

# An Econometric Model of the Occurrence of Coups

## Online Appendix II

Our argument posits some relationships between the coup and post-coup stages. It would be instructive to estimate a model of coup occurrences, with the same variables, to see whether the selection dynamic we posit appears to be at work. For example, we believe that rising levels of GDP per capita fails to explain the movement to elections after coups because most richer countries never experience coups – and so, even if they *would* experience a faster onset of post-coup elections, we would not be able to observe the event in a range of the explanatory variable allowing us to estimate its impact.

Table 1 presents results of analysis of a probit estimation of likelihood of coups. We again include a weighted average of the 10 year history of coups, which we expect to significantly increase the probability of a coup as countries may be caught in “coup traps”. Not only does this variable thus capture the path-dependence of coups, it may also be the case that this variable would capture some of the differences between countries’ propensity to experience the event, differences not adequately summarized by the covariates.

Table 1 shows the results of the estimation. We find that a country’s wealth is signed as expected and highly statistically significant as a predictor of coups. Richer countries, before and now, are less likely to experience a coup event. The selection dynamic we posited is at work, helping to explain the attrition in the values of the wealth variable in the coup sample. Thus, Hypothesis 1, linking wealth to post-coup elections is not necessarily wrong: it is simply difficult to test in observed post-coup samples. The *observed* variation across the

Table 1: Probit Model of the Likelihood of a Coup

Variable	Coup	
	b	Std.Err
Aid Dependence	0.085	.899
GDP per capita	-0.160**	.063
Economic Growth	0.335	.593
Former French Colony	0.174	.136
Pre-Coup Elec. Democracy	-0.099	.118
Coup History	4.670***	.689
Post-Cold War	0.030	.191
Post-Cold War $\times$ Aid Depend.	0.625	.791
Post-CW $\times$ Pre-Coup El. Dem.	-0.438**	.223
Constant	-0.646	.469
Pseudo R-square	0.1771	
Number of Obs.	3320	

two periods we are looking at in the timing of post-coup elections is explained by variables other than rising global wealth.

Our findings on the importance of a country having electoral democracy in place are of considerable interest. In the pre-1991 period, whether a country had elections in place did not matter for coup onset. The situation changes after 1991. In this era electoral democracy has a significantly dampening effect on the probability of a coup d'état. (The linear combination of the Post-Cold War dummy and Post-CW  $\times$  Pre-Coup Electoral Democracy yields a coefficient of  $-0.468$  with a standard error of  $.145$  which is significant at the  $p < .001$  level. This linear combination is statistically significantly different from Pre-Coup Electoral Democracy ( $\chi^2 = 2.89, p < .089$  two-tailed test), e.g., during the Cold War. Theoretically, this finding sits nicely with the idea that there is more of an insistence on the holding of elections after the coup: if a potential plotter knows that they would have to hold elections after they seize power, and the country is already an electoral democracy, then coup plotters can expect post-coup policy to be set where it already is: at the median voter's preferred point. That makes the actual gains from undertaking a risky grab of power minimal and potentially not worth the effort. This requires us to believe that the existence of electoral democracy in a country tends to result in greater pressure for elections in the post-1991 period. Whether this results from some normative shift among domestic audiences or whether

some other mechanism is at work merits further research. In combination with the findings on elections after the coup, the finding on electoral democracy has a special meaning: coups after the Cold War are less likely to come to countries that already have elections and more likely to steer the countries they affect toward the holding of elections.

As expected, we find that coup-history is a significant predictor of future coups. We do not find that economic growth leads to fewer coups, a non-finding possibly attributable to the complex relationship between economic performance and political instability. The French colony variable is also insignificant, possibly a reflection of the inability or unwillingness of outsiders to intervene with the fast-developing, possibly violent events that mark most coups.

We plot the overtime variation in the incidence of successful coup d'états. Figure 1 shows two trends. The bars indicate the number of coups in a given year. The line represents the number of countries with coup-installed leaders. There is an evident overtime decline in the incidence of coups. The popularity of coups peaked at the height of the Cold War between 1960 and 1980, with some years recording 10 or more extra-constitutional seizures of executive power. Before 1991, there was not a single year on record in which a coup did not succeed at least once. After the end of the Cold War, some years record no coups, and the maximum number of events we see in a single year does not come close to the maximum observed in the earlier period.

Our results indicate that growing levels of economic development may be partly responsible for the decline, and greater insistence on post-coup elections may also play a role.

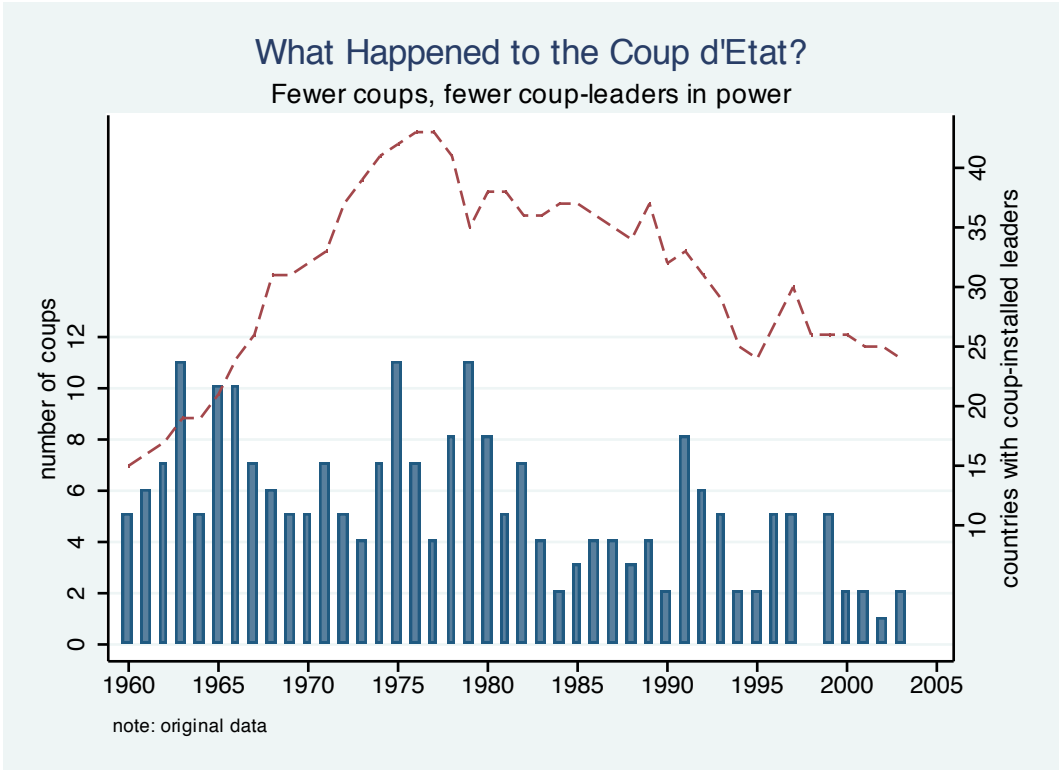


Figure 1: