

REIGN DATA: EXTENDED TECHNICAL NOTES

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The *Rulers, Elections, and Irregular Governance (REIGN)* dataset describes political conditions in every country each and every month. These conditions include the tenures and personal characteristics of leaders, the types of political institutions in effect, election-related outcomes and announcements, and irregular events like coup attempts and other violent conflicts. We update the dataset monthly to reflect the most recent political events and changes in leadership. The dataset covers more than 200 countries for each month they were independent, January 1950 to the present. REIGN was created by gathering original data, compiling other datasets on political conditions, reviewing their coding rules, and updating all information to the present.

Countries

REIGN covers 201 sovereign states, including several states that existed at some point since January 1950 but have since disappeared from the map (i.e. North and South Yemen, South Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, etc.). This list includes every current member of the United Nations, including very small island microstates, but it does not include Vatican City or non-sovereign entities like Greenland and Puerto Rico. As of 2016, the 194 countries are all 193 members of the United Nations and Kosovo.

Many of these states are included for every month since January 1950, but most entered the list only after achieving independence. We identified state birth and death months using several sources that document major political events, including [Correlates of War](#), [Polity](#), and the [Political Handbook of the World](#). Generally, we recognize independence when the government has de facto and de jure power to govern, which typically occurs when the parent state formally transfers power to the new state or, in more contentious separations, when the enactment of a new constitution or peace agreement legitimizes a separatist regime (as in the former Yugoslavia, South Sudan, and Eritrea).

Leaders

REIGN covers more than 2,300 world leaders who governed a qualifying country for at least seven consecutive days between January 1950 and the present. Unless states are in a rare period of truly anarchic warlordism, states have one qualifying leader who is almost always the recognized president, prime minister, monarch, acting/interim head, or junta chairman. The only state where a single qualifying leader cannot be identified is San Marino, which has a

unique political system that divides executive authority between two Captains Regent with equal power and rank.

Identifying the chief executive is not always straight-forward, so we cross-validated our list of leaders by comparing it to the most recent release of [Archigos](#) (version 4.1, released March 2016), which is the most widely-used scholarly dataset on world leaders. This dataset similarly aims to list the chief executive leaders of every independent state, though its coverage ends in December 2015, it includes 22 fewer countries, and we sometimes disagree over the identity of the chief leader. Here is a complete comparison of *Archigos* v.4.1 and our list of leaders.

Difference #1: The List of Included States

Archigos includes the leaders of three states that we do not consider to be sovereign: Taiwan and Tibet (Provinces of China) and Zanzibar (Tanzania). Leaders of these states are not included in REIGN.

Our dataset includes leaders for more than 20 states that are not included in the *Archigos* dataset. In the Caribbean: Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Kitts and Nevis. In Europe: Monaco, Liechtenstein, Andorra, San Marino, and Montenegro. In Africa: Seychelles and Sao Tome and Principe. In the Pacific: Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga, Nauru, Marshall Islands, Palau, Micronesia, and Samoa.

Difference #2: Entry Dates for Newly Independent States

During transitions to independence we code leadership tenures from the date of independence whereas *Archigos* sometimes (though not usually) codes leader entry dates from the time that leader took power in a non-sovereign pre-independence government. For example, Prime Minister Price of [Belize](#) first came to power in April 1961, but Belize did not achieve independence from the United Kingdom until 1981. In this case, we code Price as having served from September 1981 to December 1984, while *Archigos* includes him from April 1961 to December 1984. Similarly, we disagree on the entry dates of the first leaders of [Macedonia](#) (November 1991, rather than January 1991), [Slovenia](#) (December 1991, rather than April 1990), [Tunisia](#) (February 1956, rather than May 1943), the [Maldives](#) (July 1965, rather than September 1953), and [Singapore](#) (August 1965, rather than June 1959).

Difference #3: Exclusion of Leaders Serving Less than Seven Consecutive Days

Archigos includes some, though not all, leaders who served for less than seven days. These leaders are not included in the REIGN dataset.

