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Party System Institutionalization and the Durability of Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

Short Title:
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Abstract

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Party system institutionalization (PSI) is regarded as a critical underpinning of democracies, but its role in non-democratic systems has been understudied. In this paper, we evaluate whether the concept has meaningful and perhaps unique implications for the durability of competitive authoritarian regimes. We argue that a modified version of electoral volatility—the most common measure of PSI in democracies—conveys useful information about PSI in competitive authoritarian contexts by signaling the ability of the ruling party to manage the opposition. To this end, we construct an original data set that disaggregates electoral volatility into ruling party seat change and opposition party seat volatility, and further divide opposition party volatility into Type-A and Type-B volatility. We find robust results that democratization becomes more likely when decreases in the ruling party's seat share coincide with an increase in opposition party Type-B volatility. This paper demonstrates that the concept of PSI has utility for understanding regime dynamics in competitive authoritarian contexts.

Keywords: party system institutionalization; regime durability; ruling parties; competitive authoritarian regimes

1. Introduction

Since Mainwaring & Scully's (1995) formative work on party systems in Latin America, the concept of party system institutionalization (PSI)—which refers to the stability and predictability in the set of parties in the party system and the patterns of competition between them—has been used to explain the performance and consolidation of democracies. Institutionalized party systems allow political actors to acquire information and develop more accurate expectations about who the parties are, what they prefer, and how they might behave. Consequently, PSI has come to be regarded as critical to democracy as it facilitates representation and governance, with less institutionalization linked to ineffective governance and democratic breakdown (Casal Bértoa & Enyedi, 2021; Kim, 2023; Mainwaring, 2018).

While the study of party systems has been a staple in the comparative analysis of democracies, the role that party systems play in authoritarian contexts has gone largely

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unexplored. This is not without reason, as interparty competition was nonexistent or irrelevant in many conventional authoritarian regimes. However, the rise of competitive authoritarian (CA) regimes engendered a novel type of party system in which a dominant ruling party 'competes' against opposition parties, albeit while enjoying significant structural and resource advantages. Elections in these regimes are fundamentally distinct from those typically observed in democracies as they do not offer a means to keep governments accountable, but instead establish an institutional channel though which incumbents can extend and legitimize their rule. Nonetheless, acknowledging that elections are biased in favor of the incumbent does not mean these elections and the accompanying party systems are meaningless. Indeed, the stakes involved in CA elections can be quite substantial—while democracies routinely survive significant turnover in their party systems,[1] a loss by the incumbents in a CA regime signals not just the potential for government turnover, but also the possibility of regime change.

Our purpose is to assess whether PSI is valuable for understanding the durability of CA regimes.[2] An extensive body of research highlights the importance of elections for

[1] Such turnover can indicate that self-correcting mechanisms within democratic institutions are functioning properly by allowing for necessary party realignments.

[2] Party institutionalization is related to PSI but is a distinct concept as it specifically refers to the stability and predictability of individual parties. While levels of party institutionalization—and party-level characteristics in general—should influence subsequent patterns of interparty competition, we focus on the party system since it is the interactions between the ruling party and opposition parties that have direct implications for regime durability.

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strengthening authoritarian rule (Levitsky & Way, 2010), and demonstrates that such elections still carry varying degrees of uncertainty and can trigger authoritarian breakdown (Bernhard, Edgell & Lindberg, 2020; Knutsen, Nygård & Wig, 2017). We argue that the institutionalization of the party system reflects the ruling party's ability to minimize such uncertainty by consolidating its dominance within the party system and pacifying opposition activity, which in turn enables the regime to "reap the fruits of electoral legitimacy without running the risks of democratic uncertainty" (Schedler, 2002, p. 37).

To make our case, we develop unique measures of PSI for CA contexts by modifying Pedersen's (1979) index of electoral volatility, which is the standard measure of PSI in democracies. As in democracies, electoral volatility broadly captures the stability and predictability of the party system in CA regimes, and thus reflects the extent to which ruling parties successfully minimize electoral uncertainty by managing interparty competition. On the other hand, and unlike in democracies, the ruling party is generally expected to win the election in CA regimes, which means that the electoral performance of the ruling party and opposition parties can have different ramifications for regime stability. To reflect this segmentation of the party system, we also disaggregate the system-level measure into ruling party seat change and opposition party volatility. Furthermore, we further break down opposition party volatility into Type-A and Type-B volatility (Powell & Tucker, 2014)—which respectively account for the entry and exit of opposition parties and shifts in the distribution of seats among repeat opposition contenders[3]—to better capture two of the three

[3] Opposition party volatility broadly incorporates parties that are both distinct from and 'compete' against the ruling party in elections, i.e., parties that the ruling party needs to

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dimensions of Mainwaring's (2018) more recent conceptualization of PSI: stability in the membership of the party system and stability in the seat shares of parties.[4] These modified volatility measures allow us to investigate how the interactions between different electoral dynamics within the ruling party and the opposition party sub-system matter for the survival of CA regimes.

We construct an original dataset that covers 111 CA regimes across 79 countries from 1945-2018 and examine how these different types of electoral volatility condition pathways of regime failure in CA regimes. To our knowledge, this study presents the first large-N cross-national study that applies the concept of PSI to non-democratic contexts. We find that CA breakdown—notably via democratization—becomes more likely when a deterioration of the ruling party's electoral standing coincides with disruptions in the competitive equilibrium that arise from the reapportionment of seats among repeat contenders, i.e., opposition party Type-B volatility. This runs counter to what is typical in democracies, where Type-A volatility is considered to be more inimical to regime durability. These results indicate that PSI is not only important for understanding the fate of democratic regimes, but can also have distinct implications in non-democratic regimes. In sum, we show that the study of party systems in electoral authoritarian contexts warrants further attention.

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effectively manage in order to reduce electoral uncertainty. This can include co-opted parties that support the status quo but nonetheless choose to remain separate from the ruling party.

[4] We regard the third dimension—the stability of parties' ideological positions—as being less relevant for understanding system-level interactions that reflect the ability of the ruling party to manage the electoral arena. We are indebted to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting that we link Mainwaring's more recent conceptualization to the first two dimensions.

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The paper is organized as follows: in the next section, we review the existing literature on PSI in democracies before discussing the applicability of the concept to authoritarian contexts. In section three, we develop hypotheses that link different types of electoral volatility with the durability of CA regimes. In section four, we discuss our data, empirical strategy, and results, and present our conclusions in section five.

2. PSI across Regimes

PSI in Democracies

The notion of PSI grows out of classic work on the origins and viability of democracy. In their foundational study, Lipset & Rokkan (1967) argue that a series of political cleavages intrinsic to the emergence of modernity in Western Europe became frozen in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries and continued to structure party competition for decades. The creation of durable and regular structures of interparty competition came to be regarded as characteristic of successful democratization, and subsequent studies of Western Europe seemed to confirm Lipset & Rokkan's theory of durable cleavages (e.g., Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Rose & Urwin, 1970).[5] This set expectations that party systems should become more institutionalized over time in democracies.

