Supplementary Material for "Convicting Politicians for Corruption: The Politics of Criminal Accountability"

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Government & Opposition

Data Set Description: Heads of Government Convicted of Crimes (HGCC)

The Heads of Government Convicted of Crimes (HGCC) data set is organized at the level of the political leader. To be coded as convicted, leaders must be sentenced by a civil court located in the country they once governed. Leaders who were convicted by courts in other countries, by the International Criminal Court, or by an ad-hoc military trial are not classified as being convicted in our data set. We do not code impeachments and removals from office as convictions because these are decisions taken by the legislative branch. Additionally, heads of government who were subject to temporary imprisonment that is not the result of a judicial sentence are not coded as convicted. We build the data set based on case research and coverage by major newspapers. We document the reason(s) for which a former leader was convicted and the year of the conviction. We classify as corruption the following reasons for conviction: bribery, embezzlement of state resources, extortion, money laundering, illegal campaign funding and electoral fraud. Example of convictions that do not include a corruption charge include human rights abuses, negligence, political violence, and plotting a coup. If the same sentence includes both a conviction for political violence and embezzlement of state resources, we classify this as a conviction that includes corruption. We also classify whether and when the conviction was overturned or pardoned – but even if this happened, cases are still coded as convicted.

We build on the V-DEM data set to construct the universe of heads of government that can be subject to a conviction. Differently from V-DEM, our data set covers countries after they become independent. The focus is on leaders holding executive power: heads of government. Our data set, therefore, covers prime ministers in parliamentary systems, presidents in presidential systems and the highest person in the hierarchy of authoritarian regimes. It does not include heads of state (e.g., presidents or ceremonial constitutional monarchs) in parliamentary systems. For countries that adopt a semi-presidential system, we include both. We classify countries following standard definitions of semi-presidentialism: (i) when both are equally responsible for the appointment or the dismissal of the cabinet or when (ii) the president and the prime minister are collectively responsible to the legislature by no more than the absolute majority vote of one or more chambers in the legislature (Elgie, 2011). When constructing the panel semi-presidential countries, we combine data from Elgie (2018) and VDEM dataset for when the head of government and the head of state "have same power over the appointment and dismissal of the cabinet" (Coppedge et al. 2022).

The final data set has 2,146 unique leaders in 173 countries from 1946 to 2020. Only heads of government who served for at least a full year are included. We also provide a version of the data set at the leader-country-year level. We use the Archigos data set v4 (Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza 2009) to obtain the year of the leaders' deaths and update it with information on deaths up to 2020. For leaders who served more than one consecutive term in office, the years in which the leader is again in power are not included

in the dataset since they are usually protected by functional immunity (Reddy, Schularick and Skreta, 2020). This extended version of the HGCC dataset covers all years from the year in which the head of government left office to the leader's death, resulting in 21,189 observations.

References

Coppedge M et al. (2022). V-Dem Codebook v12. Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. https://v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/

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