Institutional Legacy and the Survival of New Democracies: The Lasting Effects of Competitive Authoritarianism

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Abstract

Most nondemocratic regimes have adopted some system of multiparty electoral competition, albeit often unfree, unfair, and tightly controlled. Little is known about the long–term effects of these nominally democratic institutions. This paper investigates how experience with competitive authoritarianism affects the likelihood of democratic consolidation after a democratic transition. Drawing on competing arguments concerning the effects of authoritarian elections, I derive new hypotheses about institutional legacy and democratic survival. An event history analysis is conducted on 74 regimes that experienced a democratic transition between 1975 and 2003. Findings show that establishing a system of competitive elections prior to a democratic transition has a positive impact on the survival of the subsequent democratic regime. Institutional legacies matter; new democracies fare better where earlier regimes had adopted minimally competitive electoral institutions.

1 Introduction

Contemporary authoritarian regimes sport an impressively diverse array of political institutions. Nominally democratic institutions like elected legislatures and political parties are now a common feature of nondemocratic politics (Schedler 2002). While a significant amount of work has been put into understanding the causes and consequences of this institutional variation, many questions have not yet been adequately addressed. In particular, as Brownlee (2009a) points out, "comparativists have delved less deeply into the long–term and post–regime effects of electoral competition" (132). Building upon previous work on unfree elections and democratization (Brownlee 2009b, Schedler 2009, Lindberg 2006a, Lindberg 2006b, Lindberg 2009a, Howard & Roessler 2002, Hadenius & Teorell 2007), this study examines how the adoption of competitive elections prior to a democratic transition affects prospects for long–term democratic stability and consolidation.[1] I engage the literature on hybrid regimes and political institutions under dictatorship in order to draw out implications for how the institutionalization of competitive elections prior to democratization might impact the stability of a democratic successor regime. Previously unaddressed implications of two competing arguments are presented. An event history analysis of 74 new democracies that transitioned from authoritarian rule between 1975 and 2003 shows that institutional legacies significantly affect prospects for democratic consolidation. Specifically, competitive authoritarian regimes tend to make for longer–lived democracies following a democratic transition than regimes without minimally competitive elections.[2]

The idea that political institutions have significant and independent effects is hardly controversial in comparative politics. What has been less broadly accepted is the notion that nominally democratic institutions are anything but window dressing in regimes that do not allow for meaningful challenges to authority. By the late 1980s, a series of observed transitions led to the conclusion that there was no sustainable form of electoral authori-

tarianism. Huntington (1991) famously declared that "liberalized authoritarianism is not a stable equilibrium; the halfway house does not stand" (174–5). Others had already begun drawing the same conclusion; regimes that adopted nominally democratic institutions did not represent a new variety or subtype of authoritarian regime, they were instead considered transitory states (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986, DiPalma 1990, Przeworski 1991). For a decade, the literature on democratization treated dictatorships with electoral institutions as semi–democracies or states in the process of full liberalization. But by the turn of the century the observed facts made this a difficult position to maintain. Dictators remained in power alongside legislatures, political parties, and electoral systems that they had created or inherited. It became clear that electoral authoritarianism was not an ephemeral and unstable state; it was a new kind of nondemocracy, and it was quickly becoming the norm (Schedler 2002).

Others have argued that even when they are unfree, unfair, and rigidly controlled, elections, parties and legislatures do alter the political dynamics of nondemocracies. Many early scholars worked to establish that these institutions could have real and independent effects, though those effects may be very different from what we would expect in democratic contexts (Hermet 1978, Hyden & Leys 1972, Dinka & Skidmore 1973). More recent contributions have shown that authoritarian electoral institutions significantly affect various regime dynamics, from the level of economic growth (Gandhi 2008, Wright 2008a) to the overall stability of the regime (Wright 2008b, Hadenius & Teorell 2007, Lindberg 2006a).

Typologies of authoritarian regimes provide the analytic distinctions necessary to examine many of these questions. Levitsky and Way (2002) and Diamond (2002) offer typologies of regimes that separate states based upon the degree and openness of their electoral competition. Levitsky and Way suggest that regimes be classified as *closed* if they hold no elections, *hegemonic* if elections are held but no real challengers are allowed to participate,

and *competitive* if elections are at least somewhat contested despite being neither free nor fair. By operationalizing similar typologies, scholars have begun to engage the question of whether or not these different subtypes of authoritarian regimes fail and democratize at different rates (Hadenius & Teorell 2007, Brownlee 2009b).

How electoral institutions affect an authoritarian regime's survival and potential for democratization is a point of contention in the literature.[3] Some have argued that competitive electoral institutions can make conditions more favorable for democratization (Lindberg 2006a, Hadenius & Teorell 2007, Wright 2008b, Brownlee 2009b, Howard & Roessler 2002) while others have noted that dictators institutionalize only when they need to (Gandhi 2008) and electoral institutions are subsequently manipulated to keep autocrats in power (Gandhi & Przeworski 2007, Chehabi & Linz 1998, Remmer 1999, Joseph 1997). Both lines of argument have received mixed empirical support; a handful of studies have shown competitive elections to be associated with regime liberalization (Lindberg 2006a, Howard & Roessler 2002, Hadenius & Teorell 2007) while others have found no relationship between authoritarian institutions and regime change (Brownlee 2009b, Gandhi 2008, Brownlee 2007). Still other investigations have found a conditional effect that is only observed in some regions at some times and not in others (McCoy & Hartlyn 2009, Teorell & Hadenius 2009).[4]

While scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the possible democratizing effects of authoritarian elections, very little attention has been given to how experience with authoritarian elections shapes new democracies. As a result, little is known about the lasting, post–transition effects of competitive authoritarianism. How does the institutional legacy of authoritarian elections affect the experience of new democracies? In particular, does institutional legacy affect the stability and survival of new democratic regimes? Previous work on democratic regime stability has not explicitly investigated the role of institutional legacy, leaving open the question of what kinds of authoritarian institutions offer the best chances

of democratic consolidation in the event of a transition from authoritarian rule.

This study addresses how minimally competitive electoral experience under dictatorship can impact the prospects for democratic survival following a democratic transition; as such, *competitive authoritarian regimes* are the focus of this analysis. Existing arguments concerning unfree elections and democratization yield competing hypotheses about the long–term effects of competitive authoritarianism providing the opportunity for a critical test. The empirical analysis supports the hypothesis that even unfree electoral competition does promote democracy, at least in the long run. Competitive authoritarian regimes, if they transition to democracy, tend to survive longer and are less prone to authoritarian backsliding than closed or hegemonic regimes.

These findings have clear implications for policies of states and international organizations aiming to promote lasting democratization. Specifically, my results support the efficacy of efforts to expand electoral competition in nondemocracies. Whether or not parties and elections provide a pathway out of authoritarian rule, they provide experience with electoral competition that makes democracy, should it come about, more sustainable.

The next section briefly outlines the arguments for and against a link between elections and democratization paying careful attention to the implications for any long–term effects of competitive authoritarianism. Drawing on existing theory, I then develop new hypotheses that are consistent with the competing arguments presented. The remainder of the paper is devoted to empirical tests of these hypotheses and a discussion of the findings.