The historical patterns observed in Europe do not seem to hold for the rest of the world, however. Instead of early elections functioning as a "great electoral lottery" (Innes, 2002) that settles which parties become mainstays of an institutionalized system, the weeding

[5] However, these cleavages have thawed over time in the face of new divisions over issues such as post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1977; Kitschelt, 1989) and globalization (Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Kriesi et al., 2008).

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out period has proven to be of longer duration or shown no signs of ever abating in many newer democracies (Bielasiak, 2005; Mainwaring & Zoco, 2007).[6] These developments are troubling because under-institutionalized party systems impair the smooth functioning of democracy (Kim, 2023) by reducing accountability (Mainwaring & Scully 1995; Sartori 1976; Schleiter & Voznaya, 2018), generating short-lived governing coalitions that can make rule unpredictable and ineffective (Helmke, 2017; Hicken, 2018; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995; Lupu & Stokes, 2010; Stokes, 2001), and undermining the exercise of horizontal constraints over poorly performing governments and those who try to overreach in their exercise of power. Democracies with weakly institutionalized parties have been shown to be more prone to breakdown (Bernhard et al., 2020), and the collapse of party systems has been identified as a central mechanism in some cases of democratic backsliding (Helmke, 2010; Helmke, 2017; Morgan, 2011; Seawright, 2012). Ultimately, the failure to develop institutionalized party systems in democracies can lead to unstructured polities in which policy is incoherent, government disorganized, governance ineffective, and accountability weak, thus leading to endemic instability or democratic failure (Sartori, 1976).

PSI in Authoritarian Regimes

[6] The evidence is extensive and covers many regions, including Latin America (Cohen, Salles Kobilanski & Zechmeister 2018; Madrid, 2005; Mainwaring, 2018; Roberts, 2014; Roberts & Wibbels, 1999), Eastern Europe (Bernhard & Karakoç, 2011; Bielasiak, 2002; Haughton & Deegan-Krause, 2020; Kitschelt et al., 1999), Asia (Hicken & Kuhonta, 2014; Stockton, 2001; Ufen, 2013; Wilkinson, 2015), and Africa (Ferree, 2010; Kuenzi & Lambright, 2005; Mozaffar & Scarritt, 2005; Riedl, 2014; Weghorst & Bernhard, 2014).

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In contrast to democracies, there has been very little impetus to study PSI in authoritarian regimes since most conventional authoritarian regimes were either no-party or one-party regimes. No-party authoritarian regimes are devoid of meaningful parties or interparty competition. In one-party authoritarian regimes—which represent the most stable form of authoritarianism for most of the twentieth century (Geddes, Wright & Frantz, 2018; Smith, 2007)—the ruling party is the preeminent political actor, and any minor parties that are permitted to exist are often fully licensed satellites subservient to the ruling party.[7] The essence of no-party and one-party regimes is a monopoly of political organization by the authoritarian incumbents (Przeworski, 1991) or an absence or a highly constrained degree of opposition party subsystem autonomy (Sartori, 1976). The study of PSI is effectively meaningless in such contexts as there is no real interparty competition.

PSI in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

Over the last four decades, however, the share of authoritarian regimes that prohibit elections and opposition parties has decreased substantially. By the mid- to late-1990s, the number of electoral authoritarian regimes surpassed that of conventional authoritarian regimes (Lührmann, Tannenberg & Lindberg 2018, pp. 67-77), and the discipline has wrestled with the rise of CA regimes that relax their monopoly over political organization and authorize some degree of electoral competition.

[7] Ruling parties may call noncompetitive elections whose plebiscitary nature make them exercises in the public signaling of loyalty to the regime (Havel, 2018; Zaslavsky & Brym, 1978). The official slate of candidates consistently secures overwhelming majorities in such elections.

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In CA regimes, opposition parties are permitted to compete against the ruling party and electoral results are generally dependent on the votes cast. However, interparty competition is constrained by the structural and resource advantages granted to the incumbent holders of state power and the range of manipulative strategies available to them, which can—if wielded effectively—shield incumbents from electoral punishment and diminish the probability that they cede power (Levitsky & Way, 2010; Schedler, 2002). A large number of authors argue that elections for CA regimes hold the key to maintaining credible commitments within the ruling authoritarian coalition by distributing rents (Boix & Svolik, 2013; Magaloni, 2008; Svolik, 2012; Wright & Escribà-Folch, 2012), effectively containing popular challenges to authoritarian rule by coopting or disrupting counter-elites who could lead popular challenges to incumbent authority (Arriola, Devaro & Meng, 2021; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007; Lust-Okar, 2009), granting concessions to important social constituencies to garner popular support (Greene, 2010), and regularizing popular legitimation via electoral competition (Schedler, 2002).

Nonetheless, elections in CA regimes are not devoid of uncertainty and can be a double-edged sword for ruling parties that can destabilize the regime (Bernhard, Edgell & Lindberg, 2020; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2007). For instance, elections can amplify the voices of disgruntled actors against ruling incumbents or facilitate the solution of collective action problems by the opposition (Knutsen, Nygård & Wig, 2017; Tucker, 2007). Despite their best laid plans, incumbents in CA regimes can be surprised by election results and do, sometimes, lose elections.

In this spirit, we argue that the durability of CA regimes is a function of the ability of ruling parties to establish institutionalized party systems that minimize electoral uncertainty

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by reinforcing their dominance and taming the opposition in the electoral arena. Elections channel opposition activity into a formalized arena, which can provide ruling parties with information about the degree and sources of elite and mass support and opposition. Ruling parties can exploit such information to identify and appease key opposition actors via access to appointments and spoils, or punish those who defect from or oppose the regime. These strategies create perverse incentives for the opposition to participate in elections without truly challenging the ruling party to maintain good standing and the flow of benefits (Weghorst, 2022). Such acquiescence through participation legitimizes the ruling party and simultaneously divides and demoralizes anti-regime actors, thereby diminishing threats to the regime. As ruling parties establish an "autocratic collusive equilibrium" (Magaloni, 2010) by managing elites, opposition parties, and larger groups within society through elections, the patterns of interparty competition observed in the electoral arena should become more stable and predictable, i.e., institutionalized. This, in turn, should generate expectations that the status quo—which revolves around the ruling party—will persist into the future. Consequently, and contrary to democracies in which institutionalized party systems typically manifest in familiar sets of parties alternating in power, institutionalized party systems in CA regimes should correspond with an entrenchment of the ruling party.

