this co-optation, Islamist parties—and Ennahdha (‘the renaissance’) in particular—remained a substantial political threat in a society that was deeply divided between a more modernized, secular, European orientation and one that gazed toward that traditional, Islamic character of Arab States in the Gulf (Esposito & Piscatori 1991; Klaas & Dirsus 2013). In 1989, the Islamists were allowed to contest elections and received an estimated 25% of the vote; they were outlawed shortly thereafter (Sadiki 2002, 125).

In 1991, Ben Ali concisely showed his key strategies at staying in power with a single event, a little known crackdown on Islamists and the military known locally as the Barraket Essahel affair.<sup>305</sup> Ben Ali’s Ministry of the Interior concocted a fake coup plot as a pretext to crack down on two potential threats: an overly competent, powerful military (which could feasibly launch a coup) and a robust Islamist political movement (which, after being banned, could feasibly launch a civil war or insurgency).<sup>306</sup> On May 22, 1991, Ben Ali’s Ministry of the Interior, Abdallah Kallel, announced that the regime had uncovered an alleged coup plot, claiming that more than 200 military officers were conspiring with Islamists of the Ennahda movement (Klaas 2013). In fact, there was no plot and no conspiracy. Nonetheless, hundreds of competent military officers and Islamists were severely tortured, “suspended on a metal rod in the so-called ‘roasted chicken’ position for hours...beaten, hung by [their] feet with [their] hands tied behind his back, and brought to the brink of drowning in a basin of urine and feces” (Klaas 2013). The torture was done in the heart of Ben Ali’s institutions: the Ministry of the Interior, a building that is known to be “as deep as it is tall.”<sup>307</sup> Three weeks later, they were inexplicably released. The officers were discharged, removed of their rank, and stripped of their uniforms and pensions. The Islamists that were not kept in prison largely fled into exile or went ‘underground’ (Allani 2009).

The fabricated Barrket Essahel affair was a fitting parable for Ben Ali’s strategy to maintain stability. Military weakness was an explicit goal of Ben Ali, as a coup proofing strategy: “Ben Ali sought to keep the military at a distance from the regime, limiting its influence and

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<sup>305</sup> The Barraket Essahel affair was named after the small town where the coup was allegedly being plotted, though both the plot and its supposed locale were fabricated.

<sup>306</sup> This was not to say that the notion of Islamists plotting a coup was unfounded; Islamists affiliated with the organization that would grow into Ennahdha were plotting a coup attempt; Ben Ali beat them to it, and launched the coup a day before they were planning to do so. See Shahid (17 February 2012); Lt. Col. Mohammed Ahmed, torture victim of the Barrket Essahel affair, personal interview; 12 November 2013; Tunis. For further on the Barraket Essahel ‘plot’, see Sami Kourda (2012). *Le ‘Complot’ de l’Affaire Barraket Essahel: Chronique d’un Calvaire*, Sud Editions, Tunis.

<sup>307</sup> Lt. Col. Ahmed, personal interview, 12 November 2013; Tunis.

investing in police and security services to act as the mainstay coercive forces of the regime. The military therefore effectively operated at the periphery of politics in the regime, where it continued a long-standing historical role of acting as an apparatus of the state with limited responsibilities and without a daily role in the regular management of the regime” (Brooks 2013, 208). This strategy, in tandem with suppression, harassment, and occasional crackdowns on Islamists, formed two major pillars of Ben Ali’s mechanism of maintaining power over a divided society; each was aimed at ensuring that political grievances (such as those that would be produced by repeated iterations of electoral exclusion and broader political exclusion) did not result in political violence.

Ben Ali also relied on non-electoral co-optation using the institutionalization of a powerful political party system, with tentacles in every component of Tunisian society. With a centralized spoils system, being close to Ben Ali’s ruling *Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique* (RCD) party was essential. Joining the RCD was a surefire way to accrue more opportunities to improve one’s position within Tunisian society; being on the outside reduced one’s chances for advancement (Hibou 2011, 82-83). As a result, during the height of Ben Ali’s time in power, the RCD had a staggering two million official adult members—in a population of roughly ten million; “in other words one in two working people” (Hibou 2011, 86). These vast swaths of the Tunisian population became members of a local ‘cell’ of the political party, one of 7,500 spread across the country. These cells fulfilled two main functions, both of which are relevant to the discussion of electoral exclusion and (the lack of) political violence in Tunisia.

First, the RCD cells functioned as propaganda machines, “the main places of diffusion of official discourse, in every domain,” where the regime can communicate its priorities to its citizens, such as “the legitimacy of the ‘eradication of Islamism,” for example (Hibou 2011, 87). Second, the RCD cells functioned as informal police and spy networks, where behavior or viewpoints that were at odds with official regime doctrine were quickly detected and, often, snuffed out—a network that was much more powerful at detecting dissent and possible threats than existed in Madagascar, Zambia, or Côte d’Ivoire (Hibou 2011, 89). These two functions corresponded to two critical facets of the analysis here; propaganda was used to legitimize the necessity of electoral exclusion (particularly against ‘the Islamist threat’), while the infiltration of spies and the injection of state power into the daily lives of most citizens precluded the ability for genuinely violent opposition to coalesce and launch a ‘feasible’ attack on the state.<sup>308</sup> As one

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<sup>308</sup> The media was an important weapon on the propaganda front; Ben Ali and the RCD apparatus intentionally were vague about which types of speech were tolerated and which were not. By creating an intentionally wide gray area of sanctioned speech and expression, Ben Ali successfully prompted self-censorship, as it was far easier to toe the party line than to risk a crackdown. See Alexander (2010, 55).

key opposition leader, Ahmed Néjib Chebbi, put it: “Ben Ali’s RCD was not the party in power; power was only in the party.”<sup>309</sup>

Cumulatively, this contextual backdrop of Ben Ali’s repression tactics is crucial for understanding how and why electoral exclusion was used under his authoritarian regime, why it failed to spark political violence for so long, and why, eventually, even savvy repression was insufficient to stave off the explosion of anger that was the Arab Spring uprising.

### **The 2009 presidential election: a pressure cooker of repeated exclusion and boycotts**

Unlike Côte d’Ivoire’s trajectory from a peaceful, stable country into a hotbed of violence, it is quite possible to explain the motivations behind the Arab Spring uprising in Tunisia without any reference to electoral exclusion. Electoral exclusion was not the primary driving factor that resulted in a public outpouring of resentment and a mass-based demand for regime change. Nobody in the streets during December 2010 and January 2011 was protesting the exclusion of candidates in the 2009 elections. Opposition politicians and the broader political movements they represented were caught completely off-guard by the uprising, and were not crucial to its organization or its eventual success (as was the case with UNIP in Zambia’s failed coup; Haugbølle & Cavatorta 2011).

However, electoral exclusion was a contributing factor to the outbreak of regime change in January 2011. The 2009 case of electoral exclusion in Tunisia fulfilled the three necessary perception criteria to make Ben Ali’s use of the tactic strategically attractive, but the regime’s coup proofing and ‘political economy of repression’ were successfully used to mitigate the post-election threat of a coup or civil war. Absent the feasibility of these ‘traditional’ forms of political violence, anger toward the regime accumulated over time, accelerated by each uncompetitive election, like a vast cloud of steam building up in a pressure cooker—with Ben Ali’s regime holding the lid on as tightly as possible. Eventually, in early 2011, a crack in the lid opened up, and the steam came pouring out all at once.

In the process tracing analysis below, I examine four key groups in society: the incumbent (Ben Ali); the opposition (Islamists and secularists united by a disdain for the authoritarian regime); the military; and the Western international community (particularly the United States and the African Union).

As I have argued previously, for electoral exclusion to be strategically attractive, incumbents 1) must face a genuine electoral threat, 2) must be able to present the exclusion in such a way that would deflect criticism (such as using the legislature or an ‘independent’ electoral

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<sup>309</sup> Personal interview, 22 November 2013; Tunis.

body to implement candidate disqualification), and 3) must believe that the exclusion itself will not prompt a stinging international backlash against the regime. In 2009, Ben Ali fulfilled all three criteria; excluding serious opponents from the election was an attractive strategy. It worked. According to official results, Ben Ali garnered 89.6% of the vote against three weak opposition candidates (with only one of those three being a real opposition figure rather than a 'loyal opposition' puppet of the regime; Aghrout 2010, 750).

First, there was a genuine electoral threat to Ben Ali. While it was the deliberate practice of the Tunisian regime to not produce independent electoral polling (for obvious reasons), there are several indications that opposition parties—and Islamists in particular—would have posed a real challenge to the regime. As mentioned previously, Ennahdha performed extremely well in the 1989 election—so well that they were banned shortly thereafter. Moreover, once the political system opened up for the first truly competitive multi-party elections in October 2011 (after the Arab Spring uprising), Ennahda won the most votes (Stepan 2012). There is no question; the opposition (and the banned Islamist opposition in particular) would have been a credible threat if they had been allowed to contest the 2009 Tunisian elections openly.

Second, Ben Ali—in his typical savvy autocratic style—managed to pass off electoral exclusion as a democratic political opening, a liberalization of politics aimed at creating *more* competition rather than less. He did so in order to shield his regime from criticism and minimize the actual costs of pre-election manipulation. Ben Ali's masterful con was unveiled in July 2008, when the *Majlis al-Nuwab* (Chamber of Deputies) announced a constitutional change that seemed on the surface to expand the pool of possible candidates: allowing “candidates who did not meet [the existing] legal requirement to stand for election provided that they had served as leaders of their respective parties for at least two consecutive years on the day of lodging their candidacy” (Aghrout 2010, 750). At first glance, this constitutional change was an opening of the political system, allowing more candidates to stand even if they did not meet pre-existing eligibility criteria. In reality, it was a cynical tactic aimed at neutralizing precisely the few candidates that actually would have mattered in the upcoming election, if their names were allowed to appear on the ballot. In particular, longtime opposition leader Ahmed Najib Chebbi was excluded from the vote by this rule change because he was the candidate for his party but not its official president for administrative purposes. The exclusionary rule change was proclaimed just a month after Chebbi's Democratic Progressive Party (PDP) announced that he would be their candidate. It is likely that the new language was adopted specifically to target “one of the best known political figures and arguably the only one who could have injected some suspense into the outcome of the forthcoming vote” (Jawad, 2009). Chebbi told me that he was

aware of Ben Ali's strategy: "This was a targeted move—targeted directly at me."<sup>310</sup> This was also a savvy move by Ben Ali, because to outside observers it appeared that the election laws were becoming less restrictive; in reality, the restrictions were just altered so that a specific candidate who posed a real threat could be neutralized.<sup>311</sup> And, as always, the Islamists (who posed the greatest threat) continued to be banned—a status to which they had been relegated to since 1989 and, in particular, since the 1991 Barraket Essahel affair solidified their removal from legitimate Tunisian political life. Ultimately, Ben Ali used two different tactics to ensure that his 2009 electoral exclusion was not criticized: passing off the entire charade as a political opening to dupe casual observers into thinking that he was liberalizing the political sphere while simultaneously hiding behind the 'independent' Chamber of Deputies that adopted the rule change. The second condition for electoral exclusion to be strategically attractive was fulfilled.

Third, and finally, Ben Ali was reasonably certain that there would be limited international backlash from the exclusion of his rivals in the 2009 contest. Western governments, particularly the United States, viewed the Tunisian strongman as a useful ally in "the War on Terror," and as a bastion of stability in a volatile region that was critical to Western interests (Powel 2009a; Powel 2009b). As a result, the United States poured money into backing Ben Ali's regime—particularly for security initiatives and counter-terrorism training—even as the authoritarian regime took limited steps toward democratic reform. In other words, it would have been crystal clear to Ben Ali at the time of the 2009 vote that Western backlash would be muted. Such 'wag the dog' politics is a way for authoritarian regimes to overcome or bypass international criticism for flawed elections—but only if they are strategically valuable to Western governments (in a way that Zambia, Madagascar, and Côte d'Ivoire are not).

When the vote actually took place, some international observers (astoundingly) came to monitor the sham contest. Incredibly, once the predetermined outcome was officially recorded, the African Union monitors even went so far as to describe the vote as 'free and fair,' even though it was objectively one of the least free and fair elections to take place globally that year (Aghrout 2010, 752). Nonetheless, these international reactions affirmed Ben Ali's suspicion that he could get away with exclusion while facing limited—if any—international costs.

With all three criteria fulfilled, the electoral exclusion of a wide swath of candidates in Tunisia's 2009 election was an attractive form of strategic manipulation that paid dividends. The excluded political parties and opposition candidates had limited recourse against the government;

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<sup>310</sup> Chebbi, personal interview, 22 November 2013; Tunis.

<sup>311</sup> Chebbi attempted to sway international opinion against Ben Ali's efforts to exclude himself (and others) from the election: "I traveled everywhere, trying to alert the international community as to what was happening in Tunisia," personal interview, 22 November 2013; Tunis.

the judiciary was controlled by cronies that were close to the regime, and opposition legal challenges were always in vain.<sup>312</sup> Unable to challenge in the courts and with few powerful international allies to help them make their case against the election's flaws, the opposition had a limited, weak arsenal to challenge Ben Ali with reputational costs. Nonetheless, several parties boycotted the election, including Chebbi's PDP (Aghrout 2010). The illegal political parties (the Tunisian Communist Party, Congress for the Republic, and the Islamist party, Ennahdha) all also urged their followers to boycott the election—though many of these calls came from party elites living in exile abroad, as it was illegal to operate openly within Tunisia. Regardless, the 2009 vote, like other previous elections under Ben Ali's authoritarian state, featured widespread electoral exclusion and a subsequent boycott. According to the statistical modeling presented in the quantitative chapter, these factors increase the risk of succumbing to a civil war—or perhaps a coup attempt. Why did neither take place?

First, even though there were undoubtedly soldiers in the military who sympathized with excluded parties (both legal and illegal) and their respective candidates that had been banned from the 2009 contest, Ben Ali had successfully weakened the military to such an extent that a coup was not really a feasible mechanism of toppling the regime. Ben Ali's coup proofing strategy involved “marginalizing his military leaders' roles in state institutions and limiting the organization's and its officers' access to resources. Ben Ali kept the military small and poorly funded, limiting its leaders' opportunities for personal enrichment or influence in political networks and regime institutions” (Brooks 2013, 208). Moreover, the military “did not operate in Tunis”; instead, security in the capital was controlled by local police, forces controlled by the hyper-politicized and extremely loyal Ministry of the Interior, and a “5,000 – 6,000 strong presidential guard, which played an important role as protector of the regime... notable both for how well equipped and well treated were its members under Ben Ali” (Brooks 2013, 213). Finally, for the military itself, the system seemed to be based on an “inverse pyramid of competence,” where incompetent leaders would sometimes obtain rank advancement as a deliberate means of limiting the ambitions of the military beyond the barracks.<sup>313</sup> Cumulatively, these strategies were effective as a means of ‘coup proofing’. The military had no business being in Tunis; its leaders were deliberately kept away from political power (and some officers were incompetent), and even if they had imagined the possibility of a coup, the Presidential Guard would have almost certainly remained loyal, stymying any attempt. As a result, it is highly unlikely that any of the major excluded political parties or candidates even fathomed the

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<sup>312</sup> “Ben Ali was legalistic; he used the judiciary as an instrument of suppressing the opposition,” Geoffrey Weiselbaum, Democracy Reporting International, personal interview, 30 October 2013; Tunis.

<sup>313</sup> Colonel Moncez Zoghalmi, retired member of the Tunisian army, personal interview, 12 November 2013; Tunis.



possibility of a coup as a way to take power after the debacle of ‘democracy’ that was the 2009 election.

Second, though, when a coup is impossible, a civil war becomes more attractive. This, as Roessler (2011) demonstrates, can be the case when persecuted groups have no access to, or influence with, the military. In those cases, attacking the state with an ‘outsider’ form of violence, such as a civil war, is the more feasible option. In 2009, Tunisia fit this context. However, the data presented previously show that civil war risk after an exclusive election and boycott is only statistically more pronounced in counterfeit democracies (anocracies)—not in consolidated democracies or authoritarian regimes. According to the Polity 2 democracy score, which runs from -10 (pure dictatorship) to +10 (fully consolidated advanced democracy), Tunisia’s autocratic state was scored a -4 at the time of the 2009 election, seemingly placing it as an authoritarian-leaning anocracy, more toward dictatorship than democracy. However, the Polity IV scores from 1989-2010 do not have their mean at 0; instead, the mean score is 4.5, making a score of -4 quite authoritarian in the global context.<sup>314</sup> As an authoritarian state, we should expect to see limited civil war risk after Tunisia’s 2009 election.

Therefore Ben Ali’s regime relied on a deliberate strategy to root out and mitigate any risks of organized political violence before they were able to coalesce into a feasible challenge to state power. There were between 80,000 and 133,000 police officers operating in Tunisia—giving Ben Ali’s regime up to five times as many officers per capita as there are today in the United Kingdom (Hibou 2011, 81).<sup>315</sup> Beyond the normal police, the State Security Department operated as a secret political police force, aimed at combatting extremists and threats of violence—in addition to suppressing dissent against the regime (Brooks 2013; Fuhr 2013). In addition to centralized initiatives, Ben Ali’s regime also relied on the aforementioned diffuse network of informants to mitigate the risk of civil war planning or terrorism plots. The ruling party monitored local level political interactions with 7,500 RCD cells scattered throughout the country, effectively asking neighbors to spy on each other. There was also a more deliberate network of ‘informers,’—sometimes simply café owners—who were paid up to 300 DT (\$150) a month in order to “report on the activity and behavior of people they regularly come into contact with” (Hibou 2011, 105). Even taxi drivers were coopted by the government to spy on their passengers. There are many more examples, but suffice it to say that Ben Ali’s domestic security agenda was like Bentham’s panopticon applied to a Foucauldian world: the ‘normative

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<sup>314</sup> The standard deviation of the Polity IV scores during that period is 5.7, so Tunisia was just shy of two full standard deviations more authoritarian than the mean country during those two decades.

<sup>315</sup> According to Hibou (2011), if the low-end estimate is correct, that would represent one officer for every 112 people; with the high end estimate, it would be one officer for every 67 people. The United Kingdom has roughly one officer for every 380 people.

gaze' of society operated at all times, across all sectors, and across all regions of Tunisia (Foucault 1977). This is a sharp contrast to the limited ability of Côte d'Ivoire's regime, for example, to monitor threats coalescing in its northern hinterland. That difference mattered. In short, the risk of a civil war in Tunisia was limited because the state was omnipresent, aggressive at stamping out overt dissent, and meticulous in monitoring potential threats. This is how authoritarianism, on a day-to-day basis, is able to reduce civil war risk even when giving dissidents plenty of reasons why they might want to rebel. Consequently, after the 2009 election, it is unlikely that any of the excluded candidates fathomed a violent rebellion. None materialized, and the vote took place without subsequent political violence—until the Arab Spring uprising.

During this snapshot in time, the incumbent had clear reason to exclude his rivals (which he did repeatedly); the opposition had limited recourse against the authoritarian regime; the military (and the affiliated militia forces used to coup proof the regime) had strong incentives to stay allied with the regime rather than defecting; and the international community was eager to protect their ally in the War on Terror. The incentive matrix made the outcome obvious: exclusionary elections with no immediately feasible forms of political violence in response.

### **The Arab Spring uprising in the context of electoral exclusion and coups d'état**

Just over a year after the 2009 presidential election, 26 year-old Mohammed Bouazizi lit himself on fire in the central Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid, a human spark that set the country—and then the region—ablaze with political change. Was the Tunisian Arab Spring primarily caused by electoral exclusion? In a word: no. There are so many scholarly works focusing on the roots of the Arab Spring that it would be impossible to fully review the general causes here. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, there are two important aspects of the Arab Spring uprising in Tunisia that are worth discussing.

First, even in cases where exclusion does not prompt a violent backlash led by the affected political parties and candidates, it still creates further discontent—particularly if it is repeated over time. The string of successive uncompetitive elections built up discontent in Tunisia and Ben Ali could no longer keep a lid on that pressure from below by late 2010. This anger toward the regime was exacerbated and accelerated by revelations from the Wikileaks cables that chronicled the Ben Ali regime's nepotism and corruption and finally sparked by a young vegetable vendor's dramatic act of self-immolation out of personal desperation—not out of any frustrations directly related to opposition movements or electoral exclusion. Regardless, it

was a clear and consistent viewpoint in my elite interviews that the 2009 election was a contributing factor in the upwelling of anger in December 2010.

Second, the military's involvement in the ultimate removal of Ben Ali from power underscores the points made above about the infeasibility of a coup or civil war—until popular engagement became so great that the fall of the regime became virtually inevitable. In the Madagascar / Zambia chapter, I highlighted the fact that the soldiers and officers who engage in coups must believe that a coup can successfully result in a transfer of power; failed coups are a disaster for their perpetrators and rational individuals rarely launch 'lost cause' coups. This was borne out in Tunisia's context, as the military and presidential guard remained loyal to Ben Ali until the very last days of the regime's fall from power. There is academic debate over whether it was the military or the internal security apparatus (including the presidential guard) that defected first; either way, neither defected until it became obvious that the regime was uttering its dying gasps (Brooks 2013; Pachon 2014). This second point is important because it reaffirms how far the political pendulum needed to swing for political violence to become perceived as a 'feasible' option under Ben Ali's oppressive regime, reinforcing the explanation above as to why the 2009 election did not prompt any onset of political violence—until hundreds of thousands of protesters demanded it in the Arab Spring uprising and subsequent coup d'état.<sup>316</sup> After Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia, Tunisia's elites faced a task that would prove even more difficult than toppling a dictatorial regime: building a functioning, inclusive democracy in its place.

### **The October 2011 founding elections, the 'mounachidine', and Ben Achour**

After the popular street protests prompted the military and the presidential guard to defect against the regime (forcing Ben Ali to flee into a self-imposed exile), the political situation was extremely fluid: what would be built in the place of a regime that had lasted, virtually unchallenged, for two decades? The slate of elites that found themselves in charge because of the power vacuum instigated by Ben Ali's departure agreed on one key point: their primary task was to lead Tunisia to its first genuinely competitive multi-party elections so that a legitimately elected government could draw up the contours of the new Tunisian state (Schraeder & Redissi 2011).

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<sup>316</sup> The Arab Spring is rarely referred to in terms of coups d'état, but there is no question that the regimes (in Tunisia and Egypt in particular) would not have been removed if the army had not 'defected' and joined the protesters. For a further analysis (and competing depictions) of this defection in Tunisia see Brooks (2013) and Pachon (2014). Furthermore, Ozan Varol, in a 2012 article in the Harvard International Law Journal, argues that such cases constitute a 'democratic' coup d'état because they have the backing of the people and are aimed at bringing democracy to replace an authoritarian government. Normative judgments aside, the fall of Ben Ali was only precipitated when violence or the threat of violence was leveraged against the regime after the military and internal security apparatus made clear that they would remove him from power if he did not flee; this was done with unconstitutional means, fulfilling the definitional requirements of a coup d'état.