2   Institutional Legacy and Democratic Survival

A significant number of studies have addressed how elections either foster or forestall democratization. A recent edited volume (Lindberg 2009) is, in fact, devoted to bringing together a diverse set of viewpoints on precisely this question. Many scholars studying political behavior and institutions in authoritarian regimes have offered compelling reasons why we should be skeptical of claims that competitive elections make dictators more vulnerable.[5] Others, drawing heavily upon the work of much earlier democratic theorists have proposed reasons to expect a positive electoral effect on both regime failure and probability of democratization. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to the long–term implications of these competing accounts of the effect of electoral institutions. While dozens of contributions have tested their implications for the likelihood of democratization, none have addressed how the proposed mechanisms might affect long–term democratic stability in the event that a democratic transition takes place.

The two lines of argument produce competing hypotheses concerning the relationship between institutional legacy and the stability of democratic successor regimes. Specifically, theories that suggest no relationship between competitive elections and probability of democratic transition imply a null relationship between institutional legacy and the survival of new democracies. In contrast, those suggesting that competitive authoritarianism promotes democratization imply that institutional legacy is likely related to the stability of young democracies.

2.1   The Democratizing Effect of Elections

Accounts of how competitive authoritarianism can be linked to democratization have generally relied on two related mechanisms. First, some have suggested that electoral competition

can imbue societies with increased support for democratic norms and values (Lindberg 2006a, Birney 2007, Pei 1995). Birney (2007), for example, argues that local elections in China can have a positive effect on both participatory attitudes and the protection of political rights. The liberalizing effects of better elections could be considered real progress toward liberal democracy to the extent that these attitudes and protections, once adopted, are not easily reversed (153). Similarly, Lindberg (2006; 2009) argues that repeated experiences with elections inculcate societies with democratic values. In his data from sub–Saharan Africa, repeated elections were associated with improvements in a country's Freedom House scores for civil liberties and political rights. His claim is that elections increase respect for basic rights and freedoms which spur liberal reforms and, presumably, could ultimately lead to a democratic transition.

Second, others propose that electoral competition prepares a society for democracy by mobilizing politically salient groups leading to an increase in the cost of oppression and a decrease in the cost of inclusion (Lindberg 2009a, Brownlee 2009b).[6] Brownlee (2009) finds that competitive authoritarian regimes are significantly more likely than closed regimes to be followed by electoral democracy given that a transition occurs. He explains this finding by looking to earlier democratic theorists. He points to Rustow's (1970) claim that democracy is forged by prolonged struggle within a polity, linking this struggle to experience with competitive elections. Similarly, Dahl's (1970) proposition that competition can eventually make inclusion a more appealing strategy than repression suggests that competitive authoritarianism may change the incentives and values of groups in society in favor of democratic governance. Lindberg (2009) identifies the mechanisms that may help shift away from repression and toward inclusion on the part of incumbents, including a growth in the size and complexity of opposition organizations, increased mass political mobilization, and large–scale investment in democratic institutions and processes (329).

If these are in fact the mechanisms linking competitive electoral institutions and democratization, then what might the long–term effects of these institutions look like? First, if minimally competitive elections increase the acceptance of democratic values and norms then new democracies with a competitive authoritarian legacy will, on average, have more initial support for and experience with democratic processes than regimes with noncompetitive legacies. Greater support for widespread political rights and broader acceptance of norms of electoral participation can reasonably be assumed to have a positive effect on prospects for democratic survival. A greater proportion of the electorate would be expected to accept the rights and liberties of others and thus be less inclined to take part in stripping away those rights. Furthermore, more people would be expected to understand and take part in electoral politics, boosting the legitimacy of a new democracy's institutions and its rulers.

Greater mobilization and organization of politically salient groups would also be expected to reduce the risk of authoritarian backsliding in new democracies. In states with competitive authoritarian legacies, we would expect politically relevant groups to have attained a higher level of organization prior to a transition. This head–start in group mobilization is assumed to drive up the costs of repression and reduce the costs of inclusion, which it would then be expected to continue to do following a transition. There is no reason to believe that the same mechanism that led to a decline in repression would not help to prevent its return. Furthermore, groups that are organized and highly invested in the system from the beginning are less likely to try to undermine the democratic process; instead, they are more likely to see their fate as intertwined with that of the new regime.

Even if the differences between regimes with competitive and noncompetitive legacies evaporate soon after a democratic transition – as all states, regardless of legacy, see increases in the acceptance of democratic values and the activation of politically salient groups – the effect of institutional legacy may be significant. New democracies face their greatest risk of

authoritarian backsliding in the first few years after a democratic transition (see Figure 2). Since the risk they face is the greatest early on, having broader support for democracy and better organized interests at the moment of transition may in fact be a crucial difference between regimes with different legacies. Broader acceptance of democratic norms and values may help to insulate young democracies with competitive legacies from some potential threats to their survival during the tumultuous first decade and first few alternations in power.

Overall, this line of argument implies that competitive authoritarian regimes will make for longer–lived democracies in the event of a democratic transition. Extending this logic thus leads to the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *New democracies with a legacy of competitive authoritarianism will be less likely to return to authoritarian rule than new democracies with no electoral legacy.*

2.2 The Strategic Adoption of Electoral Institutions

The argument that elections either have no impact on prospects for democratization or that they actually help to sustain authoritarian regimes has also been made (Gandhi & Przeworski 2007, Joseph 1997, Remmer 1999). One challenge to the proposed relationship between elections and democratization is endogeneity: do nominally competitive elections lead to opposition mobilization and the acceptance of democratic values or is the development of an organized, pro–liberalization challenge to the regime the impetus for instituting elections? A related argument comes from those seeking to explain the existence of political institutions under dictatorship in the first place. The general argument is that autocrats institutionalize when they need to, either as a means of political survival (Geddes 2005, Gandhi 2008) or in order to reap the benefits that elections and legislatures may be able to provide (Gandhi 2008, Lust-Okar 2005). The adoption of nominally democratic institutions is explained as a

rational choice made by self–interested dictators seeking to coopt challengers, counterbalance the power of the military, and/or exploit parties and legislatures for their added efficiencies in the distribution of patronage. Since rulers choose to institutionalize for their own benefit and often directly to maintain their monopoly on power, some have concluded that a link between elections and democratization would be unlikely (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009).

Gandhi (2008) offers a model in which dictators choose to create political parties and legislatures when they need to "mobilize cooperation and to deter larger segments of society from forming active opposition" (100). Here, institutions provide a forum for the distribution of patronage and the cooptation of opposition elements in which transaction costs are reduced and those who may have otherwise threatened the regime become invested in maintaining the status quo. She concludes by questioning the assertion that elections and parties might have democratizing effects, noting that authoritarian elections are a "rigged game" and thus not likely to imbue democratic values to those who may participate (188). Gandhi and Lust–Okar (2009) echo this point and add that the link between elections and democratization is further complicated by evidence that dictators often institutionalize in order to maintain their hold on power.

