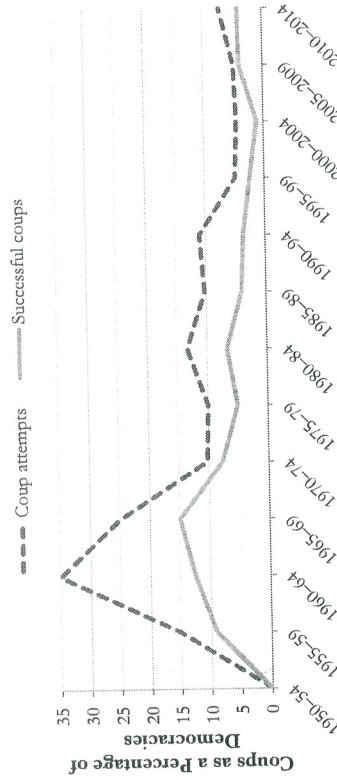


FIGURE 1—COUP FREQUENCY IN DEMOCRACIES, 1950–2014



Source: Regime data are from Polity IV, supplemented with Polity IV data modified by Kristian Skrede Gleditsch (see endnote 6). Coup data are from Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne's "Coups d'état, 1950 to Present" dataset (www.uky.edu/~lthyn2/coup_data/home.htm). A detailed explanation of the axes for this figure and how the data sources were used may be found at www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/supplemental-material.

a dramatic decline in all coups and especially the open-ended military coups that gave rise to long-lasting and brutal dictatorships during the Cold War. As Figure 1 shows, the probability that a democracy will be targeted by any sort of coup has dropped dramatically. The probability reached a thirty-year low after 1995, and although it rose slightly as the first decade of the new century ended, it is still significantly less than it was during the 1960s.

The likelihood of a democratic government being the target of a *successful* coup has also declined markedly, dropping to nearly zero in the early 2000s. Though it has recently risen slightly, the drop in the success rate that began during the Cold War has not been reversed.

The decline of executive coups. Alongside the decline of classic coups d'état there has been a decline in executive coups. These "self-coups" or *autogolpes* involve a freely elected chief executive suspending the constitution outright in order to amass power in one swift sweep. Executive coups associated with dictatorships (such as that of Ferdinand Marcos [1965–86] in the Philippines) were fairly common during the Cold War and the decade after its end. During the 1990s, there were a full five ex-