

Repression, Elections, and Competitiveness in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

By

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Abstract

Competitive authoritarian regimes are identified as a Post-Cold War phenomenon that utilize democratic institutions, but cling to authoritarian tendencies to remain in power. I posit that these authoritarian tendencies towards repression are limited by the competitive nature of the regimes. Examining competitive authoritarian regimes from 1990 to 2008, I use data from the Varieties of Democracy, Quality of Government, and Mass Mobilization datasets to examine repression of civil liberties. Both comparative case studies and OLS regression are used to investigate repression levels over time. I observe from the comparative case studies that repression is not a tool often used by these competitive authoritarian regime incumbents. This observation is further reinforced by the OLS regression results presented. The competitiveness of elections are the critical component that is resulting in increased civil liberties within these regimes. Given these results, it can be inferred that these authoritarian leaders have choices regarding political reform. If the election is competitive, the incumbent can be voted out of office. However, while these incumbents may be voted out of office, there is still a likelihood that they may regain power in the future. The competitiveness, while a way in which these incumbents can be voted out of office, also allows for these incumbents to regain power in the future. Ultimately, this is likely the reason that competitiveness is critical within these regimes.

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I want to dedicate this to my parents and sister. You all have been the cornerstone to my success and drive. Without your continued support, I would not be the person who I am today.

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Introduction

Since Dahl's (1971) conception of *Polyarchy*, democracy has often required a number of processes for democracy including free and fair elections, right to vote, and institutions dependent on votes as well as other expressions of preference. Other more recent approaches have also attempted to define democracies and their attributes (Coppedge et al., 2011; Lijphart, 2012; Munck & Verkuilen, 2002; Powell, 2000). Free and fair elections are one component in that are foundational to democracies (Coppedge et al., 2011; Powell, 2000). Indeed, there is a clear distinction between institutional or procedural democracy and a liberal democracy. Recent developments show some authoritarian regimes adopt elements of procedural democracy, that is, elections may not be unique to democracies. With the more recent waves of democratization after the fall of the Soviet Union, the advent of a different era in democratic processes arrived: competitive authoritarian regimes (Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2002, 2010; Zakaria, 1997).

Competitive authoritarian regimes are identified as a post-Cold War phenomenon (Levitsky & Way, 2002, 2010). During this time, liberal world order provided challenges to authoritarian regimes. In response to this change, many authoritarian regimes adopted what appeared to outsiders to be democratic practices. Unlike democracies, competitive authoritarian regimes are veiled in democratic processes, yet lack the liberal sense often credited to liberal democracies (Zakaria, 1997). Failing to meet this liberal component of elections means a lacking in the fairness often associated with liberal democracy processes that meet international (i.e. Dahl's Polyarchy) standards. According to Zakaria (1997), even though these elections fail to meet international standards of free and fairness, there is still popular participation in politics within these regimes. Competitive authoritarian regimes do allow for some opposition that would

otherwise not be present in authoritarian regimes. In fact, Levitsky and Way (2010) suggest these regimes offer the possibility of the incumbent being voted from office by the public. Yet—it has been argued by Levitsky and Way (2002, 2010)—to remain in power, these incumbents repress civil liberties, rig elections, and alter the playing field in a way that biases the rules in favor of the incumbents.

Authoritarians may use both elections and repression to stay in power. Often, repression is applied as a means of reinforcing the power of the regime by tampering down dissent. Repression can include censoring the media, harassing journalists, or limiting academic and cultural expression. Theories surrounding regimes such as competitive authoritarian regimes often utilize the “Murder in the Middle” hypothesis which posits that there are more incentives for repression when a democracy is not fully institutionalized (Carey, 2010; Fein, 1995; Regan & Henderson, 2002). This suggests that competitive authoritarian regimes (I.e. in the middle) will display greater levels of repression. Such a hypothesis lends itself useful when conceptualizing how these regimes view opposition as a threat, thus repressing more. With a growing number of authoritarian regimes and progressively democratic norms and institutions being violated, understanding how competitive authoritarian regimes remain in power is increasingly vital. This leads to the following question: does the competitiveness of elections influence repression of civil liberties?

Much work still needs to be done in order to understand how competitive authoritarian regimes behave and incumbents remain in power. Previous works have focused on democratization of competitive authoritarian regimes while others have found that democratization does not occur. Other works focus on the stability of competitive authoritarian regimes. Some literature on repression focus on authoritarian regimes, but many have not fully

explored how repression is used in competitive authoritarian regimes, particularly during election years. However, the key component of these elections is often overlooked: competitiveness. Competitiveness of elections is ultimately the critical mechanism that drives whether repression of civil liberties within the competitive authoritarian regimes is utilized. This study specifically addresses competitive elections in these authoritarian regimes.

By sampling competitive authoritarian regimes, I am able to better understand how the competitive election component of procedural democracy influences the behavior of incumbents. Thus, this study evaluates whether or not state repression increases during election years. Theoretically authoritarian incumbents risk being voted out of office in a competitive election, as a result these leaders may be less likely to use repression before or during an election for fear of losing popular support. Therefore, competitive elections may result in decreased repression—a as opposed to the “Murder in the Middle” hypothesis. As these regimes become more competitive, repression becomes a greater risk to their position and may not be utilized in the same way as regimes that are completely authoritarian (i.e. no political reforms or procedural democracy). If we want to understand the different dynamics of elections in competitive authoritarian regimes, we must attempt to understand the behavior of incumbents within them.

Examining level of political civil liberties in a competitive authoritarian regime within election years, the results suggest that repression is not frequently used by leaders during election years. In fact, the level of competitiveness is the key determinant of whether repression of political civil liberties occurs. As competitiveness increases in these regimes, so do civil liberties. These findings provide a new understanding of how incumbents remain in power through elections. Elections are not the key mechanism within these regimes. Instead, it is the competitiveness of these elections. Competitive authoritarian incumbents—particularly at the

executive level—must bolster their credibility and legitimacy through elections. Repression comes with risks and this method is a highly visible way of undermining this legitimacy. Increasing repression during election years is a costly way to ensure an electoral victory.

This paper proceeds as follows. The next section reviews competitive authoritarian regimes, repression, and the relevant literature surrounding these concepts and elections. The next section also discusses the theory surrounding repression and elections in competitive authoritarian regimes. Section three reviews the research design and corresponding hypotheses of the theory; discussion of the variables and data are also discussed in this section. Section four provides descriptive statistics, empirical evidence, analysis, and results. The final section is a conclusion examines the implications of the study and intriguing insights from the analysis.

Theory

Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

The conception of competitive authoritarian regimes has taken many names and conceptualizations: hybrid regimes, electoral authoritarianism, and hegemonic authoritarian regimes (Geddes, 2005; Howard & Roessler, 2006; Morgenbesser, 2014; Schedler, 2006; Weeks, 2008). Each conception is centered on authoritarian regimes and unique aspects that are contrary to other categorizations of authoritarian regimes.

No matter the name, many of these typologies of authoritarian regimes focus procedural democracy and the election quality of certain authoritarian regimes. Categorizations of regime type within the context of elections is particularly crucial. When attempting to understand how elections behave in authoritarian regimes that offer publics an opportunity to vote incumbents from office, it is increasingly important to categorize these regimes properly. Levitsky and Way (2010) provide the most comprehensive understanding of competitive authoritarian regimes.