In contrast to arguments addressed in the previous section, Gandhi (2008) and Gandhi and Lust–Okar (2009) suggest that elections may not instill democratic values or increase the level of opposition that a regime faces. Instead, regimes that need to compromise or coopt the opposition will strategically use institutions in order to do so efficiently, thus maintaining their position in power. While nominally democratic, unfree elections should not be expected to bring about any changes in the acceptance of democratic values because they are themselves inherently undemocratic. Even worse, authoritarian elections may cause citizens to distrust the electoral process so that even following a democratic transition they may be less willing to invest in electoral institutions that were once used to legitimize and

prop–up undemocratic rulers.

If unfree elections do nothing to promulgate democratic values or participatory norms, as suggested by Gandhi (2008), among others, then we should see no relationship between institutional legacy and democratic survival. Unfree elections fail to advance the acceptance of democratic norms and any group mobilization/organization is limited to those interests that incumbents wish to bring into the process. New democracies with either competitive or noncompetitive legacies are expected to be comparable with respect to the acceptance of democratic values and the mobilization and organization of politically relevant groups. The overall implication of this approach is that unfree elections do not affect societies in the way that the previous account suggests. Since these institutions have no effect on regime stability or democratization, there is no reason to expect their legacy to be associate with longer–lived successor regimes.

Hypothesis 2: *New democracies with a legacy of competitive authoritarianism will be no less likely to return to authoritarian rule than new democracies with no electoral legacy.*

Hypotheses 1 and 2 are drawn from conflicting accounts of how authoritarian elections effect prospects for democratization. Since their predictions directly contradict one another, they offer the possibility of a critical test. But first, I consider one complicating factor: the observed relationship between initial levels of political participation following a democratic transition and regime stability.

2.3   An Indirect Relationship? Initial Levels of Participation

Some have argued that high levels of participation are hazardous to the survival of young democracies (Dahl 1970). Giving all groups access to the levers of power simultaneously might cause chaos by making large numbers of divisions politically salient, quickly over-

whelming the entire system. Wright (2008) argues the opposite; high initial levels of participation actually make for more stable democracies. He provides evidence that gradually bringing different segments of society into the political process following a transition increases the risk of democratic failure. Initial levels of participation are related to institutional legacy, with competitive authoritarian regimes seeing a higher initial level of participation following a democratic transition than closed regimes. Thus, institutional legacy may only be related to democratic regime stability indirectly, through its effect on initial level of participation.

Hypothesis 3: *Institutional legacy has no direct effect on democratic survival; it has only an indirect effect working through initial level of political participation.*

The next section details an empirical strategy for testing these three hypotheses. The findings strongly support Hypothesis 1, indicating that competitive authoritarian regimes make for more stable democracies. Like Wright (2008), I find that initial levels of participation are associated with the survival of new democracies, but institutional legacy also has a direct and independent effect on regime survival.

3   Empirical Analysis

Data was collected on 76 new democratic regimes (in 67 different countries) that transitioned from authoritarian rule between 1975 and 2003 (967 regime–years).[7] The unit of analysis is regime–year. Of the 66 countries in the data, 7 experienced multiple democratic spells over the thirty–year period under observation. Of the 74 democratic transitions that occurred, 20 subsequently returned to authoritarian rule.[8] The majority of democratic failures occurred in Africa, but South America, Asia, and Eastern Europe also saw authoritarian backsliding. The spatio–temporal domain of the sample allows us to capture the diversity of the dozens of democratic transitions that occurred around the world in the last quarter of the 20th

century.

3.1 Democratic Regime Survival

Transitions were coded according to the criteria offered by Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi (2000) which classifies regimes as either *Democratic* or *Autocratic*.[9] In Przeworski et al.'s coding, years in which countries experience a regime transition are coded for the incoming regime, so transition–years are indicated by a change in the type of regime. Dichotomous measures of democracy are widely accepted in the transitions literature (see Geddes 1999, Przeworski et al. 2000, Linz 1975), though some have opted to view democratization as movement along a continuum of democracy or polyarchy (Lindberg 2006*a*, Lindberg 2009*a*). When trying to examine the effect of electoral institutions on democratization, dichotomous measures may be problematic to the extent that they rely on elections themselves as part of their criteria for the existence of democracy, as most do, including the one used in this study. In practice, however, this measure largely comports with the available alternatives (based on Polity or Freedom House) and with the general understandings about when a country has democratized or transitioned to authoritarian rule. Furthermore, since we are interested specifically in how institutional legacy affects the survival of democracy, not necessarily its emergence, the operationalization used here does not pose a problem.

Countries enter the sample in the year after experiencing a democratic transition. They leave the sample when they either fail or are censored. A regime is considered to fail if it experiences a transition to authoritarian rule. Regimes that enter the sample and do not fail by 2004 are considered censored. Countries can enter and leave the sample multiple times by experiencing multiple democratic transitions within the period under observation.

Figure 1 plots the Kaplan–Meier Survivor Function for my sample. The survivor

function estimates the unconditional probability of surviving to time t. Hence, the probability of survival declines monotonically from time zero, where the probability of survival is one. The survivor function shows that democratic regimes of the third wave have been somewhat resilient, with roughly three quarters of new democracies expected to survive more than two decades. The survivor function also appears to be flattening out over time which is what we would expect as democracy becomes consolidated.[10]

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The hazard estimate is plotted in Figure 2. The hazard gives the rate of failure conditional on survival to time t. As we might expect, new democracies face the highest risk of authoritarian backsliding in the first decade or so after a democratic transition, with the risk of failure dropping off substantially by about fifteen years post–transition. The hazard peaks at roughly 7 or 8 years after transition, and rises again at about twenty years post–transition. If democratic values play a role in sustaining young democracies then their greatest impact may be during those tumultuous first few years when the risk of returning to authoritarian rule is near its maximum.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

3.2   Operationalizing Institutional Legacy

I rely on Brownlee's (2009) operationalization of Levitsky and Way's (2002) typology of authoritarian regimes. Levitsky and Way offer a typology of authoritarian regimes based on the existence and competitiveness of electoral institutions. They first divide regimes into those that hold elections and those that do not, the former are considered *Electoral* authoritarian regimes and the latter are considered *Closed* regimes. The typology next distinguishes between elections that are dominated by one party/candidate and those in which at least

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some regime opponents are actually allowed to meaningfully challenge incumbents for elected offices. This distinction is used to subdivide *Electoral* authoritarian regimes into *Hegemonic* and *Competitive* subtypes.

Brownlee (2009) operationalizes this typology using the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions (DPI). The DPI contains a 7–point measure of legislative and executive competitiveness, coded as follows: 1 = no legislature, 2 = unelected legislature/executive, 3 = elected legislature/executive, one candidate/post, 4 = one party, multiple candidates, 5 = multiple parties are legal but only one party won seats, 6 = multiple parties won seats but the largest party won more than 75% of the seats, 7 = largest party held less than 75%. A regime receiving a 4 or less on both scales is considered *Closed*; conversely, a regime with a score greater than 4 or either scale is considered to be an *Electoral* authoritarian regime. *Electoral* authoritarian regimes are then considered *Competitive* if they score a 7 on either scale and *Hegemonic* if they score a 6 or less on both.