Difference #4: Inclusion of Missing Acting Presidents and Prime Ministers

For the most part, *Archigos* includes acting and interim leaders. However, *Archigos* misses the following leaders who appear in our leader list: in [Venezuela](#), Lepage Barreto (5/1993 – 6/1993) and Ramon Velasquez (6/1993 – 8/1993) during the impeachment trial of Andres Perez; in [Greece](#), Thanou-Chrisophilou (8/2015 – 9/2015) during the 2015 snap election; in [Iceland](#), Benediktsson (9/1961 – 12/1961) during the tenure of Olafur Thors; in [Israel](#), Olmert (1/2006 –

4/2006) following incumbent Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's debilitating stroke; and in Jamaica, Sangster (2/1964 – 2/1967) following Prime Minister Bustamante's stroke.

Difference #5: Disagreement over the Identity of the Chief Executive Leader

Some political systems have weakly institutionalized executive authority or purposefully divide executive authority between multiple offices. These instances include three situations where the de facto leader does not have the job title held by the de jure head-of-government. In Surinam, coup leader Desi Bouterse left the incumbent president in power from February to August 1980, but ruled through him and eventually dismissed him in favor of another puppet. We code Bouterse as the de facto leader from the date of the successful coup rather than August when he switched puppets. In Burkina Faso, *Archigos* codes a power struggle between President Lamizana and Prime Minister Gerard Ouedraogo as a temporary change from the former to the latter (January 1971 to February 1974), but Lamizana maintained his office and the support of the military the entire time and eventually ridded his government of Ouedraogo with military support. Finally, the former President Hadi of Yemen was forced into exile in February of 2015. *Archigos* continues to code him as the incumbent, while our dataset codes the leader of the Houthis rebel movement as the de facto leader since the fall of Yemen's capital city.

Many Eastern European states have semi-presidential systems that divide executive powers between a president and prime minister. In Croatia, the president held most executive power until reforms allowed the prime minister to exercise more power over budgetary and domestic issues. For questions of foreign policy, it may make sense to use *Archigos*, which continues to code presidents as the chief executives. But for questions of political stability and domestic opposition, we code Croatian prime ministers after these reforms were enacted in 2000. A similar reform shifted power from the president to the prime minister of Finland in 2003. We include Finnish prime ministers after 2003 and *Archigos* continues to code presidents. Lastly, Bosnia has a two-year rotating presidency that exchanges authority between three representatives for eight months each. The 2012 to 2014 cycle is not coded correctly in *Archigos*. Komsic is listed as the leader for the entire period when, in fact, power exchanged between Izetbegovic (3/2012 – 11/2012), Radmanovic (11/2012 – 7/2013), and Komsic (7/2013 – 3/2014).

Difference #6: Probable Data Entry Errors in the Archigos Data

Finally, there are two cases where divergence is likely due to typographical errors. President Maduro of Venezuela entered on 5 March 2013, rather than 5 March 2012. Honduran President Lozano Diaz began his acting presidency in November (11) 1954, and not January (1) 1954.

Leader Characteristics

REIGN includes four pieces of information about each leader. Two datasets---[Archigos](#) and [LEAD](#)---were adapted and updated to create most of these variables. If you use leader characteristic data, please cite these sources in addition to REIGN.

Age: For every leader, we include age as measured by the year of observation subtracted by birth year. Most birth years are drawn from *Archigos*, though we supplement these data with original case research on leaders that are not included in the *Archigos* dataset. Note that because this is a simple subtraction of years, it does not account for the specific birthdate and therefore will list leaders as one year older for months occurring before their birth month. (Example: a leader turning 70 in March will be listed as 70 for January and February.)

Gender: *Archigos* and LEAD also record the gender of every leader. We researched each leader not included in *Archigos* to complete data for this measure. As of September 2016, approximately 96.5% of leaders were male and 3.5% were female.