Other scholars have provide types of regimes (Diamond, 2002; Zakaria, 1997). While these authors have offer crucial insights into competitive authoritarian regimes, I am more concerned with the understanding of repression of civil liberties within these regimes. Levitsky and Way (2010) present several components within their definition, and this study will follow their definition and conceptualization of competitive authoritarian regimes.

Levitsky and Way (2010) define competitive authoritarian regimes as “civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents’ abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents” (5). Abuse of state authority provides an unfair advantage to incumbents not available to opposition parties or individuals. While unfair, there are institutions in place within these competitive authoritarian regimes that provide just that: actual competition or the opportunity for the opposition. Levitsky and Way (2010) provide a procedural-minimum conception of democracy which has been conceived by Dahl that provides a basis for the aspects of democratic institutions within these regimes. Having these democratic institutions allow for distinguishability from other authoritarian regimes which lack democratic institutions.

Competitive authoritarian regimes differ from completely authoritarian regimes (i.e. limited political reforms and non-competitive national elections), but also differ from democracies. Levitsky and Way (2010) state that “what distinguishes competitive authoritarian regimes from democracy, however, is the fact that incumbent abuse of the state violates at least one of three defining attributes of democracy: (1) free elections, (2) broad protection of civil liberties, and (3) a reasonably level playing field” (7). By abusing or violating one of these crucial assumptions, we find that competitive authoritarian regimes are neither entirely

democratic nor completely authoritarian. Each of these aspects is crucial to understanding competitive authoritarian regimes.

Removal of broad protections of civil liberties is one area where repression is most prevalent. Repression can take many forms within authoritarian regimes. This includes censorship of media, harassment of journalists, or making free discussion within the populace less likely. Some scholars argue that there are instances when this sort of repression is more prevalent (Davenport, 2007). Given that competitive authoritarian regimes are argued to be a post-Cold War phenomenon, research provides evidence that there was no significant difference in repression after the Cold War (Cingranelli & Richards, 1999). Other research focuses on the authoritarian incumbent's level of perceived domestic threat to their regime as a significant influence on a leader's decision to use repression (Carey, 2010; Regan & Henderson, 2002). This literature also supports the idea that repression is highest among transitioning regimes or regimes that are hybrid in nature (Carey, 2010; Regan & Henderson, 2002). These studies tend to support the "Murder in the Middle" hypothesis.

"Murder in the Middle" hypothesis proposed by Fein (1995) posits that regimes that are neither purely democratic nor completely authoritarian are likely to exert higher levels of repression on their populations. Moreover, this theory "asserts that there will be more conflict mobilized and incentives for repression—i.e., worse violations of life integrity—as democracy is extended before it is fully institutionalized" (Fein, 1995, p. 170). As these regimes transition towards democracy, there should be more opposition and a greater incentive for the state to repress this opposition. I argue that this will not be the case. Instead, the competitiveness of the election will result in increased civil liberties for individuals. The more competitive these elections are, the more incentive there will be for states to not repress. Indeed, there is an election

competitiveness threshold that once passed the authoritarian incumbents find it difficult to use repression due to the political risk. Incumbents do not want to undermine the support they need within this competitive atmosphere. Moreover, if competitive elections are guaranteed, then even if an authoritarian leader loses the election, they have an opportunity to run again. Civil liberties will not be repressed as competition and opposition grows. Support for this argument is found within Davenport and Armstrong (2004) in that once a threshold of democracy is met, repression will no longer be the primary means of the regime. The costly nature of repression for these incumbents—vote share loss or being voted out of office—is the crucial component in understanding competitive authoritarian regimes.

Nevertheless, elections in these competitive authoritarian regimes are not completely free and fair. While these elections allow competition, elections are often biased in favor of the incumbent. Having biased elections also influences whether there is a reasonably level playing field. This is often not the case in competitive authoritarian regimes. While democracies offer opportunities in a somewhat fair way, competitive authoritarian incumbents use their power to influence their position and that of opponents. However, the level of competitiveness should counter some of these effects.

When an authoritarian incumbent is faced with little or no competition, then the risk of employing repression against popular protest is low. In this case we expect greater abuses of civil liberties and fewer protections. Even if the national election occurs with limited competition, repression is more likely. However, introducing competitiveness elections (political reforms) is a double edge sword for these leaders. Although these election reforms can increase the political legitimacy of the authoritarian incumbents, it also increases the political risk of losing an election. Thus, these leaders may calculate the risks of using repression to control elections.

Indeed, this does not mean these authoritarian leaders will not attempt to manipulate the elections, but that they are less likely to use overt repression and general suppression of civil liberties.

The major focus of this paper focuses on political civil liberties. Some of these political civil liberties include uncensored media and overall freedoms of expression. In a democratic society, many political civil liberties are guaranteed or are not infringed upon. The same cannot be said in competitive authoritarian regimes. This study examines how these civil liberties can be repressed in competitive authoritarian regimes.

Competitive Authoritarian Regimes and Elections

Growing literature on competitive authoritarian regimes and elections offers differing conclusions on the role of elections in competitive authoritarian regimes. Scholars have attempted to understand what has been described as a post-Cold War phenomenon. Others have attempted to understand democratization or the lack thereof in these unique regimes. Stability and longevity of competitive authoritarian regimes has been an area with growing scholarship (Bunce & Wolchik, 2010; Donno, 2013; Geddes, 2005; Hanson, 2017; Howard & Roessler, 2006; Kaya & Bernhard, 2013; Knutsen & Nygård, 2015).

Authors attempt to understand the stability that elections provide competitive authoritarian regimes. According to Bunce and Wolchik (2010), elections in competitive authoritarian regimes are tales of continuity, not of change even with term limits. To defeat an incumbent in an election, opposition members must utilize “novel and sophisticated strategies to maximize their chances of winning power” (Bunce & Wolchik, 2010, p. 47). Geddes (2005) makes an argument that elections are utilized to reduce intra-regime conflicts thus stabilizing

their power and regime as leaders which she labels dictators; these elections also increase regime longevity. Hanson (2017) analyzes state capacity in electoral authoritarian regimes to find that this capacity influences how well threats are addressed from within the regime or outside of the regime.

Other works find stability does not occur within competitive authoritarian regimes due to elections. For Knutsen and Nygård (2015), regimes that are not democracies or autocracies and are instead—what they call semi-democracies—less durable and unstable. This instability is attributed to the rarity of these regimes that are likely to transition to other regime types—particularly democracies or autocracies.

Many of the works on the competitive authoritarian regimes attempt to understand regime trajectory and democratization. Donno (2013) finds that incumbents that are weaker in competitive authoritarian regimes and they are often more susceptible to losing their authority during democratization (i.e. at higher risk). Howard and Roessler (2006) investigate liberalizing outcomes of elections and why this occurs in some regimes and not others. They provide evidence that political change is possible in some competitive authoritarian regimes, but it remain unclear why the liberalizing effect does not occur in other regimes. Kaya and Bernhard (2013) analyze post-communist countries in Eurasia and the liberalizing effect of repeated elections. Their study supports the position that repeated elections do not lead to a more liberalizing or democratization effect. For Schedler (2002, 2015) these regimes are neither democratic nor democratizing; elections in these regimes are window dressing for these leaders to boast of electoral confidence. Morse (2015) explores post-Cold War Africa finding that many of the former single-party regimes successfully transitioned to a more competitive authoritarianism, but the single party leaders continue to influence elections. Matti (2010)

examines how the introduction of elections within a country with weak central government and almost non-existent legal system can lead to dictatorship. He finds that external pressure to democratize and establish national elections from international non-government organizations and Western European governments have made the Democratic Republic of the Congo more vulnerable to authoritarian tendencies and dictatorship.

