1 Introduction

"The only way to have democracy is to have it."
— Adolf A. Berle, Ambassador to Rio De Janeiro, Sep. 23, 1945[1]

America adopted a somewhat different approach. Where Russia used force and fear to enhance the results of a democratic election, the U.S. used money.[2]

On the eve of the March 1945 elections in Finland, the Soviet daily *Pravda* editorialized that "elections are not to be considered internal affairs" of the countries holding them. What *Pravda*'s infamous editorial meant remains a puzzle for policy-makers and scholars alike. We do not know much about external election interventions. We do not know, for example, under what conditions states favor electoral integrity and aid democratization, and under what conditions states try to help the candidates they favor. We do not know whether and when these are in conflict. Nor do we understand when states leave others alone, to "have" democracy. This book explores the ways in which outside preferences for who is elected affect how an election is conducted. The tensions between what we call the who and how of elections have been an important part of the history of democracy and of international relations. They will recur on the pages of this manuscript.

Engaging this topic is especially important against the background of recent developments. Take Britain's historic referendum vote to leave the European Union. The Nationalist UK Independence Party (UKIP) was among the fiercest supporters of leaving the EU. There has been speculation that UKIP accepted funds from Russian President Vladimir Putin, helping Brexit come about in a tight

[1] Jordan Schwarz, *Liberal: Adolf A. Berle and the Vision of an American Era.*
[2] Brian Landers, *Empires Apart: A History of American and Russian Imperialism.*

race.[3] How much of the speculation is true is unclear as of this writing. The party has certainly been unwilling to support transparency when it comes to who, outside of the EU, funds political parties inside the EU. It is conceivable that Russian interventions in the democratic process of one of the world's oldest democracies helped set off a momentous chain of events, upending – as one newspaper declared – the post–World War II political and economic order.[4]

Barely a month after the pivotal Brexit vote, in the United States, a trove of emails pertaining to the Democratic National Committee's handling of the Democratic Party presidential primaries, inexplicably leaked to the press. The DNC leak caused high-level resignations, and much finger-pointing among Democrats and supporters of the leading candidates. Speculation mounted that Putin may have been behind the attack, with the objective of aiding "his horse" in the race.[5] The US intelligence community traced the leak to a Russian hackers' group, lending some credibility to the allegations.

How often do states attempt to influence the elections of others? What does that mean for democracy? The Finnish election of 1945 is a good place to start telling the story of electoral interventions. It is no accident that the history of Soviet relations with the small Baltic country resulted in a new verb, "Finlandize," added to Webster's dictionary of the English language.[6] For decades after the end of World War II, the Soviet state cast a "silent ballot" in Finland's elections (Forster 1963). The historical detail below aims to put some flesh on what "Finlandization" stands for. It also helps motivate the core puzzles this book is about.

As World War II winded down, the Soviets started building a belt of friendly states around the USSR. The USSR has had a strong

[3] "UKIP under Fire after Blocking Scrutiny of Party Donations," *Telegraph*, June 11, 2015, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ukip/11666944/Ukip-under-fire-after-blocking-scrutiny-of-party-donations.html.

[4] "Britain Rattles Postwar Order and Its Place as Pillar of Stability" by Jim Yardley, Alison Smale, Jane Perlez, Ben Hubbard, *The New York Times*, June 25, 2016.

[5] See "As Democrats Gather, a Russian Subplot Raises Intrigue" by David Sanger and Nicole Perlroth, *The New York Times*, July 24, 2016 (www.nytimes.com/2016/07/25/us/politics/donald-trump-russia-emails.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news).

[6] Definition of Finlandization: a foreign policy of neutrality under the influence of the Soviet Union; also: the conversion to such a policy; first known use: 1969; Finlandize *transitive verb*. Source: Merriam-Webster www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Finlandization.

interest in Finland because it served as a buffer zone between Russia and Western Europe. Moscow's distrust of Finland was only natural: the two countries entered into military conflict twice during World War II, first in the Winter War (1939–1940) and later in the War of Continuation (1941–1944). Following the defeat in the Winter War, Finland allowed German troops on its soil. With victory of the Allies, Finland negotiated an armistice with the Soviet Union in September 1944, in which the country agreed to remove all German troops from its soil, cede part of its territory to the USSR, and pay $600 million in war reparations within six years. Soviet Russia controlled a good chunk of Finnish territory at the closing of World War II. That, and the presence of Soviet military advisors in Helsinki, allowed Moscow to exert considerable influence.

Among the main Soviet objectives in the March 1945 election was rooting out the Anti-Soviet ministers (elected in 1939) who led Finland into war with Soviet Russia. The USSR accused the ministers of supporting fascism. It also demanded the dissolution of the Finnish veterans' association "Comrades in Arms" because it believed the 400,000-plus members would sway the election in favor of Anti-Soviet parties. Moscow sought to bolster support for the Democratic People's Union (SKDL), which included the Communist Party.[7] Furthermore, the Kremlin publicly worried that the elections may be biased against leftist parties. In its official newspapers, the Soviet Union made clear that the Social Democrats were unacceptable and would deteriorate the relationship between the two countries.[8] Finland owed the USSR large amounts of war reparations. In statements issued before the election, the Soviets made it clear that financial support for Finland, and even its territorial integrity, depended on how the voting went (Zilliacus 1995).

The Russian-favored party did make a good showing. The elections were also free of fraud.[9] In the 1945 parliamentary elections, the

[7] It is likely, though not certain, that the Finnish Communists received direct monetary support from the Soviet Union. The party certainly had de facto Soviet backing. The USSR had played host to the party's former leader Otto Kuusinen in his years of exile. During the campaign season, the Democratic People's Union received support from the Finn-Russian Society, set up by Moscow to build pro-Soviet sentiments in Finland.

[8] "Finland Awakes," by Paul Winkler, *The Washington Post*, January 30, 1945.

[9] "Leftist Finns Wins Slender Majority" by wireless to *The New York Times*, March 20, 1945.

Soviets established their customary method of interference for the next decades: using their state media as a bully pulpit. The main tactic used by the USSR was public declarations in its official news sources, such as *Pravda* and *TASS*, against parties the Soviets disfavored. Subsequent interventions also showed some variation in extent and methods.

In the 1950 Presidential Elections, the tactics of influence involved sponsoring strikes and issuing attacks on politicians.[10] During New Year's 1950, the USSR sent Finland a note demanding the return of 300 "war criminals" in an attempt to delegitimize some political parties. Soviet media also attacked incumbent Juho Paasikivi for being "Anti-Soviet." Voters were largely able to resist these interventions: Paasikivi received nearly 60 percent of the votes.[11] Nevertheless, the Communists were able to take advantage of the Soviet influence, eventually earning more than 20 percent of votes for their candidate Mauno Pekkala.[12]

The USSR attempted to influence the 1958 parliamentary elections by hinting at the possibility of an uprising.[13] The official Soviet news agency, *TASS*, published an article that said Russia feels anxiety about articles published in the Finnish right-wing press. The Soviet newspaper *Izvestia* accused Finnish Social Democrats of joining "reactionary rightist circles" and forming a front against the people. There were also allegations that the Russians had promised the Finnish

[10] In the fall of 1949, the Communists within the trade unions organized nation-wide strikes. See: "Russ Using Strikes as Tool in Finland," Polyzoides, *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1949.

[11] Paasikivi maintained that Finland must remain on friendly terms of the Soviet Union.

[12] "Moscow Note Tied to Finns' Election," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1950.

[13] The 1951 Parliamentary election pitted the Social Democrats, the most pro-democratic party, against the People's Democrats, who were the most pro-Russian. Moscow Radio and Russian press attacked the Social Democrats during the campaign. In addition, the Soviets provided the Communist Party with funding for the campaign, which allowed the party to launch an election campaign far out of proportion to their previously demonstrated numerical strength in the population. Ultimately, the election did not bring too much shift in the government make up, although the People's Democrats gained seven more seats. The 1954 Finnish emergency parliamentary elections were brought on by the dissolution of the coalition government made up of the Social Democrats and the Agrarians. The main issue of the election was how to fix the slagging domestic economy; therefore, foreign policy with the Soviet Union got pushed into the background. The election results are similar to the ones in the 1951 elections.