After weeks of uncertainty after Ben Ali's departure, former Bourguiba and Ben Ali era politician (and critic of both governments) Béji Caid Essebsi was named as the country's interim prime minister. Once in power, Essebsi's first three major acts were to dismantle the RCD party, arrest regime hard-liners, and disband the political police (Schraeder & Redissi 2011, 15). The third act was unquestionably a victory for a transition to democracy; the political police existed for no reason other than to crush and deter political dissent. The first two, however, were more contentious; a mass arrest of former regime figures is not necessarily conducive to establishing a case-by-case rule of law, and the disbanding of the RCD would only be a victory for democracy if other political parties were allowed to form openly in its place (though precisely that happened in the end; Schraeder & Redissi 2011, 16).

However, as the country veered haphazardly toward its first open multi-party competitive elections, it quickly became clear that one of the key unresolved issues centered on the role of members of the 'old regime' in the 'new' Tunisia. There was, of course, the worry from proponents of a democratic transition that allowing powerful members of the former regime to run for office risked jeopardizing the entire democratic character of the transition, with the sentiment that: "We are in a transitional period. We have to protect the revolution from the counter-revolutionaries from the former regime."<sup>317</sup>

Bizarrely, in the 2011 elections, the group that was keen to introduce electoral exclusion was Tunisia's historical opposition, as the incumbent had recently fallen and there was no real incumbent to take his place. As Mohsen Marzouk, an executive committee member of the nascent 'old guard' party Nidaa Tounes put it: "the Tunisian revolution was not led by any party, so it has no guiding program or leadership; nobody can claim to be the 'winner' or the 'incumbent.'"<sup>318</sup> In order to cope with the thorny issue of candidate inclusion and exclusion (for members of the old regime), the interim government established the 'Higher Political Reform Commission,' known by nearly everyone as the Ben Achour Commission, since it was led by respected jurist Yadh Ben Achour (Al-Arab 2011). They were asked to draft an electoral law that would be used to guide the swiftly organized October 2011 elections, which would in turn be used to elect a constitutional drafting assembly to complete the transition to democracy with the backing of citizen representation. Remarkably, the Ben Achour commission exercised considerable restraint compared to many other post-dictatorship transitions. There were two categories of exclusion embedded in Article 15 of the electoral law. First, anyone who had served at the highest level of Ben Ali's government (as a minister or above) was excluded from

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<sup>317</sup> Mohamed Kemal al-Gharbi, prominent member of Tunisian civil society and NGO president, personal interview, 6 November 2013; Tunis.

<sup>318</sup> Mohsen Marzouk, personal interview, 20 November 2013; Tunis.

standing in the initial constitutional assembly elections, but was not excluded beyond that contest. Second, anyone who had publicly signed a letter calling on Ben Ali to run for president in 2014 (the so-called *mounachidine*) was also banned from being a candidate.<sup>319</sup> This latter provision was problematic. For many people, “their livelihoods depended on being on that list,” as they were public figures operating under an image-obsessed authoritarian state; people in political life who did not publicly call for Ben Ali to run for another term would face serious consequences and reduced prospects for career advancement.<sup>320</sup> Hundreds of people were on that list—an excessive number—but the list was also not made public. Secrecy may have been in the interests of the *mounachidine* so that they were not openly scapegoated as allies of the regime, but it was also antagonistic to the notion of open democratic institutions. Several people who were excluded only found out that they were banned when the electoral authority rejected their attempted candidacies.<sup>321</sup> This type of exclusion does not fit neatly in with the theoretical propositions outlined above, because there was no incumbent; it was uncharted territory for Tunisia.

When the Ben Achour Commission exclusions were announced, the international and domestic response was muted. Most observers believed that the commission took a fairly reasonable measure after just toppling a regime that relied on manipulating elections to keep its authoritarian grip on power. For major international organizations, such as the UN, the exclusions were acceptable because they conformed to the standard of being “temporary, rational, and limited in scope to the minimum number possible.”<sup>322</sup> In retrospect, many people I interviewed (in 2013) thought that the *mounachidine* provision went too far, but in the pragmatic forward-looking politics of the 2011 transition, there was virtually no objection in Tunisian society—perhaps partly because there was nobody who was willing to voice publicly their concern for people who were tarred with the image of the toppled autocracy. Even politicians who were actively involved in the Ben Ali regime sought to distance themselves during this transition period in 2011: “former regime officials are all attempting to ‘wash their CV’—everyone now claims that they were an ‘opposition activist’ during the Ben Ali period.”<sup>323</sup> Some Tunisians were willing to write off anyone who had been ‘tainted’ by the stain of Ben Ali’s regime (meaning that the only experienced political leadership would have to come from the Bourguiba era, which ended in the late 1980s). Other Tunisians were eager to write off the top

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<sup>319</sup> Marion Volkmann, The Carter Center, personal interview, 28 October 2013; Tunis.

<sup>320</sup> Geoffrey Weichelbaum, Democracy Reporting International, personal interview, 30 October 2013; Tunis.

<sup>321</sup> Volkmann, interview, 28 October 2013; Tunis.

<sup>322</sup> Baha Bakri, legal adviser to the United Nations Development Programme, personal interview, 29 October 2013; Tunis.

<sup>323</sup> Nicole Rowsell, National Democratic Institute, personal interview, 31 October 2013; Tunis.

cadre of the Ben Ali elite, but were not eager to throw out all the cumulative expertise and experience that came with being a lower level cog in the Ben Ali machine—after all, anyone who was involved in politics in Tunisia at any point during his two decades in power could be considered part of the regime. There were virtually no Tunisians, however, who called (publicly) for elections to be so inclusive that the exiled Ben Ali and his top-level entourage could be allowed to run. In short, there was no constituency or vocal public support for the fallen dictatorship, and that, in turn, made it highly unlikely that any form of political violence would be sparked by the exclusion of these elites in 2011. Tunisian society would never have accepted a coup or a civil war in 2011, so it would have been highly likely to fail—a major deterrent to would-be plotters. Moreover, even though the United States and other Western governments had been close allies of Ben Ali’s regime, they had fully reversed course and would have strongly condemned any form of democratic reversal—particularly one that was instigated with violence. Tunisians were unsure of what the future would bring, but they were ready to try something new—and that meant that excluding the ‘old’ was not a major cause for concern for most people.

The election proceeded peacefully and smoothly. Ennahda, the Islamist party that had been banned since Ben Ali’s crackdown in the start of his time in power, won a clear victory with 37% of votes cast. Eight other parties split the remainder of the vote.<sup>324</sup> Moncef Marzouki, a human rights activist who fled into exile during Ben Ali’s regime, was elected president.<sup>325</sup> Hamadi Jebali of Ennahdha became prime minister. This was a stunning reversal; Jebali was one of the men who had been tortured, convicted, and sentenced to 15 years in prison as a result of the fabricated “Barraket Essahel” coup attempt in 1992. Jebali spent ten of his fifteen years in prison in solitary confinement (Human Rights Watch 2004, 17). Now, he was in charge of the country as a legally (and democratically) elected politician of the formerly banned Ennahdha party. The political pendulum could not have swung much further in just one year.

The case study of Tunisia’s founding 2011 election presents an important qualitative point that is not easily captured by statistical modeling: sometimes, during overwhelming sea change transitions like the one ushered in by Tunisia’s Arab Spring uprising, electoral exclusion—even when applied broadly and against powerful people—may not immediately increase the risk of coups or civil wars, because the excluded candidates have no political

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<sup>324</sup> The Tunisian electoral commission, known as ISIE, approved the registration of 116 political parties; an impressive 80 of those 116 parties submitted candidate lists for proportional representation in districts across the country. See National Democratic Institute (2012) or European Union Election Observation Mission (2012) for further information.

<sup>325</sup> Marzouki represented the *Congrès pour la république* (CPR) party, which allied with Ennahdha and a social democrat party, Ettakotol, to form a coalition government known as the “troika.”

support base willing to speak on their behalf. Certainly, there were people loyal to the former regime, but the quasi-euphoric political culture after Ben Ali's downfall made it unfathomable to imagine credible voices—in politics, the military, or even disaffected prospective rebels—rushing to the defense of the excluded hardliners from the discredited, destroyed authoritarian state. Such institutional sea changes are not easily measured or quantified, but they do matter; in Tunisia's case, the fervor for a transition to democracy in 2011 mitigated any immediate additional risk of political violence wrought by electoral exclusion.

At this snapshot in time, the incentive structures were murky. There was no real incumbent or opposition. The military was loyal to the transition, but it was in a position of volatility and could have acted had political events become violent. The international community prioritized security and the establishment of any form of democracy—even a severely flawed manifestation of it—over any other concerns. These incentives combined to allow a tentative interim period that featured limited exclusion and the establishment of a fledgling, weak democracy that would be guided fatefully by the Tunisia's first competitively elected government, led by Ennahdha.

### **Ennahdha's temptation and the allure of the 'exclusion trap' (Dec. 2011 – July 2013)**

The euphoria could not last, however, as transitions to democracy are often “the most serious, painful periods in the lives of any nation.”<sup>326</sup> The period from late 2011 to 2014 was one of hard-fought compromise, coalition building, and consensus. However, there were serious divisions—and episodes of violence—along the way that threatened to destabilize the democratic transition. The shifting motivations during this period are key to using process tracing to demonstrate how inclusion stabilized a fragile transitional state.

A key division during this period surrounded the question of electoral exclusion and inclusion of former regime candidates. The 2011 election law was non-renewable; it applied to just the first post-Ben Ali election. Candidates that were excluded in 2011 (including the expansive, semi-secret list of *mounachidine*) were not (yet) excluded from future electoral contests. As a result, just three months after the cabinet coalition was announced, CPR—one of the three political parties in the governing Troika—began drafting an ‘immunization of the revolution’ law aimed at excluding anyone who had been a member of the Ben Ali regime or had been part of the *mounachidine* list. When the drafting procedure was initiated, human rights groups that had been silent during the 2011 exclusion law's implementation now criticized the broad interpretation of who would be excluded from future consideration for political positions.

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<sup>326</sup> Said Ferjani, Ennahdha MP and member of the party leadership, personal interview, 21 October 2013; Tunis.

Human Rights Watch lambasted the law, saying: “The law would disqualify all members of the successive Ben Ali governments, from 1987 to 2011, as well as senior members of the former ruling party, the Constitutional Democratic Rally (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique, RCD), from holding certain elected or appointed positions, and from forming or joining the governing bodies of any political parties. The numbers affected are unknown but estimates rise to tens of thousands” (2013).<sup>327</sup> The vocal opposition of international actors to the prospect of an expansive exclusion law was a salient shift over time; it changed the political context for all actors.

There was also more concern over the law among domestic political actors than there had been in 2011 too. Debate over the law starkly divided Tunisia’s political elite, even within the same political party. Some in Ennahdha joined with CPR and the more extreme Wafa movement in calling for a full and robust ban of anyone even remotely affiliated with the former regime (Piser & Dhaoudi 2014).<sup>328</sup> Others, such as Mohsen Sabani, Ennahdha’s Minister of Human Rights and Transitional Justice were in favor of exclusion but only for a limited time frame: “I’m against any law that excludes in a collective manner; it must be done on an individual basis. And, for those that we do exclude, in my opinion, excluding them for five to seven years would be a sufficient time period simply to ensure that new institutions can be established without their interference.”<sup>329</sup> Finally, the newly formed Nidaa Tounes (“Call of Tunis”) party, adamantly opposed the ban for obvious reasons: their leader, Beji Caid Essebsi—who had served as the caretaker prime minister right after Ben Ali fled—would likely have been excluded from the elections if the ‘immunization of the revolution’ law passed.<sup>330</sup> There was a range of opinion (even within the ruling Troika coalition), from hardliners who wanted a permanent ban, to those that believed in a temporary, case-by-case form of electoral exclusion, to those who opposed any form of ‘political purge’ against members of the old regime. Even people who had been excluded previously had mixed views toward excluding former RCD members; Ahmed Néjib Chebbi—who had been repeatedly excluded from running for office himself—rejected the

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<sup>327</sup> Opposition leader Chebbi argued that this was, again, excessive: “A passive complicity with the regime is not a crime; if it were, ten million Tunisians would need to be dragged before a tribunal,” personal interview, 22 November 2013; Tunis.

<sup>328</sup> Ennahdha member Néjib Mrad, for example, was so strongly opposed to the inclusion of former “RCD-istes” that he went so far as to call all of them ‘criminals and vampires’ in a radio interview in support of the ‘immunization of the revolution’ law (Radio FM Tunis, January 2014).

<sup>329</sup> Sabani, personal interview, 13 November 2013; Tunis.

<sup>330</sup> Essebsi would have been excluded because he had served as President of the Chamber of Deputies under Ben Ali’s regime from 1990-1991. Sélim ben Abdesslem, MP of Nidaa Tounes, personal interview, 14 November 2013; Tunis. Some Nidaa Tounes members, such as Mohsen Marzouk, argued that exclusion should not be so far reaching because Ben Ali was more of a “soft despot” than other authoritarian elites around the world. “This was soft despotism. The proof? All the leaders of Ennahdha are still alive,” personal interview, 20 November 2013; Tunis.



notion of exclusionary revenge against members of the former regime: “I am against exclusion. We need to think of building a transitional justice process to turn the page on the dictatorship and write a new page that has a place in politics for everyone.”<sup>331</sup>

There there were two other concerns that divided the political elite over the exclusion law. First, some Ennahdha critics claimed that the exclusion law was simply a cynical political ploy to improve the Islamists’ electoral prospects in the next election while consolidating power. For those critics, this strategy was part of a ‘double language’ in Ennahdha, saying the ‘right’ things about their commitment to democratic institutions in international media and to diplomats in Tunis while fighting a battle to restrict political rights of their opponents in the domestic sphere.<sup>332</sup> For members of Nidaa Tounes, this was “a fight against Nidaa Tounes for power; they were trying to use the exclusion law as a political threat.”<sup>333</sup>

Second, there were powerful figures—even within Ennahdha—who worried that a sweeping exclusion law could damage the transition by removing crucial bureaucratic expertise from the political system at a time when it was needed most. Said Ferjani, a man who had previously plotted a coup d’état in 1987 and was tortured for it when it was discovered by Ben Ali’s regime, nonetheless recognized the value of expertise and experience in the former regime: “We have to study the old regime. The old structures were homogenous and coherent. When you get rid of the head, the rest must remain intact.”<sup>334</sup> Ennahdha’s rival party, Nidaa Tounes pushed this point, arguing that “you cannot import a political elite from outside; what is the most important experience and qualification that you have? For Ennahdha it is fifteen years in prison or sipping tea in London,” a reference not only to the exiled leadership of Ennahdha—with many living abroad for decades—but also to political figures like Prime Minister Jebali, who had spent more than a decade prior to taking political office as a prisoner in solitary confinement.<sup>335</sup>

In previous chapters, I have argued that three institutional incentives for electoral exclusion need to be in place in order for the exclusion to be strategically attractive to incumbent regimes. During the period from the law’s original drafting (February 2012) until 25 July 2013, all three conditions were met: former members of Ben Ali’s regime were a threat; it would be relatively straightforward to exclude them using an independent electoral authority; and it was unlikely that there would have been significant political ‘blowback’ from either international or

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<sup>331</sup> Ahmed Néjib Chebbi, presidential candidate for the Republican Party (created in 2012), personal interview, 22 November 2013; Tunis.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Mohsen Marzouk, personal interview, 20 November 2013; Tunis.

<sup>334</sup> Personal interview, 13 November 2013; Tunis.

<sup>335</sup> Mohsen Marzouk, Nidaa Tounes executive committee member and Béji Caid Essebsi’s campaign manager in the 2014 elections, personal interview, 20 November 2013; Tunis.

domestic actors (barring a smattering of international NGOs that would have had limited effect at imposing costs on the regime). After all, the exact same form of exclusion as was being proposed had been ushered in during the 2011 ‘founding election’ and the silence from the international and domestic community was deafening. It was overwhelmingly clear that the diplomatic cadre (particularly in the ‘West’) were more concerned with a democratic election happening at all than with it being ‘perfect’.<sup>336</sup> Finally, there was an impulse among Ennahdha’s leadership (perhaps not wholly irrational) to not only fear the electoral threat of a return of old regime figures to power, but also to fear being jailed or exiled once again. A democratic reversal with old guard figures was therefore more potent than just the specter of electoral defeat. “Who put these guys [Ennahdha’s leadership] in jail? Essebsi, his entourage, and other figures from the old regime who are now in Nidaa Tounes.”<sup>337</sup> The incentives were therefore even stronger toward exclusion than in other cases; this was not just about winning elections, it was also about personal freedom and safety. As a result, when the law was introduced during this period (in November 2012), most political observers believed it would pass. Ultimately, they were wrong; the process tracing puzzle is figuring out what changed between this period and the eventual vote on the law in May 2014.

### **Assassinations, regional warning signs, and economic woes: the allure of exclusion wanes (July 2013 – July 2014)**

Three events in July 2013 tipped the scales against electoral exclusion. First, for the second time in five months, extremists assassinated a liberal opposition politician, gunned down in the streets of Tunis.<sup>338</sup> Mohammed Brahmi’s death followed the assassination (in similar fashion) of liberal politician Chokri Belaid in early February. Both men were murdered in broad daylight in front of their homes. This assassination raised conjecture that Ennahdha was complicit in the attacks, working hand in glove with extremist Islamists groups such as Ansar al-Sharia.<sup>339</sup> Whether or not there was any truth to this is difficult to tell; what is certain is that Ennahdha quickly was forced onto the political defensive. With reduced political capital, the exclusionary (‘immunization of the revolution’) law became a tougher sell.

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<sup>336</sup> Western diplomatic source, unnamed here at his request, personal interview, 24 November 2013; Tunis.

<sup>337</sup> Nicole Rowsell, country director, National Democratic Institute, personal interview, 31 October 2013; Tunis.

<sup>338</sup> Carlotta Gall, “Second Opposition Leader Assassinated in Tunisia,” *New York Times*, 25 July 2013.

<sup>339</sup> *New York Times*, 25 July 2013. Ennahdha had an uncomfortable relationship with such extremist groups. Their hardline base support viewed Salafist extremists more favorably than the majority of their more moderate leadership; this divide in Ennahdha was an important one that also manifested during the debate over electoral exclusion. It also fueled the credibility of accusations against the Islamist party’s leadership that they were complicit in allowing attacks, or at least that they had not done enough to deter or prevent them.

Second, other countries in North Africa that were going through a similar post-Arab Spring transition showcased the perils of political exclusion in the summer of 2013. In May 2013, two months before Brahmi was gunned down in Tunis, Libya adopted an even more extreme version of Tunisia's 'immunization of the revolution law'; the Libyan version was known as the 'Political Isolation Law' (Boduszyński & Pickard 2013). This divisive Libyan law, which has been viewed as a major driver of conflict in the country, exacerbated tensions and violence spiked in the wake of its adoption (Pack 2014).<sup>340</sup> Many Tunisian elites that I spoke to suggested that the destabilization in Libya presented a further risk—and a warning sign—about what could happen if Tunisia followed in Libya's policy footsteps. Furthermore, on 3 July 2013, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood government—which had been elected in Egypt's first post-Arab Spring elections—was toppled in a coup d'état by the Egyptian military following a long period of anti-government protests. While Egypt had not engaged in the same sort of electoral exclusion, the ruling Muslim Brotherhood party had been rigidly exclusive of rivals in their ruling style, which destabilized the fragile democracy (Klaas and Pack 2014). The risk of a major democratic reversal in Tunisia seemed more realistic and tangible to Ennahdha's leadership when it happened in the regional neighborhood and happened to a ruling Islamist party; "[The coup in] Egypt has helped people take a more reasoned approach."<sup>341</sup> With Libya and Egypt falling apart due to political exclusion (more in Libya, perhaps less in Egypt), at precisely the same time that Tunisia was debating its own version of exclusive political laws, the warning signals were sufficient to further dampen support for the law at home.

Third, and finally, Tunisia's economy was hit hard by the volatile transition period after the downfall of Ben Ali's longstanding, stable regime. This economic slide did not affect public attitudes toward democracy significantly in 2011, as the national mood was still highly optimistic; however, as the harsh reality of a long recession began to sink in between 2012 and 2014, Tunisians increasingly questioned whether the democracy was worth the seemingly inevitable economic costs. "Tunisia faced a deep recession in 2011; industrial activity halted in Q1 and Q2. There was a huge decline in mining."<sup>342</sup> This downturn coincided with a major drop in tourism; before Ben Ali's regime fell, about 7 million foreign visitors came to Tunisia each year. In 2011, that number crashed to 4.7 million—a decrease of 33% in a single year. Between 2011 and 2014, more visitors came, but total annual visitors remained significantly below their pre-Arab Spring levels (Tunisia National Institute of Statistics 2014). This, combined with the loss of foreign

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<sup>340</sup> There were several major attacks in Libya shortly after the law was adopted; dozens were killed in a series of attacks on 4 June; 8 June, 14 June, 26-27 June (all 2013).

<sup>341</sup> Nicole Rowsell, NDI, personal interview, 31 October 2013; Tunis.

<sup>342</sup> Policy official at a major international lending institution, unnamed here at their request, personal interview, 29 October 2013.

investment wrought by Tunisia's political uncertainty in the midst of an unprecedented transition, meant that the economy was nowhere near the 4% growth levels that were frequently achieved under Ben Ali's regime (IMF 2014). The economic costs of transition reduced public support for the government, and for Tunisian democracy more generally. The International Republican Institute conducted a tracking poll of Tunisian attitudes by asking citizens if they would rather have a stable authoritarian Tunisia or an unstable but democratic Tunisia. In January of 2012, a year after the Arab Spring uprising forced Ben Ali to flee, the split was 70% to 26% in favor of an unstable but democratic state. By February of 2014, the gap had narrowed considerably to 53% to 40%; in other words, nearly half of all Tunisians began to believe that the costs of democracy were becoming too great. Tunisia's economic woes had an important effect for the exclusion debate in two ways. First, it meant that Ennahdha was on the defensive again, losing considerable political capital due to its inability to deliver robust growth.<sup>343</sup> This, combined with the assassinations, made Ennahdha question whether or not it should pursue a potentially contentious vote over political exclusion when there were other pressing political battles to be fought.<sup>344</sup> Second, the rise in support for the notion of a return to a stable, authoritarian state as an alternative to Tunisia's quite unstable democratic transition meant that the formerly reticent supporters of 'old guard' figures began to be more vocal. Certainly, Ben Ali and the top cadre of his regime were still largely reviled by most of Tunisian society (at least in the prevailing discourse during my field research), but it was also becoming clear that some who were hit hard by the recession began to have a bit of nostalgia for the old system. Ironically, Nidaa Tounes was becoming more of an electoral threat to Ennahdha for precisely the reasons that made it more difficult for Ennahdha to exclude them from the upcoming vote—their constituency was rising just as the ruling Troika's political capital was falling rapidly.

The severity of the crisis in 2013 became apparent shortly after Brahmi was assassinated. On 6 August 2013, tens of thousands of protesters flooded the streets of Tunis, marching and calling for the Troika's resignation (BBC; 6 August 2013). Weeks later, even more protesters joined in, forming a two mile long human chain from the parliament building to the seat of the government, again insisting on the government's resignation (BBC; 1 September 2013). In the autumn, general strikes and protests continued. On 23 October 2013, Ennahdha announced that the government was ready to resign, but insisted that it be allowed to finish its work on the constitution and establish a firm election date before turning over power (Reuters; 23 October 2013). In late November, hundreds of protesters attacked Ennahdha party offices in Gafsa,

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<sup>343</sup> It should be said that no government would have had a perfect track record in this context; transitions are generally difficult times in economic terms.