Conversely, incumbents who preside over under-institutionalized party systems face greater uncertainty over their own electoral performance and may well confront a more active and less predictable opposition. When ruling parties are unable to successfully consolidate their position within the party system and manage the opposition in the electoral arena, they may be forced to resort to higher levels of repression or more overt electoral manipulation to

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maintain power, but such measures can undermine their legitimation claims, galvanize the opposition, and expose the fragility of their position.

Thus, the failure of ruling parties to develop institutionalized party systems can signal a heightened vulnerability of the regime. However, pathways of regime breakdown are more complex in CA regimes than in democracies (Geddes, Wright & Frantz, 2014). Whereas democratic failure leads to authoritarianism, CA regime failure can either result in a democratic transition, or give rise to a new authoritarian regime seizing power—what we call "authoritarian replacement." It is important to account for these different pathways as PSI may well have different ramifications for the two types of regime failure. More specifically, the institutionalization of the party system encapsulates both elite and mass support for the collusive equilibrium, and thus can be expected to closely capture the propensity for democratic transition since this process typically involves both the elites and the masses. On the other hand, the concept may hold less relevance for authoritarian replacement, which is usually a product of ruptures within the incumbent camp (Svolik, 2012) that may not necessarily be channeled through the party system or elections. As a result, PSI may be a more useful concept for understanding pathways to democratic transition than authoritarian replacement in CA regimes.[8]

[8] Comparable studies of authoritarian regime change also typically report a stronger association between nominally democratic institutions and democratization (e.g., Bernhard, Edgell & Lindberg, 2020; Kavasoglu, 2022; Slater & Wong, 2013; Wright & Escribà-Folch, 2012).

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In the next section, we propose a set of novel measures of electoral volatility that allow us to predict and assess the ramifications of the stability and predictability of patterns of interparty competition in CA regimes.

3. Electoral Volatility across Regimes

Electoral Volatility in Democracies

Electoral volatility (Pedersen, 1979) aggregates the movement of seats from party to party across elections,[9] and is a central measure of the stability and predictability of the party system.[10] This system-level measure of volatility ranges from 0 to 100, with a value of 0 indicating no change in the composition of the legislature across two consecutive elections, and a value of 100 indicating that the composition of the legislature in election *t* is completely novel relative to election *t-1*.

[9] The formula is: $EV_t = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N}|p_{i,t}-p_{i,t-1}|}{2}$ where $p_{i,t}$ is the seat share obtained by party *i* in election *t*. We choose to focus on seat shares because it directly captures the strength of the ruling party and the opposition, and thus is more applicable for questions regarding governance. Electoral volatility can also be calculated using vote shares, but we believe that such a measure is more appropriate for exploring questions of representation.

[10] See Casal Bértoa & Enyedi (2021) for a novel, though data-intensive, alternative to electoral volatility that focuses on cabinet composition, or Kim (2023), who uses a Bayesian latent variable measurement strategy to produce a more comprehensive measure of the concept.

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Generally, institutionalized party systems are expected to exhibit low levels of volatility, whereas high levels of volatility are associated with under-institutionalized party systems and indicate pervasive uncertainty within the electoral arena. Powell & Tucker (2014) also differentiate between Type-A and Type-B volatility, which both contribute to overall system-level volatility but are driven by different dynamics. The former captures changes in seat shares resulting from the entry and exit of parties, and thus reflects the stability in the set of parties that make up the party system. The latter summarizes the reallocation of seats between existing parties and is more closely associated with the stability of electoral support for repeat contenders. Type-A volatility is thought to be potentially dangerous and destabilizing for democracies,[11] whereas Type-B, when not excessive, is regarded as a reflection of the normal operation of vertical accountability wherein voters redistribute their support based on their satisfaction with the incumbent.

Electoral Volatility in Authoritarian Regimes

Does electoral volatility convey any useful information in authoritarian contexts? Is it an indicator with any utility when interparty competition is less than fully competitive? To begin, there are three settings in which an application of electoral volatility would be nonsensical, superfluous, or misleading. First, there are regimes in which there are no direct national elections or where political parties are not allowed (e.g., China). Second, there are regimes that hold elections in which only the ruling party is allowed to compete as a party (e.g., Vietnam). Finally, there are regimes in which electoral results have little relationship to

[11] Except in the one or two elections following a democratic founding or in the case of a successful party system realignment.

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underlying voter preferences as expressed through the ballot (e.g., cases with massive electoral fraud or those in which officials are not elected through popular elections).

Electoral Volatility in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

On the other hand, we expect electoral volatility to be a useful indicator of PSI in CA contexts. Some might contest this point by arguing that electoral results in these regimes are endogenous to incumbent preferences and convey little else apart from the incumbent's strategic decisions over how much competition to allow, who will be allowed to vote, and what strategies to employ to ensure the desired result. To accept this view, however, is to reject the assumptions of competitive authoritarianism as a concept and ignore the compelling evidence that the chance of incumbent loss is non-negligible. Research has shown that these regimes can be both vulnerable and relatively fragile (Bernhard, Edgell & Lindberg, 2020; Bunce & Wolchik, 2011; Knutsen, Nygård & Wig, 2017). Of the CA regimes sampled in this paper, almost two-thirds come to an end. Thus, unless one is willing to assume that incumbents are more interested in losing than winning, then elections and the accompanying patterns of interparty competition should offer meaningful insight into the strength and durability of CA regimes.

But what specific information does electoral volatility provide about CA regimes? System-level volatility reflects the overall stability and predictability of the party system, and thus should broadly inform about the extent to which the ruling party is successfully managing the electoral arena. However, the measure is quite blunt as it conflates electoral dynamics concerning the ruling party and opposition parties, which can have distinct implications for the regime. To create more nuanced measures that allow us to investigate the

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consequences of more complex patterns of interparty competition, we partition the party system based on ruling party and opposition party status and calculate volatility measures for each sub-system.

Party systems in CA regimes revolve around the ruling party, and changes in the ruling party's electoral performance can have more pronounced ramifications for regime durability. As such, while conventional calculations of electoral volatility assess the magnitude of seat share changes by taking the absolute value, we note that such a calculation is not appropriate for ruling parties since both the magnitude *and* direction of changes in their seat shares matter for regime stability, e.g., a 20 percent decrease in the ruling party's seat share has very different implications compared to a 20 percent increase. Thus, we create a measure of ruling party *seat change* (i.e., without taking the absolute value) to better account for potentially large swings in the ruling party's standing.

In turn, we calculate an opposition party volatility measure using Pedersen's index to capture the magnitude of instability in opposition party seat shares (i.e., excluding the ruling party).[12] Furthermore, we divide opposition volatility into Type-A and Type-B volatility to account for two different dynamics in the opposition party sub-system: stability in its membership and stability in the seat shares of repeat contenders (Mainwaring, 2018).

[12] These seat shares are based on the total number of seats in the legislature rather than the total number of seats won by the opposition. As such, the measure is comparable across elections even if there are changes in the total number of seats won by the opposition. Since seat shares may be influenced by the electoral system, we control for changes in district magnitude as a part of our robustness checks.