Communists in 1957 that, if the Communists staged an uprising, the Soviet Army would be prepared to come to their aid. All the parties in the elections agreed that they should remain "good neighbors" with the USSR and foreign policy was not the central issue in the elections. The Communists gained the most seats, largely due to a split within the Social Democratic party in September and economic issues (Lam 2003).

Before the 1962 presidential and parliamentary elections, the Soviets created a political crisis in Finland. They sent a note, asking to revive "military consultations." The note was interpreted as veiled threat of war. Because of the note, the Parliament was dissolved and Kekkonen called for early elections. The USSR wanted President Kekkonen to be re-elected because they found his opponent Olavi Honka, who was supported by "anti-Soviet" parties, unacceptable. In November 1961, Kekkonen went to Novosibirsk to meet the Soviets for military consultations; during this time, Honka dropped out of the presidential race. After Kekkonen returned from the Soviet Union, he made a public broadcast suggesting that Finnish politicians whom the Soviets dislike should retire. Vaino Tanner, a prominent Socialist whom the Soviets found unacceptable, dropped of the parliamentary race. In the end, Kekkonen won the presidential election because he faced no serious challengers. Kekkonen's victory carried over to the parliamentary elections when his party won the most seats.[14]

The Finnish case raises a number of questions. How did Soviet preference for candidates affect the free and fair nature of the elections? Did the presence of other interested outsiders, such as the United States, matter, and how? How was local politics, including party positions, affected? Who lost and won: the Finns, the Soviets, or the Americans? While on the face of it, the Soviets got some things accomplished, they also had to spend heavily on political and diplomatic capital, and scarce hard currency.

These questions relate directly to central issues in democratic representation, and great power rivalry research in international relations. Despite much weakening of the sovereignty norm over the last decades, there is one area where the norm remains very powerful: the idea that foreigners should not interfere or intervene in any way in

[14] For a complete case-study and sources, see Finland in the online appendix.

the democratic elections of another country, unless possibly to support a stronger democratic process. But certainly not to push one candidate over another.

However, this norm is observed mainly in the breach. In this book, we present for the first time systematic data on third-party intervention in elections. As it turns out, such interventions are stunningly common. Interventions often impact not simply who is elected, but the quality of the democratic process, and the rules under which an election is conducted.

Consider Soviet behavior in Poland after World War II. In the Polish elections of 1947, the Soviets helped the government bludgeon its way to victory. The political police recruited almost half of the electoral commission's members. About eighty thousand people, members and supporters of the non-communist People's party (PSL) were arrested during the election period. Polling stations were controlled by the militia and the army. Pro-opposition activists were intimidated and sometimes murdered, many other voters were forced to vote in public.[15] The result was an overwhelming victory for the governing communists, won in a rigged and deeply flawed manner.

The story of the 1946 Czechoslovakian election was different. The Russians had planned to stage a troop movement across Czechoslovakia on election-day to carry out a readjustment of Red Army occupation forces in Germany. In the end, however, the Russians "generously agreed to delay after reaction here [Czechoslovakia] and abroad [US and UK] misinterpreted the motive."[16] The resulting contest was free of fraud and intimidation and saw the communists make further gains. Public sentiment did not have a very positive view toward the United States. The prewar Prime Minister, Benes, was not a communist, but he no longer trusted the West. He had seen at Munich in 1938 how Britain and France had abandoned his country to Hitler. He was therefore determined to establish good relations with the USSR in order to have protection for his country in the future.[17]

[15] Soon after that Stanislaus Mikołajczyk left Poland in secret, fearing for his own life. See www.sztetl.org.pl/en/term/560,election-in-poland-in-1947/.

[16] "Czech Election-Day Move of Soviet Troops Cancelled," *The New York Herald Tribune*, May 23, 1946.

[17] He visited Stalin and told him how he intended to favor the communists in his own country after the war. In return he wanted Stalin's help to deport the 2 million Germans still living in Czechoslovakia. Stalin got this request written into the Potsdam Declaration.