<sup>344</sup> Interviews with Zied Ladhari and Said Ferjani, 14 November 2013 and 21 October 2013; Tunis.

torching the building (The Daily Star; 27 November 2013). Clearly, the situation was deteriorating for Ennahda at precisely the time when hardliners in their party were stubbornly eager to pass the ‘immunization of the revolution’ law.

Finally, the impasse was resolved in January 2014. On 26 January, the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly passed a new constitution with an impressive level of consensus for a starkly divided country in transition (200 votes in favor, 12 against, and four abstentions; Tunisia Live, 26 January 2014). Three days later, the Troika resigned, and a technocrat government took its place, led by businessman and political independent turned Minister of Industry Mehdi Jomaa. Jomaa’s task was to prepare Tunisia for fresh elections, with Ennahda still as the leading party in the National Constituent Assembly. Still, this was a major, unprecedented step—and a strategy completely at odds with what had taken place in the previous case studies; the ruling party voluntarily gave up party at a time of vulnerability to a technocrat caretaker government. Cynics doubted Ennahda’s intentions, but Ennahda’s leadership claimed that “for us, the success of the democratic process is dearer to us than Ennahda itself; it is non-negotiable.”<sup>345</sup> Whether this was cynical political strategy or genuine commitment to the procedural integrity of the transition to democracy, the ultimate vote on the electoral exclusion law would take place in a parliament controlled by Ennahda but under a prime minister and cabinet that were viewed as neutral technocrats.

The fateful vote took place on 1 May 2014. The ‘immunization of the revolution law’ was rejected, but just barely; 100 members voted in favor, 27 against, and 46 abstained, giving it 58% of votes in favor when an absolute two-thirds majority was required for passage (Marsad.tn; 1 May 2014). Interestingly, it seems that Ennahda members were divided on the issue, and that many of them chose to abstain rather than vote against the provision—a reluctance to vote ‘for’ inclusion of members of a former regime that they reviled personally but a recognition that exclusion might be damaging. Only 21 Ennahda members voted for the provision, compared to 38 who abstained (Marsad.tn; 1 May 2014). In other words, the incumbent party—which had most to gain from electoral exclusion—was the reason why the law did not pass.

This was, by all accounts, a prescient moment of restraint for a party that had every reason and strategic incentive to want to exclude the remnants of the former regime. In addition to the fact that Nidaa Tounes posed an extremely credible and robust electoral threat to their prospects for re-election as the dominant party, several members of the Ennahda leadership were either forced into exile or were tortured under a government that some of the figures now being included in electoral politics had worked for at top levels. There is no way to truly

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<sup>345</sup> Said Ferjani, personal interview, 21 October 2013; Tunis.

determine Ennahda's motivations in being inclusive toward members of Nidaa Tounes and other independent candidates who would have been excluded under the proposed 'immunization of the revolution' law. It may have been a strategic calculation, but it may also have just been precisely what Said Ferjani suggested—that their leadership worried more about the transition's success than their own party's electoral prospects, and on this one issue that was sure to be divisive, they put a united Tunisia before electoral strategy. This is, of course, speculation. But it does raise an important point about qualitative research and the limits of quantitative analysis; leadership surely does play a role in these critical make-or-break decisions during a transition to democracy, but that aspect cannot be captured with numbers.

Regardless of motivations, it is highly likely that the decision to be inclusive rather than exclusive in the eventual October, November, and December elections substantially mitigated the risk of political violence. The protests that had been raging in late 2013 dissipated, and the street protests morphed into campaign rallies. The opposition parties bought in to the election rather than boycotting—a crucial development, because Tunisia no longer was a coup-proofing police state that could mitigate violent impulses.<sup>346</sup> In September 2014, Ennahdha announced that it would not be fielding a candidate for the presidential election, but would rather defer to others and give them a chance to rule—further indication that inclusive leadership rather than cynical strategy was at play in the party (Reuters; 8 September 2014). 27 candidates were officially registered to run for president (Cairo Post; 30 September 2014). Several of the candidates, including Béji Caid Essebsi and Kemal Morjane (who served as Minister of Defense under Ben Ali from 2005-2010), would have definitely been excluded had the 'immunization of the revolution' law passed. On the other side, the CPR's candidate was Moncef Marzouki, who led the charge for the exclusion law in the first place; he had been repeatedly arrested, harassed, and ultimately forced to flee under Ben Ali's regime.

Ennahdha's inclusive politics cost them power. The parliamentary election took place peacefully in late October. Nidaa Tounes won comfortably, securing 86 votes to Ennahdha's 69—but still leaving Nidaa Tounes short of a majority to govern. Most election observers indicated minor flaws, but found the vote to have been conducted smoothly, peacefully, and effectively. A month later, the first round presidential voting took place. Béji Caid Essebsi, who had been targeted previously for exclusion from the contest, received the highest share of the vote with 39%; Moncef Marzouki of the CPR came in second with 33%. As stated above, Ennahdha did not field a presidential candidate—so Marzouki became the implicit favorite of the party. In December 2014, these top two candidates squared off in the runoff. Essebsi won

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<sup>346</sup> Tunisia's transition caused its Polity IV rating to soar, up to +7 for 2012-2014.

comfortably, by a margin of 56% to Marzouki's 44%—showing unequivocally just how much of a threat Essebsi and Nidaa Tounes were to Ennahdha's electoral prospects. If Ennahdha was somehow playing politics by ultimately being inclusive (as some critics suggested) rather than simply demonstrating principled leadership, they badly misjudged the electoral game.

The theory outlined previously does not provide a convincing explanation for this behavior. Every incentive was drawing Ennahdha toward exclusion. The incumbent government faced a credible threat and had a way of legitimizing their exclusion without significant costs from the international community. Instead, they included the very rivals that deposed them in the election, writing and passing electoral laws that spelled their eventual demise. This is the type of qualitative nuance that is a blip in quantitative datasets but matters considerably; humans are not like electrons—they may face invisible forces that compel them to act in certain ways, but they have the choice to ignore those forces. Ennahdha did.

If Ennahdha had not included Nidaa Tounes, it is impossible to know what would have happened. However, the opposition would have faced an increased incentive toward challenging the regime illegitimately. Moreover, the military would have been forced to choose between backing an exclusionary government or taking up the cause of those excluded—never a stabilizing prospect in a divided society. Finally, the international community may have sanctioned Ennahdha (though this is also speculative). Yet if they had, it would have put a weak government in a volatile transitional state in a terribly vulnerable position. These are all unknowable counterfactuals, but this speculation helps frame the debate over why inclusion was stabilizing: it created buy-in from regime rivals rather than forcing them to challenge from outside the legitimate political sphere and therefore gave the military no alternative to back.

Once the dust settled from the election, the newly-elected 'old guard' of Nidaa Tounes initially attempted to form a cabinet in early 2015 without any inclusion of Ennahdha members (Middle East Eye; 23 January 2015). However, the proposed lineup for the cabinet faced stiff resistance in the parliament and it became clear to Nidaa Tounes' leadership that the proposed government would not be ratified by the required majority (Reuters; 25 January 2015). As a result, Nidaa Tounes withdrew its proposed cabinet and formed a grand coalition instead, with members from Ennahdha, the Free Patriotic Union, Afek Tounes, and independents. The cabinet was approved on 5 February 2015 (Al Jazeera; 5 February 2015). Again, exclusion was tempting, but Tunisia's political elites chose inclusion instead. So far, this inclusive cabinet has been a stabilizing force.

## **Conclusion: counterfactuals, Iraq, Libya, and the stabilizing effect of inclusion**

There is no way to tell exactly what might have happened in Tunisia if the ‘immunization of the revolution law’ had been passed and key figures from the old regime had been excluded from the 2014 elections—and indeed, there still yet may be political violence.<sup>347</sup> However, two regional forerunners to Tunisia’s inclusive 2014 elections may shine some light on just how devastating a misjudged episode of electoral exclusion can be after an authoritarian regime falls.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, in Iraq, the U.S.-led coalition issued two fateful orders upon taking control of the country in 2003. Order 1 dismantled Saddam Hussein’s Ba’ath party and excluded anyone from Saddam Hussein’s Ba’ath party from future political life. Order 2 disbanded the Iraqi military. The combination of the two—removing the powerful people with strong interpersonal networks (who also happened to be the only ones with any expertise and experience running the country) at the same time as the coalition sent roughly 400,000 men home without paychecks but with guns—was not, by any means, a recipe for stability (ICTJ 2013). Specifically, ‘de-Ba’athification’ is viewed by most analysts as “a deeply flawed process... Ineffective and incoherent, it polarized Iraqi politics and contributed to severe instability in the Iraqi military and government—not just in the first flush of regime change, but extending as far as the parliamentary elections of 2010, some seven years later” (ICTJ 2013, 1).<sup>348</sup> Had there been a much less aggressive purge of Ba’athists from political life and electoral competition, it is likely that a larger portion of Iraqi society would have felt invested in the transition to democracy (Pfiffner 2010). In this instance, de-Ba’athification—and the freezing of salaries for all senior government officials—meant that the insurgency turned civil war was likely started as a result of political exclusion turned electoral exclusion. Tunisia does not have the same sectarian divides as Iraq, but it is probable that the risk of serious violence would have grown considerably had the elite in Tunis mimicked the unfortunate policies in Baghdad years earlier. The ‘immunization of the revolution’ law would have mirrored, albeit on a smaller scale, Iraq’s misguided and devastating de-Ba’athification process.

As referenced previously, Libya’s Political Isolation Law also had disastrous effects, sowing “political confusion, chaos and instability” (Smith 2013). Just as with Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, anyone who was involved in the political affairs of Libya (for an astoundingly

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<sup>347</sup> The attack on the Bardo museum in March 2015 is an example of the types of extremist threats facing Tunisia; critically, however, this major terrorist attack did not derail the political compromise and consensus forged in the wake of the elections, unlike the 2013 assassinations. This may be a sign of a more stable equilibrium with both Nidaa Tounes and Ennahdha directly invested in the government’s success.

<sup>348</sup> See also Pfiffner (2010): “Both of these decisions fueled the insurgency by: (1) alienating hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who could not support themselves or their families; (2) by undermining the normal infrastructure necessary for social and economic activity; (3) by ensuring that there was not sufficient security to carry on normal life; and (4) by creating insurgents who were angry at the US, many of whom had weapons and were trained to use them,” 76.



long period of time, between 1969 and 2011) was tainted by the stain of an affiliation with deposed strongman Muammar Gaddafi. Excluding an entire class of the political elite from the elections was the precursor to Libya's current quagmire, where a series of militias are battling in a low-level civil war amidst chaos while two parallel governments have been established, dueling for legitimacy in Tobruk and Tripoli (Klaas & Pack 2015; Pack 2014). Inclusivity and electoral integrity may not have solved all of Libya's problems—elections are not a panacea—but it is certain that the Political Isolation Law was a polarizing act that likely accelerated Libya's descent into chaos and violence (Pack 2014). These two foils (Iraq and Libya) provide an important parable for Tunisia: during recent transitions in the Middle East, exclusion has been destabilizing while inclusion has been stabilizing.

The case of Tunisia provides several important insights that would not be discernible through statistical analysis alone. First, the 2009 election provides an important demonstration of how authoritarian regimes can exclude their rivals without being toppled by violence—at least for a time. This type of exclusion and the illusion of stability it projects may, however, ultimately be the calm before the storm: a case of “pseudo-stability, its tranquil façade concealing deep structural vulnerabilities” (Taleb & Treverton 2015). In these cases, the ostensible governmental stability of a case like Ben Ali's Tunisia is certainly far worse than the seeming unending volatility of a country like Italy or Belgium, where governments routinely fall but the institutional system is effective at managing the risk of political violence. Second, Tunisia's experience in the 2010-2011 Arab Spring uprising, and the eventual decision by the military to force Ben Ali to flee, demonstrates the limitations of coup proofing; authoritarian regimes can suppress ‘pressures from below’ quite effectively for some time while co-opting the military, but eventually, if the pressure is released against the regime in an uprising, the coup proofing insurance policy might dissipate much faster than mass-based anger. The 2009 election also offers insights on precisely why counterfeit democracies (anocracies) are most prone to civil war, while dictatorships and consolidated democracies are not. Third, Tunisia's inclusive 2014 election—which resulted in a democratic, peaceful transfer of power—makes clear that, even with the presence of violent actors, electoral *inclusion* can be a stabilizing force during a democratic transition.<sup>349</sup> By contrast, countries such as Iraq and Libya that went through similar types of transitions at around the same time as Tunisia took an alternate, exclusive path and ended up as hotbeds of extreme

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<sup>349</sup> The assassinations in 2013 were not the only act of political violence during this time period; there were several attacks against Tunisia's police and military forces, failed suicide bombing attempts, and the gruesome attack, killing more than 20 foreign tourists at the Bardo museum in March 2015. The risks of destabilization from these acts were each extremely high, but so far, the political center has held. It is likely, however, that Tunisia will face a continuation of threats, as the country is having a difficult time securing its border with Libya, a major source of extremist militants.

violence and political chaos. This is not proof that Tunisia would have followed the pathway of Iraq or Libya had its elites been less inclusive, but it does add credence to the hypothesis that inclusion is a stabilizing force during transitions. It may be a counter-intuitive proposition, but it appears that being inclusive toward the elements of a fallen dictatorial regime may be the best way to strengthen a country's transition to democracy.

I now turn to the final case study, Thailand, to explore what happens in political systems where electoral exclusion is used to target a political figure, but that exclusion is insufficient to destroy the political movement the individual politician represents.

## CHAPTER SIX: “RUNNING OUT OF SHINAWATRAS”

### *Inclusion, exclusion, the ‘network monarchy’, and Thailand’s ‘twin coups’*

#### **Introduction: the ‘failure’ of exclusion as a driver of conflict in Thailand**

Thailand, the 20<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world, is home to 66 million people. It is a kingdom, but one with a limited, proscribed role for the monarch. All Thai constitutions since 1932 have affirmed the dominance of elected civilian government and ostensibly democratic rule. In reality, the king may be relegated to being a subtle, behind-the-scenes political actor, but he is undeniably the most potent authority in Thai politics (Handley 2006). No Thai political figure can hope to retain perceived legitimacy without at least the tacit consent of the monarchy in Thailand; the king is the ultimate veto player in the country.

Against this royalist backdrop, the military are secondary—but critical—kingmakers (so to speak) in Thailand. Since 1932, when the absolute monarchy was abolished and replaced by a counterfeit democracy (which lingers on today), Thailand has been rocked by 19 attempted coups d’état; 12 of them have been successful (Chen 2014). The regularity of military interventions in civilian politics has bestowed Thailand with the dubious distinction of being the most coup prone country on Earth.

Recent coups have not, however, mimicked the same dynamics as previous army incursions into politics. Instead, the two coups that rocked Thailand in the last decade (2006 and 2014) have been responses to electoral politics, something that was not usually the case in previous coups. However, the Thai case does not conform to the theoretical propositions outlined in the first chapter. Electoral exclusion played a central role in the Thai coups, but not in the ways that were previously suggested; there is limited overlap between the dynamics in Thailand and those in Madagascar, Zambia, Tunisia, or Côte d’Ivoire. It is nonetheless quite useful at furthering our theoretical understanding of how electoral exclusion interacts with the risk of political violence.

Four elections took place in Thailand between 2006 and 2014. However, the dynamics of two in particular—2006 and 2014—shine a light on how electoral exclusion, or the lack thereof, has played a role in the 2006 and 2014 coups d’état. Its divergence from other cases makes it a useful outlier that fills in some theoretical gaps for less straightforward cases.

In all previous case studies, electoral exclusion was a major driver of subsequent political violence. It was not in Thailand—at least not in a straightforward sense. In prior cases, exclusion was used to neutralize a political threat, and that act of exclusion was effective. In

Madagascar, exclusion neutralized Rajoanarivelo and his movement. In Zambia, exclusion neutralized Kaunda and his movement. In Côte d'Ivoire, exclusion neutralized Ouattara and his movement. All three men were excluded, and all of their movements lost the election without their top candidate on the ballot. But, what happens when exclusion is used but does not work? What if a candidate is excluded but the broader movement pursues electoral politics regardless and goes on to win the subsequent election without its figurehead?

Thailand's bout with electoral exclusion went through two phases. In the first phase, the 'network monarchy' wanted to exclude Thaksin Shinawatra from standing for re-election but was constrained by his overwhelming popularity; excluding Thaksin would have provoked an immediate violent backlash. Then, in the second stage, the network monarchy successfully rid Thailand's political stage of Thaksin (excluding him with exile) but failed to neutralize his broader movement that continued to win election after election. Ultimately, the military intervened to unseat the incumbent, since trying to unseat Thaksin's movement in elections proved impossible.

Exclusion was undeniably a key tactic in Thai politics during his period. The tactic failed. Thaksin was included and allowed to contest the 2001, 2005, and 2006 elections. His party won each successive election in a landslide. In subsequent elections (2007, 2011, 2014), electoral exclusion was used to effectively remove Thaksin from the ballot, but his movement won the contest regardless. After Thaksin won the 2006 election, and after his movement won the 2014 election, the military launched two separate but similar post-election coups.

In Thailand, the repeated *failure* of electoral exclusion to achieve its intended goal (neutralizing Thaksin's movement) prompted the outbreak of political violence—an inversion of the theory outlined previously. This departure from the expected form of electoral exclusion helps us answer the question: what happens when exclusion is used, but the targeted party wins anyway?

Thailand is therefore an exception to the theoretical rule, but one that furthers the overarching argument in two ways. First, Thailand's 'twin coups' (19 September 2006 and 22 May 2014) demonstrate that elite electoral rivalries can result in political violence even when strategic manipulation fails to neutralize its target. Both coups were launched after one network of elites – including those closely linked to the monarchy and conservative elements within the military – failed to successfully eliminate other elites (in Thaksin's movement). While the latter elections (2008, 2011, and 2014) all featured electoral exclusion, Thailand's volatile politics did not and do not follow the same pathways as Côte d'Ivoire, or Madagascar, or Zambia. This does not negate the argument, but rather provides further nuance and context; parsimonious theories

in political science are always stronger when they acknowledge the messiness of real-world politics rather than attempting to stringently force everything to fit into the same one-size-fits-all framework.

For example, the Thai case demonstrates that, sometimes, electoral exclusion is not a strategically attractive choice because the tactic would produce a guaranteed backlash. In these instances, the overwhelming risks of the ‘exclusion trap’ are sometimes so obvious and immediate that elites may feel their hands are tied and that they must be inclusive. In that context, elites that may want to exclude rival threats may choose not to do so, allowing inclusive elections to take place even though it is against their preferences. These constraints on exclusionary behavior are sometimes unavoidable, particularly when the candidate in question has extensive and widespread mass support.

Thailand therefore showcases what happens when a powerful group of quasi-incumbent elites—albeit ones that are not formally in elected power—attempts to manipulate an election but is unable to win regardless. In this case, conservative, traditional, entrenched Thai elites—associated with the military and the monarchy—were unable to rig an election to their advantage, so they used a coup d’état to fix the political system to their liking instead. In this sense, the ‘network monarchy’ (defined below as an array of supporters of the king and the military) functions as both an incumbent and an opposition force. They attempted to rig the election in order to put a proxy regime in power. They failed. Once they failed, they switched from a quasi-incumbent to a quasi-opposition force. Realizing that elections were an ineffective way to beat the Thaksin party—due to their sheer popularity—they intervened with violence. In this instance, bullets were used because ballots could not destroy Thaksin.

Once the monarchy affiliated coup government took power, it was free to exclude rivals from future elections; coup governments operating under martial law typically face fewer constraints than elected civilian governments. However, even though the coup government was able to exclude Thaksin in subsequent elections, that rigging tactic only eliminated the individual candidate, not the party. Thaksin’s party fought on and won. This was possible because his political movement had mass support extending well beyond Thaksin himself.

The Thailand case is therefore important for two reasons. First, it showcases a counterintuitive trend that can happen with electoral exclusion sparking violence because of failed exclusion rather than successful exclusion. Unlike the other cases, military intervention in Thai politics took place because attempts at electoral exclusion were *unsuccessful* and the excluded candidate’s movement won anyway—rather than as a response to a successful exclusion that neutralized a political figure. This situation demonstrates that the pathway from exclusionary

elections to political violence is often messy and not as straightforward as it was in, for example, Côte d'Ivoire's 2000 elections.

Second, the Thailand case demonstrates that quantitative evidence frequently is bolstered by statistical false positives, cases where exclusion occurs but it is not the most important causal driver of coups d'état. This is an important caveat to cap off the findings of this dissertation, as a reminder to be cautious about statistical relationships without exploring national political contexts with qualitative research. In this case, exclusion occurred—but the military *supported* exclusion rather than launching a coup in protest of it. This is a critical difference. Without qualitative evidence, Thailand could mistakenly be viewed as having the “1’s” and “0’s” lined up in the ‘right’ place to provide further support for the main causal link outlined previously; that would be a mistake. In other words, this chapter is an exposition of a false positive, included here to show alternative pathways in which exclusionary elections can provoke political violence—even if the causal relationship is an inversion of the hypotheses outlined previously. Rather than weakening the argument, I believe that the Thailand case acknowledges the complexity of real-life politics, while affirming many of the theoretical hypotheses outlined previously, albeit perhaps not in precisely the way they were originally theorized.

Thailand is also a case study outlier in other ways. While the previous cases propose a relatively simplistic binary between opposition movements and incumbent regimes, the political dynamics in Thailand cannot be represented by such a straightforward dichotomy. Instead, Thai elites—even elites formally in power such as Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra or his sister, Prime Minister Yingluck (who rose to prominence after Thaksin was sent into exile) —must navigate their behavior through the constraints of a ‘parallel state’, the so-called ‘network monarchy’—an intricate web of royalist-affiliated elites that derive their authority and influence from their relationship to Thailand’s monarchy (Chambers 2013; McCargo 2005).<sup>350</sup> As Duncan McCargo highlights, modern (post-2001) Thai politics can be best conceptualized as a battle between a rising new elite represented by Thaksin Shinawatra’s political movement and the traditional elite networks affiliated with a conservative royalist agenda: “Since 2001, the primacy of palace-based networks has been challenged by the remarkable rise of the billionaire telecommunications magnate turned prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra” (McCargo 2005, 500).

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<sup>350</sup> Chambers draws parallels with the ‘parallel state’ in Pakistan, where informal blocks of power constitute a major counterweight to the official regime; in Thailand this operates as the palace and the military in a relationship between the senior partner (the palace) and the junior partner (the military). McCargo emphasizes that the influence of the king is enormous in Thai politics. “With more than six decades on the throne, the king is treated as god-like by a public that has not known any other king. The supposed significance of the king and royal family is highlighted in everything from school texts to prime ministerial speeches. The Thai media produces nothing other than obsequious accounts of even the most mundane royal events and portrays them as somehow extraordinary” (Hewison 2008, 191).