Repression in Authoritarian Regimes

Repression is a tool that can be systematically utilized within authoritarian regimes. Studies on repression in competitive authoritarian regimes are sparse. Most literature on repression in authoritarian regimes typically does not examine how repression varies within single authoritarian regime type. Nonetheless, repression is employed in numerous authoritarian regimes. How this repression is operationalized also differs. I define repression as behavior that partakes in the following activities: censorship of media, harassment of journalists, media self-censorship, limiting freedom of discussion, limiting freedom of academic and cultural expression, limiting civil society entry and exit, and repressing civil society.

Bove, Platteau, and Sekeris (2017), find that authoritarian incumbents utilize repression depending on the level of wealth of that country; there is an optimal strategy and level of repression that can also be understood within these regimes. Unlike Bove et al., Frantz and Kendall-Taylor (2014) discover that a reliance on co-optation drastically alters repression within these authoritarian regimes. More specifically, Frantz and Kendall-Taylor (2014) find that authoritarian leaders that co-opt through institutions like legislatures or political parties, reduce the likelihood of censorships, but increases the likelihood of physically violent repression. Rivera (2017) offers a different claim by stating that “authoritarian-elected legislatures reduce

repression and the presence of opposition parties increases it” (2183). Davenport (2007) offers evidence that single-party regimes are generally less repressive than other authoritarian regimes—finding stability in this single-party institution. Regan and Henderson (2002) posit that regimes that are more vulnerable to threats will respond more harshly to these threats. Carey (2010) offers a different insight in that the longer a country is able to avoid repressive behavior and activities, the less likely there will be instances of repression in the future. However, there seems to be no consensus in the literature on the use of repression in authoritarian regimes except that it is utilized.

Repression Cycles and Elections

Only a few specific studies attempt to understand repression near elections in authoritarian regimes. The evidence suggests that in competitive authoritarian regimes the incumbent leaders attempt to reduce the power of legislatures and the judiciary, harassment of media, and harassment of the opposition before elections (Bunce & Wolchik, 2010). Davenport (1997) finds non-democracies utilize repressions in election years. Thus, consensus in the literature appears to find that repression coincides with elections in authoritarian regimes.

Studies on repression and elections in competitive authoritarian regimes are sparse. One specific study by Bhasin and Gandhi (2013) attempt to understand how, when, and whom repression impacts in competitive authoritarian regimes. Bhasin and Gandhi (2013) find that the months leading up to an election will result in greater repression of opposition members than voters. This analysis more specifically attempts to understand who is being targeted and when these individuals are harassed. The rationale behind this result suggests that competitive

authoritarian incumbents can apply selective repression of specific groups and individuals without blanket suppression of civil liberties. .

Furthermore, studies measuring the competitiveness of elections within competitive authoritarian regimes primarily focus on the fact that these regimes are a mixed or hybrid regime, but have not fully explored whether or not the levels of competitiveness have an influence on repression levels (Carey, 2010; Davenport & Armstrong, 2004; Fein, 1995; Regan & Henderson, 2002). To fully understand the competitive aspect of competitive authoritarian regimes, we must test whether this competitive identifier in these regimes influences how these regimes behave.

Variations in Results and Problem

Previous research offers a number of variations and conflicting claims of elections and repression in competitive authoritarian regimes. Numerous authors focus on democratization or lack thereof. Other authors focus on stability. Studies have not fully explored the relationship between repression and the competitiveness of elections more specifically. This is an unresolved problem in the literature.

When repression has been understood in competitive authoritarian regimes, it only looks at specific individuals that oppose the regime. It is unclear from the current literature whether repression can be seen as a systematic issue or if it is at the individual targeted level that Bhasin and Gandhi (2013) have claimed. Is this systematic repression of political civil liberties unique to authoritarian regimes or can it be utilized in competitive authoritarian regimes? This question is not answered within the literature.

This study is an attempt to address this issue. By instead looking at competitive authoritarian regimes and elections within these specific regimes, I will be able to answer the

questions left unanswered by the current literature. More directly, I will attempt to understand repression in the year of an election and its systematic characteristics. The type of repression utilized in competitive authoritarian regimes tends to be more systematic than more random violent reaction to specific protests. For example, censorship of media or media self-censorship—amongst other measures is more systematic. This study uses an index that accounts for the systematic forms of repression on political civil liberties. I will also only investigate elections within competitive authoritarian regimes detailed by Levitsky and Way (2010). By only looking competitive authoritarian regimes and systematic repression, I will be able to see if there are cycles of systematic repression within these regimes during election years.

Data and Methods

Hypotheses

As previously discussed, competitive authoritarian regimes often violate the protection of civil liberties of their citizens (Levitsky & Way, 2002, 2010). I argue that repression of this sort is not occurring within these regimes. Instead, it is the competitive aspect of these regimes that is driving the behavior of incumbents. Specifically, repression of civil liberties will be more costly (risky) for incumbents as the national elections become more competitive.

Hypothesis 1: As the level of election competitiveness increases within competitive authoritarian regimes, civil liberties will increase.

Hypothesis one suggests that the levels of competitiveness are a driving force behind whether systematic repression is being utilized or not. These regimes will thus not use repression of civil liberties given a more competitive election. I will test this hypothesis by utilizing a measurement of competitiveness of elections. I expect that as competitiveness of elections increase, there will be increases in civil liberties. Hypothesis two offers an extension of the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no substantive difference in the systematic repression of civil liberties before legislative and executive elections.

Thus, the type of election (legislative and executive) should not influence whether repression is occurring within these countries. Instead, it should only be the competitiveness that matters. I expect to find that there is no difference in the type of elections being held. This leads to my final hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Protests will have a negative influence on civil liberties resulting in more repression.

Protests can often lead to an immediate reaction from authoritarian leaders and result in increased repression. This type of reaction will also lead to more systematic repression in the form of reduced civil liberties. I expect that protests will have a negative impact on civil liberties

Dependent Variable

Previous literature has focused on competitive authoritarian regimes violating civil liberties (Levitsky & Way, 2002, 2010). Given this, I will operationalize civil liberties using an additive index variable. Political Civil Liberties are an index created from measures within the Varieties of Democracy dataset. Political Civil Liberties is an index variable that is aggregated from a number of constituent items. These indicators include government censorship effort-media, harassment of journalists, media self-censorship, freedom of discussion for men and women, freedom of academic and cultural expression. The index is a continuous measure of civil liberties. As this index increases, so do civil liberties. With a decrease in this index, we see decreases in civil liberties and thus increased systematic repression.

Independent Variables

To account for competitiveness within elections, I have constructed a categorical variable that measures the relative competitiveness of elections within competitive authoritarian regimes. The categorical variable is based on three measures: whether some parties are banned, if there are restrictions and barriers to party formation, and if the opposition parties are independent of the ruling regime. The coding scheme reflects the level of competitiveness. The variable is an index of the categories where each measure is 0,1. For example, if some parties are banned then this category is coded as 0, if no parties are banned then 1. The higher the number the more

competitive the election. Thus the categorical variable of one for non-competitive to four for most competitive.