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Hypotheses

We build on our preceding discussion to develop hypotheses that link these measures to the breakdown of CA regimes. Central to our argument is the idea that the ability of the ruling party to manage the party system is key for the durability of these regimes.

Our first hypothesis concerns general system-level (i.e., Pedersen's) volatility. While this measure may be noisy and conflate electoral dynamics related to both the ruling party and opposition parties, high levels of volatility across the party system nonetheless indicate a general disruption in the status quo and that the ruling party has not sufficiently resolved the uncertainty in the electoral arena. This signals a heightened vulnerability of the regime, and thus we expect that this measure should be associated with regime breakdown.

H1: Higher system-level electoral volatility should be associated with higher risk of CA regime breakdown.

We also apply our disaggregated measures of electoral volatility to assess how more nuanced patterns of interparty competition within the ruling party and opposition party sub-systems may matter for regime durability. In the case of the ruling party, decreases (increases) in the ruling party's seat share indicate a weakening (strengthening) of the ruling party, which in turn should lead to a higher (lower) risk of regime breakdown.

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H2: Decreases in the ruling party's seat share should be positively associated with a higher risk of regime breakdown.

While the logic underlying the ramifications of the losses of seats by the ruling party is relatively straightforward, such losses only offer indirect information about the opposition party sub-system, which still plays a key role in shaping the future of the regime. As such, we next turn to opposition party volatility, which directly accounts for instability in the seat shares held by opposition parties. From our theoretical perspective, low opposition volatility indicates that the opposition parties have been contained or sufficiently handicapped, leaving them with both less capacity and fewer incentives to challenge the status quo. On a popular level, it can also correspond with the satisfaction, resignation, or apathy of voters. High opposition party volatility, on the other hand, indicates a disruption of the status quo. It can occur when opposition parties and their voters become dissatisfied with and seek to alter the present state of affairs by adopting new electoral strategies, such as choosing a new leader or coordinating with one another. Conversely, such volatility could also be a result of the ruling party attempting to co-opt or divide the opposition, or remaking the collusive bargain with a modified set of negotiating partners, perhaps to punish non-compliant parties or remove weakened parties that may be less relevant for maintaining power.[13] Nonetheless, these disruptions—at least in the short-term—change the relative bargaining positions of the opposition parties and the subsequent payouts that they could receive. This can empower

[13] While our volatility measures focus broadly on instability, future works could disaggregate and examine how the different forms of disruptions that contribute to volatility shape regime durability.

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opposition parties to assert greater influence or alternatively foster discontent, which generates uncertainty about how future interactions between the ruling party and opposition parties might play out. While we do not argue that such volatility by itself is sufficient to cause regime breakdown, it can increase the ability or incentives of opposition parties to contest the status quo, which should correspond with an increased probability of regime failure.

H3: Increases in opposition party volatility should be positively associated with a higher risk of regime breakdown.

Furthermore, opposition party Type-A and Type-B volatility represent different types of instability within the opposition party sub-system, and thus we apply our disaggregated measures to examine if either or both forms of instability might be particularly consequential for CA regimes. If Type-A is significant, this would indicate that the ability of ruling parties to maintain stability in the membership of the opposition party sub-system is important for regime durability. If Type-B is significant, this would suggest that minimizing electoral uncertainty associated with repeat opposition contenders is critical.

H4a: Higher Type-A opposition party volatility should be associated with a higher rate of regime breakdown.

H4b: Higher Type-B opposition party volatility should be associated with a higher risk of regime breakdown.

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Lastly, the preceding hypotheses are based on the premise that electoral volatility in the ruling party or opposition parties sphere offers useful information about PSI and the strength of CA regimes. However, since the party system encompasses the interactions between the ruling party and opposition parties, it may be the combination of specific patterns of ruling party seat change and opposition party volatility that portend regime failure. For example, volatility that is the product of a strengthening of the ruling party at the expense of the opposition does generate some uncertainty about how the opposition might react. Nonetheless, such a pattern is less likely to correspond with an increased risk of regime failure since it is in part a consequence of the ruling party expanding its control at the expense of the opposition. The inverse, however, could be a strong indicator of the kind of de-institutionalization that could trigger regime breakdown. If the key to CA stability involves both the ruling party's ability to sustain its dominance within the party system and manage opposition parties, the combination of ruling party enfeeblement and significant disruptions in the opposition party sub-system should have the strongest implications for the durability of the regime. For instance, a ruling party that performs poorly in elections will have reduced leverage to re-establish a favorable collusive bargain, particularly given the shift in the balance of power, which can in turn undermine the ruling party's position.[14] As

[14] Numerous works suggest that such situations can generate incentives for autocratic powerholders to facilitate democratization while they remain in control (Kavasoglu, 2022; Riedl et al., 2020; Slater & Wong, 2013). Of course, there are also numerous cases where CA regimes rely on repression rather than reform when threatened with electoral losses, e.g., Cambodia, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russia, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.

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such, it may be the interaction between these types of instability within the ruling party and opposition party sub-systems that are particularly consequential for regime durability.

H5: Increases in opposition party (Type-A or Type-B) volatility should be associated with a higher risk of regime breakdown when the ruling party concurrently loses seats.

4. Empirical Analysis

Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

To test our hypotheses, we first construct a sample of CA regimes by using the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Regimes of the World variable (Coppedge et al., 2020) to identify electoral autocracies, and then applying more stringent criteria to exclude electoral autocracies that are not *competitive* authoritarian. More specifically, we first limit our sample to non-monarchic[15] regimes that hold minimally competitive multiparty elections with basic de jure provisions of suffrage.[16] We then further constrain our sample to regimes in which the

[15] As classified by Geddes, Wright & Frantz (2014). We exclude monarchies as elections in these regimes do not involve competition for the executive, and thus are by definition not competitive for the most important office in the system. Furthermore, many monarchies do not have ruling parties. In CA regimes, on the other hand, control of the executive is subject to uncertain elections based on party competition.

[16] For minimally competitive elections, we use the V-Dem dataset to identify elections in which at least one real opposition party is allowed to contest elections, and drop elections in which less than 25 percent of adult citizens have the legal right to vote to exclude cases such

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ruling party wins a minimum of two consecutive elections that meet our baseline criteria since electoral volatility—and PSI in general—cannot be assessed given one time point. This produces a final sample that contains 111 ruling party regimes[17] and 372 elections across 79 countries from 1945-2018[18] for a total of 940 country-year observations. This makes up less than 30 percent of observations that are classified as electoral autocracies in the V-Dem dataset. An overview of the regimes is provided in the online Appendix A.