Military Career: Every leader is coded “0” if their primary route to power was not through a military or police career and “1” if they ascended into politics from this kind of career. Previous military or police service is not sufficient to earn a “1” on this measure (i.e. George H. W. Bush or John F. Kennedy in the United States). Rather, this coding is reserved for leaders who spent their careers in the military/police and took power from a high ranking position (i.e. Dwight D. Eisenhower in the United States). As of September 2016, around 16% of leaders were coded as having emerged from high ranking military or police positions. We expanded the coding work done for the LEAD dataset collected by Ellis, Horowitz, and Stam.

Month of Election: We include the month in which each leader’s tenure was first legitimized by a popular election for that specific office (e.g. presidential election, general election, or legitimizing popular referendum). Around 49% of leaders were elected at some point before or during their tenures. Most unelected leaders served in non-democratic states, though unelected leaders also include appointed politicians like Gerald Ford in the United States (1974-1977), Theresa May in the United Kingdom (2016-Present) or Michael Temer in Brazil (2016-Present). For more on qualifying elections, see the Elections section below.

Political Systems

We assign one of 16 regime types to every month a leader holds power. These regime type definitions are adapted from democracy data from [Polity](#), the [Autocratic Regimes Dataset](#) from Geddes, Wright, and Frantz, and original case research.

Forms of Democracy

Democracies are divided into *presidential democracies*, in which the executive is distinct from the legislative branch and considerable decision-making authority is granted to the executive, and *parliamentary democracies*, where legislatures are more powerful and executives are less autonomous. Generally speaking, countries with powerful prime ministers and general elections are parliamentary democracies. Presidential systems have presidents who serve as chief executives rather than figureheads. Hybrid semi-presidential systems are classified case-by-case, but are usually grouped with parliamentary democracies.

We use a procedural definition of democracy, meaning we are interested in the institutional rules that dictate how leaders gain power and not in other correlates of democracy, including strong traditions of freedom of speech and assembly. Non-competitive single-party systems are classified as such, even if some are somewhat more liberal than others (see Botswana and Namibia). Democracies have reasonably free-and-fair competitions for political power.

In mid-2016 there were just over 50 presidential democracies, mostly concentrated in Latin America, West Africa, and the major archipelagos of Southeast Asia. The more than 70 parliamentary democracies dominated the Caribbean, Europe, and the Indian subcontinent. The periods of democracy we recognize generally align with those recognized in the GWF dataset and all disagreements are listed in the table at the end of this section.

Forms of Dictatorship

The [Autocratic Regimes](#) dataset by Professors Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz classifies all non-democratic governments into one of ten categories. Though our data differs from this dataset in important ways, it uses the same typology:

- **Personalist Systems:** Power is highly concentrated in the hands of a non-monarch dictator who is relatively unconstrained by a military or political party. Contemporary examples include Russia, Sudan, and Chad.
- **Monarchies:** Power is highly concentrated in the hands of a monarch who is much more than just a figurehead. Contemporary examples include Swaziland, Kuwait, and Morocco.
- **Single-Party Systems:** Power is held by the head of a party. Executive power is effectively checked by the party or ruling committee. Contemporary examples include China, Angola, and Ethiopia.

- **Oligarchies:** Power is held by the head of party, but unlike other single-party systems this party explicitly represents the interests of one elite segment of society. Past examples include apartheid-era South Africa and Rhodesia under Ian Smith.
- **Party-Personalist Hybrids:** An intermediate hybrid where a party apparatus supports a dictator, yet the party's identity is concentrated around the person in power and it has few meaningful checks on executive power. Examples include Eritrea, and North Korea.
- **Military Juntas:** A military committee runs the country. One officer typically serves as head, but this head serves the interests of the committee and his power is checked by other members of the military. Recent examples include Thailand and Algeria.
- **Indirect Military Juntas:** The military has de facto power, but rules behind a civilian puppet. See pre-Mobutu Zaire and Suriname under Bouterse (1980-1988).
- **Personalist-Military Hybrids:** A hybrid of military and personalist institutions in which a dictator holds most power and is relatively unchecked, yet the dictator's authority is rooted in military support. These systems often evolve from juntas when power is consolidated around a single individual. Examples include Chile under Pinochet, Pakistan under Zia and Musharraf, and Fiji under Bainimarama.
- **Party-Military Hybrids:** Militarized single-party states in which most or all members of the ruling party are military elites. Examples include Algeria from 1962-1992, El Salvador before 1982, and Congo-Brazzaville between the 1968 coup and 1991.
- **Party-Personalist-Military Hybrids:** A dictator rules with the support of a militarized single-party state, but is relatively unchecked by these institutions. Examples include Egypt after 1952, Indonesia under Suharto, and Syria under the Assads.

