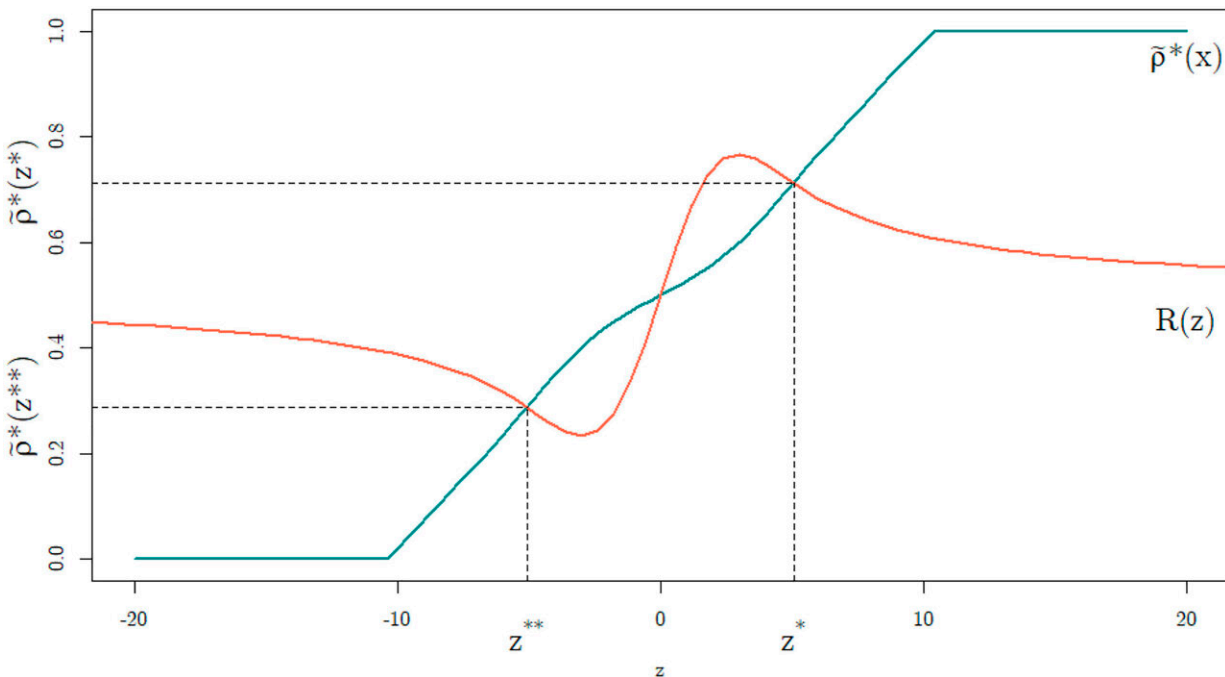


Why do some politicians cling to power after electoral defeat?

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Extremal cutoffs when the electoral process follows a fat tail. Protesting is uniquely rationalisable when $z \leq z^{**}$ and staying silent is uniquely rationalisable when $z > z^*$. Both actions are rationalisable in the interval $(z^{**}, z^*]$, which is smaller than the range of the dominance bounds, $(z^-, z^+]$. In this example, $G(v)$ has three degrees of freedom.

What effect do election processes, protests, social media, electoral rules, integrity, and voter outcomes have on an incumbent's decision to respect

an election result or fight to retain office? A paper published in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* looks at why, following an election, a losing incumbent may be reluctant to depart gracefully and highlights the vital role of electoral integrity in ensuring the smooth transition of power in democracies.

The study by University of Auckland economics academics, Dr. Chanelle Duley and Professor Prasanna Gai, shows how the threat of protest by citizens, clarity around election results, and transparent electoral processes interact to determine whether an incumbent might try to retain power. Examples of disputed elections in Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, The Gambia, and the US are referenced in the paper, which uses [game theory](#) to explore strategic behavior by citizens and politicians to establish conditions that may see an incumbent refuse to cede office.

Dr. Duley and Professor Gai say that once there's genuine uncertainty about election results (as was seen following the 2020 US [presidential election](#)), incumbents in advanced democracies may be reluctant to step aside.

Also according to the paper, the ability of people to coordinate and threaten an incumbent with [mass protests](#) plays an important role in ensuring compliance with electoral rules. However, uncertainty about the process behind [election results](#) hinders people's ability to coordinate protests, and citizens may be unsure about the actual popularity of an incumbent and about what others believe.

With less common knowledge about where their sentiment sits in relation to other people, Duley says a person is less able to accurately predict the size of protests. "By diminishing peoples' ability to threaten costly, large-scale protests, concern over electoral probity may embolden an incumbent to ignore electoral rules."

Meanwhile, if an election result is so strong that a politician is certain that [protests](#) will be minimal, they are less likely to step down, according to the authors, who note that shadows cast over an election result due to gerrymandering, [social media](#) campaigns, [foreign interference](#) or litigation over electoral processes weaken the role of protest and embolden incumbents to subvert electoral rules.

Duley and Gai say the link between the informativeness of an election result and the enforceability of electoral rules highlights the critical role of transparency and trust in the electoral process.

"If there's mistrust in electoral institutions, concerns about voting arrangements, or meddling by foreign powers, then citizens may doubt the integrity of the electoral process," says Duley, "and if doubt over electoral integrity prevails, office-seeking incumbents quite deliberately reject electoral rules."

More information: Electoral Integrity, the Concession of Power, and the Disciplining Role of Protests, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/00220027231158055](https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027231158055)

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