Dependent Variable

We use two dependent variables and models in our analysis. We first estimate the conditional probability of CA regime breakdown using a logistic regression model. However, party system dynamics can have different consequences for the nature of regime failure in CA regimes. As such, we follow Geddes, Wright & Frantz (2014) and apply a trinary categorical coding scheme that indicates the survival of the ruling party regime, the displacement of the incumbent by another authoritarian regime (i.e., authoritarian replacement) or democratic

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as apartheid-era South Africa, or those in which the ruling party won all the seats while obtaining more than 90 percent of the vote.

[17] We code the party affiliated with the head of state as the ruling party for cases in which the ruling party is unclear. We code a regime as ending but not undergoing transition if it does not hold an election over the next decade or holds an election that does not meet our baseline criteria. As such, a ruling party can preside over more than one CA regime.

[18] The first observation begins in 1948 since volatility measures cannot be calculated until a second election has been held.

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transition,[19] and utilize a multinomial logistic regression model to assess whether different types of electoral volatility are associated with particular types of regime breakdown. We match the dependent variables with values of the independent variables from the preceding year.[20] Around two-thirds of the CA regimes in our sample come to an end; there are 50 instances of authoritarian replacement and 24 instances of democratic transition.[21]

Independent Variables

We first calculate Pedersen's (1979) index of electoral volatility (*EV*) using seat share data from general lower house legislative elections.[22] We also further disaggregate this system-

[19] Transitions to democracy are coded based on V-Dem's Regimes of the World variable. We code regimes that intermittently shift between being classified as an autocracy and democracy as undergoing democratic transition if it is classified as a democracy in at least three of the five subsequent years after the regime is first classified as a democracy.

[20] The dependent variables are matched with values of the independent variable in the same transition year for Bolivia 1964 and the Republic of Vietnam 1963 since the ruling parties were removed from power after winning an election in those years. Our results are not sensitive to this coding decision.

[21] The remainder of the regimes are right-censored as they were still in power as of 2018 or transitioned to a closed autocracy without a change in the ruling party.

[22] Given the data challenges associated with tracing the development of small parties over time (Casal Bértoa, Deegan-Krause & Haughton, 2017), we follow convention by treating small parties that gain less than two percent—including minor parties grouped into the 'other' category in election data—as 'new' parties in each election. For mergers and coalitions, we

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level measure as we expect different types of electoral volatility to have distinct implications for ruling party survival. We calculate ruling party seat change (*RPSC*), which is simply the change in the ruling party seat share across two consecutive elections and can be positive or negative. Opposition party volatility (*OPV*) is calculated using the Pedersen index and the seat shares of all other parties (i.e., excluding ruling party seat shares). Moreover, we further break down opposition party volatility into Type-A and Type-B. Opposition party Type-A volatility (*OPV-A*) reflects changes in the distribution of opposition seat shares stemming from the entry and exit of opposition parties while opposition party Type-B volatility (*OPV-B*) represents shifts in the distribution of seats between existing opposition parties.

Figure 1 plots the different types of electoral volatility. As in democracies, degrees of electoral volatility vary widely across CA regimes. Changes in the ruling party's seat shares are centered around zero, which indicates that ruling party seat shares usually remain steady across elections. Furthermore, changes in opposition party volatility are generally of higher magnitude and tend to be driven by opposition party Type-A volatility rather than Type-B volatility. This is to be expected since opposition parties face significant electoral disadvantages and costs in CA regimes, which can undermine their ability to be consistently

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compare party seat shares where possible. If a party experiences a split but the original party continues to contest and win elections, the original party is treated as a continuation of the old party while the faction that broke off from the original party is treated as a 'new' party. Parties that simply change their name without undergoing any significant organizational change are coded as being the same party. Our main results remain unchanged when treating parties that fall under the two percent threshold as repeat contenders or when simply excluding these parties from volatility calculations.

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competitive across elections. Moreover, the lack of uniform trends in electoral dynamics[23] across the different measures demonstrates that there is some uncertainty about how patterns of interparty competition might unfold in CA regimes.

Figure 1. Different Types of Electoral Volatility: Scatterplots, Histograms, and Correlations
[Insert Figure 1 here]

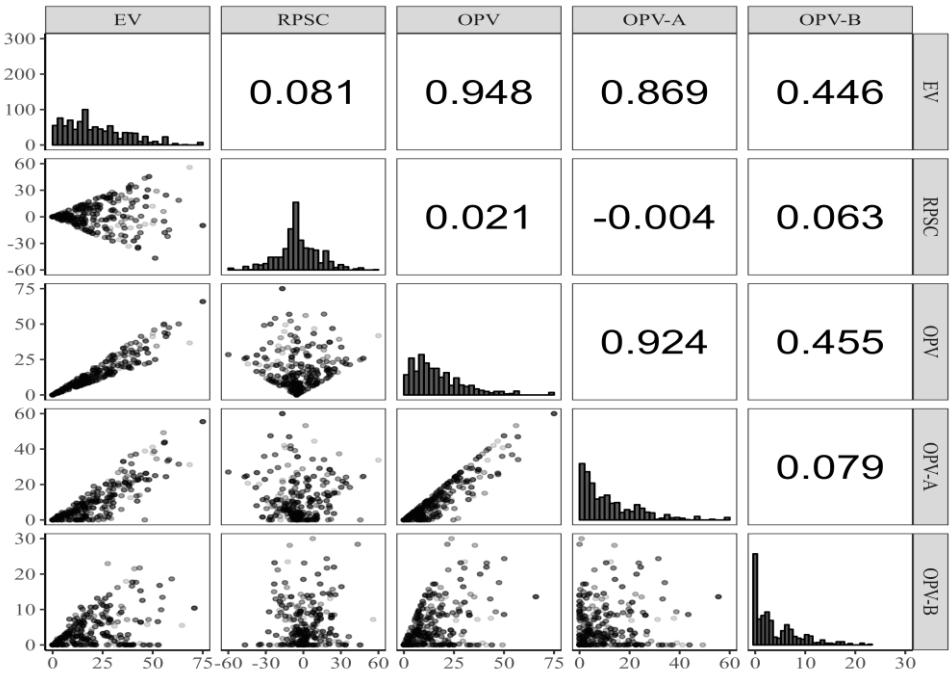
[23] Ruling party seat change should be accompanied by—at minimum—corresponding levels of opposition party volatility, but the reverse does not hold; the seat share of ruling parties can remain steady even when the distribution of seats between opposition parties undergoes significant transformation.

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Note: The lower diagonal cells show scatterplots of the corresponding row/colum variables while the upper diagonal cells show their correlations. The diagonal cells show the distribution of each corresponding variable.