Since I am interested in the post–transition effects of electoral institutions, each new democracy in my data is coded as having either a *Closed, Hegemonic* or *Competitive* legacy corresponding to the type of authoritarian regime that immediately preceded it. First, for each newly democratic regime, I coded its predecessor according to Brownlee's specifications using dummy variables for different regime–types.[11] I then created dummy variables for institutional legacy based on the coding of the predecessor regime in the year prior to a democratic transition. For example, if in the year prior to a democratic transition a regime was coded as *Hegemonic*, then the democratic regime that emerged is coded as having a *Hegemonic* legacy for every year it remains in the data (until it either fails or is censored). About half of the 74 regimes in the sample have *Electoral* authoritarian histories, a majority of which have *Competitive*, rather than *Hegemonic*, legacies, providing sufficient variation for the subsequent analysis.

Coding institutional legacies solely on the basis of what a regime looked like the year before a transition means that I am ignoring any institutional variation that occurred further back in a regime's history.[12] This means that democratic regimes will be treated as having a given legacy whether that institutional arrangement had been the status quo for decades or had been adopted not long before a democratic transition. Most of the regimes that are coded as being *Closed* in the year prior to transition probably were *Closed* regimes for most of the years leading up to democratization. This is because institutions tend to be sticky – once created, elections and parties are difficult to dispense with and, more often than not, dictators simply choose to subvert or undermine them rather than dismantle them. In contrast, a number of regimes that were considered to be *Competitive* in the year before a transition would probably only recently have met the criteria for that classification because the proliferation of competitive authoritarianism has been a fairly recent phenomenon.

If the proposed pro–democracy effects of competitive authoritarianism accrue over time with repeated elections, then equating all *Competitive* legacies, however long or short, is problematic. On average, the effect of *Competitive* legacy should be greater in countries with more experience with competitive authoritarianism. The present analysis, however, does not distinguish longer legacies from shorter ones – any state that was *Competitive* in the year prior to transition is considered to have a *Competitive* legacy, whether they had been holding nominally competitive elections for one year or for several decades. Operationalizing institutional legacy in this way makes it more difficult to find support for Hypothesis 1 than if only states with longer competitive authoritarian experience had been considered to have *Competitive* legacies. The results still strongly support Hypothesis 1 over Hypothesis 2.

The key independent variable in this analysis is *Competitive*, the dummy variable identifying democracies with a legacy of competitive authoritarianism. Most arguments linking electoral competition and democratization rely on a conceptualization of electoral competi-

tiveness that is much like Levitsky and Way's (2002) competitive authoritarian regime type. Since these are the arguments relevant to Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, *Competitive* is a more appropriate measure than *Hegemonic*.

Figure 3 plots the Kaplan–Meier survival estimates for cases with and without *Competitive* legacies.[13] Almost a quarter of the new democracies with *Closed* or *Hegemonic* institutional legacies are expected to fail in the first decade following a democratic transition, with nearly half expected to return to authoritarian rule after thirty years. In contrast, regimes with *Competitive* legacies appear to fare much better with over 80% predicted to survive thirty years or more. If we compare *Competitive* legacies to *Closed* legacies (omitting *Hegemonic* legacies), the differences in expected survival become even starker; among regimes with *Closed* legacies, fewer than half are predicted to persist 25 years after a democratic transition. A logrank test of the equality of the survivor functions indicates that there is a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between the expected survival of new democracies with *Competitive* legacies and without *Competitive* legacies.

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Figure 3 supports Hypothesis 1; within the sample, democracies that were born out of *Competitive* authoritarian regimes do fare better than those emerging from *Hegemonic* or *Closed* regimes. But this bivariate analysis does not account for other important factors such as GDP or the level of ethnic conflict that a young democracy faces. The next section specifies a Cox proportional hazards model for repeated events that allows us to control for several other factors and explicitly test whether or not the effect of institutional legacy is working through initial levels of democratic participation.

3.3 Model

I specify a Cox proportional hazards model in order to examine how authoritarian institutional legacy affects the survival of new democracies. Since some of the countries in the data experience multiple spells of democracy interspersed with periods of authoritarian rule, the variance of the estimates is adjusted by employing a conditional gap–time model, an appropriate approach for dealing with the type of repeated events in my data (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones 2004, Box-Steffensmeier & Zorn 2002). In addition to the two institutional legacy dummies, *Competitive* and *Hegemonic*, a measure of initial level of political participation is included to examine Hypothesis 3. Controlling for a number of other factors including initial participation, *Competitive* legacies have a positive and significant effect on the survival of new democracies. Simulations show that at substantively meaningful values of all control variables, democracies with either *Hegemonic* or *Closed* legacies face a greater risk of regime failure than those with *Competitive* legacies.

3.3.1 Modeling the Survival of Democracy

The dependent variable of interest in this analysis is the survival of new democracies. More precisely, I am interested in how having a particular institutional legacy affects the probability that a new democracy experiences a transition back to authoritarian rule. An event history analysis is appropriate when modeling the hazard of experiencing some event, as event history models have a built–in set of tools for dealing with several characteristics of survival–time data, such as censored observations (observations that never experience an event while under observation), temporal dependence, and the inclusion of time–varying covariates (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones 2004).

The semi–parametric Cox proportional hazards model has a major advantage over

parametric survival models: the Cox model does not demand that we make any assumption about the shape of the baseline hazard. This allows us to proceed without imposing any assumptions about whether the overall risk of regime failure is rising, falling, or constant over time. Since none of the theory discussed here makes any firm predictions about the shape of the baseline hazard in this case, it is preferable that we not make any unsupported assumptions.[14] Additionally, the Cox model allows us to easily account for the repeated nature of democratic breakdown, which a country may experience more than once.[15]

There are several ways that we can modify the Cox model to handle repeated events. The most common set of solutions are known as variance–corrected models which adjust the variance of our estimates by clustering on subject (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones 2004). Choosing between the different specifications within this set involves a consideration of how we view the risk each unit faces at any given time and how we want to measure time to an event. This analysis deals with spells of democratization that can be repeated within a given country. The events we are interested in, democratic failures, are ordered in the sense that a country cannot experience its second failure until after experiencing its first. As a result, risk faced by the countries in the analysis is conditional; a country is only at risk of experiencing its kth democratic failure if it has, at that point in time, already experienced k-1 failures. Additionally, it makes sense to measure time to a democratic failure starting from the time of a country's most recent democratic transition, effectively resetting the clock each time a country enters the data after transitioning from authoritarian rule. By resetting the clock after a second (or subsequent) democratic transition, we are assuming that the risk to the survival of the current regime was not developing during the period prior to that regime emerging, a reasonable assumption in most instances.[16]

A conditional gap–time model is appropriate for situations in which repeated events are ordered and the time since the previous event is of interest (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones

2004).[17] Like all variance–corrected approaches, the conditional gap–time model adjusts the variance of our estimates by clustering on subject to account for the fact that the risk faced by a given democracy may not be independent of the risks faced by democratic regimes that previously existed in that country. In addition, the model stratifies events by sequence, allowing us to estimate a different baseline hazard for the first democratic failure and the second and so on. Stratifying by sequence means that we are treating first events as different from later events, since the risks a country faces during its second experience with democracy may be qualitatively different from those associated with its first.