Given that competitive authoritarian regimes utilize democratic institutions, we should expect to find that elections for both executives and legislatures are influenced by the incumbent leaders. For this reason, we must measure whether an executive or legislative election is occurring. To measure this, I will operationalize two particular variables. The first is executive elections. Executive elections is a dichotomous variable from the Varieties of Democracy dataset. It is coded one if there was an executive election in that given year, zero otherwise. The next variable is legislative elections. Legislative elections is a dichotomous variable from the Varieties of Democracy dataset. This variable is coded one if there was a legislative election in that given year, zero otherwise.

Repression of political civil liberties can result in the possibility for protests. To test whether protests have influences on political civil liberties, I will include protests as a measure. Protest data is from the Mass Mobilization dataset. Occurrences of protests are coded one if a protest occurred within a given year with more than fifty individuals and this protest was directed at the state, zero otherwise.

Controls

I will utilize two controls within my analysis. These variables are from the Quality of Government and Mass Mobilization datasets. Previous literature has suggested that the larger the economy, the less repression is likely to occur (Mitchell & McCormick, 1988; Poe, Tate, & Keith, 1999; Zanger, 2000). Given that economic environments can influence levels of repression, I will control for GDP per capita. Conflict can also influence the likelihood of

repression (Poe & Tate, 1994). To control for this, we will control for interstate conflict.

Interstate Conflict is coded one if a country participated in an international conflict in a given year, zero otherwise.

Data

When conceptualizing competitive authoritarian regimes, I will be utilizing the following countries and time periods as provided by Levitsky and Way (2010). These countries offer different time frames with the years following in parentheses for each country given: Albania (1990-2008), Armenia (1992-2008), Belarus (1992-1999), Benin (1990-2006), Botswana (1966-2008), Cambodia (1992-2008), Cameroon (1991-2008), Croatia (1992-2000), Dominican Republic (1986-1996), Gabon (1990-2008), Georgia (1992, 1995-2008), Ghana (1991-2008), Guyana (1985-1992), Haiti (1994-2004, 2006-2008), Kenya (1991-2008), Macedonia (1991-2007), Madagascar (1989-1993, 1997-2008), Malawi (1993-2008), Malaysia (1957-2008), Mali (1992-2002), Mexico (1982-2000), Moldova (1992-2008), Mozambique (1992-2008), Nicaragua (1983-1990), Peru (1992-2000), Russia (1992-2007), Romania (1990-1996, 2000-2004), Senegal (1976-2008), Serbia (1990-2003), Slovakia (1993-1998), Taiwan (1991-2000), Tanzania (1992-2008), Ukraine (1992-2004), Zambia (1990-2008) and Zimbabwe (1980-2008). In order to understand whether competitive authoritarian regimes will apply repression to civil liberties, I will focus on these countries from 1990 to 2008. For the comparative case studies of the 35 countries, I compare the descriptive analysis for each country. For the regression models, the unit of analysis is country-year.

The rationale for choosing these particular countries is to directly test Levitsky and Way (2002, 2010) competitive authoritarian regimes types. Levitsky and Way (2002, 2010) posit that

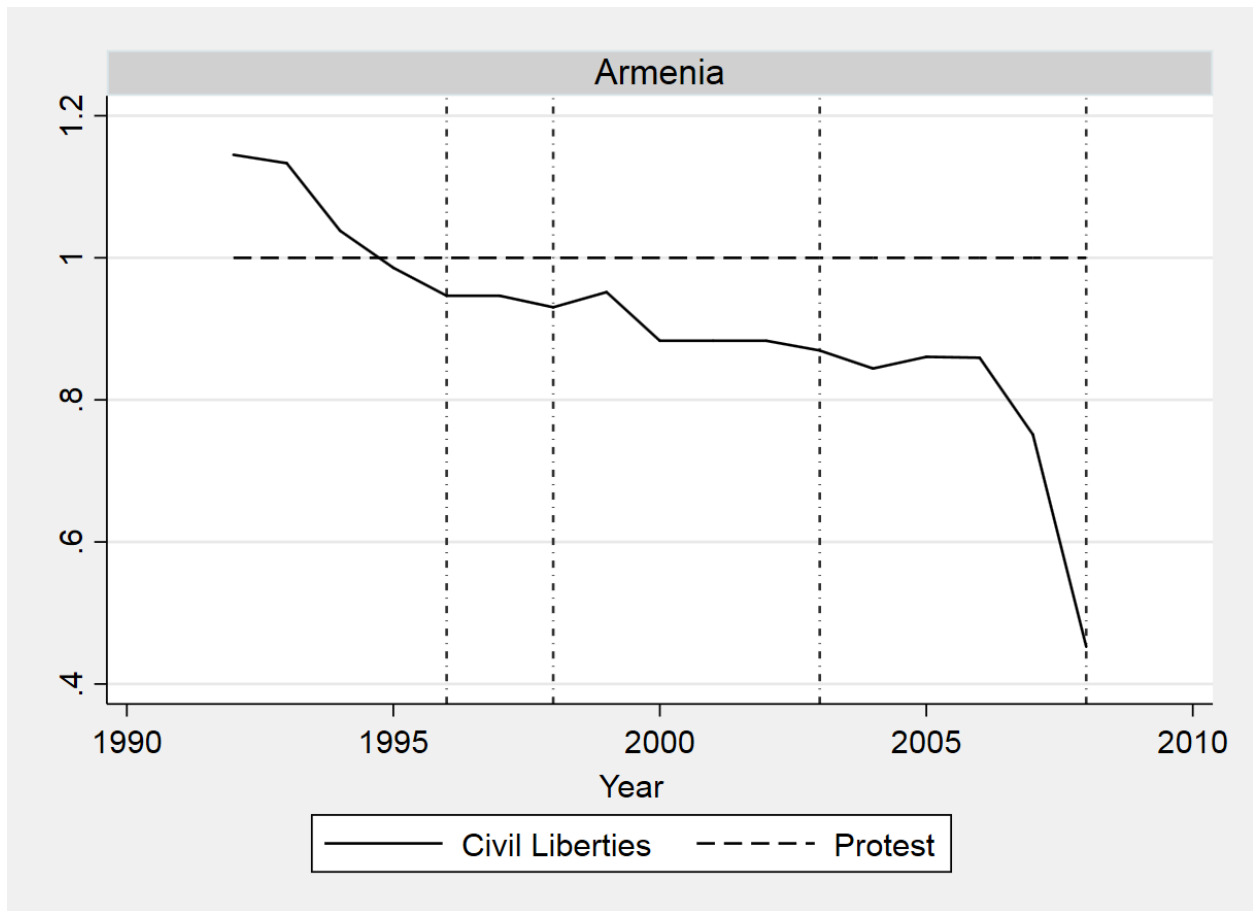
competitive authoritarian regimes violate or repress civil liberties to remain in power. Also, these sorts of regimes are viewed as a post-Cold War phenomenon. By only analyzing these specific countries and years outlined by the authors, I am able to test whether or not the level of election competitiveness has an influence on repression of civil liberties.