Control Variables

We also control for a battery of other factors that may influence the durability of CA regimes. Ruling parties should be better situated to prolong their rule the longer they are in power and as they gain electoral experience (Bernhard, Edgell & Lindberg, 2020). We account for regime age and time dependence by including cubic polynomials of regime age in our models (Carter & Signorino, 2010).[24] On the other hand, a dissatisfied and determined opposition may well pursue extra-institutional action against the regime when opportunities to contest elections become infrequent. Because this can affect regime stability, we include the variable

[24] These cubic polynomials capture hazard shapes that are common to parametric duration models and semi-parametric models such as the Cox proportional hazards model (Carter & Signorino, 2010).

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Years Since Election, which counts the number of years that have passed since the last competitive multiparty election. We also include the effective number of parties (*ENP*) in our model since, ceteris paribus, the ruling party may find it easier to maintain its position as the dominant party when the party system is more fragmented. We use the log of *ENP* due to the variable's right skew.

Economic development and growth have been frequently linked to regime stability and are measured using log of per capita GDP (*GDP per capita*) and per capita GDP growth rates (*GDP Growth*), which are sourced from the Maddison Project (Bolt & van Zanden, 2020). Since state capacity dictates the ability of regimes to maintain control of the state apparatus, we include V-Dem's estimate of the percentage of a state's territory over which the state has effective control (*Territory Control*).

Extensive ethnic fractionalization can foster conflict (Easterly & Levine, 1997; Horowitz, 1993), which can threaten regime stability. We calculate ethnic fractionalization scores (*EF*) using ethnic data from the Composition of Religious and Ethnic Groups (CREG) dataset (Nardulli et al., 2012). Although the CREG dataset is only available up to 2013, ethnic fractionalization changes very slowly over time. Thus, we use linear prediction based on all past scores to calculate scores for post-2013 years. We substitute ethnic fractionalization scores calculated by Alesina et al. (2003) for the handful of countries that are not covered in the CREG dataset. Nonetheless, we show that our results are robust to using observations from the original CREG dataset, i.e., without linear prediction and substitution.

We also include a variable from the V-Dem dataset that reflects the proportion of losing parties that accept the results of the national election within three months (*Election*

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Accepted). Regardless of whether fraud was committed, the contesting of election outcomes signals opposition dissatisfaction with the electoral arena, which can weaken the ruling party's ability to control the opposition through elections. Furthermore, the presence of an active civil society through which citizens can collectively voice their demands should increase the impetus towards democratization (Bernhard & Edgell, 2022; Bunce & Wolchik, 2011; Newton, 2001), and so we also include a five-year moving average of V-Dem's Civil Society Participation Index (*Civil Society*). Lastly, we include the mean regional V-Dem electoral democracy score (*Regional Polyarchy*) to control for neighborhood democratization effects, and a post-Cold War (*Post-Cold War*) dummy variable since electoral authoritarian regimes became much more commonplace during this period. The summary statistics for all variables used in our main models are presented in the online Appendix B.

Oil production per capita and district magnitude could also be included in our models since rent capacity can facilitate more effective cooptation and repression, while modifications to the electoral system could mechanically alter the seat distribution between parties. Moreover, "western leverage" (Levitsky & Way, 2006) in the form of foreign aid may push authoritarian regimes towards democratization. However, the use of associated variables would force us to drop a significant number of our observations due to missing data. As such, while we do not include such variables in our main models, we show that our results are robust to their inclusion in the appendix.

Results

Table 1 presents the results of the logistic (Model 1) and multinomial logistic (Model 2) regressions using system-level electoral volatility as the key independent variable. While the

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results of Model 1 indicate that system-level electoral volatility shares a relatively weak association with regime breakdown in general,[25] Model 2 shows that this measure is a significant predictor of democratic transition in particular. This supports Hypothesis 1 and our proposition that the inability of the ruling party to minimize electoral uncertainty can have repercussions for the durability of CA regimes. In subsequent models, we examine whether this association is driven by more specific patterns of electoral instability.

Table 2 replaces system-level electoral volatility with ruling party seat change and opposition party volatility. In Table 3, we further disaggregate opposition party volatility into Type-A and Type-B to assess whether these different types of volatility have contrasting implications for CA regimes. Given that estimates of the control variables are generally similar across the board to those reported in Table 1, we present the full results including the control variables in Appendix C.

[25] The control variables indicate that CA regimes are less likely to be replaced by another authoritarian regime when ethnic fractionalization is higher and in the post-Cold War period. As more time passes since the last election, authoritarian replacement becomes more likely while democratization becomes less likely. Democratization becomes more likely when the opposition is more accepting of the most recent election results, there is a vibrant civil society, and when countries in the same region are more democratic.

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Table 1

Model	(1)	(2)		
Comparison Group vs. Reference Group	**Breakdown vs. Survival**	**Replacement vs. Survival**	**Democracy vs. Survival**	**Democracy vs. Replacement**
EV	0.0140	-0.0005	0.0516**	0.0522**
	(0.0121)	(0.0128)	(0.0225)	(0.0253)
Years Since Election	0.1624	0.3849***	-0.3764*	-0.7613***
	(0.1024)	(0.1293)	(0.2074)	(0.2489)
ENP (ln)	0.3265	0.5466	-0.2214	-0.7680
	(0.4008)	(0.4344)	(0.7563)	(0.8341)
GDP per capita (ln)	-0.1997	-0.1807	-0.2228	-0.0422
	(0.1547)	(0.1880)	(0.3102)	(0.3743)
GDP Growth	-3.2083	-5.9859	3.3624	9.3483
	(3.6027)	(3.8162)	(6.3688)	(6.7282)
Territory Control	-0.0135	-0.0162	0.0221	0.0383
	(0.0118)	(0.0127)	(0.0228)	(0.0254)
EF	-0.8263*	-1.0639**	0.3309	1.3949
	(0.4979)	(0.5274)	(0.9728)	(1.0374)
Election Accepted	0.3807**	0.2183	0.8398***	0.6215**
	(0.1569)	(0.1672)	(0.2801)	(0.2991)
Civil Society	2.0180**	1.4494	4.0335***	2.5841
	(0.7987)	(0.9706)	(1.5516)	(1.8194)
Regional Polyarchy	4.1575***	2.4753	7.4335***	4.9582*
	(1.2108)	(1.5231)	(2.0915)	(2.5959)
Post-Cold War	-0.8093**	-0.9662**	-0.6139	0.3523
	(0.3349)	(0.4569)	(0.6294)	(0.8470)
Regime Age	-0.0306	-0.1178	0.0830	0.2008
	(0.1182)	(0.1581)	(0.1337)	(0.2007)
Regime Age^2	-0.0010	0.0015	-0.0030	-0.0045
	(0.0054)	(0.0070)	(0.0058)	(0.0087)
Regime Age^3	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Constant	-1.3345	-0.1878	-9.5578***	-9.3700**
	(2.0450)	(2.4212)	(3.7050)	(4.4999)
N	916		916	
Pseudo R^2	0.127		0.167	

Note: results report country-clustered standard errors. * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