While several of the countries in the data have two spells of democracy, only one has three, and only one ever actually experiences multiple democratic failures. As a result, stratifying is not feasible since there would only be one event in the second strata and none in the third, making estimates highly unstable. By not stratifying the sample, I am effectively combining three strata into one. Combining higher–order strata when they contain only a few events is a recommended practice when dealing with conditional gap–time models (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones 2004).[18] Instead, an event counter is included in the model to control for any effects of prior experiences with democracy.

The next analysis employs a Cox model to investigate the effect of institutional legacy on the survival of new democracies. Standard errors were clustered on country to relax the independence assumption within units. While the properties of this particular Cox model make it an appropriate choice, the main findings are robust to numerous alternative modeling strategies and specifications.

3.3.2   Control Variables

In addition to the two institutional legacy variables (*Competitive* and *Hegemonic*), a number of relevant control variables were included in the analysis.

A country's wealth has been shown to be related to the stability of democracy (Przeworski et al. 2000). The log of each new democracy's GDP is included for each year it remains under observation to account for how differences in wealth might affect the risk faced by new democracies. Also included in the analysis is Alesina's (2003) measure of ethnic fractionalization which combines racial and linguistic variation within a country. Obviously, greater ethnic diversity might be expected to increase the overall level of conflict in a polity, likely having a negative effect on the stability of new democracies.

The failure of many presidential democracies, particularly in Latin America, has led to the speculation that presidential systems face a greater risk of democratic breakdown than parliamentary systems (see Linz and Valenzuela 1994).[19] I include a dummy variable coded one if a regime has a presidential system and zero otherwise to control for any such effects.

The commonality of post–Soviet transitions suggests a theoretical justification for including a single regional dummy variable to capture new democracies that emerged from the former Soviet Union, so I include a dummy variable for central and eastern Europe. Additional region–specific controls are not included. As Brownlee points out (2009, 526), correcting the variance of our estimates by clustering on country relaxes the assumption that observations within units are independent and reduces the need for regional controls. Including a full array of regional dummies does not alter the results presented below.

Finally, Wright (2008) argues that higher initial levels of participation make for more stable democracies. His study shows that new democracies in which a greater portion of the population was brought into the political process right after democratization tend to survive longer than democracies where initial participation was relatively limited. This finding leads directly to Hypothesis 3; the assertion that institutional legacy may have no independent effect on the survival of new democracies but rather it may have only an indirect effect by altering the expected level of participation just following a transition. To examine this

question directly, I employ the same measure of initial participation as Wright (2008): Polity IV's seven–point scale of participatory competitiveness (PARCOM). A country's PARCOM score on the year it became a democracy was used to code the initial level of participation for each regime in the data. Since we are only interested in *initial* or starting levels, a regime's score is the same for every year it remains in the data.[20]

3.4 Results

Table 1 presents the results from three different Cox regressions. Model 1 just includes the two institutional legacy variables. Model 2 adds all of the controls except Initial Competitiveness and Model 3 includes all covariates. Interpretation is relatively straightforward; coefficients that are negative (positive) and significant indicate variables that are associated with a decrease (increase) in the overall risk of regime failure.

Recall that Hypothesis 1 asserts a negative relationship between *Competitive* legacy and risk of democratic failure, Hypothesis 2 proposes that *Competitive* legacies are not associated with a reduction in risk of breakdown, and Hypothesis 3 claims that the effect of institutional legacy is entirely operating through initial levels of political participation. A negative and significant coefficient on *Competitive* (indicating that *Competitive* legacies are associated with a decreased risk of democratic failure) would be considered support for Hypothesis 1; insignificant or positive coefficients for both institutional legacy variables would be supportive of Hypothesis 2; and Hypothesis 3 would be supported if *Competitive* is negative and significant but becomes insignificant after *Initial Participation* is added to the model. The findings are strongly supportive of Hypothesis 1 and raise serious doubts about Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3. Institutional legacy has a profound effect on the survival of the young democracies in the data, even after controlling for a number of theoretically relevant factors including initial level of participation. Specifically, *Competitive* authoritar-

ian legacies significantly reduce the risk of breakdown in new democracies; in comparison, regimes with *Hegemonic* or *Closed* legacies face a risk of failure that is, on average, many times greater.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Competitive legacies are associated with a significantly lower risk of democratic failure than *Closed* legacies.[21] The effect of *Competitive* legacy is quite robust, remaining negative and significant in all three models. The consistently negative and significant effect of *Competitive* legacy is strong support for Hypothesis 1 and a major challenge to Hypothesis 2. Moving from Model 1 to Model 2, the effect of *Competitive* legacy retains its magnitude and statistical significance with the inclusion of a host of relevant control variables. When we include *Initial Participation*, which is also associated with decreased risk of democratic failure, the effect of *Competitive* legacy gets even larger and more significant. The last column of Table 1 reports the results from the full model and the coefficient on *Competitive* legacy is negative and significant, indicating that there is a robust relationship between *Competitive* legacy and reduced risks to democratic survival. The results of the full model, including *Initial Participation*, indicate that we can reject Hypothesis 3 as well; *Competitive* legacies have a significant independent effect on the survival of new democracies beyond any indirect impact they may have by driving up initial levels of participation. *Hegemonic* legacies are associated with lower risk of democratic failure than *Closed* legacies (the coefficient is negative in all three models) but the effect is not statistically significant in the full model. Taken together, these results indicate that electoral authoritarian regimes make for more stable democracies but only if a minimal level of meaningful political competition is allowed to thrive. Otherwise, the mere presence of elections and parties prior to a democratic transition does not contribute significantly to the longevity of the new regime.

Simulated hazard ratios were calculated to examine the substantive significance of this

relationship.[22] Simulated hazard ratios allow us to examine how the risk faced by a new democracy changes when we vary its institutional legacy while holding all other covariates constant at substantively meaningful values.[23] The first entry reports the simulated ratio of the hazards faced by a hypothetical country with *Closed* rather than a *Competitive* legacy. The hazard ratio indicates that all else being equal, a country with a *Closed* institutional legacy faces a risk of democratic failure that is more than three and a half times greater than if the same country had a *Competitive* legacy ($p < .05$). Similarly, the second entry reports the simulated ratio of the hazards faced by a country with *Hegemonic* rather than a *Competitive* legacy. A country with a *Hegemonic* legacy is expected to face a risk of regime breakdown more than double the risk it would face with a *Competitive* legacy but the hazard ratio fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Finally, when compared to *Competitive* regimes, any non–*Competitive* regime (not specifying whether *Closed* or *Hegemonic*) faces a risk more than three times greater ($p < .05$).[24] The magnitude of the substantive effect of institutional legacy is quite impressive. New democracies with *Competitive* legacies face a hazard that is just a fraction of that faced by identical regimes with *Closed* or *Hegemonic* legacies.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Most of the control variables in the full model (Model 3) behave as expected with few surprises. As Wright (2008) shows, *Initial Competitiveness* is associated with reduced risk of breakdown though the result falls just outside conventional levels of statistical significance. More *Ethnic Fractionalization* is associated with substantially greater risks of democratic breakdown ($p < .05$). Surprisingly, *Presidential* systems were significantly less likely to return to authoritarian rule than other types of democracies ($p < .01$), despite some of the arguments concerning democratic institutions and regime stability. Also contrary to intuition, higher GDP is not associated with lower risk to democracy; the coefficient on

logGDP is not statistically significant. Also insignificant is the dummy for central and eastern Europe. Finally, the event counter that controlled for the sequence of democratic spells never achieves statistical significance.