To offer a visual representation of political civil liberties over time, I have plotted each country individually for the years in which these countries are identified as competitive authoritarian regimes. This is a descriptive comparative country study. Note that the time frame for each country differs post-1990. This is due to the time in which these countries were categorized as competitive authoritarian regimes. For each country, I have plotted the following: civil liberties, protests, competitive, and non-competitive elections. Civil liberties is the measure previously discussed as a measure of the civil liberties within a country and allows for a discussion of whether repression is occurring. The solid trend lines within the graphs are civil liberties. As the civil liberties index increases, repression decreases and civil liberties are thus higher. The opposite is true when the civil liberties index decreases; we see that this results in increased repression, thus decreased civil liberties. Protests are the trend line which is dashed and is plotted across time. This variable is dichotomous and coded one for a protest occurring, zero otherwise. Competitive and non-competitive elections are time lines that indicate which year's elections were occurring. There are only for executive elections. Vertical solid lines are elections that are competitive, coded as none banned within the competitiveness variable. Non-competitive elections include variables that have at least one ban. These non-competitive elections are vertical short dashed time lines.

Comparative Case Study Results

Plotting political civil liberties over time with allows for a visual understanding of how political civil liberties are changing during election years. The following figures offer examples of political civil liberties over time. Each country is plotted as a way to visually see whether the competitiveness of elections influence repression levels felt by the populace. The first country is Armenia.

Figure 1. Armenia Elections, Civil Liberties, and Protest 1992-2008

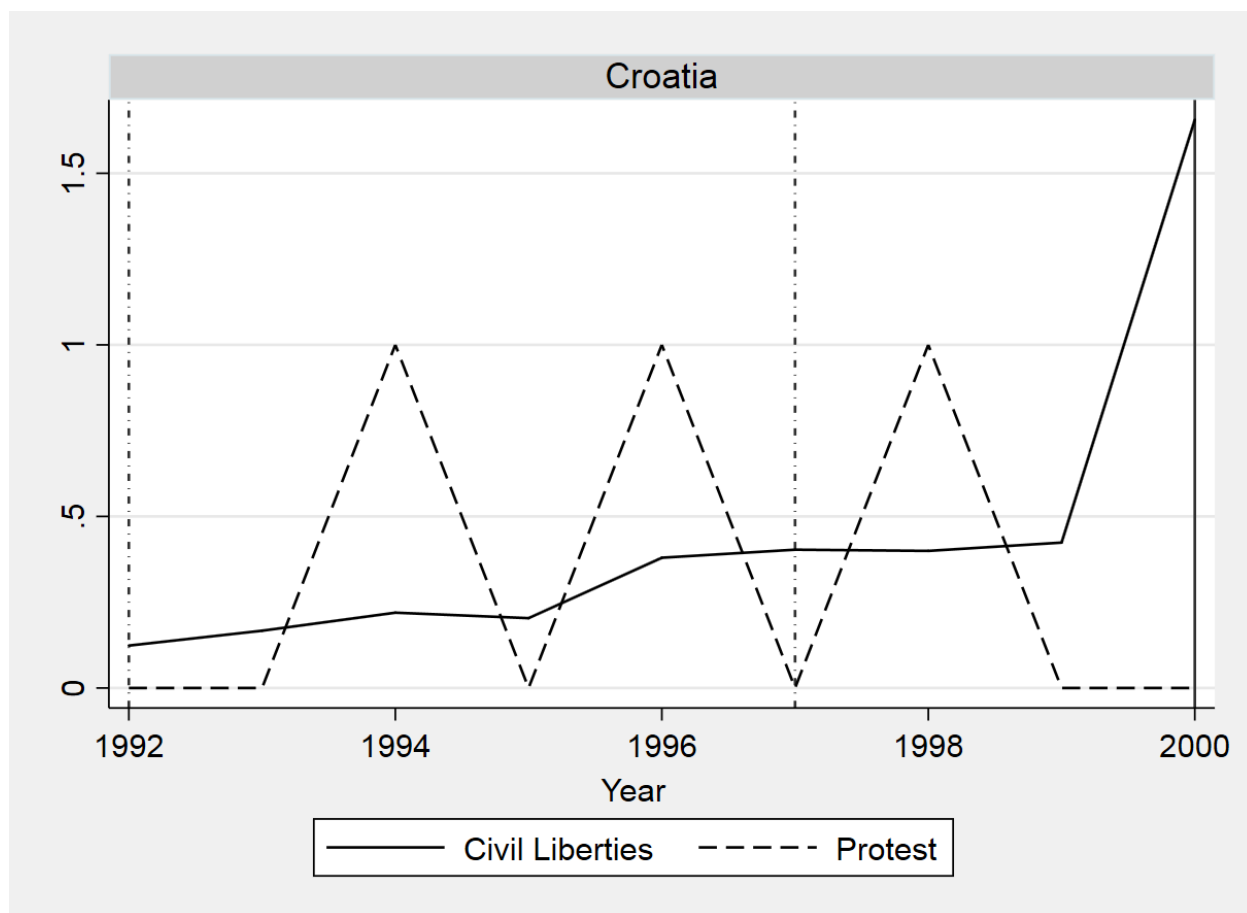


Armenia offers an example of how the competitiveness of elections influences whether civil liberties will change over time. Recall that the short dash vertical lines signify the year of an election and that these elections are non-competitive. Also recall that the solid time-series line is the measure of civil liberties. We see that the above figure offers that each election is non-competitive. Protests are continuous throughout the years studied, but do not appear to offer any

distinct influence on civil liberties. Prior to each election, there appears to be a decrease in political civil liberties that coincides with these non-competitive elections. For each instance where there is an election, civil liberties reduce and do not always rebound post-election. The general trend for Armenia appears to be that civil liberties are decreasing over the times studied. Ultimately, it appears graphically that these non-competitive elections are influencing civil liberties in a negative way.

Armenia is not the only case that is seeing decreases in civil liberties with non-competitive elections but increases in civil liberties with competitive elections. Croatia provides a sufficient example of how transitioning towards competitive elections can influence civil liberties over time.