Interim and Transitional Periods

REIGN includes four temporary regime types: *Civilian Provisional*, *Military Provisional*, *Foreign-Occupied* and *Warlordism*. Provisional governments are explicitly temporary arrangements that usually proceed completed transitions to democracy or follow coups and constitutional crises. Interim regimes are only called "military provisional" if the military is holding power until an election or some other formalized legitimizing event can occur. GWF calls these regimes "military" and does not distinguish between provisional and more permanent forms of military rule. Foreign-Occupied governments occur where foreign politicians or militaries hold de facto power over a government. Warlordism occurs only in countries that are torn apart by conflict to the extent that they do not have a functional government. As of 2016, only Libya and Yemen meet this definition.

Comparison: REIGN and the GWF Autocratic Regimes Dataset

REIGN data is updated to the present month. We also added the following countries to the dataset: The Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Belize, Guyana, Surinam, Andorra, San Marino, Malta, Cyprus, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Equatorial

Guinea, Djibouti, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Sudan, Bhutan, Maldives, South Vietnam, Brunei, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, Tonga, Nauru, Marshall Islands, Palau, Micronesia, and Samoa.

We also added political systems that lasted for less than a year and specified start and end months. This allows for a more granular look at transitional periods and interim governments. These new short-lived regimes appear in countries including Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Peru, Benin, Niger, Ghana, and Nigeria.