Media reports regularly mischaracterize Thailand's divisive political battles as an unbridgeable chasm between the (northern) rural poor (represented by Thaksin) and southerners joined with Bangkok's urban elite (represented by the 'network monarchy'). This mischaracterization is based on a certain truth—that Thaksin's political base is found in rural, poor Thais in the north—but this single fact taken as political gospel obscures the more salient dynamic at play. "It's not the poor vs. the rich—it's an elite dynamic. Now there are two elite networks rather than just shifting within one network. There are two Thailands."<sup>351</sup> Thailand's political battles are between a new rising elite that has (ostensible) democratic populism on its side (led by Thaksin) against an old entrenched elite that has the king and his powerful allies in their camp (led in electoral politics by the Democrat Party).<sup>352</sup> The elite battles are a proxy fight between two major social rifts that have developed in Thai society but are simmering below this intra-elite rivalry.

In Thailand's case, process tracing can be used to demonstrate how these competing elite networks morphed over time—and how various elite interests interacted to produce 'failed' attempts at electoral exclusion followed by two subsequent coups d'état. These shifting incentives can be categorized into two distinct stages. In the first stage, powerful elites were unable to exclude the ever-popular Thaksin precisely because of his robust popular support, which meant that they were left with one main trump card: a coup d'état. The network monarchy's inability to exclude Thaksin provoked the 2006 coup, as they wanted him ousted but could not find a strategically attractive way to do so with election manipulation. Thaksin won the election fair and square, so the 'network monarchy' responded outside the confines of legitimate political action. In the second stage, the coup government *was* able to neutralize Thaksin's candidacy using electoral exclusion, but that electoral manipulation did not neutralize Thaksin's wider political movement. When the political machine lived on and won the election without Thaksin, the military launched a coup in response. Again, the 'network monarchy' and military attempted to oust the Thaksin movement by using exclusion on the ballot, was unable to do so, and used bullets instead. In other words, "the traditional royal-military-bureaucratic power alliance, which lost power but was unwilling to participate [directly] in electoral competition, employed an old-fashioned, coercive tool—the coup—to capture state power and overthrow the popularly elected government" (Prajak 2014, 387).

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<sup>351</sup> Marc Saxer, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Thailand country director, personal interview; 8 December 2014, Bangkok.

<sup>352</sup> This is not to say that Thaksin has never curried favour with the monarchy; in fact, for Thaksin's authority to be recognized, it required the tacit consent of the king and the 'network monarchy' even if that consent was reluctant. In other words, as with all political contexts, simple dichotomies of any sort belie a more complex reality, but for analytical purposes here, this distinction is a useful one.

This is a key point because it demonstrates the limits of my overall argument. The straightforward link between electoral exclusion and future political violence is most salient when exclusion can neutralize not only the candidate but also the movement.<sup>353</sup> The link between electoral exclusion and political violence may be less applicable to political contexts where exclusion necessarily precipitates mass mobilization (as is typically the case in Thai politics). This is particularly true when the level of popular support for a candidate or movement is so high that exclusion is strategically unattractive because of the prospective political blowback. Moreover, the relationship between exclusion and future political violence may be less applicable when non-incumbent elite networks affiliated with the military can act as veto players *above* the reigning government should elections fail to produce the ‘desired’ outcome. In those contexts, the election is not the ultimate arbiter of state power, as legitimacy is derived from another external actor (in this case, the king). With these two characteristics (‘parallel states’ and mass mobilization) combined, the stark dichotomy between incumbent and opposition is less useful in Thailand. A coup by the military in Thailand is not akin to the attempted takeover of Zambia by Captain Solo because it is not a rogue opposition force, but a quasi-incumbent (the monarchy) that was behind its instigation. My theory may also be less apt in cases where neutralizing an individual with exclusion is insufficient to take the political wind out of the broader movement’s sails in an electoral context; if the targeted candidate’s party (or their political movement more generally) will win the election anyway, then exclusion of a single candidate is less likely to provoke anger than in a context where exclusion eliminates the entire party’s chances at electoral victory. This is intuitive; opposition groups that face electoral manipulation but win regardless are less likely to attack the regime, since they are about to inherit it!

These are important caveats, but they do not detract from the fact that Thailand still illustrates several important points about the role of electoral exclusion in provoking political violence. These points are best illuminated with detailed process tracing. For this chapter, there are three critical camps of actors most relevant to process tracing analysis: the Thaksin political machine, the ‘network monarchy,’ and the military. As was the case in the previous cases studies, all three actors have extremely complex motivations that belie simplification. However, understanding their shifting interactions during the 2005-2006 political crisis and the 2013-14 political crisis offers the best hope for understanding how electoral politics in both instances

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<sup>353</sup> There is an important aspect about the timing of the exclusion here. In Madagascar, for example, the exclusion was only announced *after* the candidate registration period had closed. In other words, when Rajaonarivelo was excluded, his political party did not have the option of putting forward an alternative candidate—it was too late. As a result, this meant that excluding the man was equivalent to excluding the movement. This is a stark difference between previous cases and Thailand with major implications.



provoked subsequent coups d'état. Moreover, while there are three distinct actors, it is important to note that the Thai military's ethos is strongly associated with the role of "guardian of the monarchy" – a role that they demonstrated repeatedly during the political volatility between 2006 and 2014 (Chambers 2013, 68). In other words, two of the three actors are inextricably linked (the military and the 'network monarchy'). Beyond their links, the actors are not equals. Recent events have reaffirmed the hierarchical structure of Thailand's political sphere between these three actors: "a dominant monarchy, strong military, and weak civilian polity" (Chambers 2013, 68). The rise of the Thaksin machine during the 2000s as a populist counterweight in civilian government narrowed the gap between the comparative strength of the three actors, but has not fundamentally changed the position of each within the overall Thai political hierarchy. Without a bare minimum amount of tacit support from the king and the military, political elites in Thailand—even someone as popular as Thaksin Shinawatra—do not stand a chance of political survival.

### **Thaksin rising: the political awakening of rural Thailand**

Between 1997 and 2011, Thailand saw "five elections (including the nullified 2006 election), six prime ministers, two constitutions, one military coup and countless violent clashes between state security forces and colour-coded mass movements which led to a large number of deaths and injuries" (Prajak 2014, 387). Since 2011, there has been another election (annulled), another coup (ongoing), and another constitution (drafted, proposed, and pending a referendum). Thailand's recent turmoil has largely revolved around elections. In the four elections between 2001 and 2011, there were 117 political assassination attempts, 18 bombings, and five acts of politically motivated arson—leaving 80 Thais dead and 120 wounded in election-related violence (Prajak 2014, 389). Clearly, Thailand's recent political history has been marked by political volatility and tragic violence—mostly centered around the ongoing feud between the rising star of Thaksin Shinawatra's newly awakened political machine and the entrenched 'network monarchy.'

In February 2001, this confrontation between 'old' and 'new' elites began in earnest. Thaksin Shinawatra became prime minister, winning a general election campaign not by leveraging 'local influence' and clientelism but by offering an appealing 'populist' slate of policies to 'the rural mass' (Pasuk & Baker 2009, 8). Populism was such a new feature in Thai politics that there was not even a word in the Thai language for it; a new one had to be coined (Kasian 2001). New or not, the strategy worked. In previous elections dating to 1979, no single party had won more than a third of the vote share amongst the divided electorate. Yet Thaksin nearly

won an outright majority of votes cast (Pasuk & Baker 2009).<sup>354</sup> Even more striking than the populist commitment and the comfortable victory was Thaksin's ability to follow through on campaign promises: within a year, Thaksin had implemented most of the major elements of his political platform. But even as Thaksin rode a populist wave into power and catered to the interests of the rural poor, he was very much part of an elite network, as "big business interests clustered in and around his cabinet" (Pasuk & Baker 2009, 8). This is a crucial fact, because it set-up the elite standoffs—often fought quite visibly with rival proxy protest movements on the streets of Bangkok—for the next fourteen years.

However, equally salient to the future coup dynamics was the 'awakening' of Thailand's rural population to become politically active—not only by voting in elections in much greater numbers, but also by mobilizing in mass protests, and generally viewing participation in democracy as more than just a patronage-based exchange (Thananithichot 2012). There is a vast array of scholarship supporting the notion that, during the 1990s, rural Thai voters were primarily motivated by patronage and outright vote buying (Jinagool 1995; Khankaew 1996; Sompong 2002; Treethanakorn 2002).<sup>355</sup> Because voters had to be 'activated' by local political elites, voter turnout was consistently low prior to Thaksin's arrival as a major player on the political stage. In the 10 national-level elections between 1975 and 1997, the average national turnout was 55%, and was never higher than 64%. In the subsequent four elections, the average turnout was 73.25% (18.25% higher than the previous average). The lowest turnout during those four recent elections was 70%—six percentage points above the *highest* turnout in the previous three decades. In other words, there was a marked shift in voter behaviour from the pre-Thaksin era to the Thaksin era; Thananithichot (2012) finds strong evidence for the notion that rural Thai voters were, if anything, *more* engaged than urban Thais in recent elections—a major shift from pre-Thaksin politics.<sup>356</sup> Critically, these rural voters (and 'urbanized villagers')—along with urban Thaksin sympathizers in Bangkok—became increasingly mobilized, with hundreds of thousands participating in popular protests regularly throughout the series of Thai political crises during the last 15 years (McCargo 2014).<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> In the 2005 election, Thaksin's *Thai Rak Thai* party was able to form a single-party government because it was so dominant (winning 374 out of 500 seats); this had never happened in Thailand dating back to 1957 (Siripan 2005).

<sup>355</sup> The 'network monarchy' regularly uses the term 'money politics' to insinuate that Thaksin's popularity is a result of vote buying. Most analysts dismiss this claim: "Vote buying is a big myth. It was problem in the 1980s. Parties were weak and relied on intimidation and vote buying. Now, people vote more on policies. Vote buying is still there, but it is not a decisive factor anymore," Prajak Kongkirata, political scientist at Thammasat University, personal interview; Bangkok, 29 December 2014.

<sup>356</sup> This mobilization intensified after the 2001 election, when Thaksin implemented an ambitious new health care policy called the "30 baht" plan, which provided health insurance at the cost of 30 baht per person (roughly \$1 in 2015).

<sup>357</sup> It would be a mistake to believe that Thaksin caused this shift; instead, he understood the socioeconomic change that was happening in Thailand's northeast, and rode that wave to power. "Thailand's current political polarization

Why does this ‘activation’ of political consciousness matter? The answer lies with demographics. Over time, it became clear that Thaksin was genuinely the most popular figure in Thai politics; a free and fair election would yield a Thaksin victory. Moreover, the exclusion of Thaksin was likely to be insufficient to destroy his mass-based movement once it picked up momentum; even without the figurehead, it was a formidable political force. That mobilization capacity had a major impact on conditioning the behavior of both the ‘network monarchy’ and the Thaksin machine.

Thaksin was popular and he knew how to get people to turn out and vote. As a result, Thaksin had no incentive to exclude his rivals; he simply did not need to. Instead, because Thailand has a ‘parallel state’ with the ‘network monarchy,’ the question of exclusion related to neutralizing the incumbent, not the challenger. This became clear as “the military, the bureaucracy, the network surrounding the monarchy, and key business interests” – sought to limit Thaksin’s electoral success, which they viewed as a challenge to their longstanding dominance in Thailand’s political sphere (McCargo 2014). This stands in contrast to the other elections studied in Madagascar, Zambia, Côte d’Ivoire, and Tunisia, where electoral exclusion was alluring *for the incumbent* precisely because it would virtually guarantee victory when the possibility of a ‘free and fair’ victory was in doubt. In this sense, Thailand featured an inverted dynamic from the other cases: in Thailand, a network of elite interests that were technically the formal political opposition (the ‘network monarchy’ and Democrat Party) aimed to neutralize the formal incumbent (Thaksin) with procedural changes, rather than the incumbent aiming to exclude the opposition.

### *The 2005 election and the 2006 coup d’état*

Thaksin ran for re-election in 2005, under the banner of his party (*Thai Rak Thai*). Given Thaksin’s overwhelming popularity heading into the 2005 election and the increasingly obvious—and highly visible—mobilization of hundreds of thousands of *Thai Rak Thai* supporters throughout the country (including in Bangkok), it was quite clear that any effort to remove Thaksin from the ballot would have prompted a major political crisis and a strong likelihood of violence (Hewison 2014). This became even more obvious as the flood waters of the devastating 2004 Tsunami receded a month before the vote took place; Thaksin’s “decisive

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both is and is not about Thaksin. He did not cause Thailand to change. Rather, he and his parties have identified and capitalized on a massive socioeconomic transformation, a shift in the aspirations of voters that has been underway for a couple of decades. Urbanized villagers are utterly weary of the relentless paternalism of Thailand’s capital city and its denizens” (McCargo 2014).

leadership” in the crisis meant that “only a miracle...could turn the tsunami tide [in the election] which is now clearly in favour of Mr Thaksin” (Bangkok Post, 10 January 2005).

In the previous case studies, exclusion was deemed strategically attractive if the candidate in question posed a real threat, if the exclusion could be passed off as being conducted by an allegedly ‘independent’ third party, and if the costs of that exclusion would not be substantial. The first two were no problem in Thailand, but the third criteria—the costs of exclusion—tipped the scales against it being a strategically appealing option. As a result, even though the ‘network monarchy’ had sufficient influence and incentive to try to disqualify Thaksin from the 2005 election, it was not a comparatively appealing course of action. Moreover, unlike in places like Madagascar, independent opinion polling prior to Thailand’s 2005 election provided the electorate with affirmation of what was already apparent: Thaksin was easily the most popular figure in the race. This information constrained the ‘network monarchy’ from acting to sideline Thaksin; not only would the move have likely been condemned internationally but it would have unleashed a groundswell of destabilizing domestic protests—something that the elite was keen to avoid volatility just eight years after the 1997 Asian financial crisis.<sup>358</sup> The Democrat Party was disappointed that exclusion did not take place, and their leadership criticized the Election Commission for not finding sufficient pretexts to disqualify some lower-level parliamentary candidates associated with Thaksin’s *Thai Rak Thai* party. Even if that had happened, however, these measures would not have undermined Thaksin’s overwhelming popularity and the low-level candidates would not have made a meaningful impact on the national results (Croissant & Pojar 2006).<sup>359</sup> Given the obviously high costs of possibly excluding the exceptionally popular Thaksin, he was allowed to stand in elections. With electoral exclusion ruled out, it seemed that the most sensible course of action for the ‘network monarchy’ heading into the 2005 elections was simply to try to go back to their standard political playbook that had worked for decades: allow politicians to battle each other over day-to-day squabbles while retaining a political veto that could be used to constrain, manage, and if necessary, depose politicians as needed. This was the aim, but Thaksin would, over time, make clear that he would not succumb to this strategy: “The political establishment—even those not technically ‘in power’ in Thailand’s government—had been quite successful with controlling the political dynamic. Thaksin broke that contract.”<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Director of the Thailand office of a major international political NGO, unnamed here at their request, personal interview; 11 December 2014, Bangkok.

<sup>359</sup> Thaksin (the incumbent) did not consider using electoral exclusion because he knew he would win without procedural manipulation; actors within the ‘network monarchy’ (in this case, the opposition, even though they retained significant power and influence, in some ways *above* Thaksin) did not attempt to exclude Thaksin or major candidates within his party because of the obvious destabilizing backlash it would have provoked.

<sup>360</sup> Jonathan Prentice, International Crisis Group Senior Advocacy Adviser, personal interview; 6 December 2014, Bangkok.

Thaksin's breakthrough was possible because Thaksin's victory in 2005 was so substantial that he secured a veto-proof and impeachment-proof majority in the parliament (Chambers 2005). This meant that a vote of no confidence was impossible unless it came from within Thaksin's party, a highly unlikely prospect (Ockey 2007). In other words, the opposition parties—including the Democrat Party, which served to some extent as a political proxy for the elite interests embedded in the 'network monarchy'—were (for the first time since 1932) "powerless" to counteract the ruling party's formal political power using the old method of constraining and molding political behavior to conform to what was acceptable to these entrenched elite interests (Croissant & Pojar 2006). This shifted the political dynamic in a way that runs parallel to the opposition experience in Zambia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Madagascar: when legitimate avenues to defeat the incumbent are rendered futile (in those cases by electoral exclusion), the illegitimate avenues of contestation became comparatively more attractive. This logic played out in Thailand. The legitimate way of beating Thaksin was in an election. When that failed, the legitimate way of deposing him would have been by engineering a vote of no confidence or an impeachment, but that had become impossible. As a result, it became clear to the entrenched elite interests that the only way to get rid of Thaksin was not by neutralizing him legitimately at the ballot box or in parliament but in the streets of Bangkok and from the army barracks.

As an incumbent, why didn't Thaksin choose to use electoral exclusion? He certainly could have, and the theoretical propositions of the 'exclusion trap' argument outlined in Chapter One make clear how the strategy would have been effective. But the answer is simple: he was already certain of victory. This adds further nuance to the theory; electoral exclusion is not likely to be used in cases where victory is already assured.<sup>361</sup> Everyone knew it too, which meant that the 'network monarchy' and the opposition movements' hands were tied; attempting to remove Thaksin from the ballot was an obviously poisonous choice that would have prompted a major backlash from international trade partners and investors while simultaneously ensuring a groundswell of destabilizing protests in favour of Thaksin and his *Thai Rak Thai* party. If anything, excluding Thaksin from the 2005 elections would likely have only exacerbated the problem for the 'network monarchy.' However, at that moment in time, "a military coup seemed risky—they [the network monarchy and army] knew there would be mass protests."<sup>362</sup> In other words, for the same reason that exclusion was deemed implausible, so too was a coup

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<sup>361</sup> In fact, there would be an incentive to include opponents, not only to reduce popular discontent but also to get a reasonable 'read' of the political support of rivals.

<sup>362</sup> Prajak Kongkirata, political scientist at Thammasat University, personal interview; Bangkok, 29 December 2014.

d'état off the table (at that snapshot in time). As a result, the elections proceeded in an inclusive manner and, as expected, Thaksin won in a landslide.

*From the streets to the barracks: the 2005-06 political crisis and the 2006 coup d'état*

After the election, Thaksin carried an aura of invincibility. He was not only more popular than any previous Thai politician in history but he won such a large mandate that there was no possibility of being impeached or censured by the opposition. It seemed that this new titan of Thai politics had a firm grip on power. Yet just eighteen months after winning an enormous electoral mandate from the Thai people in the 2005 vote, Thaksin was overthrown in a September 2006 military coup d'état that harnessed a huge outpouring of mass protest to justify the military takeover (Pye & Schaffer 2006, 38). In less than a year and a half, Thaksin had to be transformed in the popular consciousness from a hero to a villain; without that metamorphosis, the 'network monarchy' would have remained constrained, paralyzed by the prospect of a major backlash should they act against the ever-popular Thaksin. What caused this massive shift in such a short time span?

The answer: a coordinated campaign by elites within the 'network monarchy' to depict Thaksin as a power-hungry, anti-king, despot who would do anything to sell out Thailand for his personal business interests. The symbol of this coordinated campaign was a rival elite to Thaksin and a member of the 'network monarchy': Sondhi Limthongkul. Sondhi, a former ally of Thaksin who had previously profited from Thaksin's role in resuscitating his struggling business, is representative of the sometimes convoluted relationship between entrenched elites and Thaksin: many were willing to ally themselves with Thaksin's populist machine until the point where it began to threaten their core interests (Pye & Schaffer 2008, 40). When Thaksin failed to deliver on promises of preferential business treatment toward Sondhi, the two elites had a falling out (Kasian 2006, 33). Sondhi became increasingly outspoken against Thaksin's regime on his radio programme, "Thailand Weekly," and Thaksin promptly shut down the station (a parallel of a misstep that Ravalomanana took in Madagascar attempting to silence Rajoelina on the radio). Stripped of his platform on the airwaves, Sondhi began holding the show in person in Bangkok's major public park, Lumpini Park (Pye & Schaffer 2008, 40). Sensing a political opportunity and a potential sea change in their favour, Thaksin's rivals in the Democrat Party

began echoing Sondhi's calls, asserting that "Thaksin turned parliament into a semi-autocratic body, consumed with the abuse of power and corruption."<sup>363</sup>

This movement picked up steam in January 2006, when a political gift dropped into Sondhi's lap. This came in the form of Thaksin's so-called 'Shin Corp deal.' "It was announced that Thaksin's family had sold their Shin Corp business to a Singaporean government investment company in a tax-free sale. The deal involved a shadowy investment firm called Ample Rich that had been set up in the British Virgin Islands tax-haven" (Pye & Schaffer, 41). Sondhi immediately seized on the deal to expose Thaksin's corrupt business dealings, accusing him of (like Ravalomanana later in Madagascar) using his public authority for private profit.<sup>364</sup> The scale of public outcry over this line of argument was substantial and immediate; on 4 February, Sondhi's call for a protest against the deal attracted at least 50,000 protesters (Pye & Schaffer 2008, 42). This was a major shift in a short period of time, and a critical start to the onset of Thaksin's vulnerability.

Immediately after the success of this protest, Sondhi and several other prominent allies who shared the goal of forcing Thaksin to resign came together to found the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD)—a strangely named movement given that it had the explicit goal of ousting Thaksin, a democratically elected leader, from power (Ockey 2007, 134). Critically, the PAD invoked the powerful monarchy directly as they "accused Thaksin of corruption, undermining democracy, and usurping royal prerogatives and called for royal intervention" (Ockey 2007, 134). For symbolic effect, the PAD protests that continued for the next several months were a sea of yellow shirts. Protesters were instructed to wear the colour—a symbol of the king and the monarchy—as they took to the streets of Bangkok. This yellow sea washed over Bangkok with between 50,000 and 300,000 demonstrators in six protests during the first two months of PAD's formation on 11 February, 26 February, 5 March, 17 March, 25 March, and 29 March (Pye & Schaffer 2008). The organizers were comprised of "an urban elite and conservatives, such as disgruntled royalist civil servants who were being marginalised by the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party, or sections of business who were not part of Thaksin's patronage system" staunchly allied with the 'network monarchy' (Pye & Schaffer 2008, 40). However, they successfully projected the movement to other disgruntled citizens (who were alienated by Thaksin's newfound arrogance, corruption, and brazen contravention of democratic

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<sup>363</sup> Kasit Piromya, former foreign minister of Thailand and Democrat Party leader, personal interview; Bangkok, 18 December 2014.

<sup>364</sup> Moreover, because ShinCorp was being sold to foreign business interests, this appeared to be Thaksin selling out Thailand to foreign rivals—an unpopular move for a supposedly populist politician.

procedures)<sup>365</sup>, allowing PAD to merge top-down pressure from the conservative establishment with impressive grassroots support. The seemingly invincible Thaksin now seemed much more vulnerable.