These findings offer substantial support to the hypothesis that *Competitive* authoritarian regimes make for more stable and longer–lived democracies (Hypothesis 1). The effect of institutional legacy is both highly statistically significant and substantively meaningful, with *Competitive* legacies leading to a risk of authoritarian backsliding that is many times smaller than would be expected given a different authoritarian history. Even accounting for the complementary effect of high *Initial Participation*, institutional legacy can be seen to exert a powerful, independent effect on democratic stability.

The main results of this analysis are quite robust to alternative model specifications and modeling strategies, despite the relatively small number of cases and failures in the data.[25] Different strategies for dealing with repeated events, such as an Andersen–Gill model or the inclusion of an event counter, do not change the substantive or statistical significance of the results. Estimating models for discrete–time processes and rare events also yields statistically significant results for the effect of institutional legacy. Finally, when employing a host of different parametric models the findings presented here do not change in any meaningful way. The main results are thus supported using a variety of different specifications and estimators.

4   Conclusion

Institutional legacies matter. Newly democratized states whose predecessors institutionalized a minimal level of electoral competitiveness are much more likely to remain democratic than states with no pre–transition history of electoral competition. The exact mechanisms

driving this process are not entirely clear, though the literature linking competitive authoritarianism with democratization offers some guidance (see Lindberg 2009a). If, as some have suggested, unfree electoral competition instills democratic values and participatory norms then it seems reasonable to expect that such states will have an advantage in the event of a democratic transition. Prior experience with competitive elections might lead to the adoption of values and norms that help to stave–off authoritarian backsliding. The greater acceptance of democratic norms may help to shepherd young democracies through a tumultuous first decade and first few electoral cycles. Going beyond the first decade, competitive legacies may provide new democracies with a head start in the building of mass acceptance of the rules of the game and thereby offer them a permanent advantage in terms of democratic stability and consolidation.

The evidence presented strongly supports the conclusion that competitive legacies make for more stable democracies. Using a duration model for repeated events, I show that competitive legacies are associated with significantly decreased risk of democratic breakdown among newly democratized states. Simulations show that these effects are quite substantively significant as well; democracies with *Hegemonic* legacies face a risk of democratic failure 8 times greater, and those with *Closed* legacies face a risk 23 times greater, than new democracies with *Competitive* legacies. Alternative modeling strategies, specifications, and the omission of some potentially influential cases (microstates, for example) does not impact the significance of these main results.

Many questions remain, especially concerning the specific mechanisms driving the observed relationship between institutional legacy and democratic survival. More detailed theoretical and empirical examinations of the mechanisms thought to contributing to the democratizing effect of elections may lend further insights. Field work in newly democratized states may help to pin down the relationship between experience with institutions and

acceptance of democratic norms and values. Any productive efforts to this end will need to take care to address issues of endogeneity between democratic norms and the adoption of competitive elections.

In light of the vigorous debate over the potential democratizing effects of competitive authoritarianism, it is surprising that no previous work has directly addressed the long–term effects of these institutions. Both sides of the debate offer accounts that yield testable implications concerning the post–transition effects of competitive authoritarianism. This study provides strong support for the argument that electoral competition leads to more mobilization ad greater acceptance of democratic norms and values. This paper presents compelling evidence that the post–transition effects of electoral institutions are quite important and deserving of greater attention. Whether or not elections can foster democratic transitions, there is reason to support the adoption of minimally competitive electoral institutions in authoritarian regimes; if a transition occurs, new democracies with competitive legacies will be much more likely to avoid authoritarian backsliding and become stable, established democracies.

Notes

[1]In the terms of the typology introduced below (owing to Levitsky and Way 2002), autocracies that institute competitive elections are considered *competitive authoritarian regimes*, a subset of *electoral authoritarian regimes.*

[2]By *minimally* competitive I am referring to electoral systems that meet the relatively low standards to be considered a competitive authoritarian regime. The concept and operationalization of competitive authoritarianism is discussed below.

[3]The debate over whether or not elections promote democratization is presented nicely by Lindberg (2009) in an edited volume that brings together a number of perspectives.

[4] Schedler (2009) notes the diversity in the findings and suggests several reasons why the empirical evidence appears so inconsistent.

[5]See Gandhi and Lust–Okar (2009) for a review.

[6]A related point is made by a number of scholars who argue that authoritarian elections (especially in instances of perceived electoral fraud) can serve as focal points for collective action and lead to greater overall levels of mass political unrest (Tucker 2007, Bunce & Wolchik 2006, Thompson & Kuntz 2004).

[7] A complete list of the country–years in the data is available in the Appendix.

[8] A tabulation of regime failures by institutional legacy is available in the Appendix.

[9] Przeworski et al.'s data have only been extended through 2002. Most regimes in the data continue to qualify as democracies per Przeworski et al.'s operationalization through January 2004. I code three failures as occurring in 2003 due to coups and/or civil war: Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, and Ivory Coast. This is consistent with the

coding of regime change put forth by Przeworski et al. (2000).

[10]Substantively, this means that younger democracies failed at a higher rate than older ones in my sample. But this is more appropriately conveyed through the hazard rate.

[11]Following Brownlee (2009), I created two dummy variables, *Competitive* and *Hegemonic*, with *Closed* left as the reference category.

[12]DPI data currently only goes back to the mid–1970s, so systematically accounting for earlier regime history with the current operationalization is not possible.

[13]Cases where *Competitive*= 0 (the left panel in Figure 3) include both *Closed* and *Hegemonic* regime legacies.

[14]While tools such as the Aikake Information Criterion can help to choose between different parametric models, Box–Steffensmeier and Jones (2004) argue that in the absence of a strong theoretical justification for imposing any assumptions about the baseline hazard, the Cox model is the best, most flexible alternative.

[15]Residuals–based tests indicate that the proportional hazards assumption is not significantly violated by any of the variables in the model.

[16]If we assumed that the risk of a second (or subsequent) regime failure was developing at the same time as the risk to the first democratic failure, then this would not be a good assumption to make. In this case, it seems reasonable that threats develop sequentially, following the emergence of each new democratic regime.

[17]Box–Steffensmeier and Zorn (2002) convincingly argue that most of the time, conditional gap–time models are the most appropriate specification for ordered, repeated events in political science.

[18] Stratifying by fist and subsequent spell does not affect the results presented below.

[19]Roughly one–third (n=24) of the new democracies in my data are presidential systems.

[20]The measures of GDP and ethnic fractionalization vary over time in the data; PARCOM, the event counter, regional dummy, and the presidential system dummy are not time–varying.

[21]*Closed* is the reference category for the institutional legacy variables.