Election interventions continue unabated after the end of the Cold War. European leaders publicly urged the Bosnian electorate to vote for pro-EU candidates in the Presidential and general-elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina on the October 3, 2010. British and German foreign ministers William Hague and Guido Westerwelle wrote in an open letter: "Our message to the Bosnian people is that our countries are sincere in wanting to help and support you. But for that to be successful, we need leaders who choose to work with us towards the goal of EU integration."[18]

It is not hard to think of other examples, from all over the globe. Brands (2010) argues that American support was important for Chamorro's win in Nicaragua in 1990. Many observers expected the Sandinistas to cheat, but they did not – while expecting to win – and lost (Johnson 2006). The United States supported both clean elections, and Chamorro – and was successful at securing both. The 1967 South Vietnamese presidential election was conducted with more propriety than Saigon's previous elections, but the result – a victory for the US-military slate – was certain even before campaigning started. The short life of the Republic of South Vietnam has been associated with the unwillingness of the ruling junta to allow for proper democratic procedure, and American failure or unwillingness to prevail over the generals.[19]

These examples show that foreign powers sometimes spend resources to rig or to improve the process of voting. Foreigners also sometimes aim to help a partisan ticket win by extending resources to a candidate. Existing work has not examined systematically the evidence on election interventions. Nor have scholars built a theory of foreign interest in elections. We seek to accomplish both in this book.

1.1 How Election Interventions Replaced Coups and Wars

States' ability to safeguard their interests in international affairs has always hinged on securing allies and influence abroad. At present,

[18] The letter continued: "... we shall support the Bosnian people and work with leaders who look to the future not the past." See www.robert-schuman.eu/en/eem/1066-presidential-and-general-elections-in-bosnia-herzegovina-3rd-october-2010 and www.gov.uk/government/news/bosnia-and-herzegovina-the-path-to-eu-integration.

[19] "A Turning Point for South Vietnam?" by Sean Fear, *The New York Times*, September 1, 2017.

whether a state wins or loses allies often comes down to who wins elections in other countries. For example, it seems safe to assume that electoral contests in Lebanon, Egypt, and Venezuela get at least as much attention in Washington as Chinese weapons acquisitions. The electoral platforms of the contenders in elections often diverge in nontrivial ways, from the point of view of foreign powers. Left–Right divisions over asset ownership and redistribution, disagreements over the degree and nature of a country's support for the US war on terror, as well as conflicts between firebrand, aggressive, theocratic candidates, and their moderate counterparts, are some examples of the worries American policy-makers face.

Why elections? In principle, outsiders have options. If they dislike the options offered by a democratic election, outsiders could sponsor a coup d'état or engineer regime change, possibly by orchestrating a military campaign. Or they may engage in sanctions and economic coercion. Those options have been studied by political scientists, policy-analysts, and diplomatic historians.

The coup d'état, or the forceful seizure of executive power by regime insiders, remains the principal way in which democracy ends. Coups are sometimes externally supported, externally inspired, or at least approved by foreign patrons. When the United States ran out of ideas on how to keep the Left out of power in Greece, it lent its approval to the Colonel's coup of 1967. The US Ambassador to Greece favored the deflection of a US ship with weapons from its intended berth in Athens, as a way of signaling disapproval of the coup. However, Kissinger overruled that decision, ensuring that the aid, and the approval it symbolized, reached port on time.

Yet, the coup d'état is a drastic measure. It is increasingly falling out of use. As Goemans and Marinov show, coup d'états occurred about 200 times since the end of World War II (Goemans and Marinov 2014). By comparison, the number of elections that took place over the same period exceeds 3,000. Some of the coups were encouraged or sponsored or approved by foreign actors. Still, it is a small number. By contrast, foreign elections interventions are frequent. This suggests that, when it comes to foreign powers trying to affect the direction of a country, "enhancing" elections, rather than abrogating democracy, is the prevalent order of the day. We demonstrate, in Chapter 7 of this book, that the availability of means of affecting who wins an election is one of the reasons outsiders may have lost their interest in coups.

