Turnover Spillover: The Spatial Diffusion of Irregular Leadership Turnovers

Petra Hendrickson
Michigan State University
hendr136@msu.edu
Research Question and Rationale

- Do irregular leadership turnovers cluster in space and time?
  - Arab Spring
  - 1977 Pakistan coup and 1978 Afghanistan coup
  - February 1963 Iraq coup and March 1963 Syria coup

- Lessons of irregular turnovers diffuse via two possible mechanisms
  - Learning
  - Emulation
Diffusion and International Politics

• Democracy and democratization
  • Focus on broader phenomenon of regime change, rather than narrower phenomenon of leadership change

• Coups
  • Focus on methodological techniques

• Civil war
  • “Bad neighborhoods” effect

• International relations
  • Spread of international norms
Moving Forward from What We Know

• Phenomena with evidence of diffusion
  • Coups
  • Political violence
  • Nonviolent campaigns

• Consensus
Emulation and Learning in Irregular Turnovers

- Combining methods of turnover
- Irregular turnovers as signals
  - Demonstration effects
- Emulation
- Learning
Research Design

• Data
  • Irregular turnovers
  • Past coup attempts, violent and nonviolent instability, civil conflict, post-Cold War era, population, GDP, regime type, number of years since previous irregular turnover, neighborhood concentration of irregular turnovers (aggregated and coup only)

• Cases
  • States with populations over 500,000 from 1950-2006

• Testing time horizons
  • Emulation
    • One-year lag
  • Learning
    • 2-5 year lags
Types of Irregular Turnover

- Popular protest without foreign support (N=27)
- Rebels with foreign support (N=7)
- Rebels without foreign support (N=23)
- Military with foreign support (N=4)
- Military without foreign support (N=173)
- Other governmental actors with foreign support (N=3)
- Other governmental actors with foreign support (N=24)
- Military action short of a coup (N=22)
- Unsupported assassins (N=13)
- Other, unspecified methods (N=8)
Results

- Aggregated irregular turnovers
  - Emulation
    - No support
  - Learning
    - 2-, 3-, and 4-year lags significant
    - 5-year lag insignificant

- Military without foreign support only
  - Emulation
    - No support
  - Learning
    - 2-, 3-, and 4-year lags significant
    - 5-year lag insignificant
Conclusion

• No diffusion via emulation based on short-term observation of irregular turnover occurrence

• Diffusion via learning based on longer-term observation of consequences of irregular turnover occurrence
  • 2-4 year timespan

• Findings hold both for coups in isolation of other methods and for an aggregated measure of irregular turnover