[22]The hazard ratio is defined as $HR = \frac{h(t|x^1)}{h(t|x)} = \frac{\lambda(t)\exp x^1\beta}{\lambda(t)\exp x\beta} = \frac{\exp x^1\beta}{\exp x\beta}$, where x^1 and x are set values of the independent variables (one in which *Competitive* $= 1$ and one in which *Competitive* $= 0$) given draws of β from its sampling distribution (Imai, King & Lau 2007, Imai, King & Lau 2008).

[23]*Presidential* was held at its mode and all other controls were held at their means.

[24] Omitting the *Hegemonic* dummy did not change the size or significance of *Compet*.

[25] The Appendix reports the results of a rare events logit specification both with and without cubic splines to account for temporal dependence. The results are supportive of the preceding analysis.
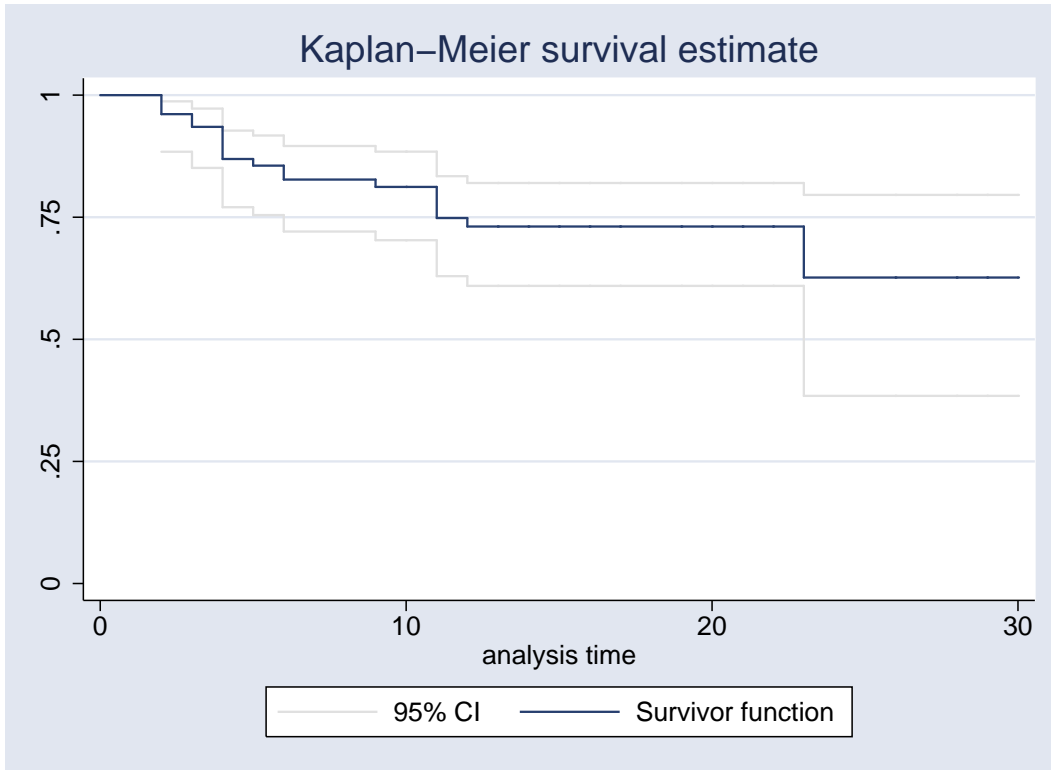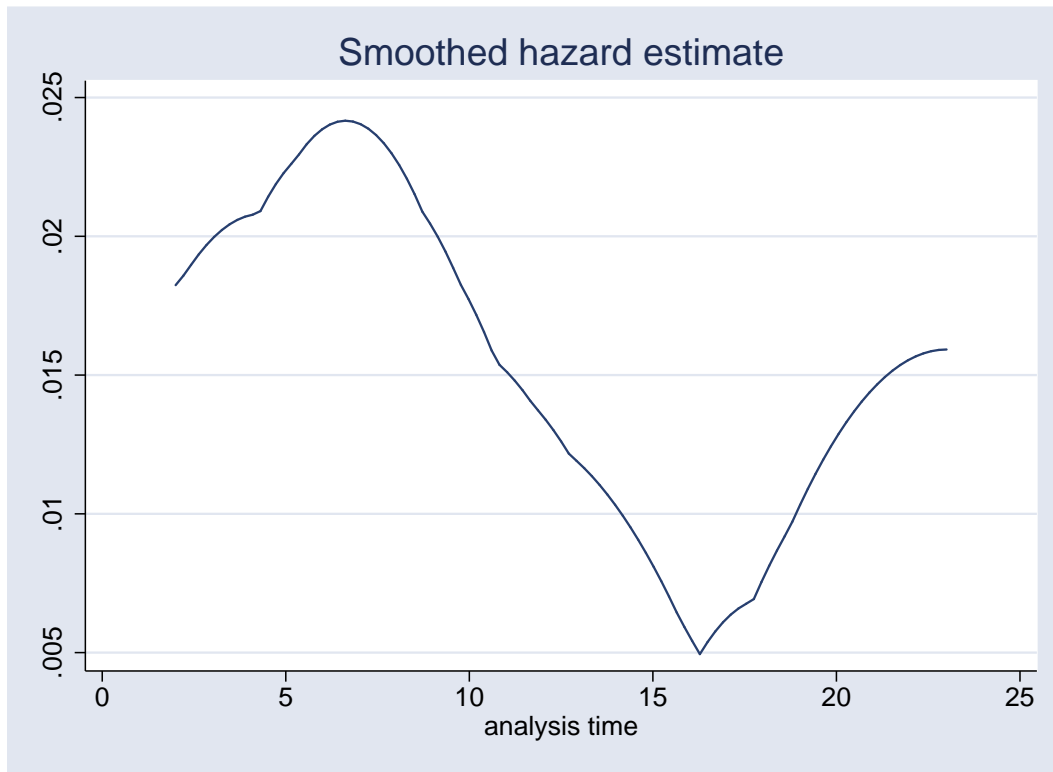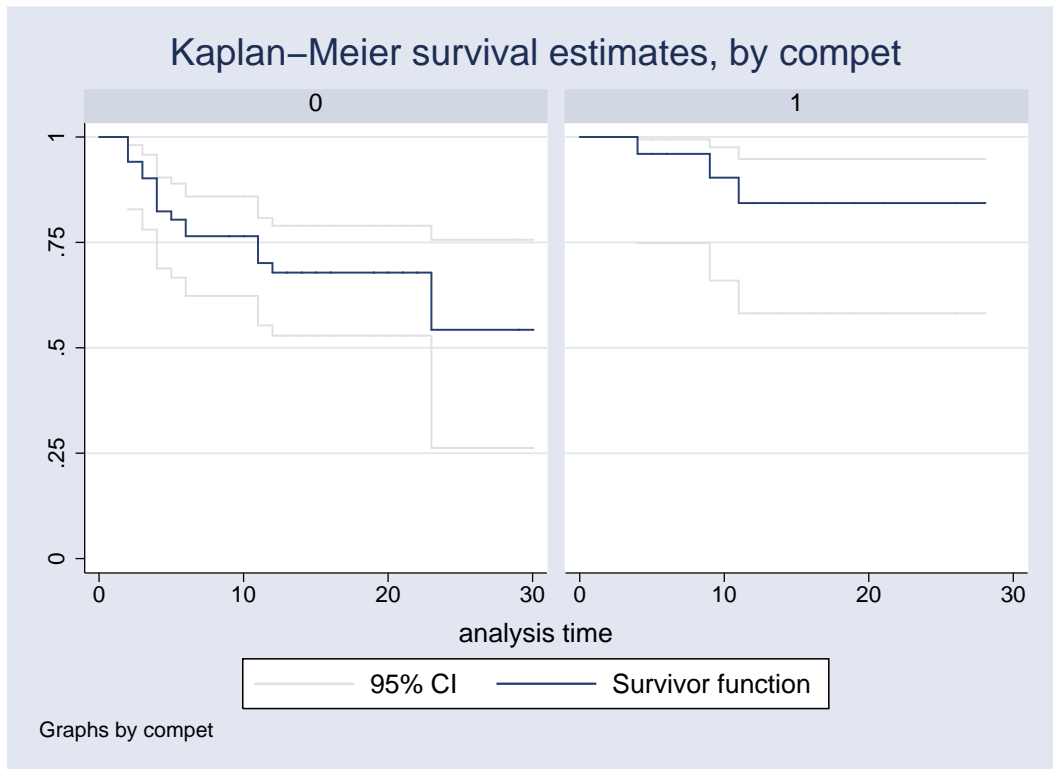
Figures and Tables