Thaksin was under immense pressure during this time, as the capital city was transformed into mass demonstrations against his regime. Week after week of elite-organized mass protests created sufficient pressure that Thaksin felt he needed to hold snap elections in the hopes of defusing the situation with a newly elected government (McCargo 2011, 299). This was a strategic move. Thaksin's political rivals knew that, in spite of the mass protests and his newfound vulnerability in symbolic terms, he was still the most popular politician in Thailand. If the vote took place in a free and fair context, it was inevitable that Thaksin would win. As a result, his rivals objected to the snap elections by boycotting the vote. Instead, they refused to legitimize the contest and called for Thaksin's immediate resignation—with the (ultimately successful) aim of turning the snap election into a 'farce' (McCargo 2011, 299). Because the *Thai Rak Thai* party was unopposed in the uncompetitive snap election, Thaksin (unsurprisingly) won another overwhelming victory. The victory was pyrrhic because Thailand's king quickly discredited the election, forcing other actors to intervene. He "made extraordinary remarks to two groups of judges urging them to take responsibility for addressing Thailand's political problems. Within a fortnight, the election had been annulled by the courts and Thaksin's political future was in doubt" (McCargo 2011, 299). Even though Thaksin could not be beaten at the polls, the 'network monarchy' had successfully overridden the potency of electoral politics; the king overruled the election result simply by calling the vote 'undemocratic' and 'a mess' (Hewison 2008, 203).

This was an enormous turning point for the PAD movement to oust Thaksin. With the king showing disdain for Thaksin's electoral victory, it was a clear sign that the 'network monarchy' was on the side of the PAD protests. As a result, "the centre of the opposition moved from PAD to General Prem Tinsulanond, the octogenarian president of the king's Privy Council" (Hewison 2008, 203-204). In the short-term, this shift away from populist mass-based politics deflated the street protests. In the medium-term, however, the involvement of the royalist camp gave a more important form of momentum to the mission of neutralizing Thaksin: "it was clear that the palace wanted Thaksin out" (Hewison 2008, 204). Amidst this political

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<sup>365</sup> This too was a parallel with what would later happen in Madagascar under Ravalomanana's second term, as a stunning electoral landslide victory triggered much bolder action that ultimately led to the incumbent's downfall. "However, by this time, the TRT leadership was so powerful that arrogance had set in, as demonstrated in reprehensible actions against the democratic system and human rights. For example, there were more than 2000 extra-judicial killings in an anti-drugs campaign and sometimes brutal efforts to control southern separatism (see Human Rights Watch, 2004; McCargo, 2007)" (Hewison 2006, 202).



turmoil, but with the implicit backing of the king and his entourage, the military launched a coup d'état.

At first glance, it appears that the military took power in this context simply to satisfy the whims of its main patron: the palace. However, this was not the case. The military had its own reasons to favour the end of Thaksin's regime. Once in power, Thaksin had alienated the military itself in ways that were not immediately obvious based on the street protests; these alienating strategic blunders sealed Thaksin's fate of being deposed by force. First, sharing a mistake that Ravalomanana was repeating at roughly the same time in Madagascar, Thaksin began using career advancement within the military as a political tool. This tactic angered the top ranks of the military brass because they viewed Thaksin as meddling in military affairs (Chambers 2013, 72). Second, Thaksin decreased the military's budget during his time in office, which is never a smart strategy in a coup-prone country (Chambers 2013, 72). Third, Thaksin sought to privatize army-controlled media outlets, such as the Channel Five television station—something that was doubly provocative given the manner in which privatization and the sale of Shin Corp had played out in terms of perceived corruption (Chambers 2013, 72). These three strategic missteps, combined with the fact that Army Commander Sonthi Boonyaratkin was “an arch royalist with political ambitions,” ensured that the military would be an eager partner to the palace in eliminating Thaksin with a coup (Chambers 2013, 72). In other words, even though the military had a close relationship with the palace at the time, there were also motivations unique to the military that aligned in favour of deposing Thaksin by force. The alignment of incentives between palace and barracks was too great to overcome, and a coup became the most obvious choice to achieve the goals of both parties.

On 19 September 2006, the Royal Thai Army rumbled through Bangkok in tanks and took power from Thaksin while he was attending a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in New York (Hewison 2008). Thaksin was aware of this potential threat; he had attempted to limit the palace's influence in the military. He was unsuccessful—when General Prem, who could claim to speak for the palace directly, demanded loyalty, he got it from those in uniform (McCargo 2005).<sup>366</sup> This close alliance between the military and the ‘network monarchy’ was too much for Thaksin.

In 2005-2006, the possibility of excluding Thailand's most popular politician—the incumbent prime minister—was virtually unthinkable. The political blowback would have been immediate and destabilizing. So, it became clear that Thaksin could not be beaten at the ballot

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<sup>366</sup> Furthermore, several loyal Thaksin military officers were moved outside of Bangkok in July in anticipation of the September coup plan (Ockey 2007, 137).

box. In fact, he won by such a wide margin that he could not be beaten in parliament either. And, when the 2006 snap elections reaffirmed these facts, the military and palace joined forces to find another way to beat him: with a coup.

Coups that are likely to be successful are more feasible and enticing than coups that are likely to fail. In process tracing the origins of Thailand's 2006 coup, then, it is crucial to understand how the perceived feasibility of a military intervention increased over time. The turning point, in my view, was when the king publicly chastised the 2006 snap election, providing an implicit criticism of Thaksin's regime. This was further affirmed after the coup took place, as the king gave the takeover his immediate blessing (Kavi 2006; Hewison 2008).<sup>367</sup> This made it virtually certain that the coup would stick; challenging the king's wishes was simply not a rational course of action for anyone who valued their career or their life (Kavi 2006).<sup>368</sup>

However, electoral exclusion did not play a role in the outbreak of the 2006 coup. The situation was not amenable to using that particular election rigging tactic; when the incumbent is virtually invincible at the polls and when politics is already highly mobilized among the masses, electoral exclusion is not the most attractive strategy because of the prospective blowback—even for a powerful entrenched elite (such as the 'network monarchy'). However, electoral exclusion can *become* feasible for future elections if the incumbent is toppled in a coup d'état, because that abrupt act—and the onset of military rule—inevitably shifts the parameters of what is considered legitimate or at least possible in the political arena. Coup governments operating under martial law have more latitude to behave as they see fit than elected governments that are more directly accountable to the people. Thus, when the 19 September 2006 coup took place, the coup government had new weapons to wield against Thaksin that civilian opposition did not. The nine year long battle to exclude and eliminate Thaksin Shinawatra from Thailand's political stage had only just begun.

### *From one Shinawatra to the next: exit Thaksin, enter Yingluck*

After the 2006 coup, the military junta became the new 'incumbent' government. Its leadership set about doing something that civilian rule had failed to do: destroy Thaksin's political career beyond repair. To do so, they turned to the prospect of electoral exclusion. The

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<sup>367</sup> Moreover, there were credible allegations that the junta had paid 1.5 billion Baht (about US\$40 million) to officers to ensure their participation in the coup d'état, further guaranteeing its success and a lack of fragmentation or internal divisions from Thaksin loyalists ("Coup d'état spending not denied by Sonthi", *Bangkok Post*, 20 December 2006).

<sup>368</sup> Indeed, this was made clear in April 1981, when a coup d'état attempt (against Prem as prime minister) failed because the military takeover was not supported by the palace: "The April 1981 coup should have succeeded because it had battalion support, but General Prem—the prime minister at the time—was supported by the royal family, so the coup failed. This cemented Prem's relationship with the king," Thitinan Pongsudhirak, political scientist at Chulalongkorn University, personal interview; Bangkok, 26 December 2014.

junta had already signaled that it planned to file charges against Thaksin. As a result, Thaksin had already fled into exile in London, wary of the impending (and almost certainly politically motivated) warrant for his arrest. This was not sufficient for the junta's ambitions, however. On 30 May 2007, Thailand's Constitutional Tribunal (likely under pressure from the top echelons of the military) ordered the dissolution of the *Thai Rak Thai* party and banned Thaksin Shinawatra from politics for a period of five years (BBC News, 30 May 2007). The aim of this move was to neutralize Thaksin from electoral politics, the arena in which he had previously been unstoppable since 2001. However, unlike in Madagascar or Zambia, eliminating the head of the party was insufficient to destroy the wider party and the influence of the party leader; Thaksin may have been removed from the political stage but he was still a titan in Thai politics, even if it was from several thousand miles away. The *Thai Rak Thai* party officials who were not banned by the ruling simply migrated to the People's Power Party, a smaller party that gladly accepted the mantle of being the new electoral dynamo in Thailand (Thitinan 2012).

In process tracing, it is important to account for shifts in motivations and the constraints that dictate which types of behavior are possible and which types are impossible. Previously, the 'network monarchy' (and its allies in the military) were unable to rely on electoral exclusion because the prospect of removing Thaksin was guaranteed—at that time—to produce considerable backlash and destabilizing protests. By 2007, those constraints were lifted, primarily because the country was in a state of martial law and the threat of a violent crackdown on protests was far more worrisome to would-be "red shirts" protestors, the pro-Thaksin colour-coded alternative to the pro-monarchy PAD "yellow shirt" protesters. Unlike in Côte d'Ivoire, the coup government was not only able to exercise enough *de facto* control to mitigate any threat of large-scale protests from below with coercion and the threat of violence, but it also received a mandate of legitimacy from the king—the only figure in Thai politics at the time that was more popular and powerful than Thaksin himself. The diminishment of Thaksin due to coordinated street protests combined with the greater political latitude afforded to a military government during a time of political crisis meant that electoral exclusion became a strategically attractive tactic for the 'incumbent' coup government in 2007, even if it had been unfathomable for the 'network monarchy' in opposition to Thaksin prior to the 2006 elections.

With Thaksin removed from elections for five years, the junta agreed to hold a vote. However, it quickly became apparent that getting rid of Thaksin would not rid Thailand of his influence. The *Thai Rak Thai* party, cloaked in the label of the PPP, won the most votes – garnering 233 seats compared to the 165 gained by the Democrat Party (the electoral representative of the traditional conservative elite establishment). This came as a "profound

shock” to the ruling junta, which had believed that exclusion would have been sufficient to tip the scales back toward the Democrat Party (Dressel 2010). Instead, by January 2008—just fifteen months after the coup that was supposed to destroy him—“Thaksin was back on top through a proxy prime minister” (Thitinan 2012, 49). When it became clear that the attempt to exclude Thaksin had failed to remove him from the political sphere, the elites that had previously organized the PAD protests called on their yellow shirt followers to yet again take to the streets. They responded with sit-ins of Government House (including the prime minister’s office) in May 2008, and followed that up by taking over Bangkok’s main airport for a week in late November / early December 2008 (Thitinan 2012, 49). In other words, the Thai political climate found itself back in a crisis that seemed like *déjà vu*. Thaksin was not in sight, but he was in power, and the traditional elite yet again sparked protests against his rule.

As this ‘crisis of governability’ festered, the courts—at the urging of elites affiliated with the ‘network monarchy’ returned to the same playbook as they had used in the aftermath of the 2006 coup d’état: they sought to get rid of the head of the party and disband the party itself, hoping to eliminate it from subsequent electoral politics (Thitinan 2012). Demonstrating that winning populist elections does not guarantee absolute authority—particularly if the elite establishment controls the courts and bureaucracy—Thailand’s Constitutional Court removed Thaksin’s proxy, Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej, from power over what was a trumped up abuse of power charge. In one of the most bizarre ‘judicial coups’ in history, the PAD accused Prime Minister Samak of corruption for receiving a nominal payment for appearing on a televised cooking show, making Pad Thai. Samak was convicted on a unanimous 9-0 verdict, and removed from power (Dressel 2010, 682). One week later, the Thailand Supreme Court’s Criminal Division for Holders of Political Positions issued an official arrest warrant for Thaksin Shinawatra himself, forcing the ex-Prime Minister to remain in exile indefinitely (Thaksin is still abroad, living primarily in Dubai). Then, the third in a series of judicial blows against Thaksin’s political base came on 2 December 2008, when the court ordered the PPP party dissolved and disbanded (Dressel 2010, 683). This decisive political strike allowed the ‘network monarchy’ to remove Thaksin from Thailand indefinitely, ban him from future elections, remove his proxy prime minister from power, and eliminate his party; it was, in short, a full-throttled effort to neutralize Thaksin from the political stage and from future ballots.

For a time, this coordinated political attack was successful. However, it brought destabilizing instability. The political climate during this ‘silent judicial coup’ was so divisive that it seemed to many analysts that ‘civil war seemed entirely possible...and likely to be coming within days’ (Nostitz 2009). This did not happen, which seems surprising given the exclusion of

Thaksin and Thaksin's party—which had the capability to mobilize the masses. Why did it not provoke a civil war? The answer lies with co-optation. The “military put enormous pressure on Thaksin's allies to jump ship, wielding both carrot and stick—legislators were offered large financial inducements to switch allegiance, and the army told them there would be a coup unless they changed sides” (MacGregor Marshall 2014, 181). In other words, the ‘insider’ pull of the elites was sufficient to stave off a civil war from ‘outsiders.’ This is an important point because it demonstrates that agency of elites within the matrix of risk factors for political violence; Thailand may have succumbed to a civil war had it not been for the cynical ploy to force Thaksin-affiliated elites into the fold of the state yet again. The red shirt movement *could* have turned violent if it had a political leader vocally calling for conflict and protests, but the ‘network monarchy’—in alliance with the military—had found a way to co-opt the movement while decapitating its leadership...for a time. This effective strategy culminated on 15 December 2008, as parliament voted to elect a new prime minister, Eton and Oxford educated Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva (Ferrara 2011). The old order that catered to the ‘network monarchy’ was back in formal control of the government.

However, the ‘network monarchy’ failed to realize that the social and political changes in Thailand were not just about Thaksin. As Michael Peel, the Bangkok correspondent for the *Financial Times* explains: “The elite goes wrong by viewing Thaksin as a demonic figure—which ignores the broader political and social forces at work.”<sup>369</sup> Thaksin had ridden a wave of political change and populism to power, but *that wave* was challenging the old order; Thaksin was just a symbol of it.

In 2010, the social wave—in the form of the Red Shirts of the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD)—crashed onto the streets of Bangkok in a series of protests and bloody showdowns with the Yellow Shirts of the PAD. The Red Shirts demanded “a ‘real democracy’ – one that would dispense with the long-standing extra-constitutional prerogatives reserved for the country's armed forces, the palace, and King Bhumibol's Privy Council” (Ferrara 2011, 513). The Yellow Shirts, fed up with the incessant turmoil surrounding elections, advocated—to varying degrees—for the removal of even ‘the façade of procedural democracy’ guaranteed under the constitution (Ferrara 2011, 513). These dueling visions for Thailand devolved into street-level violence between Red Shirts and Yellow shirts, resulting in the deaths of 94 people, including demonstrators, government officials, and foreign journalists (International Crisis Group 2010). At least 1,400 others were wounded in the clashes.

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<sup>369</sup> Personal interview; Bangkok, 10 December 2014.

This violence raises several important points about the role of electoral exclusion that deviate from the main focus of the argument outlined above. First, uncertainty surrounding electoral exclusion *prior* to elections can also be deadly. The Red Shirt protesters knew that an election would happen eventually and had already witnessed: the leader of their political movement deposed, forced into exile, and excluded from future involvement in politics; a subsequent prime minister from their movement arrested and deposed by a court; two of their political parties disbanded; and no indication that the rival Democrat Party in government—which catered to the ‘old guard’ elites in the ‘network monarchy’—would allow any fair contestation of the subsequent vote. These factors meant that the announcement of further electoral exclusion of Thaksin and others involved in the *Thai Rak Thai* party (and later, the PPP) was a contributing driver of street-level violence even before the next round of voting took place. In that way, violence can surround the announcement of exclusion rather than after the implementation of it on election day. Second, while I focus on the role of electoral exclusion as a driver of political violence aimed at the state (coups d’état and civil wars), it is important to note that other types of violence may arise from this electoral tactic—including mass protests, rioting, and clashes between security forces and demonstrators. Thailand provides clear evidence in support of this proposition but not enough to demonstrate any causal relationship.<sup>370</sup>

Regardless, the crackdown on the protesters did little to upset Prime Minister Abhisit’s support base among upper middle class and upper class Thais who, along with the southern provinces, favoured the Democrat Party and the ‘network monarchy’ (Ferrara 2011). The 2011 election was a case of ‘here we go again,’ with the same stale divides, as the Democrat Party took on the reincarnated legacy of Thaksin’s political machine. This time, it was Yingluck Shinawatra—his sister—at the head of the ticket, and the party was *Pheu Thai* rather than *Thai Rak Thai* or the PPP (Thitinan 2012). Thaksin, from exile, referred to his sister as “his clone”—clearly signaling that he would be a major figure in any Yingluck government (Thitinan 2012, 48). Like the hydra in Greek mythology, the elite establishment kept trying to cut off the head of the Thaksin movement, only to find it regenerating a new one at least as strong as before. There was always someone else to take up Thaksin’s mantle. As long as a façade of electoral politics existed, the movement remained largely unstoppable—at the polls.

When the 2011 vote took place, the Yingluck-led *Pheu Thai* party—unsurprisingly by now, perhaps—took the majority of seats, 265 out of 500 compared to just 159 for the Democrat Party (Thitinan 2012). Thaksin’s influence was obvious after the victory. He picked nearly her entire cabinet (Thitinan 2012, 49). However, unlike previous contests, it appeared that

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<sup>370</sup> This requires further research.

the ‘network monarchy’ and the resurrected incarnation of Thaksin’s political movement were eager to avoid the stale storyline of political showdowns ending in the dissolution of government, the arrest of the prime minister, and military or judicial intervention. Both sides, it seemed, were fatigued; neither needlessly provoked the other as Yingluck’s government took power. 2012 began ‘in an atmosphere of a stalemate’ (Thitinan 2012, 50). However, there seemed to be an understanding between the two sides, as Yingluck’s government began to aggressively enforce the draconian *lèse majesté* laws that guarantee harsh punishments (often between three and fifteen years in prison) for criticizing the monarchy. The government also assisted with the Computer Crimes act, allowing for monitoring of such anti-monarchy criticism on the internet. Moreover, Yingluck’s government “was weak and she feared a military coup,” so she gave the military “almost everything they wanted—arms deals, increased funding.”<sup>371</sup> In return, “debilitating street protests, party dissolutions, and politician disqualifications have abated” (Thitinan 2012, 50). For a time, there was a sort of equilibrium, where Yingluck’s government avoided provoking the sleeping conservative establishment, and the conservative establishment permitted her to remain in power.

#### *Why was there no violence after Thaksin was excluded from the 2011 elections?*

If my theoretical propositions outlined previously are correct, then the strategic elite interactions of the 2011 election should have increased the risk that a civil war would break out. Electoral exclusion was used to remove a popular political figure (Thaksin) from the ballot. That political figure had the capability to mobilize the masses on his behalf (as was made tragically clear in the 2010 Red/Yellow clashes that left nearly a hundred dead in the streets of Bangkok). And, although the Thaksin machine clearly had links to the military, the military brass was clearly aligned *against* Thaksin, which ruled out a coup d’état as a feasible option (this had been made clear in 2006, when the military removed Thaksin from power). So, why did a civil war not happen? There are several reasons, and each highlights the important fact that *even when electoral exclusion takes place, the risk of a coup or a civil war is low in absolute terms*. In other words, even though exclusion increases the risk in comparative terms, the probability of violence remains low overall for any individual election. Thailand’s political dynamics surrounding the 2011 vote make clear why this might be.

First, Thaksin was excluded and his party was disbanded, but his movement lived on—and won—without its patriarch. This was distinct from the exclusion of Ouattara in Côte d’Ivoire, Kaunda in Zambia, and Pierrot Rajaonarivelo in Madagascar because their parties

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<sup>371</sup> Prajak Kongkirati, personal interview; Bangkok, 29 December 2014.

decided to boycott the contests that they knew they could not win without their charismatic front man on the ballot. The various parties affiliated with Thaksin correctly discerned that they would win—even without Thaksin—in 2008 and 2011, so they stood at the polls even as their top figure was not allowed on the ballot. This is a major difference, because it meant that electoral exclusion neutralized the name but not the movement; when an excluded candidate's movement still wins the election, violence in the form of a coup or civil war is far less likely. After all, no political movement will sponsor a coup or civil war against itself (and rebelling against the king was a non-starter, as I explain below).

Second, many elites in the party were co-opted by the rival political establishment, particularly in 2008 when Prime Minister Abhisit rose to power without a national election. It became clear during the cycles of crisis during the 2000s that battling the elite conservative establishment and the 'network monarchy' came with major risks and costs. The successful co-optation of Thaksin-allied elites mitigated the risk that those who were not yet excluded from politics would throw away their political careers, risking everything by sponsoring a rebellion. In this way, elite self-interest and an enticing combination of carrots and sticks, precluded mass violence.

Third, and finally, the Thai case played out in a context that was distinct from other national political contexts because of the unifying nature of the monarch. Even many Red Shirt activists who believed the palace to be behind the machinations against Thaksin were hesitant to speak out against the monarchy. This may have been partly out of fear, but many analysts suspect that this is also out of a genuine adoration—or at least respect—for the king.<sup>372</sup> As a result, the idea of a rebellion against this unifying and mythical figure was unfathomable to many Thais during this period. Even for those that believed in the possibility of a rebellion, the Thai military was a formidable foe—in a way that the Ivoirian military was not in 2002, for example. The strength of the Thai military decreased the perceived feasibility of rebellion. And, “many people believe that the king can do no wrong and the military is the guardian of the king.”<sup>373</sup> Cumulatively, these three factors help explain why Thailand did not descend into a civil war as a result of electoral exclusion in the 2011 elections, but the most important consideration was the obvious one: even without Thaksin, Yingluck Shinawatra was allowed to stand, and win, in place of her excluded brother.

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<sup>372</sup> Personal interview, Thai political journalist, unnamed here at their request; Bangkok, 16 December 2014.

<sup>373</sup> Professor Nung Yuttaporn, political scientist at Sukhothai Thammathirat University, personal interview; Bangkok, 19 December 2014.



### *The 2014 coup d'état: "Sia Kong" and learning from the 'mistakes' of 2006*

The tenuous equilibrium between Yingluck's conciliatory government and the parallel state (represented by the 'network monarchy', the military, and the Democrat Party and its supporters) did not last for long. The equilibrium was upset for several reasons (perhaps the most important being the inevitable incompatibility of the two elite networks' visions for Thailand) but three catalysts accelerated this showdown: Yingluck's doomed so-called 'rice pledging scheme', her failed attempt at passing an amnesty bill to allow Thaksin to return to Thailand without being charged for crimes, and a proposal to allow senators to be directly elected rather than appointed. All were strategic 'blunders' that breathed new life into street protests, accelerated political deadlock between the rival elite factions, and gave the military the opportunity—yet again—to depose an elected civilian government, which they did on 22 May 2014.<sup>374</sup>

In 2011, Yingluck's government introduced a populist 'rice pledging scheme,' intended to "improve the living standards of Thai rice farmers by increasing rice prices...the program allows farmers to directly pledge rice to the government at a fixed price of 15,000 Baht (\$469) per ton" (Pongkwan 2014, 45). However, the government was unable to offload their rice supply at these inflated prices—creating a "surplus of rice that is unprecedented" (Pongkwan 2014, 45). Moreover, the Democrat Party leaked a classified audit document showing that the scheme was already \$8.13 billion over budget in 2013—an enormous sum at a time when Thailand's economy was struggling (Pongkwan 2014, 45). This document prompted Moody's credit agency to downgrade Thailand's sovereign debt, a major blow to Yingluck's regime and fuel to the 'network monarchy' simmering fire of opposition to the Thaksin machine. The rice pledging scheme became a rallying cry for the opposition, eager to find yet another opening to depose an elected prime minister affiliated with Thaksin.