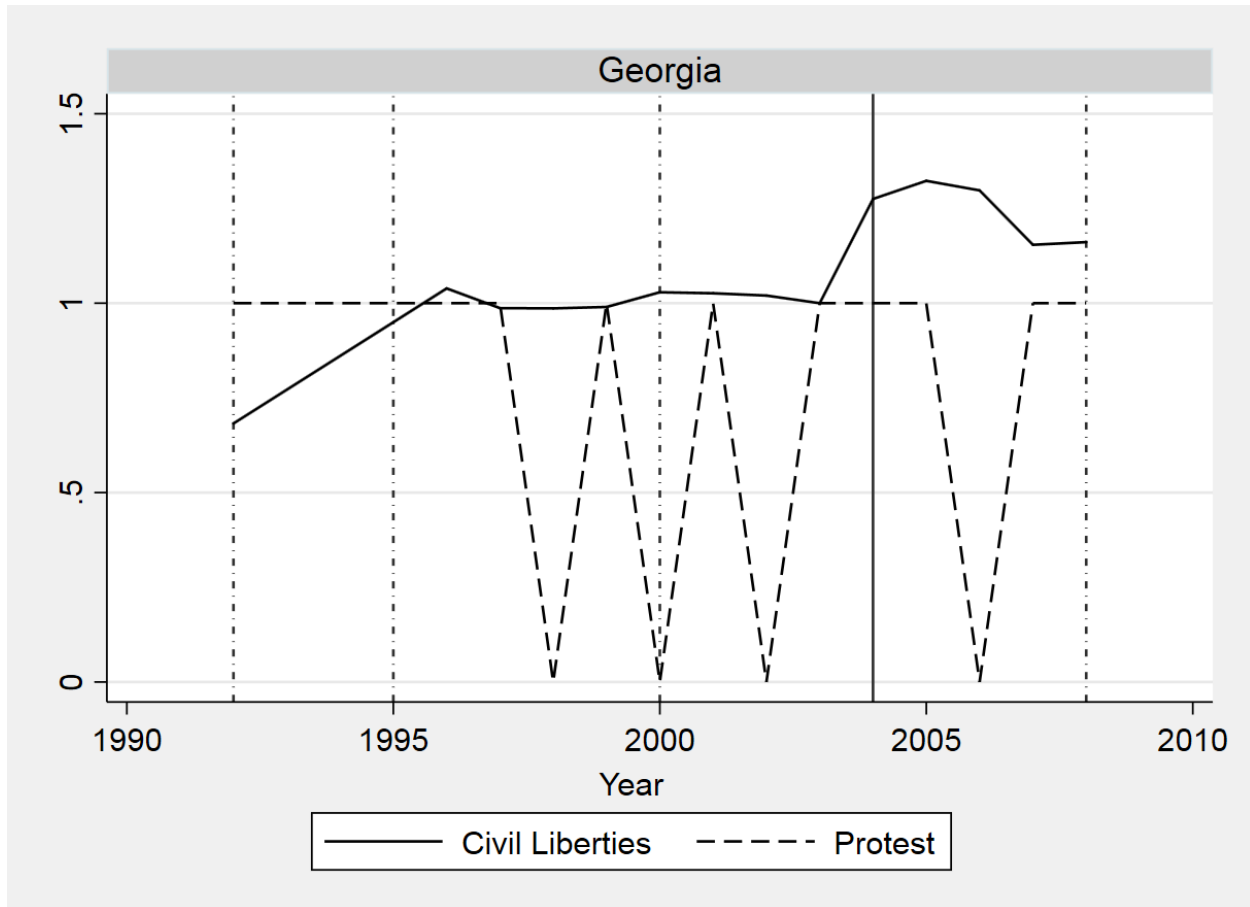
Figure 2. Croatia Elections, Civil Liberties, and Protest 1992-2000



Croatia's graph shows that a transition from non-competitive to competitive elections have a positive influence on civil liberties. We see that this results in increased civil liberties. The most distinct increase in civil liberties is occurring prior to the competitive election in 2000. Civil liberties in the non-competitive elections previous had been somewhat flat, but increasingly slightly. However, the spike in civil liberties occurred in the time between 1999 and 2000. Moreover, protests appear to have not distinctive difference in civil liberties as well. Protests appear to occur—within the years sampled—every other year for the majority of the time. The general trend overall for civil liberties appears to be increasing, particularly leading into the final election. The above figure offers a sufficient example of how competitiveness of elections results in increased civil liberties.

While we see that non-competitive elections can result in decreased civil liberties and transitioning to more competitive elections can result in increased civil liberties, there can be alterations in civil liberties when transitioning from a competitive election to a non-competitive election. Georgia provides an example of this relationship.

Figure 3. Georgia Elections, Civil Liberties, and Protest 1992-2008

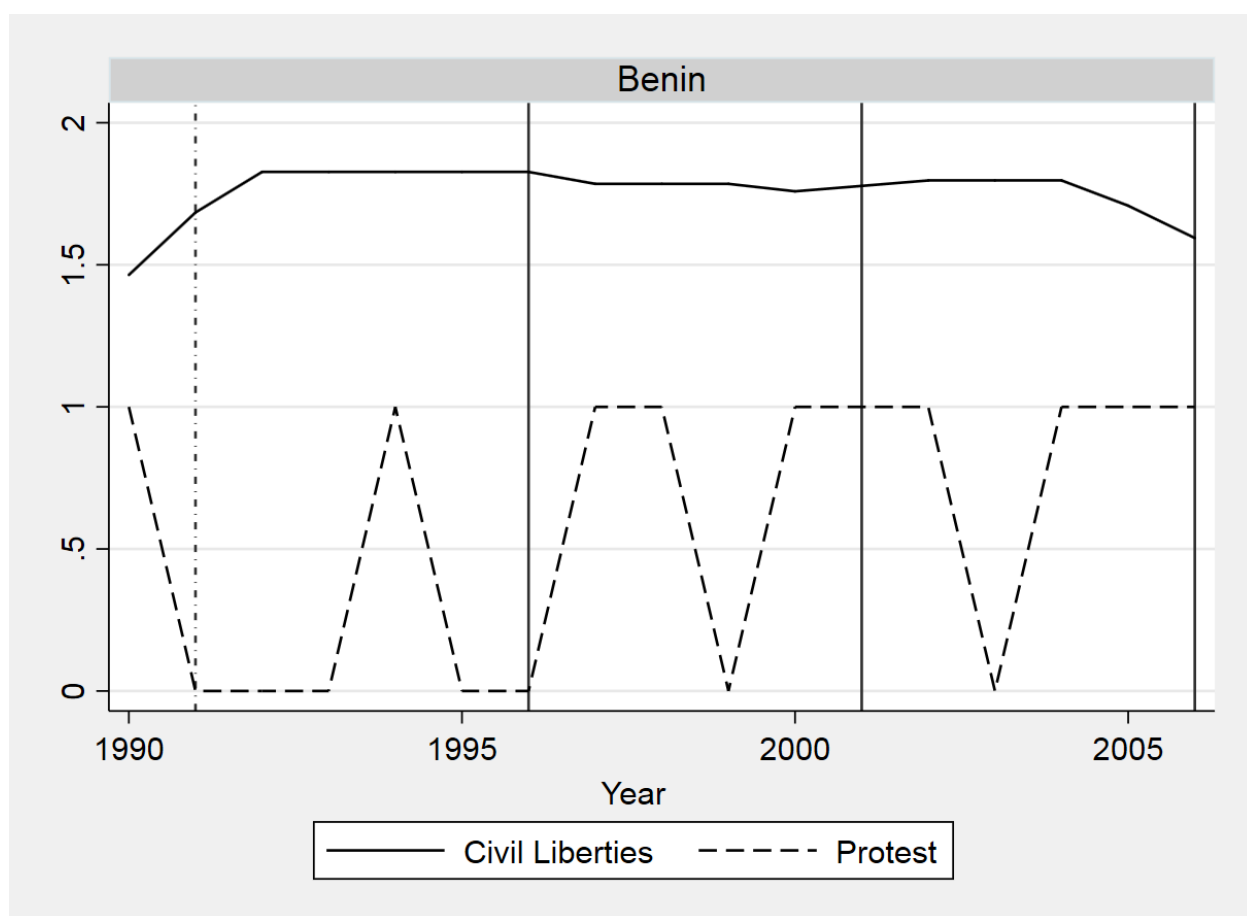


Within Georgia, there was a transition to a more competitive election in 2004, followed by a non-competitive election in 2008. Leading up to the competitive election, there appeared to be a general increase in civil liberties over time. This is especially true leading up to the competitive election. There was a steep increase in civil liberties that occurred prior to that election. However, we see a decline in civil liberties following this election as time leads on to the non-competitive election. Protests also appear to have not distinct influence on civil liberties

during the time studied. Overall, the general trend appears to be upward. However, protests do not appear to have a distinct impact on civil liberties. Not every country offers that competitiveness matters.

While some countries do follow this pattern that the competitiveness of elections matters, others do not. One particular example is Benin.