Figure 1

Kaplan–Meier survival estimate

Figure 2

Smoothed hazard estimate

analysis time

Figure 3

Kaplan–Meier survival estimates, by compet

Graphs by compet

Table 1: Institutional Legacy and Democratic Regime Survival
Conditional Gap–Time Cox Model

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Competitive	-1.151**	-1.281**	-1.184**
	(.582)	(.505)	(.541)
Hegemonic	-.849	-.584	-.567
	(.683)	(.517)	(.537)
Initial Competitiveness			-.373
			(.233)
logGDP		-.093	.651
		(.928)	(1.015)
Ethnic Frac		6.357***	6.802**
		(2.408)	(2.689)
Presidential		-2.474***	-2.247***
		(.697)	(.708)
Central/East Europe		-1.171	-1.117
		(1.026)	(1.044)
Event Counter		-.300	-.647
		(.403)	(.431)
N	832	832	832
N–failures	19	19	19
Log pseudo–likelihood	-78.973	-50.141	-48.703

$*p < .10 \ **p < .05 \ ***p < .01$

Entries are coefficients from Cox regression. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *Closed* is the reference category for the two institutional legacy variables.

Table 2: Simulated Hazard Ratios by Institutional Legacy
Relative to Competitive Authoritarian Legacy

Legacy	Hazard Ratio	95% CI
Closed	3.677**	(1.092–10.063)
Hegemonic	2.263	(.511–6.627)
Non–Competitive	3.298**	(1.035–7.725)
(*Competitive* = 0,		
Hegemonic omitted)		

$*p < .10 \ **p < .05 \ ***p < .01$

Hazard ratios calculated by simulation with 1000 reps. 95% confidence intervals in parentheses. Simulations were based on the full model (last column of Table 1). *LogGDP* and *Ethnic Fractionalization* were held at their means; the system dummy and *Initial Competitiveness* were held at their modes (*Presidential* = 0, *Initial Competitiveness* = 3). Simulation assume a country is in its first spell of democracy and is not in central or eastern Europe.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Authoritarian Institutional Legacy

Regime Classification	Coding Protocol	N
Fully Closed	1–4 on both scales	36
Electoral Authoritarian	5-7 on either scale	41
Hegemonic	<7 on both scales	15
Competitive	7 on either scale	26
Total		77

Table A.2: Authoritarian Regimes Succeeded by Electoral Democracies, 1975–2003

Country	Years as Democracy	Country	Years as Democracy
Albania	1992–	Macedonia	1991–
Argentina	1983–	Madagascar	1993–
Armenia	1991–	Malawi	1994–
Bangladesh	1991–	Mali	1992–
Benin	1991–	Mexico	2000–
Bolivia	1979–80, 1982–	Moldova	1996–
Brazil	1979–	Mongolia	1992–
Bulgaria	1990–	Nepal	1991–2002
Burundi	1993–96	Nicaragua	1984–
Cape Verde	1991–	Niger	1993–96, 2000–
Central African Republic	1993–2003	Nigeria	1979–83, 1999–
Chile	1990–	Pakistan	1988–1998
Congo	1992–97	Panama	1989–
Cote d'Ivoire	2000–2003	Peru	1980–90, 2001–
Croatia	1991–	Philippines	1986–
Cyprus	1983–	Poland	1989–
Czech Republic	1993–	Portugal	1976–
Ecuador	1979–2001	Romania	1990–
El Salvador	1984–	Russia	1992–
Estonia	1991–	Sao Tome	1991–
Ghana	1979–81, 2000–	Senegal	2000–
Greece	1975–	Sierra Leone	1996–97, 1998–
Grenada	1984–	South Africa	1994–
Guatemala	1986–	Spain	1977–
Guinea–Bissou	2000–2003	Sri Lanka	1989–
Guyana	1992–	Sudan	1986–89
Haiti	1994–	Suriname	1988–1990, 1991–
Honduras	1982–	Taiwan	1996–
Hungary	1990–	Thailand	1975–76, 1983–91, 1992–
Indonesia	1999–	Turkey	1983–
Kenya	2002–	Uganda	1980–1985
South Korea	1988–	Ukraine	1990–
Kyrgyzstan	1991–2001	Uruguay	1985–
Latvia	1991–	Zambia	1991–

Democratic spells with no end year indicate regimes that were coded as democratic as of January 2004. All microstates (Sao Tome, Cape Verde, Grenada, Suriname, and Guyana) and Taiwan were dropped from the full analysis due to the unavailability of data on control variables. Including these regimes under alternate specifications did not change the substantive or statistical significance of the main results.

Table A.3: Distribution of Democratic Failures by Legacy

	Closed	Hegemonic	Competitive
N Failures	14	3	3

Table A.4: Rare Events Logit Analysis of the Survival of New Democracies

Competitive	-.995**	-1.020**
	(.462)	(.485)
Hegemonic	-.310	-.240
	(.527)	(.614)
Initial Competitiveness	-.428*	-.409
	(.241)	(.268)
log(GDP)	.583	.217
	(.799)	(.896)
Ethnic Frac	5.851**	6.841**
	(2.209)	(2.973)
Central/East Europe	-1.082	-.855
	(.956)	(.984)
Presidential	-1.978**	-2.373***
	(.775)	(.855)
Event Counter	-.420	-.288
	(.506)	(.698)
Spline 1		.002
		(.009)
Spline 2		-.003
		(.010)
Spline 3		.002
		(.004)
Cons	-5.819*	-5.880
	(3.460)	(4.025)
N	835	835

$*p < .10 \; **p < .05 \; ***p < .01$

Entries are coefficients from rare events logistic regression. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *Closed* is the reference category for the two institutional legacy variables. Cubic splines naturally spaced to account for temporal dependence (See Beck, Katz and Tucker 1998).