An alternative way of influencing the affairs of other states is conquest, possibly accompanied by regime change. Well-known cases of regime-change include the externally imposed democratization on Germany and Japan after World War II. The imposition of a Communist system was the Soviet response in Eastern Europe. Regime change via military means is even more expensive than engineering a coup d'état. Not surprisingly, instances of regime change are infrequent. Much of the time, elections survive the regime change. The problem of influencing their outcome, therefore, remains on the agenda. Having won the war and imposed a new regime in Japan, the United States went on to spend significant resources trying to make sure the Liberal Democrats prevail in Japanese elections. The long spell of that party's rule in Japan probably owed some to its patron's influence.[20]

Another means of influencing events in another country involves sponsoring a more hybrid form of warfare, such as aiding ethnic or other rebellions. Consider the case of Laos. In the legislative elections of April 24, 1960, the West and the USSR were battling for influence via local allies. The Committee for the Defense of the National Interests won an absolute majority of 34 out of 59 seats. The Lao People's Rally received 17 seats. The election became necessary after the King placed Laos under army control of General Phoumi Nosavan in the aftermath of the resignation of Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone (Lao People's Rally) on December 31, 1959. As the *New York Times* explained:

> The King was believed to be backing an Anti-Communist reform group, the Right-wing Committee for Defense of the National Interest, which includes top military commanders. [...] The conflict between the army officers and Mr. Phoui developed when they accused him of adopting an appeasement policy toward the Communists and jeopardizing the electoral system. The officers had called on the King to name a nonparty cabinet, including themselves, to prepare for new elections in April, 1960.[21]

There was fear that the election will result in a pro-Communist majority. The strength of Pathet Lao was disclosed in the elections

[20] Related to the possibility of regime change is the idea of simply killing foreign leaders. This idea, also, has fallen into disuse, after Jimmy Carter outlawed the assassination of foreign leaders.

[21] "Army Rules in Laos As Premier Resigns," *The New York Times*, January 1, 1960.

in May 1958, when its political offshoot, the Neo Lao Haksat Party, captured 9 of the 21 seats at stake. The Red Pathet Lao, supported at least morally by China and Communist North Vietnam, had been waging a guerrilla rebellion. Eight of Pathet Lao's members, including their leader Prince Souphanouvong, were in jail.[22] In the April 24, 1960, elections, Phoumi exerted considerable pressure and had changes made in the electoral law. With financial support from Marshal Sarit Thanarat of Thailand, Phoumi bought off strong or inconvenient candidates and enlisted civil servants as his campaign workers. Election balloting was fraudulent, and the results, giving rightist candidates large majorities, were "totally unbelievable."[23]

The Soviet Union was an active participant in the events in Laos. Moscow accused Laos of violating the Indochina armistice agreements by jailing opposition leaders in the country's current election campaign.[24] Moscow further asserted that these tactics rendered the election unfair. The local Communist rebellion was fueled by neighboring Communist North Vietnam, very likely with Soviet backing. The rebel movement accused the United States of interfering in the election. The North Vietnam radio charged interference in the elections by the United States.[25] Appeals to Britain and the United States to guarantee the integrity of the elections fell on deaf ears. Their attempt to win at the ballot box having proved futile, the leftists escalated the insurgency.[26]

During or after civil wars, such tactics of influencing political events in a country are not uncommon. US policy in Afghanistan is an example. Russian actions, of supporting the separatists in the Donbas and other regions of Ukraine is yet another example of a policy implemented in response to a failure to influence Ukraine's political course via the more regular channel of political, and electoral means.

Events such as those only underscore the importance of understanding how and why foreign powers influence elections. It is precisely the failure of such influence attempts that often precipitates a more muscular, military response. And a military/rebel intervention does

[22] "Laos Army Takes Over as Premier Quits," *Washington Post*, January 1, 1960.
[23] See pp. xii–xiii in Robert E. Lester: Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Laos 1960–January 1963.
[24] "Arrests in Laos Hit by Soviet," *The Sun*, April 21, 1960.
[25] "Laos Votes Today for Legislature," *The New York Times*, April 24, 1960.
[26] See Goldstein (1973,175).