Figure 4. Benin Elections, Civil Liberties, and Protest 1990-2006



Benin has transitioned towards competitive elections. The first election during the time frame is a non-competitive election. Leading up to this election, we see an increase in civil liberties that continues past the election, but plateaus leading into the first competitive election. We then see a slight decrease in civil liberties overall with a greater decrease leading up to the final competitive election in 2006. With competitive elections, we should see higher levels of

civil liberties. However, this is not what we are seeing within this graph. The decrease in civil liberties prior to the final competitive election offers that competitiveness of elections may not always result in higher civil liberties. Yet, Benin is starting out with a relatively high level of civil liberties and only a slight decrease. In fact, the longtime president Mathieu Kérékou who served from 1972-1991 as the head of the single party regime and then popularly elected president from 1996-2006 was ineligible to run again due to the constitutional term and age limits. There was speculation that he might attempt to change the constitution, but he did not and he stepped aside. An independent (non-major party affiliation) candidate Yayi Boni won the election. This reflects greater quality of elections and civil liberties. Protests also appear to have no substantial impact on civil liberties.

Overall, it appears that trends for all 35 country cases support an increase in political civil liberties post-election. Although, only 4 of the 35 cases are discussed in the paper, the trend is consistent across all cases for the executive elections. Thus, the descriptive data supports the hypothesis 1 and 3. However, the case studies reject the “Murder in the Middle” explanation. As the authoritarian regimes become more developed procedural democracies (i.e. more competitive elections) systematic repression decreases (i.e. improved civil liberties).

Empirical Results

In addition to the descriptive comparative cases, I evaluate my data with Ordinary Least Squares regression with robust standard errors to control for heteroscedasticity or unequal variance within the model. Robust standard errors allow for the model to remain unbiased, thus providing that the models and results do not violate assumptions made within the models

themselves. The results presented in the table are from that of the OLS regression with robust standard errors.

Table 1 below offers these results from the empirical tests. I run five different models. Model one does not include control variables. Model two includes two controls: GDP per capita and interstate conflict. Model three adds the final independent variable—protest—with controls. Model four includes interactions between protests and the competitiveness of elections. The final model interacts elections and protests. The models provide the coefficients for each and the robust standard errors are below each coefficient in parentheses. The levels of significance are also outlined at the bottom of Table 1.

Table 1. Civil Liberties in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
2 of 3 Banned	0.0754 (0.0850)	0.635* (0.251)	0.641* (0.259)	1.340** (0.479)	0.635* (0.260)
1 of 3 Banned	0.583*** (0.0770)	0.829*** (0.239)	0.829*** (0.248)	1.712*** (0.467)	0.837** (0.251)
None Banned	0.930*** (0.0743)	1.129*** (0.244)	1.126*** (0.252)	1.821*** (0.480)	1.127*** (0.254)
Exec. Election	0.119 (0.0639)	0.127 (0.110)	0.105 (0.108)	0.113 (0.114)	0.117 (0.139)
Leg. Election	-0.0608 (0.0599)	-0.0395 (0.103)	-0.0157 (0.102)	0.00864 (0.105)	0.115 (0.148)
Protest			-0.185* (0.0769)	0.845 (0.514)	-0.145 (0.0940)
2 of 3 Banned x Protest				-0.949 (0.534)	
1 of 3 Banned x Protest				-1.209* (0.525)	
None Banned x Protest				-0.943 (0.537)	
Exec. Election x Protest					-0.0170 (0.205)
Leg. Election x Protest					-0.174 (0.201)
GDP per Capita		-0.000126 (0.000173)	-0.000156 (0.000174)	-0.000172 (0.000173)	-0.000147 (0.000177)
Interstate Conflict		0.0967 (0.0723)	0.156 (0.0799)	0.143 (0.0887)	0.150 (0.0816)
Constant	0.303*** (0.0685)	0.100 (0.239)	0.243 (0.270)	-0.514 (0.461)	0.207 (0.281)
adj. R^2	0.301	0.182	0.199	0.240	0.194
AIC	792.2	375.2	371.3	361.9	374.4
BIC	817.5	399.3	398.9	399.8	408.9
N	503	232	232	232	232

Robust Standard Errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Dependent variable for these models is an additive index of political civil liberties. Across all models, the measure for competitiveness is statistically significant—all except the first coefficient within model one. In fact, the coefficients are larger and statistically significant as the categories move closer to being fully competitive. These coefficients are in comparison to the base category that is fully non-competitive. This result is consistent with the descriptive comparative case studies. . Elections for executive and legislative elections are not statistically significant across the models along with the controls. Protests are statistically significant within model three, but lose their significance once it is interacted with other measures within models four and five.

Model four is the first model with interactions. I have interacted protests and the competitiveness of elections within this model. When I interact these variables, the signs of the coefficients become negative, but only one of the interactions is statistically significant. This interaction is when the election is nearly competitive, but one of the three variables forming this categorical variable are banned (i.e. more competitive election). To see this visually, I have plotted the margins. Figure 5 illustrates this within the appendix. In my final model, I interacted the protest variable with both executive and legislative elections. In both instances, the interaction of the two variables are not statistically significant. I plotted the margins for both of these interactions. Figure 6 and 7 are available in the appendix.

Overall, I find support for my first hypothesis that increased competitiveness results in increased civil liberties. This is contrary to what the literature expects in these types of regimes. I also find that the types of elections do not have any substantial influence on civil liberties, offering support for hypothesis two. Ultimately, the type of election is not the critical mechanism. It is instead the competitiveness of these elections that is of critical importance.

Finally, I do find some support for my third hypothesis, but not a sufficient amount. Protests do have a significant lowering impact on civil liberties. However, elections and protests in the same year do not influence civil liberties. Also, only the nearly competitive elections where one of the three measurements are banned has a negative significant impact on civil liberties.

Conclusion

Competitive authoritarian regimes act akin to democracies by employing democratic institutions. Institutions within these regimes are controlled much like an authoritarian regime. Opposition is allowed within these regimes, which deviates from a more authoritarian regime; this provides the competitive typology. Through the addition of the opportunity of opposition, these incumbents have provided an opening for their ouster. To remain in power, these incumbents appear to increase levels of civil liberties as elections grow more competitive.

What could explain this phenomenon? One explanation could be that the competitiveness of these elections can increase the political legitimacy of the incumbent leader, but also increase the political risk of repression especially just before an election. If the election is competitive, then there is a risk that the incumbent can be voted out of office. In addition, as Geddes (1999) suggests, authoritarian leaders have choices regarding political reform. They circle the wagons and resist reform including repression, but once the regime is overthrown, the leaders are killed or ousted from politics. However, authoritarian leaders, who allow for greater election competitiveness including multiparty elections, may survive as one of the competing parties (or candidates) even if they lose the early elections. The result from this sample of countries and the time period, seem contrary to what Levitsky and Way (2002, 2010) propose. Instead of repressing voters, these regimes appear to not systematically repress civil liberties to remain in power, putting into question one of the foundational points proposed by Levitsky and Way

(2002, 2010). Repression could be limited due to voters and individuals being more aware of repression leading up to an election. The election cost of repression for incumbents can be great. This costliness could provide a reason for voters to change their voting preference to support the opposition. Such an outcome or change in preferences is counter to what incumbent's desire. If incumbents wish to remain in power, they must find ways to do so. Visibly repressing voters on a systematic level when elections are competitive may be counter to their objective and undermine their chances of remaining in power. These statistical results also undermine the "Murder in the Middle" hypothesis that proposes that these regimes in the middle—neither purely authoritarian nor democratic—are more inclined to repress their citizenry to remain in power. Instead, we see that these regimes do not repress political civil liberties to remain in power.