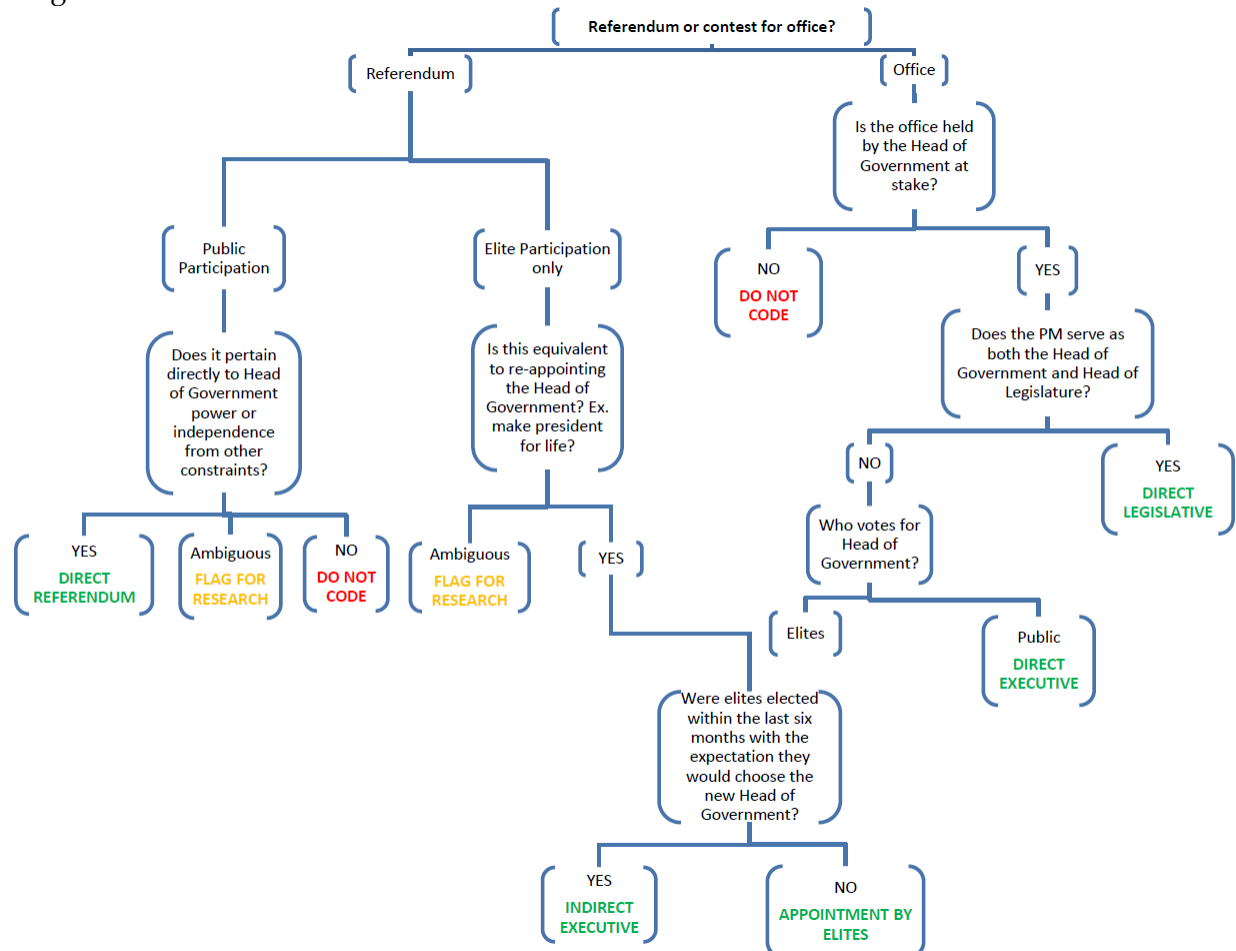
Finally, GWF generally does not allow for yearly changes in institutions over the course of a regime. If a government begins as personalist, it stays personalist until that leader leaves power. In several cases we code a change in regime type following reforms during the tenure of a single leader, including Lanzana in Burkina Faso, Rawlings in Ghana, etc.

Additional Coding Differences between REIGN and the Autocratic Regime Dataset:

Country (Period)	Autocratic Regime	REIGN	Explanation
Afghanistan (2009-)	Personal	Foreign-Occupied	More than 100,000 troops were in Afghanistan during the 2009 surge and President Obama has since delayed the date for full withdrawal.
Armenia (1991-1998)	Democracy	Personal	The regime fixed elections and banned the opposition.
Austria (1945-1955)	Democracy	Foreign-Occupied	Allied troops did not give Austrians full sovereignty until 1955.
Burkina Faso (1966-1970)	Personal	Military	Lanzana was not able to personalize his regime until after the ratification of the 1970 constitution. Before that it was more accurately described as a military junta.
Croatia (1991-2000)	Democracy	Single-Party	Croatia was not democratic during Tudjman's tenure. Elections were non-competitive and fixed.
DRC/Zaire (1960-1965)	Personal	Indirect Military	Mobutu was not in power before 1965, but was indirectly calling the shots through the military. REIGN codes this as a personalist regime only after Mobutu claims power.
El Salvador (1960-1962)	Party-Military	Military	The party-military system was overthrown by a three-man junta during this brief period.
El Salvador (1979-1982)	Party-Military	Military	The Party of National Conciliation was ousted during this brief period.
El Salvador (1989-1994)	Indirect Military	Presidential	Disagreement about when the military's role in El Salvador's elections subsides to the point that the state is sufficiently democratic.
Gambia (1994-1996)	Personal	Provisional-Military	REIGN agrees that Jammeh's regime was personalist after the provisional elections in August 1996, but it was a provisional military regime until these elections legitimized his rule.
Ghana (1993-2000)	Personal	Presidential	REIGN codes Ghana's democratic transition as the first free-and-fair election (Rawlings, 1993) while GWF codes it at Rawlings' exit in 2000.
Guatemala (1993-1995)	Indirect Military	Provisional-Civilian	Ramiro de Leon Carpio was a civilian chosen to rid the military of corruption and organize elections.
Guinea (2008-2010)	Personal	Military	Two individual presidents led a military junta during this period.
Guinea-Bissau (2000-2003)	Personal	Presidential	The election that brought Iala to power was free-and-fair, so REIGN codes this as a democratic period.
Haiti (1990 - 1991)	Democracy	Provisional-Military	General Abraham overthrew the Avril government in 1990 and then handed power to Pascal-Trouillot, the civilian chief justice. She governed with the consent of the military until elections could be organized in 1991.
Honduras (1954-1956)	Party-Personal	Personal	There was a clear personalization of the PNH regime during Lozano's administration.
Laos (1962-1975)	Provisional	Warlordism	The severity of the war was such that the country had no de facto ruler until the LPRP seized power.
Panama (1952-1955)	Democracy	Party-Personal-Military	Remon came to power in a coup and ruled through a military party.
Sierra Leone (1997-1998)	Personalist	Military-Personal	Major Koroma led a junta (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council), so we amended the GWF coding to reflect the extent of military involvement.
Zambia (1965-1967)	Parliamentary	Single-Party	Kaunda's UNIP party ruled a single-party state from independence until 1991 democratic reforms.

Elections

The election section of the dataset provides information about election schedules and outcomes for all elections related to leader selection or power. Qualifying elections fall into the following categories:

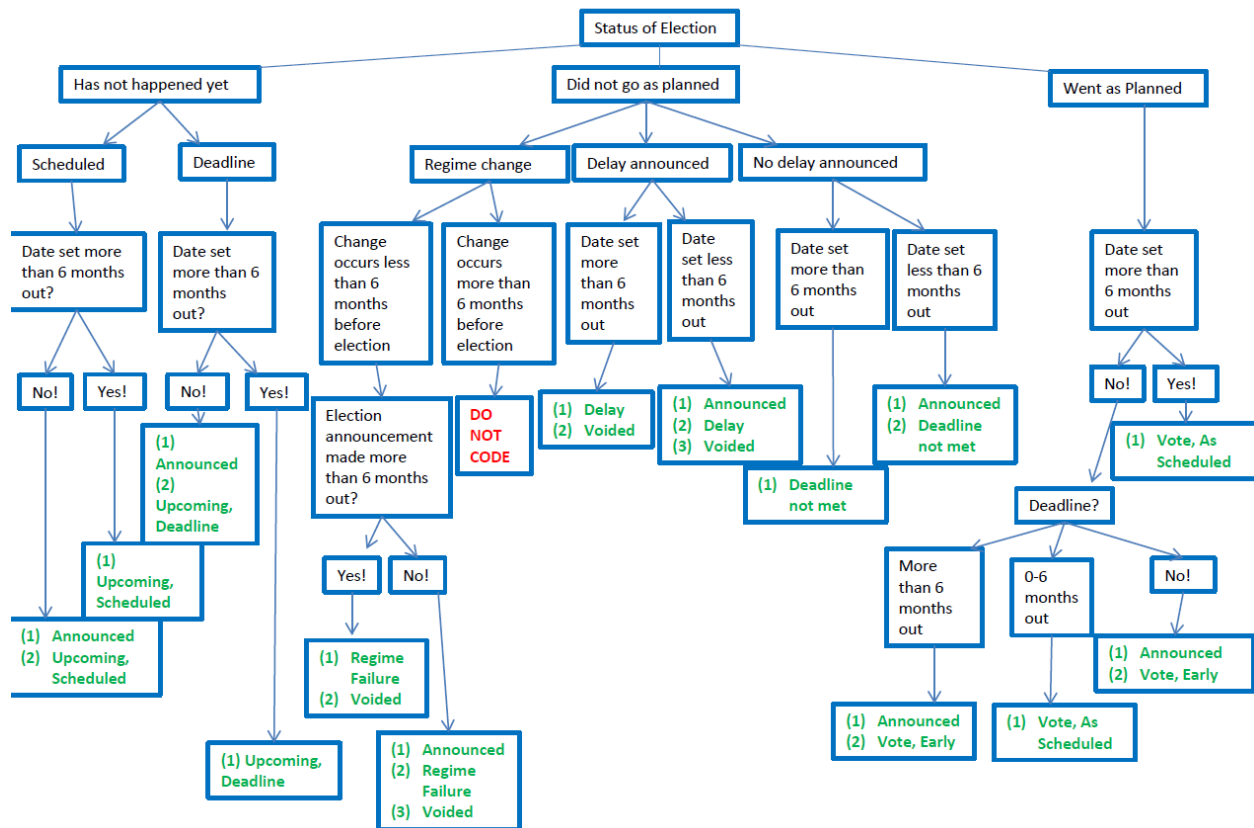


- **Direct executive elections:** The population directly elects the individual leader, usually a President, as in the United States.
- **Direct legislative elections** (often called general elections): The population elects a legislature, from which a Prime Minister is chosen, as in Canada and much of Western Europe.
- **Indirect executive elections:** The population elects a legislature, which then elects an executive who heads a different branch of government, as in China and South Africa.
- **Appointment by Elites:** Elites that were not recently elected for the purpose of choosing a leader appoint an executive, as in Somalia and many transitional states.
- **Direct Referendum:** The population votes to significant change executive authority (change in term limits, change in independence from the courts or legislature, etc.). Other referendums addressing issues that are not directly related to leader power are not included.

Each election is given a unique number and then we code election characteristics. For each election, we code the following:

- **Announcement:** We code the month in which the election was announced if it was announced within six months of the planned election date. This allows us to accurately identify the months in which an upcoming election was anticipated.
- **Delays:** We code the month in which a major delay (more than two weeks) was announced, including both cancellations and postponements.
- **Deadlines:** For irregularly scheduled elections, as in many parliamentary systems, we code the date by which an election must occur.
- **Regularity:** This is a dummy variable that is equal to “1” if the election is part of an established pattern and “0” if it is out of the ordinary.
- **Victory:** This is a dummy variable that is equal to “1” if the incumbent, incumbent party, or incumbent’s chosen successor maintained or increased power.
- **Change:** This is a dummy variable that is equal to “1” if the incumbent is replaced as a result of the outcome of the election.
- **Run-Off:** This identifies elections with no run-offs, first stage elections, and second stage elections.

We code several events related to each election which give us a better understanding of when an election was announced, when it was delayed or cancelled, and when publicly stated election deadlines were missed. We code these events using the following coding chart



Some examples will clarify how these events are used to create the variables in the REIGN dataset.

Example 1: An American Presidential Election

The United States has regularly scheduled direct presidential elections. These contests always occur every fourth November. This is a DIRECT EXECUTIVE election, and because it is scheduled regularly there are no meaningful announcement dates. We code the six months before the election as “anticipation” months. After the election, we record whether the incumbent party won and whether the individual leader in power will change as a result of the election. Because executives are chosen in these elections, we do not code the mid-term legislative elections as they do not affect the identity of the president.

Example 2: Recent General Elections in Greece

DIRECT LEGISLATIVE elections are not regularly scheduled in Greece’s parliamentary system. Instead, new elections must be called no later than four years after the previous election. This means elections are not at regular intervals and they are rarely anticipated six months in advance. Each of the last three elections (occurring in May 2012, January 2015, and September 2015) were announced only one month in advance, so we code announcement dates and construct election anticipation variables so that they are equal to 1 only after the announcement month.