Furthermore, the government's attempt to change the rules so that senators would be directly elected rather than appointed was a major provocation to the 'network monarchy,' and the Democrat Party. After all, appointed senators was one of the few remaining spheres of formal influence for the 'parallel government.' Expanding the power of the electorate at a time

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<sup>374</sup> Thitinan Pongsudhirak, personal interview; Bangkok, 26 December 2014. Moreover, Yingluck herself weighed in on this question: "Responding to her [2015] impeachment, Yingluck cited a speech she gave in Mongolia in April 2013 that marked a turning point in her premiership. After taking office in mid-2011, Yingluck made a virtue of necessity, assuming an imperturbable and conciliatory persona in order to mollify the establishment. In the Mongolia speech, she dropped her characteristic conciliatory tone and attacked "an antidemocratic regime" that toppled Thaksin in a 2006 coup, that ejected two pro-Thaksin prime ministers in 2008, and that, she said, continued to menace her administration. Her opponents, including opposition politicians and appointed senators, were outraged that she had implicitly and publicly criticized them from overseas. From that point on, a popular movement to oust her gained momentum" (Wheeler 2015).

when the establishment sought to curb their influence as much as possible was something that created further tensions and swung establishment opinion firmly against Yingluck (Nelson 2014).

Yingluck's government committed a final political blunder: the government's misguided attempt to push an amnesty bill through parliament. The bill would have granted amnesty across political lines—including to former Democrat Party Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, who stood accused of murder for his role in the cracking down on protesters in 2010—but the main plank of the bill was to remove charges against Thaksin, paving the way for him to return from exile. Even for Abhisit, who would have benefitted from the bill, this was a provocation: "We would have liked to have won [the 2011 election], but we didn't. I said that the one thing that they do not have a mandate for was to grant amnesty to Thaksin...they sent a signal to us that if we didn't play along we would be prosecuted for the events in 2010."<sup>375</sup> In other words, even though the Democrat Party—as a proxy party for the elite conservative establishment—was explicit in their staunch opposition to any measure that would allow Thaksin to return without a trial, Yingluck's government proceeded anyway. Why? As former Prime Minister Abhisit suggests, "They realized that public opposition to the amnesty bill would be strong, but if you put yourself in his [Thaksin's] shoes, that was as good a time as any to get it done; the government had a majority."<sup>376</sup> It would backfire, as opening the pathway to Thaksin's return was akin to poking the network monarchy's hornet's nest.

These strategic mistakes not only provoked the conservative establishment but also activated opposition to Yingluck's government within the military. As Major General Werachon Sukhondhapatipak, spokesperson for the NCPO military junta currently in power, explained: "Our support for the civilian government changed when the government did something immoral—like the amnesty bill or to try to change the Senators to be directly elected."<sup>377</sup> This primed the military for future intervention, and is a key turning point in the process tracing narrative of critical shifts of the military's intentions over time.

Beyond the military elite, Yingluck's government was right to expect strong public opposition to the amnesty bill when they introduced it in October 2013. On the *Pheu Thai* party (Thaksin-allied) side, red shirts were appalled that the government would grant amnesty to Abhisit, who was implicated in the deaths of up to 100 protesters—most of them red shirts (Kitti 2015, 201). On the other side, the Democrat Party was incensed at the notion that Thaksin would return after seven years of their sustained efforts to neutralize him as a political threat. By this time, the rice pledging scheme had allegedly lost nearly \$20 billion—even more

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<sup>375</sup> Abhisit Vejjajiva, former prime minister of Thailand, personal interview; Bangkok, 29 December 2014.

<sup>376</sup> Abhisit, personal interview, 29 December 2014.

<sup>377</sup> Personal interview; Bangkok, 18 December 2014.

than the leaked document had suggested earlier. These two factors gave ample political ammunition to those that wanted Yingluck out of power. However, in the merry-go-round of Thai political crises, this time it was not PAD leading the charge. Instead, a new movement was created out of the alphabet soup acronyms of the traditional elite—the People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC). The PDRC was led by Suthep Thaugsuban, “ex-secretary-general of the opposition Democrat Party, [meaning that] the self-appointed committee gained a great number of followers from the middle class living in Bangkok and provincial cities, and particularly from Southern provinces, the Democrat stronghold” (Kitti 2015, 201). The PDRC organized protests aimed at crippling the government and forcing Yingluck’s departure—following in the footsteps of two prime ministers from her movement. During the protests, “government agencies were either occupied or barred to entry. Government officials were asked not to come to work” (Kitti 2015, 200). By shutting down government, the PDRC succeeded at forcing Yingluck to take action: she called snap elections in December 2013 to form a new government and regain her lost legitimacy. This was not enough for the ‘network monarchy’. The PDRC (and the conservative establishment more broadly) recognized that the election would follow the same script as every other vote since 2001—the Thaksin machine would win. As a result, the protesters shifted from disrupting the government to disrupting the election. The Democrat Party boycotted again, and anti-Yingluck agitators used guerilla tactics on election day including, “obstructing candidates trying to tender their applications, looting ballot boxes, and even obstructing officers and voters from entering the polling places” (Kitti 2015, 202). In most southern provinces (the regional stronghold of the Democrat Party), few polling places opened at all on election day. Even though the Red Shirts sought to force voting to proceed (even adorning their demonstrations with photos of King Bhumibol and Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn to signal that they were not, in fact, anti-monarchy), their efforts were unsuccessful against the PDRC. With the PDRC’s disruptions, so many flaws marred the election that the Constitutional Court swiftly nullified its result. It was the “messiest” election in modern Thai history. The situation threatened to devolve into unprecedented bloodshed, as there was a series of grenade attacks and shootings between rival PDRC activists and Red Shirt protesters—and some analyst “suspected that those gunmen might have been sent by the military” (Kitti 2015, 202). Whether a fair allegation or not, Thailand was—yet again—teetering on the brink of major violence.

The PDRC—with the support of the conservative establishment—“created deadlock—an impasse—so there was no other way out [than a coup].”<sup>378</sup> Foreign governments issued travel

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<sup>378</sup> Prajak Kongkirati, personal interview, 29 December 2014.

warnings, the stock market plunged, and the streets of Bangkok were impassable for months as the two rival elite networks battled with their proxy mass mobs. As Major General Werachon explained, “Every night there was violence. People worried about grenade attacks. Bangkok was a very insecure place...we tested the waters and let elections run by the system did not work.”<sup>379</sup> What General Werachon meant by this, perhaps, was that elections did not ‘work’ because they continued to deliver victories to the Thaksin movement rather than someone that was in the camp of the conservative establishment and was favoured by the palace and its guardian, the Thai military.

Eventually, the military brass decided to intervene yet again. On 7 May 2014, Yingluck was removed from office on a trumped up and politicized charge of corruption. This paved the way for a direct military takeover. On 20 May 2014, General Prayuth, the army commander, declared martial law. Again, General Werachon explains the critical events of the next two days: “On 21<sup>st</sup> May, we decided we could not let the situation go on. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, I was in the room—it was clear everyone was acting only on their interest. We cannot let people die on a daily basis. We cannot let deadlock continue. Nobody was talking about the national interest...the situation was hopeless. We could not let this go on; so many countries have let ‘the people solve things themselves’—Ukraine, Syria, Iraq—and how many people have to die?”<sup>380</sup>

In making this comparison, the military’s official logic echoes the notion that the army is the ‘protector’ of the nation, and by extension, the monarchy. On 22 May 2015, the military took power. General Prayuth became the acting prime minister. Yingluck was arrested and subsequently banned from politics for five years—another act of future electoral exclusion (mirroring the action against her brother). Her trial is ongoing, but she could face up to ten years in prison if she is convicted (Wheeler 2015). For the Red Shirt leader, Dr. Weng Tajirakorn, the coup was more brutal. He describes his experience as he was speaking at the Red Shirt demonstration: “At about 2pm, I was told that they had announced a coup. After 3 or 5 minutes, they aimed an M16 and a pistol at my head. They seized the microphone from me and I told them I would go with them if they didn’t shoot or open fire. Then they arrested me. I was put in a small cell, 1/3 the size of this room—for 7 days and I was eating rotten chicken but they boiled it so I wouldn’t get sick.”<sup>381</sup>

Was this just a repeat of the 2006 coup? Street vendors in Thailand are known for telling prospective buyers—particularly gullible buyers from the West—that counterfeit merchandise is

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<sup>379</sup> Major General Werachon Sukhondhapatipak, personal interview; Bangkok, 18 December 2014.

<sup>380</sup> Werachon, interview, 18 December 2014.

<sup>381</sup> Interview; Bangkok, 15 December 2014.

*almost* the real thing by saying that it is ‘same same, but different.’ This saying adorns t-shirts and is a common expression encountered on the streets of Bangkok. But it is also apt for the 2014 coup in comparison to the 2006 coup. The dynamics for both coups were ‘same same’—in both instances, the conservative establishment stirred up popular protests and fomented government deadlock as a means to defeat and depose the popularly elected Thaksin-affiliated government. The 2014 coup was, however, different. It was different because the newly empowered junta “learned the lesson from the last coup; the last coup was a failed coup. It failed because it could not eliminate Thaksin and his political network...After the last coup, the Thaksin party still won the elections.”<sup>382</sup> The military was determined to not make the same mistake. As one prominent political activist and political theorist told me, “they don’t want to repeat 2006...This is like the Thai concept of *sia kong*, like when you order a big meal but only eat a little bit and the rest goes to waste. It should be used but it is wasted. As a reaction to 2006, they are making clear: “This time, we will not ‘sia kong’ this time, we will go the whole length.”<sup>383</sup> Put slightly differently, one analyst who asked to remain anonymous told me: “The military often says that the 2006 coup went to waste because it didn’t get the job done—and the job was to destroy Thaksin.”<sup>384</sup>

The military has learned their lesson. In practice, what this means is that the junta are not—at least so far—allowing Thaksin’s political machine to be resuscitated from its current dormant state. Yingluck, like Thaksin before her, has been banned from politics for five years, but her removal from politics could last significantly longer—particularly if she is jailed for the next decade. Like Thaksin, Yingluck’s removal will do little for Thailand’s prospects for national reconciliation. However, the junta has learned a clear lesson from 2006 and the subsequent period: unlike in Madagascar, or Zambia, or Côte d’Ivoire, eliminating the figurehead of the Thaksin party is not equivalent to eliminating the Thaksin party’s influence in electoral politics. They know that “the idea that if you remove Thaksin, you remove the lifeblood of the Red Shirts, is wrong.”<sup>385</sup> The Thaksin machine’s success is indicative of a social shift that goes beyond the intra-elite rivalry. As a result, the scope of the 2014 coup is much broader than the transient 2006 military takeover. General Prayuth is still prime minister more than one year after taking power. He is making clear to journalists that criticism of the military-led regime will not be tolerated.<sup>386</sup> Now, as has happened many times before, the coup is ushering in a new constitution drafting process; as Dr. Weng Tajirakorn, leader of the UDD (Red Shirts) told me:

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<sup>382</sup> Prajak, interview, 29 December 2014.

<sup>383</sup> Unnamed here at their request for their own safety, personal interview; 17 December 2014.

<sup>384</sup> Country director, major international political NGO, personal interview; Bangkok, 8 December 2014.

<sup>385</sup> Matt Wheeler, Thailand country director, International Crisis Group, interview; Bangkok, 6 December 2014.

<sup>386</sup> Interview, prominent journalist for *The Nation*, unnamed here at his request; Bangkok, 9 December. This journalist was detained by the junta and kept for one week. His Twitter feed is closely monitored and he has been approached three times by military officials as a way of pressuring him to avoid writing anything critical.

“Constitutions in Thailand grow from the barrel of a gun.”<sup>387</sup> This time, however, the constitution is growing differently than before, because it is sprouting clauses that are explicitly aimed at reducing the impact of the electorate on the fundamental governing of the Thai kingdom. The proposed draft constitution aims to make electoral exclusion unnecessary with several key measures. First, the draft calls for a change to a proportional representation system that will force dominant parties to form coalitions—making it less likely that any single party could win a veto-proof or vote of no confidence-proof majority (BBC News, 19 May 2015). Second, the upper house of parliament would be primarily comprised of appointed members, likely using an appointment process that gives significant input to the conservative establishment (BBC News, 19 May 2015). Third, the proposed constitution calls for allowing non-elected MPs to serve as prime minister, which opens the possibility of having a general—perhaps General Prayuth—remain in power even without winning the general election. These decisions, along with several other procedural tweaks in the proposed constitution add up to a document that is perceived by most analysts and political parties to be “intended to neuter parliament, create weak coalition governments and allow unelected bureaucrats and judges to overrule policy decisions” (Reuters, 13 May 2015). These changes are, for now, speculative. The new constitution is not yet in place, nor has it been formally approved by a pending referendum. However, these changes are indicative of a new logic for Thailand’s conservative establishment that they can no longer play the old game against the new power of the Thaksin machine. Electoral exclusion is not enough when a party with high levels of mass mobilization and a deep pool of prospective candidates is able to bounce back from the head of the party being banned. However, even with that caveat, it is clear that now “they are out of Shinawatras.”<sup>388</sup> However the Red Shirts and the Thaksin machine try to re-form, it will be without Thaksin or Yingluck. Yet because demographics and strong mass mobilization are on their side, the Thaksin-inspired party that replaces them will continue to be a powerful political force even after electoral exclusion and politically motivated convictions have taken their toll.

### *Conclusion: false positives and failed exclusion*

Ultimately, Thailand’s repeated experience since 2006 is a ‘false positive’ case study that nonetheless reinforces the theory by showing how coups can be a response to failed attempts at exclusion, particularly in political environments with two competing ‘parallel states.’ In countries like Turkey, or Pakistan, or Iran, where there is a ‘deep state’ that operates in some ways ‘above’ the fray of electoral politics, the battle for inclusion and exclusion around elections can focus on

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<sup>387</sup> Interview; Bangkok, 15 December 2014.

<sup>388</sup> Matt Wheeler, International Crisis Group, interview; Bangkok, 6 December 2014.

the incumbent just as much as the opposition. This was never in question in Madagascar, for example, because there was no rival power structure to oppose Ravalomanana's candidacy in 2006; he was the state and there was no 'parallel.' In Thailand, the 'network monarchy' in alliance with the military provides a check and a constraint on elected officials, making electoral exclusion of incumbents possible—particularly after a coup d'état (judicial or otherwise) has taken place. When electoral exclusion was insufficient to neutralize the Thaksin movement—incarnated sequentially as *Thai Rak Thai*, the People's Power Party, or *Pheu Thai*—the conservative establishment removed those successive elected governments by force. As a result, the 2014 coup in Thailand was a response to the *failure* of electoral exclusion, rather than a response to its success. This is, therefore, a false positive in the context of my theoretical proposition, which holds that coups (and civil wars) are launched by disgruntled political movements in response to their party being the target of electoral exclusion. In spite of being a false positive, the Thai experience highlights how the dynamics of electoral exclusion can shift in different political contexts, while still underscoring the fact that the strategic decision over inclusion or exclusion from an election can provoke volatility and political violence.

## CONCLUSIONS, POLICY LESSONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

### *Eliminating 'the exclusion trap' and its destabilizing effects*

#### Summary of Findings

The persistence of electoral exclusion in contested multi-party elections around the world is troubling. Using qualitative and quantitative evidence, I have attempted to demonstrate why incumbents turn to the tactic in the first place and how its use in exclusionary elections heightens the subsequent risk of coups and civil wars—particularly in ‘counterfeit democracies’ around the globe.

Incumbents—especially those in counterfeit democracies or the ‘competitive authoritarian’ regimes identified by Levitsky & Way (2002)—fall into the ‘exclusion trap,’ trading a surefire electoral victory in a rigged, exclusionary election for an elevated risk of being deposed later on with political violence—particularly coups d’état and civil wars. They are drawn into this trap because of the shortened time horizons ushered in by elections; because the risk of being deposed in political violence remains low in absolute terms; and because the tactic provides the opportunity—all too often it turns out—for incumbents to have their cake and eat it too, rigging a vote but still receiving a mantle of international legitimacy.

This ‘trap’ functions in two distinct stages. In the first, the incumbent chooses whether or not to exclude a major rival. Several characteristics of electoral exclusion make it more attractive than alternative forms of rigging: it is easier to perform logistically; it often provides a legal ‘smokescreen’ defense, insulating the incumbent from domestic and international criticism; it is rarely condemned by international election monitors; and it substantially heightens the incumbent’s average margin of victory once used. These incentives impel incumbents toward excluding rivals, even if it creates future (but ultimately unknown) risk—risk that can be discounted in the face of the quite real short-term prospect of being defeated at the ballot box.

However, if the incumbent removes a rival’s name from the ballot, the second stage of this potentially toxic elite interaction revolves around the excluded opposition’s choice to turn to bullets or not. They have a few choices in this regard. The opposition can (and sometimes does) simply accept defeat, reluctantly acknowledging that a shrewd incumbent outmaneuvered them. If the excluded party is truly strong, as was the case in Thailand, the party may choose to contest elections even without the excluded figurehead. But for most groups, victory after exclusion is impossible and accepting defeat is insufficient—particularly given the long period of being forced to sit on the sidelines before having another shot at being allowed to contest the



next election. As a result, opposition groups may seek alternative courses of action. They could challenge the decision in court, attempting to impose reputational costs on the future legitimacy of the incumbent regime. They could also take aim at the incumbent’s reputation by boycotting the election. They could protest the result peacefully, and many losing parties do.<sup>389</sup> But these tactics often fail to deliver the desired result, as incumbents that exclude rivals all too often do not receive any biting consequences in return. As a result, a more extreme option can prove most alluring: attacking the regime violently—with a coup attempt or civil war. I demonstrate quantitatively and qualitatively why and how this conflict risk rises in the wake of exclusionary elections. While this decision occurs in a minority of cases, the magnitude of impact from an elevated risk of political violence means that this phenomenon is extremely consequential and must be taken seriously.

Once the opposition chooses to take up bullets after being excluded from the ballot, the *types* of violence that occur in the wake of exclusion are conditioned, the evidence suggests, by certain characteristics of the excluded party or the excluded candidate. As outlined in the theory chapter, Figure 21 offers a reminder of which types of violence are most likely for each type of party—in relation to their ‘insider’ connection to the regime and their ability to effectively mobilize a support base to act on their behalf.

*Figure 21: Excluded groups and the most likely pathway of political violence*

**PARTY MOBILIZATION CAPABILITIES / INSIDER CONNECTION TO THE REGIME**

	INSIDER CONNECTION	NO INSIDER CONNECTION
WEAK MOBILIZATION CAPABILITY	Coup feasible	Neither boycott nor violence feasible
STRONG MOBILIZATION CAPABILITY	Boycotts, civil war and coup feasible	Boycott and civil war feasible

I demonstrate that these findings hold up to statistical scrutiny, but also provide an explanation for how this relationship plays out in national political contexts with five case studies in three political regions: sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East/North Africa. Figure 22 summarizes how the case studies compare on key variables, and how each divergent pathway affirms the unifying rule: electoral exclusion is destabilizing and electoral inclusion is stabilizing.

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<sup>389</sup> Peaceful protests may morph into violent forms of protesting if the protests are repressed or the pace of change is deemed too slow by the opposition group. See, for example, the ANC’s turn toward violence after the Sharpsville massacre.

Figure 22: Case studies in Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Zambia, Tunisia & Thailand on salient characteristics

Country (year)	Polity score	Exclusion?	Boycott?	Insider connection?	Violence?
Côte d'Ivoire (1995)	-6 (Autocracy)	Yes	Yes, but weak	Yes	None
Côte d'Ivoire (2000)	+4 (Counterfeit)	Yes	Yes	No	Civil war
Madagascar (2006)	+7 (Democracy)	Yes	Partial	Yes	Coup d'état
Madagascar (2013)	0 (Counterfeit)	Yes	No	Yes	None
Zambia (1996)	+1 (Counterfeit)	Yes	Yes, but weak	Yes	Failed coup
Tunisia (2009)	-4 (Autocracy)	Yes	Yes, but weak	No	Coup/revolution
Tunisia (2014)	? (Transition)	No	No	N/A	None
Thailand (2006)	-5 (Autocracy)	Yes	No	Yes	Coup d'état
Thailand (2014)	+7 (Democracy)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Coup d'état

The case studies affirm several theoretical assumptions. For example, several shifts in Côte d'Ivoire between 1995 and 2000 help explain why one exclusionary election prompted a civil war while the other did not. The 1995 vote took place in an autocratic state, a political system that is well equipped to stymie rebellion. Moreover, the boycott that took place in 1995 was not predicated on a strong enough ability to mobilize supporters—which further reduced the likelihood of a civil war. These dynamics changed by 2000. With a counterfeit democracy in place and with a much stronger party mobilization capacity, the same form of election manipulation produced a dramatically different outcome—a violent rebellion.

These case studies provide further context and nuance to the statistical relationships developed in the quantitative analysis. The excluded party in Côte d'Ivoire's 1995 election *had* an insider connection to the regime; a coup d'état was therefore feasible. Yet no violence broke out. That underscores the fact that there is no guarantee that violence will break out after exclusionary elections. Instead, the model predicts a surge only in comparative risk; such violence is unlikely in absolute terms. However, the statistical findings combined with the case study evidence do lead me to conclude that exclusion is very likely a contributing factor to conflict risk. The array of case studies further demonstrates the varying contours of this causal relationship, but also provides the caveat that such relationships are not deterministic. The strongest value of meso-level research is that elite actions are malleable; incumbents are not like mountains or GDP levels—they are able to choose certain behaviors over others. The

incentives that currently make exclusion an attractive strategy for incumbents around the world are not fixed. By understanding how and why elite behaviour precipitates violence, we therefore have the opportunity to not just understand certain conflict drivers but also to mitigate them. I will outline some possible approaches as to how incentives could be changed to remove electoral exclusion from being an attractive item on the ‘menu of manipulation,’ in the hopes that a renewed emphasis on inclusive elections will undercut a highly avoidable cause of conflict around the world. These policy changes may not be the correct course of action, but by proposing one set of possible solutions, I hope to highlight the difficult decisions that must be faced if electoral exclusion is to become a rigging tactic of the past. But first, some caveats.

### **Caveats**

As with all social science research, there are inevitably reasons for caution in interpreting findings and proposing policy interventions. First, it is clear that electoral exclusion is not *the* driver of civil wars and coups, but a contributing factor that exacerbates the risk of political violence. My findings do not challenge the vast array of conflict scholarship that suggests multiple risk factors for civil war and coup outbreaks. Instead, the evidence presented here demonstrates that elections may be an oft-overlooked factor in conditioning elites to create avoidable conflict traps, but that other intervening factors are nonetheless salient.