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Table 2

Model	(3)	(4)		
Comparison Group vs. Reference Group	**Breakdown vs. Survival**	**Replacement vs. Survival**	**Democracy vs. Survival**	**Democracy vs. Replacement**
RPSC	0.0103	0.0123	0.0061	-0.0062
	(0.0100)	(0.0119)	(0.0173)	(0.0203)
OPV	0.0161	-0.0008	0.0600**	0.0609*
	(0.0153)	(0.0157)	(0.0300)	(0.0315)
N	916		916	
Pseudo R^2	0.130		0.168	

Note: results report country-clustered standard errors. Full results are presented in Appendix C.
* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3

Model	(5)	(6)		
Comparison Group vs. Reference Group	**Breakdown vs. Survival**	**Replacement vs. Survival**	**Democracy vs. Survival**	**Democracy vs. Replacement**
RPSC	0.0099	0.0149	-0.0060	-0.0209
	(0.0102)	(0.0119)	(0.0201)	(0.0229)
OPV-A	0.0157	0.0034	0.0632*	0.0597*
	(0.0155)	(0.0152)	(0.0341)	(0.0354)
OPV-B	0.0216	-0.0453	0.1659***	0.2112***
	(0.0322)	(0.0418)	(0.0474)	(0.0622)
N	916		916	
Pseudo R^2	0.130		0.177	

Note: results report country-clustered standard errors. Full results are presented in Appendix C.
* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

In these tables, we do not observe an association between ruling party seat change and regime survival. This runs counter to Hypothesis 2, though this may be because the model

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does not account for the type of conditional relationship outlined in Hypothesis 5, which we test later.[26] On the other hand, Table 2 shows that opposition party volatility is associated with a greater risk of regime breakdown via democratization. This evidence is consistent with Hypothesis 3 and aligns with our argument that the ruling party's ability to manage the opposition party sub-system appears to be an essential feature of PSI that connects it to the durability of CA regimes. Furthermore, and in accordance with Hypothesis 4b, Table 3 reveals that it is opposition party Type-B volatility in particular that is associated with a higher likelihood of democratization.[27] Although opposition party Type-A volatility is also estimated to have a similar association with democratization and achieves statistical significance in Model 6, robustness checks reveal that this result is sensitive to model specification or dropping influential cases. These results suggest that common understandings of electoral volatility in democracies that regard Type-A volatility as being more detrimental to regime stability than Type-B volatility are not reproduced in CA regimes, and the ruling party's ability to minimize electoral uncertainty among repeat opposition contenders appears to be more important for CA regime durability than its ability to regulate the entry and exit of opposition parties from the party system.

[26] In addition, many of these regimes are presidential. Such executive control could make electoral loss manageable in the short term.

[27] In Appendix D, we re-estimate Table 3 after disaggregating the *OPV-B* measure to distinguish cases where existing opposition parties gain seats and lose seats since these dynamics could have disparate implications for regime stability. The results suggest that both forms of volatility are associated with a greater likelihood of democratization.

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This discrepancy regarding opposition party Type-A and Type-B volatility may be due to differences in the types of parties that contribute to each type of volatility. Opposition party volatility generates uncertainty about how future interactions between the ruling party and opposition parties might play out and can incentivize opposition parties to contest the status quo. However, even in such cases, parties that are new, small, or unable to remain competitive in elections—i.e., those that typically contribute to Type-A volatility[28]—are unlikely to possess the infrastructure, resources, or support to push for meaningful changes, which could in part explain why such volatility does not exhibit a robust association with regime durability in our models. Conversely, repeat opposition contenders—i.e., those that contribute to Type-B volatility—that manage to consistently win seats across multiple elections despite facing electoral disadvantages are more likely to have the organizational capacity, electoral experience, and political influence to pose a credible challenge against the regime. In other words, opposition party Type-B volatility may share a more robust

[28] For example, the median seat share of parties that contribute to opposition party Type-A volatility is 4.4, whereas it is 9.7 in the case of Type-B volatility. Due to data availability issues, this calculation excludes parties that obtain less than 2 percent of the seats. We expect that this difference would be even more pronounced if these periphery parties are also factored into the calculations as they should be more likely to contribute to opposition party Type-A volatility.

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association with regime durability as it better reflects disruptions among key opposition actors who can play a more central role in shaping the future of the regime.[29]

Nonetheless, in our discussion of Hypothesis 5, we noted that opposition party volatility may be more likely to lead to democratization when the ruling party concurrently suffers electoral setbacks. That is, regime durability may depend on what happens in both the ruling party and opposition party sub-systems. Given the robust and significant results regarding opposition party Type-B volatility, we estimate a model that interacts this variable with ruling party seat change to test such a dynamic.[30] Estimates of the coefficients of interest are presented in Table 4. To facilitate interpretations of the interaction, we plot the predicted probability of democratic transition along with 90 percent confidence intervals across the range of observed *OPV-B* values when values of *RPSC* are held at ±1 standard deviation from the mean of *RPSC* (approximately -13 and 16), and other variables are held their means. The plot is shown in Figure 2.

[29] Almost two-thirds of the transitions in our dataset result in a takeover by parties associated with these repeat opposition contenders. This proportion increases to almost three-quarters when considering just democratic transitions.

[30] Interactions between ruling party seat change and the other opposition party volatility measures suggest that opposition party volatility, and Type-A volatility in particular, may be associated with authoritarian replacement when the ruling party loses seats. However, this result is not robust to different model specifications or changes in the sample. As such, we do not include this interaction in our analysis.

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Figure 2. Predicted Probability of Democratization

[Insert Figure 2 here]

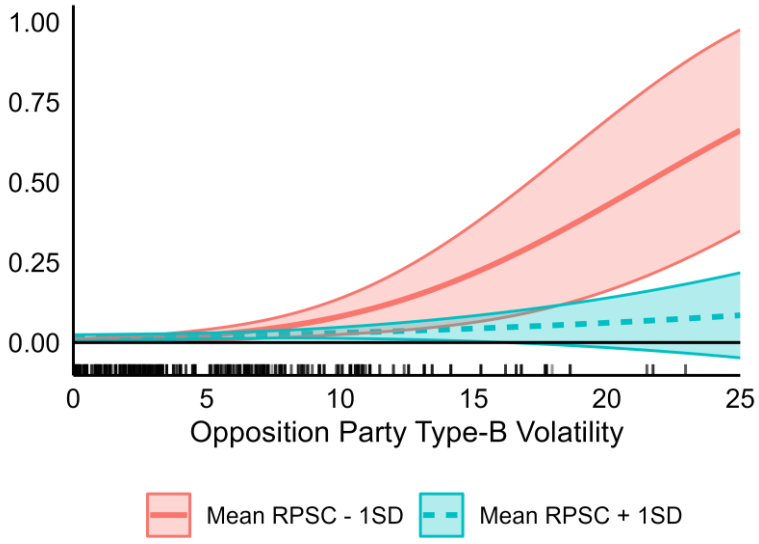


Table 4

Model	**(7)**	**(8)**		
Comparison Group vs. Reference Group	**Breakdown vs. Survival**	**Replacement vs. Survival**	**Democracy vs. Survival**	**Democracy vs. Replacement**
RPSC	0.0222*	0.0112	0.0347	0.0236
	(0.0129)	(0.0135)	(0.0269)	(0.0306)
OPV-A	0.0153	0.0038	0.0752**	0.0714*
	(0.0157)	(0.0152)	(0.0362)	(0.0374)
OPV-B	0.0307	-0.0513	0.2117***	0.2630***
	(0.0337)	(0.0446)	(0.0660)	(0.0796)
RPSC × OPV-B	-0.0023*	0.0009	-0.0077***	-0.0086***
	(0.0012)	(0.0017)	(0.0025)	(0.0032)
N	916		916	
Pseudo R^2	0.1458		0.2106	