There are limitations to my research. One such limitation is the definition and data limitations. Given such a limited scope and timeframe, we may not know if these competitive authoritarian regimes have or continue to occur post-2008. In the future, I plan to extend this categorization to include post-2008 and pre-1990. I also plan to conceptualize a more comprehensive list of competitive authoritarian regimes to test further.

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Appendix

Figure 5. Predictive Margins of Protests and Competitiveness

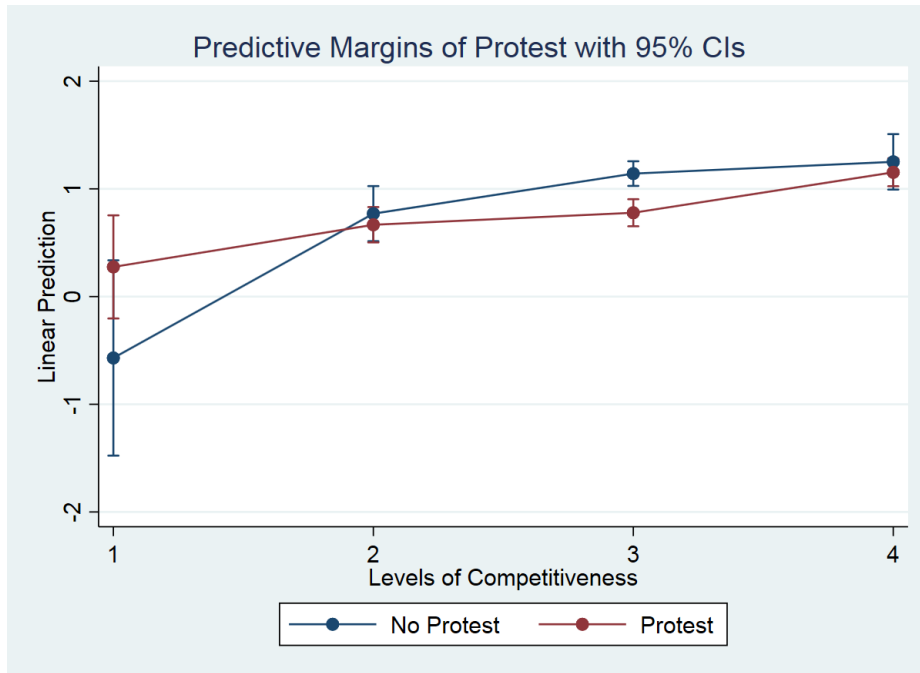


Figure 6. Predictive Margins of Executive Elections

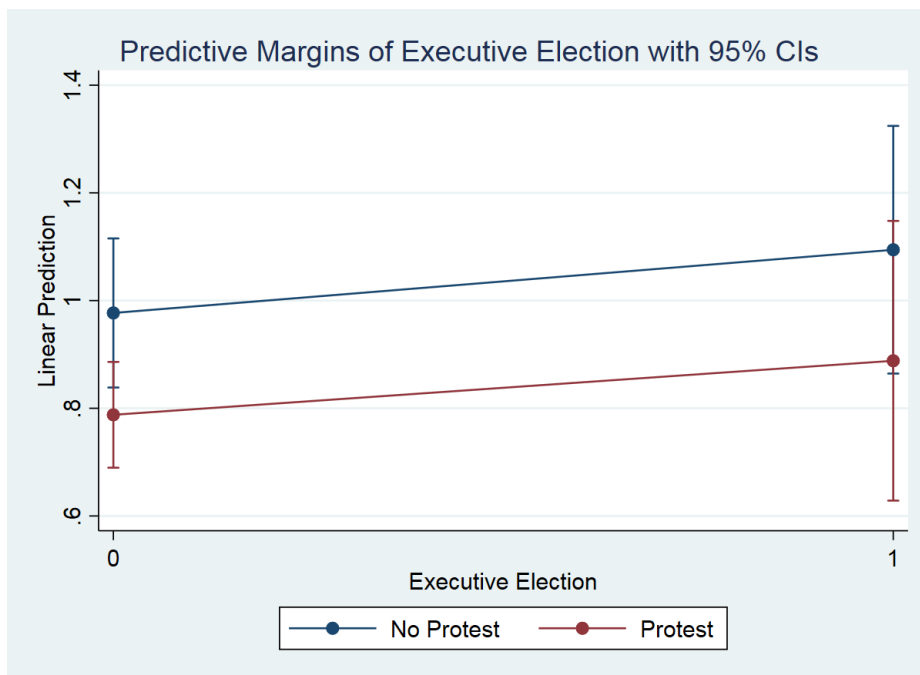


Figure 7. Predictive Margins of Legislative Elections

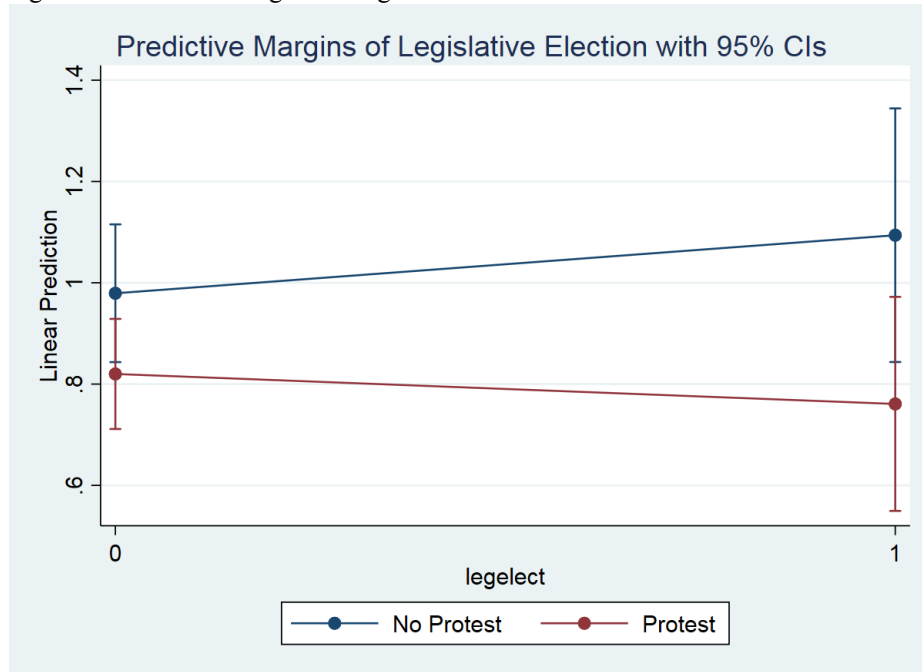


Table 2. Correlations

	Civil Liberties Index	Competitiveness category	Protest	Exec. Election	Leg. Election	Interstate Conflict	GDP per capita
Civil Liberties Index	1.0000						
Competitiveness Category	0.5350	1.0000					
Protest	-0.1927	-.1559	1.0000				
Exec Election	0.0940	0.0546	-0.0033	1.0000			
Leg. Election	-0.0069	0.0117	0.0230	0.3735	1.0000		
Interstate Conflict	-0.1893	-0.4200	0.1223	0.0116	0.1224	1.0000	
GDP per Capita	-0.0121	-0.0210	-0.0579	0.0220	0.0711	-0.0566	1.0000