Second, as with any quantitative analysis, there is the risk of measurement error. I have attempted to minimize this pitfall wherever possible with best practices approaches to coping with common problems—using independently coded variables, running spot checks on data, triangulating sources when necessary, etc. However, some problems invite more cause for caution than others. In a perfect world, I would not have to use the proxy variable of boycotts as a possible indication of party strength, for example. Reliable data for that variable do not currently exist. Therefore, I used the best proximate variable to capture the salient aspect I was attempting to study, bolstered with considerable qualitative evidence—which is extremely important support to fill in any statistical weaknesses of my data analysis. Such pitfalls do not negate the overall findings, but the evidence could be solidified in the future as better and more comprehensive databases about incumbents and challengers become available.

Third, there is still an important question about regional variation. I am reasonably confident that the evidence confirms the broader theory in sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, where I conducted three different stints of fieldwork. While I am encouraged by the findings in other areas of the world (such as Tunisia in the Middle East/North Africa region and Thailand in the Southeast Asia/Asia region), and I was also encouraged by the quantitative data when the

models were run with regional fixed effects, I still think that there is an important role of regional political culture and regional variation on key economic and political institutions that cannot be easily captured with statistical modeling or single-country case studies. This is an important caveat, and one that may be addressed in future research as scholars begin to understand how strategic election rigging differs in diverse regional contexts. Of particular interest is the unresolved question as to why observers tend to condemn elections with similar rigging tactics less often in some regions than others.

Despite these important caveats, the overall evidence does lead me to conclude with reasonable confidence that the ‘exclusion trap’ is real, and that it is an important causal factor in the outbreak of many coups and civil wars around the world.

### **Policy Proposals: Sealing off the ‘Exclusion Trap’**

So how can the trap be eliminated? In the theoretical analysis outlined previously, I argue that electoral exclusion is an attractive strategy for a simple reason: it comes with more benefits than costs, while allowing power-hungry incumbents to win elections and retain legitimacy. Any successful policy intervention aiming to reduce a particular election manipulation strategy must, therefore, decrease the benefits and increase the costs of excluding rivals from elections. Thankfully, in this instance, the presence of international election monitors and their importance in the decision-making calculations of incumbents around the world offers a possible solution—if appropriate policy changes are made and adequate consideration is given to possible drawbacks of any such changes.

The current system frequently allows incumbents to ‘get away with’ electoral exclusion. Typically, when exclusion is used in contested elections and international monitors are present, the election proceeds as scheduled. The exclusion of candidates is sometimes noted in the final observation report, sometimes not—it depends on how masterfully the incumbent was at shielding him or herself behind the guise of an ‘independent’ third party or the veil of ‘legal’ exclusion. *If* the exclusion is detected by observers, it is usually noted in the observers’ final report’s section on candidate registration and treated like an equal consideration to other aspects of election quality: voter registration, campaign finance, ballot tabulation, etc. Often, if the other aspects of election quality are flawless, the election is given a positive verdict—even if a major opposition candidate was excluded.

However, not all forms of manipulation are equal. Some rigging guarantees victory for the incumbent while other forms simply make it more difficult for the opposition to win. The opposition can still win even if the campaign finance system is opaque and unfair. The

opposition may still win if voter registration proceeds in a systematically biased way. But an opposition candidate that is excluded from the ballot cannot win. In other words, electoral exclusion is often the whole ballgame—once successfully implemented, the voting itself is usually just pageantry toward a foregone conclusion. It should be treated as a more egregious violation of democratic norms than other forms of election manipulation.

Yet, most international election observers do not behave as though electoral exclusion is any different from other types of rigging. If Barack Obama managed to ban a Republican candidate from contesting the United States' 2016 presidential election, nobody would even pretend that the election was worth monitoring or observing. It would be immediately declared a sham, condemned, and the United States would face the embarrassment of being decried for its democracy deficit. But the same tactics in Africa, or Southeast Asia, or the Middle East yield drastically different results. In around half of all cases, the monitors even endorse the sham vote. This blind eye must see if electoral exclusion is to be ended as a viable, attractive, strategic choice for incumbents. This is not to say that there are easy solutions, but it is to say that these considerations should be given a more thoughtful review than has happened in the *status quo*.

The evidence suggests that there are several specific strategies that could be implemented in order to deter incumbents from falling into the destabilizing 'exclusion trap' of neutralizing their rivals before ballots are even printed.<sup>390</sup> All policy changes have upsides and downsides, but I believe that the following proposals would have a positive impact, reducing the allure of exclusion and the corollary of future violent conflict in its wake.

First, election monitors (and their donors) could invest sufficient funding in long-term observers to detect and deter procedural manipulation in the many months before election day. As Thomas Carothers (1997) put it, there is far too much emphasis on the 'here today, gone tomorrow' nature of international monitoring, particularly because it is cheap to fly a horde of short-term election day monitors in for election day itself only to fly them out immediately after voting ends. It is expensive—but worthwhile—to have monitors use longer deployments. This long-term view may prove essential, for the 'cat and mouse' rigging game has shifted to 'strategic' procedural manipulation rather than election day ballot box stuffing. Even though the more traditional, crude strategies are still used by some incumbents, those tactics are easily detected and condemned; strategic manipulation is elusive by design. If monitoring groups cannot afford the cost of long-term deployments, they could partner with and support domestic monitoring groups that can be their eyes and ears on the ground, conveying procedural

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<sup>390</sup> These proposals are obviously normative to some extent, insofar as they assume that manipulated 'counterfeit' democracy is worse than non-manipulated consolidated democracy and that conflict risks should be mitigated whenever possible.

manipulations as they happen to international groups that have greater leverage to change the incentives that an incumbent faces.

Some groups, notably the American monitoring group The Carter Center, have attempted to incorporate these strategies into their election monitoring, but their efforts have not gone sufficiently far to have a full impact. Even for the best observation groups, there is still an overemphasis on election day. As one diplomat told me in Madagascar, ‘Only amateurs steal elections on election day,’ so the professional monitoring groups should consider responding in kind—by focusing more on pre-election manipulation. They would be well served by detecting strategic fraud before voting rather than after it has already been implemented when people go to vote, only to find the main opposition leader absent from the ballot. However, even if one group adopts this approach, there is no guarantee of coordination between observation groups, and there is the possibility that incumbents will simply allow more ‘forgiving’ monitors access to observe elections, which would be a step backward from the intended outcome. Coordination is therefore essential.

Second, perhaps the most obvious solution is also the simplest one: if a major opposition candidate is illegitimately excluded from the election, international observers could immediately condemn the election as ‘not free and fair.’<sup>391</sup> Such condemnation would only need to happen a few times for incumbents to get the message: exclude your rivals and you will definitively sacrifice the perks that come from earning the perceived mantle of international legitimacy and recognition. Over time, repeated iterations of this strategy could create an international norm that acts as a preemptive deterrent.

There would be drawbacks associated with this strategy, highlighting the difficult decision-making process that election monitors face. If monitors condemned an election immediately and closed up their offices, then an unmonitored election could invite a resurgence of old-style rigging tactics without international detection. Unmonitored elections would likely be less democratic. Therefore, there needs to be a careful calibration of carrots and sticks that aim to ensure that incumbents never ‘get away with’ electoral exclusion without prompting more egregious forms of electoral manipulation. This is an important and difficult calibration to make, but one that should be considered urgently. At a minimum, efforts to democratize would be more effective if it were never possible for incumbents to illegitimately exclude a major rival from an election and still receive international support for the contest as being ‘free and fair’.

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<sup>391</sup> It is important to note, however, that ‘not free and fair’ verdicts can precipitate violence themselves, which means that taking a principled stance may come with short-term costs—even violence. There are, as I say, no easy solutions.

Third, election monitoring could be more starkly divorced from donor government pressure. One of the key findings from the case studies was that incumbents are more likely to exclude their rivals if they believe that the costs of doing so will be limited. One way that incumbents limit their costs—particularly in ‘counterfeit democracies’ in the developing world that are foreign aid dependent—is to rely on key relationships with donors that will shield the incumbent government from a loss of revenues. These relationships can be strategic for security reasons (as was the case in Tunisia’s 2009 counterterrorism relationship with the United States, shielding Ben Ali from any costs despite his authoritarian grip on power) but they can also be economic or based on historic ties (as has repeatedly been the case with France’s relationship with Madagascar or Côte d’Ivoire). If monitoring groups are subjected to pressure from donor governments, they are less likely to apply truly independent assessments of election quality. European Union observers, for example, may feel pressure from EU donor governments to issue a certain verdict about the election quality, regardless of how much manipulation and fraud takes place. This is likely one reason why incumbents ‘get away’ with electoral exclusion so often; there appears to be a sort of ‘grade inflation’ that exists with international monitoring, as severely flawed elections still receive the moniker of being ‘free and fair’ when they are, in fact, neither. With steady streams of dedicated funding for international monitoring groups—regardless of how the winds of geopolitics are blowing—election observation could regain some lost integrity while also being more effective at deterring manipulation.

Furthermore, this independence is critical when election observers issue biting verdicts on elections: if observation groups are perceived to be divorced from geopolitical imperatives and focused solely on election quality, their proclamations will carry considerably more weight and be subject to fewer claims of bias than they are currently. This is important, because it means that election quality measures will be taken more seriously in international diplomatic circles but also could help deter post-election disputes by groups that lose a credibly democratic election. For example, if an election is deemed universally free and fair by an array of well-respected observation groups without the taint of geopolitical machinations, then opposition groups are less likely to pick up steam should they attempt to discredit the outcome of the vote with riots, protests, or future violent outbursts. Their claims of being victims of election manipulation will ring hollow if all observer groups—without interference from donor governments acting out of geopolitical interest—conclude that the election was conducted strictly in accordance with democratic norms. Generally speaking, the less politicized international monitoring can be, the more it will be taken seriously by all actors.

Like all the other proposed policy changes, though, this tactic will have consequences. Donor governments almost certainly want to be able to use electoral judgments and the conferring of international legitimacy as a diplomatic tool. Removing this tool from their toolbox and making election judgments independent would, the evidence suggests, be better for the integrity of democracy monitoring, but may have unintended consequences because it would limit the ability of diplomats to exert pressure on other governments surrounding elections—at least in ways that were in their complete control. This may be a normatively positive development—it depends on the normative assumptions being made—but if the goal is an independent and consistent election monitoring system, then it would almost certainly be a policy improvement.

Fourth, and finally, the international community could be more attuned to domestic debates on exclusion during political transitions, when regimes are often at their most vulnerable point. As the divergent pathways of the Libya and Tunisia cases demonstrate, the decision by transitional elites to exclude or include the vestiges of the old regime—no matter how reviled at the time—has the potential to derail an otherwise successful transition and lead the country to prolonged violence. To ensure that transitional states follow in the footsteps of Tunisia rather than Libya, diplomatic engagement with such regimes could better emphasize the importance of expertise and reconciliation during the founding period of the new order. *If* the country's transitional leaders are determined to implement electoral exclusion, then diplomats could insist—as much as possible—that such exclusions are limited in scope and time. It was perhaps reasonable for Tunisia to ban minister-level politicians from its founding elections, but banning all bureaucrats for life would have been far more damaging to the country's prospects for both reconciliation and for steering the transition through the inevitably choppy waters of regime change without important expertise as to how to run the country. International actors can nudge fragile transitional regimes away from inviting self-inflicted wounds, wrought by the understandable but ultimately misguided decision to be exclusionary as the country's political institutions start afresh.

This policy change may not always work as planned; if Tunisia had been *too* inclusive and had allowed Ben Ali to stand as a candidate, it could have been more destabilizing than stabilizing—particularly because tensions against him were running so high in the wake of the Arab Spring. Some, channeling Fareed Zakaria's provocative stance, may even argue that some countries are not 'ready' for true democracy without an authoritarian leader steering the transition, and that a 'free and fair' election may be destabilizing. Could Rwanda's stubborn authoritarian political stability survive an open contest between President Kagame and a credible



challenger? These questions are important, and laced with normative judgments, but if the goal is democratization, then the answer seems clear that less exclusion means more democracy, even if a few outlier cases would see increased volatility.

Certainly, these possible policy changes are not an ironclad guarantee of better outcomes, but a clarion call for policymakers to be more systematic and thoughtful with these issues. Decisions surrounding electoral exclusion are difficult and fraught with peril because they can be tipping points that invite destabilizing violence and the loss of years or even decades of peace and growth. The consequences are serious, and it appears likely from the evidence presented above that the policy community has not done enough to think through ways that these avoidable conflicts can be mitigated before they break out.

If, however, the principles embedded in the four possible policy changes outlined above were taken seriously, exclusion would likely become less common and a possible spark for violence would be stamped out before it could be fanned into a violent political conflagration. In this changed world, incumbents that exclude opponents using illegitimate manipulation tactics would simultaneously face the prospective loss of international aid, recognition, and trade deals *along with* the likelihood of a heightened risk of electoral violence—which is made more likely and more intense when observers condemn the conduct of an election, branding it as rigged (von Borzyskowski 2013). This is in contrast to the existing incentive structure, where exclusionary elections too often confer international legitimacy and receive the nod of support from monitoring groups—reducing the likelihood of immediate election-related violence (even if the longer-term risk of coups and civil wars is heightened). By inverting the incentive structure so that it leads incumbents away from electoral exclusion rather than toward it, international election observation groups can simultaneously improve the quality of democracy in ‘counterfeit democracies’ globally while also mitigating an important driver of conflict risk.

In order to create a lasting deterrent to electoral exclusion, however, the short-term interventions proposed above would need to be complemented by long-term engagement in favor of strengthening democratic institutions.<sup>392</sup> Election manipulation will not go away. The ‘fraudster’s dilemma’ is inevitably part of political life in any political system where vulnerable incumbents are able to manipulate electoral institutions in their favor. However, as I have demonstrated, ‘counterfeit democracies’ are more prone to both electoral exclusion and destabilizing political violence when exclusion is used. Strengthening democratic institutions so that countries become consolidated rather than counterfeit democracies is therefore an antidote

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<sup>392</sup> This also provides the best answer to those who would say that some regimes, like Rwanda, could not handle an abrupt transition to a ‘free and fair’ election.

to destabilizing elite political action in both stages of the electoral game. In the first stage, stronger democratic institutions limit the latitude of incumbents to modify electoral institutions to benefit their own candidacy, thereby reducing the likelihood that exclusion will be possible. In the second stage, stronger democratic institutions offer more credible legitimate avenues for excluded groups to contest the decision, through genuinely independent courts for example. In this way, the long-term project of strengthening democracy globally can decrease the feasibility of electoral exclusion in the first place, while limiting the damage and destabilization of the tactic if a misguided, power-hungry incumbent uses it. Such interventions will not eliminate the use of electoral exclusion, nor will election manipulation ever be eradicated, but policy changes could create a tipping point toward inclusion. The findings of this dissertation support the need for such interventions, but our understanding of the broader link between electoral manipulation and political violence is still inadequate. I now turn to the avenues for further research that would be most helpful in filling in critical gaps within the political science literature that are related to this research but lie outside the scope of my work.

### **A call for future research**

As with any research project, this one produced just as many questions to explore as it did answers. In particular, it begs the question: why is there such a deep, ongoing divide between election scholarship and conflict scholarship? I hope that the links drawn here between electoral manipulation and political violence prompt other scholars to look at other similar areas of overlap. For too long, conferences, journals, and jobs have been artificially split into two camps: democratization/election scholars and conflict/political violence scholars. The two camps have limited dialogue, largely as a function of the attitude that the two sub-fields are separate realms. This is a mistake, the evidence presented here suggests, because both sub-fields grapple with the question of how people attain power; the rise of democracy globally has made it the ‘only game in town’ in some places, but in much of the world, elections are just another game that must be played well and manipulated to retain power. When democracy is manipulated, the evidence shows that it can increase the risk of violence—as an illegitimate alternative to taking power via the ballot box. Such risk can only be reduced if we understand what causes it, and that should be—in my view—an urgent priority for political scientists. This is particularly true with meso-level conflict research (focusing on elite behavior, such as election manipulation) because it is easiest to change and thereby deter political violence.

For avenues of possible future research, I would point to three types of questions that might be most fruitful in the overlap between rigged elections and violent outbreaks.

First, do all types of election rigging increase the risk of future violence? I have no systematic evidence to answer this question, but I would hypothesize that some forms of electoral fraud are more likely to provoke violence than others. Exclusion may be particularly likely to spark violence because there is often no alternative pathway for excluded groups to pursue other than reputational costs against the incumbent regime or political violence. However, other forms of rigging—like gerrymandering, for example—may be more difficult to detect, prove, and mobilize against. Drawing district lines unfairly is unlikely to provoke the same form of violent backlash as candidate exclusion because candidates are still able to challenge the regime, even if the playing field is not level. Opaque campaign finance laws that favor the incumbent probably play out in a similar way to gerrymandering. However, my intuition is that ballot box stuffing probably lies somewhere between these two extremes of gerrymandering or opaque campaign finance regulations (low risk) and electoral exclusion (high risk). If detected, ballot box stuffing is likely to be explosive because it is such a blatant form of stealing an election. But if it remains undetected, it may not provoke any backlash. This points to the possibility that electoral manipulation is only destabilizing if it is exposed; if an election is stolen but nobody notices, it is less likely to provoke a backlash. Of course, that does not provide any normative excuses for electoral fraud, but it is an important point when researchers attempt to discern which types of elite behavior are most prone to sparking conflict and which ones are more likely to produce consternation but no subsequent volatility.

Second, if there is a hierarchy of election manipulation tactics in terms of their likelihood for provoking future violence, is it possible that certain types of election rigging precipitate certain forms of political violence? As outlined previously, I argue that several characteristics about excluded groups condition the types of violent response that are feasible *if* they choose to attack the regime violently. In this case, I focused on coups and civil wars, but there are several other forms of political violence. It is possible that certain forms of fraud (such as ballot box stuffing, or blatantly made up results—as took place in Côte d’Ivoire’s 2000 election) may increase the likelihood of immediate riots and protests more than they elevate the risk of a future delayed civil war onset. This would be an excellent avenue for future studies, determining the comparative destabilizing power of various forms of electoral fraud in terms of violence, and also whether specific rigging tactics condition the type of violence that is most likely to arise.

Both of these questions relate directly to how rigging, once used, can spark future violence. But there is another realm of research that needs to be explored related specifically to the failure of election monitors to regularly and consistently detect and condemn electoral exclusion. Specifically, it was troubling to find that there was substantial regional variation in the

rates at which international monitors condemned exclusionary elections. African incumbents ‘got away with’ exclusion far more often than their counterparts in other regions who used identical tactics. This begs the question: are international observation groups systematically biased in their assessments of election manipulation? If so, how and why? Again, I have no answer to these questions, but the glimpse of systematic regional bias related to electoral exclusion creates the plausible hypothesis that observers look at African elections differently (likely with lower standards) than they might approach an election in Latin America or Eastern Europe, for example. This would be a disturbing finding, because low expectations beget low quality elections, as incumbents tend to calibrate their behavior toward the lowest possible threshold that still qualifies as an ‘acceptable’ election in the eyes of outsiders (Peiffer & Englebort 2012). If there is regional variation in observers’ standards, then it may be that monitors are acting as enabling agents in certain regions, reducing the incentive of incumbents to democratize more fully in the face of low standards.

Each of these research avenues is worthy of future scholarship. But all scholarship related to democratization and conflict suffers from imperfect data. On the election side, we do not yet have access to a systematic, independently coded global database of election observation reports—particularly one that disaggregates aspects of election quality. Such a database would be a critically important gift to political science, because it would allow scholars to identify election manipulation strategies as well as observer responses to them on a global scale. On the conflict side, there are several groups that are working aggressively to address data problems (including projects like ACLED and researchers at UDCP/PRIO), but there is still not a reliable database of geo-coded battle-deaths data that is arranged with accurate chronology. This was a major hurdle for the research here, as the temporal relationship between elections and subsequent violence was predicated on my ability to determine—with reasonable certainty—that the election came *before* the violence. A reliable dataset will be an enormous undertaking, but such data sources would open up a new realm of insight into the drivers of conflict, as researchers can have much more precise measurements of conflict onset, intensity, duration, and geo-location—all critical factors to understand if we are to offer the hope of mitigating conflict risk.

### **Counterfeit democracy and stolen elections**

In early 2013, I asked the head of a political party in Antananarivo, Madagascar to explain why voters should support them in that year’s elections.

“Unlike the other parties,” he told me, “we are a party of values.”

“Okay,” I said, “which values in particular?”

He paused.

“Um, I forgot the values in the car—someone go get the values for the American,” he said to one of his aides.

That leader and his aides seemed to believe that multi-party democracy is about having multiple parties and allowing people to vote. Often, those parties and the votes they receive, however, are just counterfeit democracy, mimicking other genuine democracies throughout the world to create an illusion of contestation but nothing more.

In those fake versions of real democracy, elections are often rigged. Sometimes, that rigging is blatant and crude. In Azerbaijan’s 2013 elections, vote rigging was exposed in almost comical fashion. The autocratic government commissioned a smartphone app designer to produce an election results app that would provide the vote count as it came in, supposedly in real-time. Those eager few who downloaded the app and checked it the day *before* the election were surprised to see the results already posted of the election that was to be held the following day. According to the pre-election results, President Ilham Aliyev won the election with a resounding 72% of the vote, before a single ballot was even cast.<sup>393</sup>

When the gaffe was exposed, the app was quickly refreshed, and the embarrassed government claimed that the app was actually displaying results from the previous 2008 presidential election. However, the app showed vote tallies for the 2013 candidates, rather than the 2008 ones, so that explanation was as flimsy as popular support for the autocratic president. Remarkably, President Aliyev reportedly did even better in the post-election count (84.5%) than in the pre-election count (72%). Electoral irregularities were widespread, but, at least the voting had actually occurred before the false post-election results were published. It was an electoral joke, but one that probably does not seem so funny to the people of Azerbaijan.

These forms of manipulation are tragi-comic, but they are also fading. Foolish election manipulation like the smartphone gaffe in Azerbaijan is easily detected and condemned. And that’s why, around the world, incumbents are turning to electoral exclusion to rig elections and secure a fraudulent victory. In Côte d’Ivoire, Zambia, Madagascar, Tunisia, Libya, Iraq, and Thailand, I have demonstrated how this type of exclusion is both regularly used and extremely destabilizing. The findings presented here suggest not just a critical frontier for democratic consolidation but a crucial aspect of building peace in fragile, conflict-prone countries. Sometimes, exclusion is itself an expression of conflict, as presidential hopefuls in Ukraine

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<sup>393</sup> See Fisher, M. (2013). “Oops: Azerbaijan Released Election Results Before Voting Had Even Started.” *Washington Post*, 9 October 2013.

(Viktor Yushchenko) and Pakistan (Benazir Bhutto) were both victims of assassination plots (the former unsuccessful, the latter successful) to remove them from the ballot when procedural manipulation failed. This is a high stakes game, with disastrous consequences when it goes awry.