Note: results report country-clustered standard errors. Full results are presented in Appendix C.
* $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$.

The figure shows that the likelihood of democratic transition is largely unaffected by increased Type-B opposition volatility when the ruling party improves on its past electoral performance, which is intuitive since the latter indicates a strengthening of the ruling party's

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position at the expense of opposition parties. However, when the ruling party loses a relatively significant share of seats and opposition party Type-B volatility begins to exceed its mean value (4.11), the predicted probability of regime breakdown via democratization begins to grow substantially. At its maximum value in our sample (22.95), the predicted probability of democratic transition becomes quite large (around 0.56). That is, opposition party Type-B volatility appears to be particularly inimical for prospects of CA survival when the ruling party is relatively weakened.

Robustness Checks

We conduct an assortment of robustness checks to mitigate issues that could undermine our results. For parsimony, we focus on Models 7 and 8 presented in Table 4, and specifically on the coefficient estimates of *RPSC*, *OPV-B*, and their interaction given that they are the strongest predictors of regime failure.

In Appendix E, we include oil production per capita as a measure of rent capacity using data from Ross & Mahdavi (2015) supplemented by Wimmer & Min (2006), although this reduces our sample by 129 observations. In Appendix F, we include changes in district magnitude across elections using data from the Database of Political Institutions (Cruz, Keefer & Scartascini, 2018) since electoral volatility may also be driven by institutional changes. This causes us to lose around a third of our observations. In Appendix G, we account for the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA)—a form of foreign aid typically provided by developed democracies—received by CA regimes as a proxy for external pressure to democratize, i.e., the degree of "western leverage" (Levitsky & Way, 2006). The data is available from the OECD (2021), though only from 1960 onwards and

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thus we lose 108 observations from our sample. In Appendix H, we use the original ethnic fractionalization scores calculated from the CREG dataset, i.e., without linear prediction and substitution. This drops around a fifth of our observations. In Appendix I, we drop right-censored regimes, which leaves us with around 60 percent of our sample. As shown in the appendices, the empirical patterns between *RPSC*, *OPV-B*, and the probability of democratization observed in the main results remain consistent across all models.

Adding all these variables to our model and using the original ethnic fractionalization scores would cause us to lose more than half of our sample. As such, we re-estimate this full model after using Multiple Imputation by Chained Equations to impute missing values based on observed values of our variables. We impute ten complete datasets and present the pooled estimates in Appendix J. The results remain robust.

There may also be concerns that our results could be driven by a single influential regime. To address this point, we re-estimate Model 8 in Table 5 dropping one country at a time. This presents a more challenging test of robustness since multiple regimes may be dropped when a country is excluded from the sample. As shown in Appendix K, our results are not driven by one influential case.

In Appendix L, we re-estimate Table 4 after including V-Dem's Party Institutionalization (PI) Index, which measures average levels of party institutionalization across the main parties in the party system (Bizzaro, Hicken & Self, 2017). Our main results hold while the PI Index is estimated to have little association with regime durability. This lends support to our claim that the patterns of interparty competition between the ruling party and opposition parties, i.e., the party system, can be an important unit of analysis for understanding regime-level outcomes in CA contexts.

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Lastly, in Appendix M, we also replace the dependent variable with V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index to examine changes in a continuous measure of democracy, and estimate the model using OLS and panel-corrected standard errors. To summarize, the estimated marginal effect of *OPV-B* becomes increasingly positive and statistically significant (i.e., associated with higher levels of democracy) as the ruling party loses seats, but becomes generally negligible when the ruling party gains seats. This corroborates the main finding that CA regimes may be more likely to undergo democratization when ruling parties are weakened and levels of opposition party Type-B volatility are particularly high.

5. Conclusion

The eclipse of conventional authoritarian regimes by competitive authoritarianism requires us to re-examine our democracy-based expectations of parties and party systems in the light of the logic of these new forms of rule. The literature argues that the holding of elections is a strategic move designed to enhance the viability of authoritarianism in the face of domestic demand and international pressure for democratization. While the empirical evidence in support of such arguments is mixed, we argue that the success of CA regimes depends crucially on the ability of ruling parties to legitimize and extend their rule by effectively managing elections and the opposition. Rather than focusing on whether competitive elections in themselves fortify or undermine authoritarian rule, we explain CA regime durability as a product of the capacity of the authoritarian incumbent to resolve electoral uncertainty by establishing an institutionalized party system.

To test our claim, we explore the relationship between electoral volatility and the durability of CA regimes, and find that it is positively associated with an increased risk of

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regime breakdown, but specifically through democratic transition rather than authoritarian replacement. Moreover, because elections in CA regimes revolve around the ruling party and thus follow a different logic than in democracies. We capture the specificities of electoral competition under authoritarianism by disaggregating the system-level electoral volatility measure, and the subsequent analyses offer more nuanced insights into how specific patterns of interparty competition could be associated with regime breakdown. We find robust results that democratic transition becomes more likely when decreases in the ruling party's seat share coincide with an increase in opposition party Type-B volatility. This pattern contrasts with those observed in democracies where Type-A volatility is considered to be more dangerous for regime durability. In addition, measures of electoral volatility tend to be noisy (Casal Bértoa, Deegan-Krause & Haughton, 2017), which can weaken empirical associations. The fact that our analyses identify significant and robust results lends evidence to our argument that electoral outcomes and the party system do provide meaningful information about the survival and breakdown of CA regimes.

We show that the ability of the incumbent to manage elections holds one of the keys to success or failure, and this paper demonstrates that an increased focus on the institutionalization of party systems in authoritarian contexts is warranted. Furthermore, our findings on regime breakdown seem to be driven by democratization than authoritarian replacement. This corroborates existing arguments that elections can pave the way toward democratization in CA regimes, and suggests that the conditions under which authoritarian replacement occurs may be less contingent on the electoral sphere, which requires additional exploration.

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