Now that we better understand the link between exclusion and conflict, policy interventions can be adopted to minimize the allure of the rigging tactic and to mitigate its destabilizing effects if it is used. If nothing is done, then Kokhav Koné Abou Bakary Sidick, the Ivoirian intellectual that I met with in July 2012, will continue to be correct about the widespread use of rigged, exclusionary elections: “There are three steps. First, there is exclusion. Second, there is a bad election. Third, the excluded group takes power by force.”<sup>394</sup> Until that changes, opposition candidates will continue being excluded from ballots, and some will turn to bullets instead.

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<sup>394</sup> Sidick, Kokhav Koné Abou Bakary. Historian, geographer, public intellectual. Personal interview, 25 July 2012; Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire.

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## Selected elite interviews, by country

### Madagascar

Atallah, Béatrice. President of the Independent Election Commission of the Transition (CENI-T). Personal interview. 16 February, 2013; Antananarivo.

Andrianatoandbo, Raharinaivo. Former President of the Malagasy Assemblée Nationale and 2013 Presidential Candidate. Personal interview. 29 June 2012; Antananarivo.

Baker, Commander Michael. United States Defense Attaché to Madagascar. Personal interview. 16 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Blévin, Claude. Deuxième Conseiller, French Embassy to Madagascar. Personal interview. 10 July 2012.

Bresson, Jérôme. Premier Conseiller. French Embassy to Madagascar. Personal interview. 30 June 2012 & 6 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Bridi, Haleh. Country Director, World Bank. Personal interview. 13 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Dané, Marcelle. Country Manager, Tullow Oil. Personal interview. 10 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Desire, Thomas. Communication Director, Independent Anti-Corruption Office (BIANCO). Personal interview. 13 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Edwards, Jeremy. Second Secretary Vice Consul. United States Embassy to Madagascar. Personal interview. 6 July 2012 & 10 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Elliott, Robert. Defense Liaison Officer, United States Embassy to Madagascar. Personal interview. 13 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Faratiana Tsihoara Eugène. Secretary General of the Prime Minister of Madagascar's Office. Personal interview. 14 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Ffooks, John. Partner, John W Ffooks & Co, longtime analyst of Malagasy politics. Personal interview. 14 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Georget, Alexandre Marie. Founding President of the Green Party of Madagascar. Personal interview. 14 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Georget, Sarah Rabeharisoa. Presidential Candidate, Green Party of Madagascar. Personal interview. 14 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Hyde, Richard. British Honorary Consul to Madagascar. Personal interview. 28 June 2012; 6 September 2012; 13 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Iloniaiana, Alain. Chief Political Reporter for L'Express de Madagascar and Reuters. Personal interview. 22 June 2015 & 16 December 2013; Antananarivo.

Lacy, Brett. Associate Director of the Carter Center Democracy Program. Personal interview. 12 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Lalancette, Jules. Director of Security, Carter Center Election Observation Mission to Madagascar. Personal interviews. 17-20 December 2013; Antananarivo.

Lalaoharijaona, Rasoambolanoro. Adjoint Director General, OMNIS. Personal interview. 12 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Lech, Bartek. Deputy Chief of Mission, Carter Center Election Observation Mission to Madagascar. Personal interview. 16 December 2013; Antananarivo.

Long, Jay. Director of the American School in Madagascar. Personal interview. 3 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Maharante, Jean de Dieu Benjamin. Vice President, Superior Council of the Transition and close adviser to President Rajaonarmiampanina and former President Rajoelina. Personal interview. 3 July 2012; Antananarivo.

Mayoraz, Eric. Ambassador of Switzerland to Madagascar. Personal interview. 16 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Mondon, Stéphane. Chief of Mission, Carter Center Election Observation Mission to Madagascar. Personal interview. 17 December 2013; Antananarivo.

Nanitelamio, Simon-Pierre. UNDP National Director. Personal interview. 11 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Otallah, Nicole. Political and Economic Adviser, United States Embassy to Madagascar. Personal interview; 9 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Paternotre, Michel. Electoral Consultant to the European Union Observation Mission to Madagascar. Personal interview. 13 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Pigou, Piers. Southern Africa Country Director, International Crisis Group. Digital correspondence. (Hundreds of e-mails).

Rabenarivo, Sahondra. Madagascar Law Offices and Political Columnist. Personal interview. 16 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Rabetrano, Faly. General Director of the Independent Anti-Corruption Office (BIANCO).

Personal interview. 4 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Raharinavalona, Mamy Mamonjy. Director of the Office of the President, Congress of the

Transition. Personal interview. 28 June 2012; Antananarivo.

Raharinomena, Andry. Director General for Economic and International Affairs, Ministry of

Foreign Affairs. Personal interview. 9 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Rajosefa, Johary. Director of Investor Relations, Economic Development Board of Madagascar.

Personal interview. 28 June 2012; Antananarivo.

Rakotoarisoa, Jean-Eric. Chief Justice of Madagascar's High Constitutional Court (HCC).

Personal interview. 6 July 2012; Antananarivo.

Rakotomavo, Lantotiana. National Secretary of President Rajoelien's Ruling TGV Political Party.

Personal interview. 27 June 2012; Antananarivo.

Rakotoseheno, Zo. Editor in Chief of the Midi-Madagasikara Daily Newspaper. Personal

interview. 6 July 2012; Antananarivo.

Ramakavelo, General Désiré Philippe. Former Minister of the Armed Forces and Member of the

Transitional Authority. Personal interviews. 2 July 2012; 8 September 2012; and 14 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Ramasy, Juvence. Military Expert and Political Scientist at the Université de Toamasina. Personal

interviews (digital). 3 March 2014; 5 March 2014; 11 June 2014; Antananarivo.

Randriamiarisoa, Onivola. Madagascar Director of Mining Observatory, Ministry of Mines.

Personal interview. 12 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Rasoanaivo, Bonaventure. General Manager, OMNIS. Personal interview. 12 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Rakotonirina, Olivia. Diplomatic and Consular Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Personal interview. 16 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Ratovoson, Benjamin A. Director of Antananarivo, Independent Anti-Corruption Office (BIANCO). Personal interview. 13 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Raveloarison, Mialy. Civil service employee. Personal interview. 16 December 2013; Antananarivo.

Razafimandimby, Tsiry Harivelo Lalaina Eric. Magistrat, Independent Anti-Corruption Office (BIANCO). Personal interview. 10 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Razafimanantsoa, Maître Hanitra. Vice President of the High Authority of the Transition (HAT) and Chief Ravalomanana Adviser. 5 July 2012; Antananarivo.

Ross, Aaron. Freelance Journalist on a Pulitzer Grant to Madagascar. Personal interview. 18 December 2013; Antananarivo.

Smart, Timothy. Her Majesty's Ambassador, British Embassy to Madagascar. Personal interview. 16 February 2013; Antananarivo.

Tahiny, Tsarabory Judicial. Executive Secretary, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Personal interview. 11 September 2012; Antananarivo.

Tezapsidis, Leonidas. European Union Ambassador to Madagascar. Personal interview. 13 February 2013; Antananarivo.



Toulou, Lucien. Country Director, Electoral Institute for Durable Democracy in Africa (EISA).

Personal interview; 15 February 2013; Antanarivo.

Wind, A.J. Alonzo. Regional Advisor, United States Agency for International Development.

Personal interview. 12 February 2013; Antananrivo.

Wong, Eric. Chargé d'Affaires, United States Embassy to Madagascar. Personal interview. 13

February 2013; Antananarivo.

### Zambia

Chibwedele, Marian. ZNBC Broadcaster, held at gunpoint during the coup attempt. Personal

interview. 28 August 2012; Lusaka.

Chiti, Chileché. Son of Captain Jack Chiti. Personal interview. 30 August 2012; Lusaka.

Chomba, George. Journalist, Zambia Daily Mail. Personal interview. 24 August 2012; Lusaka.

Geloo, Zarina. Journalist that interviewed Captain Solo. Personal interview. 23 August 2012;

Lusaka.

Hinfelaar, Marja. National Archives of Zambia. Personal interview. 23 August 2012; Lusaka.

Kachingwé, Major Richard. MMD Secretary General. Personal interview. 24 August 2012;

Lusaka.

Kaunda, Kenneth. Former president of Zambia (1964-1991). Personal interview. 30 August

2012; Lusaka.

Lungu, Chibale. Son of Captain Stephen Lungu (Captain Solo). Personal interview. 27 August

2012; Lusaka.

Lungu, Enock. Nephew/adopted son of Captain Stephen Lungu (Captain Solo). Personal interview. 30 August 2012; Lusaka.

Mufalo, Mbinji. Government adviser. Personal interview. 23 August 2012; Lusaka.

Mutesa, Dr. Fred. Presidential candidate and President of Zambians for Empowerment and Development. Personal interview. 27 August 2012; Lusaka.

Mwila, Ben. Former Zambian Minister of Defense. Personal interview. 31 August 2012; Lusaka.

Nawakwi, Edith. Former Minister of Finance in President Chiluba's Government. Personal interview. 28 August 2012; Lusaka.

Silwamba, Eric. Former MP under President Chiluba. Personal interview. 30 August 2012; Lusaka.

Simutanyi, Neo. Academic, University of Zambia. Personal interview. 23 August 2012; Lusaka.

Sishuwa wa Sishuwa. Journalist and academic. Personal interviews. 24 August 2012 & 8 July 2014; Lusaka.

### Côte d'Ivoire

Akoun, Laurent. General Secretary of the FPI political party. Personal interview. 31 July 2012; Abidjan.

Bailly, Sery. Director of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Personal interview. 2 August 2012; Abidjan.

Bamba, Affoussy. Former spokeswoman for *Les Forces Nouvelles* rebel force. 24 July 2012; Abidjan.

Bavier, Joe. Reuters correspondent in Abidjan. Personal interview. 20 July 2012; Abidjan.

French, Howard. Former *New York Times* correspondent, Abidjan (1979-1986; 1994-1998).

Personal interview. 14 July 2012; Abidjan.

Gnalega, Professor Jeremy. Academic and FPI adviser. Personal interview. 27 July 2012;

Abidjan.

James, John. Former BBC correspondent in Abidjan. Personal interview. 2 August 2012;

Abidjan.

Koffi, Tiburce. Former top adviser to President Laurent Gbagbo. Personal interview. 26 July

2012; Abidjan.

Kokhav, Koné Abou Bakary Sidick. Historian and geographer. 25 July 2012; Abidjan.

Konan, Venance. Director General of *Fraternité Matin* daily newspaper. Personal interview. 19

July 2012; Abidjan.

Kraidy, Agnès. *Fraternité Matin* journalist. Personal interview. 1 August 2012; Abidjan.

Lobognon, Alain. Former Minister of Civic Service & Youth and former member of *Les Forces*

*Nouvelles* rebel force. 22 July 2012; Abidjan.

Monnier, Olivier. Bloomberg correspondent in Abidjan. Personal interview. 19 July 2012;

Abidjan.

Morfin, Thomas. Agence France Presse correspondent in Abidjan. Personal interview. 20 July

2012.

Phillip, Grant. Political analyst at the United States Embassy. Personal interview. 1 August 2012; Abidjan.

### Tunisia

Ahmed, Lieutenant Colonel Mohamed. Director of the Association INSAF and falsely accused officer in the Barraket-Essahel Affair. Personal interview. 12 November 2013; Tunis.

Bakri, Baha. United Nations Development Programme, legal adviser. Personal interview. 29 October 2013; Tunis.

Ben Abdesselem, Sélim. MP of the Nidaa Tounes party. Personal interview. 14 November 2013; Tunis.

Ben Achour, Yadh. Jurist and director of the Ben Achour Commission. Personal interview. 22 November 2013; Tunis.

Boubakri, Amor. Associate Professor in Public Law, University of Sfax. Personal interview. 28 November 2013; Tunis.

Chebbi, Ahmed Najib. Founder and presidential candidate for Republican Party, former Minister of Regional Development (2011). Personal interview. 26 November 2013; Tunis.

Cherif, Houda. Former MP and Executive Committee Member for the Republican Party. Personal interview. 22 November 2013; Tunis.

Churchill, Erik. World Bank Tunisia adviser. Personal interview. 29 October 2013; Tunis.

El Gantri, Rim. International Centre for Transitional Justice. Personal interview. 6 November 2013; Tunis.

El Gharbi, Mohamed Kamal. Director of a coalition of 100 Tunisian civil society organizations.

Personal interview. 6 November 2013; Tunis.

Fehri, Noomane. Minister of Technology and Communication. MP and founder of Afek Tounes

party. Personal interview. 18 November 2013; Tunis.

Ferjani, Seyyed. Leader of Ennahdha Islamist political party. Personal interview. 21 October

2013; Tunis.

Geddes, Chawki. Legal expert, Université de Carthage. Personal interview. 31 October 2013;

Tunis.

Halouani, Rafik. Director of Mourakiboun, civil society monitoring NGO. Personal interview. 8

November 2013; Tunis.

Kaabi, Mohsen. Secretary General of the Association INSAAF. Personal interview. 14

November 2013; Tunis.

Kaczorowski, Nicolas. Country Director, IFES. Personal interview. 18 November 2013; Tunis.

Ladhari, Zied. Spokesman for Ennahdha and Executive Committee Member. Personal interview.

14 November 2013; Tunis.

Lucangeli, Costanza. United Nations Development Programme. Personal interview. 29 October

2013.

Ltaief, Sami Bouslama. National labour leader, UGTT. Personal interview. 14 November 2013;

Tunis.

Marzouk, Mohsen. Founding member of Nidaa Tounes political party, Campaign Manager for President Essebsi's 2014 campaign, Executive Committee member of Nidaa Tounes.

Personal interview. 20 November 2013; Tunis.

McCarthy, Rory. Expert on Ennahdha, University of Oxford. Personal interview. 18 November 2013; Tunis.

Mongi, Major Mergheni. Association INSAF and falsely accused officer in the Barraket Essahel Affair. Personal interview. 12 November 2013; Tunis.

Morjane, Kamel. Former Minister of Defense (2005-2010) and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs (2010-2011). Personal interview. 6 December 2013; Tunis.

Reiter, Gabriele. Country Director, Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT). Personal interview. 13 November 2013; Tunis.

Ridane, Esmâ. Embassy of the United Kingdom in Tunisia. Personal interview. 19 November 2013; Tunis.

Rowell, Nicole. Country Director, National Democratic Institute. Personal interview. 31 October 2013.

Sabhani, Maître Mohsen. Minister of Human Rights & Transitional Justice. Personal interview. 13 November 2013; Tunis.

Todorovic, Djorde. Country director, International Republican Institute. Personal interview. 21 October 2013; Tunis.

Volkman, Marion. Country Director, The Carter Center. Personal interview. 28 October 2013; Tunis.

Weischelbaum, Geoffrey. Country Director, Democracy Reporting International. Personal interview. 30 October 2013.

Zoghلامي, Colonel Moncef. Association INSAF and falsely accused officer in the Barraket Essahel Affair. Personal interview. 13 November 2013; Tunis.

### Thailand

Abhisit, Vejjajiva. Former Prime Minister of Thailand and leader of the Democrat Party. Personal interview. 29 December 2014; Bangkok.

Arya, Dr. Gothom. Academic at Mahidol University and Former Election Commissioner. Personal interview. 17 December 2014; Bangkok.

Davis, Tony. Security analyst and expert on Thailand's military affairs. Personal interview. 13 December 2014; Bangkok.

Kent, Ambassador Mark. United Kingdom Ambassador to Thailand. Personal interview. 16 December 2014; Bangkok.

Pariyawong, Verpat. Thai legal scholar, former Special Counsel to the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, and visiting scholar (in exile) at SOAS. Personal interview. 20 November 2014; London.

Peel, Michael. Financial Times correspondent in Bangkok. Personal interview. 10 December 2014; Bangkok.

Piromya, Kasit. Former Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs (2008-2011) and former Ambassador to the United States, Soviet Union, Germany, Japan, etc. Personal interview. 18 December 2014; Bangkok.

Prajak, Kongkirati. Political science professor at Thammasat University. Personal interview. 29 December 2014.

Prentice, Jonathan. Senior Advocacy Adviser, International Crisis Group. Personal interview. 6 December 2014; Bangkok.

Rojanaphruk, Pravit. Journalist. Personal interview. 9 December 2014; Bangkok.

Saxer, Marc. Country Director Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation. Personal interview. 8 December 2014; Bangkok.

Thitinan, Pongsudhirak. Professor at Chulalongkorn University and Director of the Institute of Security and International Studies. Personal interview. 26 December 2014; Bangkok.

Weng, Dr. Tajirakorn. Former MP for Pheu Thai party, President of UDD (Red Shirts). Personal interview. 15 December 2014; Bangkok.

Werachon, Major General Sukondhapatipak. Spokesman for the NCPO military junta. Personal interview. 18 December 2014; Bangkok.

Wheeler, Matt. Country Director, International Crisis Group. Personal interview. 6 December 2014; Bangkok.

Yuttaporn, Nung. Chair of the Political Science Department, Sukhothai Thammathirat University. Personal interview. 19 December 2014; Bangkok.



**Appendix A: Summary Statistics (excluding highly consolidated democracies; countries that score +9 or +10 on the Polity4 scale.**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum Value	Maximum Value
Exclusion	0.177	0.382	0 (None)	1 (Exclusion)
Election type	0.391	0.488	0 (Parliament)	1 (Presidential)
Boycotts	0.174	0.379	0 (None)	1 (Boycott)
Polity4	2.255	5.607	-9	+8
Coup in prev. 2 years	0.144	0.351	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Riots & protests	0.207	0.405	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Population (ln)	9.413	1.250	6.831	13.695
% Mountains (ln)	2.133	1.39	0	4.421
Ethnic fractionalization	0.456	0.272	0.004	0.925
Excluded groups	2.501	4.379	0	55
GDP per cap (ln)	1.106	1.023	-1.575	6.426
Land area (ln)	5.555	1.558	2.302	9.703
Coup 2 years after election?	0.104	0.306	0 (No)	1 (Yes)
Civil war 2 years after election?	0.093	0.291	0 (No)	1 (Yes)

**Appendix B: List of Positive Cases (featuring ‘electoral exclusion’)**

Afghanistan 2010  
Albania 1992  
Albania 1996  
Albania 2001  
Algeria 1997  
Algeria 2007  
Algeria 2009  
Armenia 1995  
Armenia 2008  
Azerbaijan 1995  
Azerbaijan 1996  
Azerbaijan 2005  
Azerbaijan 2010  
Belarus 2004  
Belarus 2006  
Belarus 2008  
Benin 1989  
Brazil 2010  
Cameroon 1992  
Chad 1990  
Congo 1989  
Cote d'Ivoire 1995  
Cote d'Ivoire 2000  
Cote d'Ivoire 2001  
Cuba 1993  
Democratic Republic of Vietnam 1992  
Democratic Republic of Vietnam 1997  
Democratic Republic of Vietnam 2002  
Egypt 2007  
Egypt 2010  
Egypt 2010

Ethiopia 2005  
Gambia 1996  
Georgia 1992  
Guatemala 1990  
Guatemala 1991  
Haiti 2006  
Haiti 2010  
Haiti 2011  
Iran 1989  
Iran 1992  
Iran 1993  
Iran 1996  
Iran 1997  
Iran 1998  
Iran 2001  
Iran 2004  
Iran 2004  
Iran 2008  
Iran 2009  
Iraq 1989  
Iraq 1996  
Iraq 2000  
Iraq 2010  
Jordan 1989  
Jordan 2007  
Jordan 2010  
Kazakhstan 1994  
Kazakhstan 1999  
Kazakhstan 2004  
Kenya 2007  
Kuwait 1990  
Kyrgyz Republic 2000  
Kyrgyz Republic 2005  
Laos 1989  
Madagascar 1989  
Madagascar 2006  
Malawi 1992  
Malaysia 2008  
Mali 1997  
Mauritania 2001  
Mauritania 2007  
Morocco 1997  
Niger 1989  
Niger 1996  
Nigeria 1992  
Nigeria 1993  
Pakistan 1993  
Pakistan 2002  
Pakistan 2008  
Philippines 2001  
Poland 1989

Russia 1989  
Russia 1991  
Rwanda 2003  
South Africa 1989  
Spain 2008  
Sudan 1996  
Sudan 2010  
Swaziland 2008  
Syria 1991  
Syria 1999  
Syria 2000  
Syria 2007  
Tajikistan 1995  
Tajikistan 2005  
Tajikistan 2006  
Tanzania 1990  
Thailand 2007  
Thailand 2008  
Togo 1990  
Togo 1993  
Togo 2003  
Togo 2005  
Tunisia 1989  
Tunisia 1994  
Tunisia 2004  
Tunisia 2009  
Turkey 1991  
Turkey 1999  
Turkey 2002  
Turkmenistan 1992  
Turkmenistan 1994  
Turkmenistan 1998  
Turkmenistan 1999  
Turkmenistan 2003  
Turkmenistan 2004  
Turkmenistan 2007  
Turkmenistan 2010  
Uganda 2006  
Uzbekistan 1991  
Uzbekistan 1994  
Uzbekistan 1995  
Uzbekistan 1999  
Uzbekistan 2000  
Uzbekistan 2004  
Uzbekistan 2005  
Venezuela 2004  
Zambia 1996  
Zambia 2001

## Appendix C: How electoral exclusion is coded

I used two coding systems to ensure accuracy in terms of coding the key independent variable—whether electoral exclusion was used in a given election. First, I drew the quantitative variable directly from the National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy dataset produced by Susan Hyde and Nikolay Marinov at Yale University. Specifically, the variable is coded as “NELDA13” in the dataset, under the label “Were opposition leaders prevented from running?”

This is the verbatim explanation from the NELDA codebook:

“A “Yes” was coded when at least some opposition leaders were prevented from running and contesting the elections. A decision to boycott the election was coded “Yes” here only if it was in response to the government preventing opposition figures from running. Cases where opposition was not allowed were also coded as “yes.” Note that this question is similar to nelda3 (was opposition allowed?), but is distinct in that it should be coded as “Yes” if any specific opposition party candidates are explicitly prevented from running. If nelda3 is coded “No” this question is coded “N/A.” If nelda3 is “Yes” then this question is coded on a “Yes”/“No” basis.”

Moreover, the internal agreement between NELDA coders on this question (for all elections) was over 90%, which gave me a high degree of confidence in the quality of the data.

Second, I conducted an independent assessment of all cases in sub-Saharan Africa between 2005 and 2010 and agreed with all the assessments made by NELDA coders. My assessments involved a careful review of election observation reports (EU, African Union, Carter Center, EISA, SADC, OSCE, etc), newspaper reports, official government publications and statistics, encyclopedia entries, and books. In these independent assessments, I coded cases a ‘yes’ for exclusion if there was evidence that candidate registration procedures had been changed or re-interpreted specifically to guarantee the exclusion of at least one candidate. Across-the-board procedural changes that were adopted and showed no signs of being targeted toward a specific candidate or group were not coded positively, as every country has the internationally-recognized right to determine its procedures for registering candidates—so long as they are within international norms and limits to ensure that registration is not overly restrictive. In any of these judgments, there is, of course some degree of subjectivity. However, the risk of this flaw is worth avoiding the strictly legal interpretation of exclusion, which would play directly into the hands of incumbent regimes that are engaging in strategic rigging.

## Appendix D: Exclusion over time, 1990 – 2010

**Percentage of elections featuring electoral exclusion**  
(1990-2010)

