Article

Election Boycotts and Hybrid Regime Survival

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Abstract

Despite the frequent occurrence of election boycotts, there are few studies available in the scholarly literature concerning their effectiveness, particularly as a strategy of opposition parties seeking to bring about the end of electoral authoritarian governments. This article uses an original data set with global coverage of hybrid regimes from 1981 to 2006, and uses event-history analysis to determine the efficacy of boycotts in national elections among other risk factors thought to undermine hybrid regimes. This article also takes a preliminary look at democratization outcomes following boycotted and contested elections in hybrid regimes. The core findings are that boycotts hasten the electoral defeat of hybrid regimes without much risk of destabilizing the electoral process, but ultimately do not lead to increased competition in successor regimes.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, many countries have turned from traditional forms of authoritarianism by including elements of democratic elections.

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Along with this transition, boycotts of elections have become a recurring event in news reports from around the world: Ethiopia, Egypt, Kosovo, Venezuela, and the list continues to grow. Even if they are contested, many elections today are still accompanied with the threat of boycotting by some parties. What remains to be answered is whether election boycotts actually work. Can a political party achieve any goal by overtly avoiding competition in national elections or do boycotts simply break down the electoral process and with it any hopes for regime change and democracy?

Given the recurrence of opposition boycotts in so many elections around the world, the topic of election boycotts is certainly ripe for study. With the rise in the number of regimes falling within the category of hybrid regimes and their use of unfair political processes, it is also important to understand whether there is any advantage to the opposition to forgo potential representation in government. The question still remains unanswered whether boycotting an election is an effective strategy in bringing about change under unfair elections, or is instead simply an act of desperation by a demoralized opposition. The specific questions I seek to answer revolve around whether this form of protest can either bring about a change in power by electoral means or instead break down the electoral system all together. In addition, I investigate the nature of the regime that follows.

Surprisingly, the topic has received very little attention in the comparative politics literature despite the utility and gravity of the topic. Only very recently have there been some works addressing the topic of election boycotts directly. The literature lacks a systematic answer to the more general question of how boycotts influence the survival of the incumbent regimes that maintain unfair election processes. Also, we still know little about the exact nature of boycotts across the range of hybrid regime types. Beaulieu considers boycotts as a feature of the developing world, defined as countries receiving foreign aid, while others focus only on cases in Africa (Beaulieu, 2006a; Bratton, 1998; Lindberg, 2004, 2006). While these provide the groundwork to begin studying boycotts, there remains a need to systematically assess the degree to which boycotts of elections to national offices influence the prospects for democratization by looking at the risks of regime collapse. I intend to look at this in two specific manners. The first is an analysis of whether the decision to contest or boycott as my primary independent variable increases the risks to an incumbent faction of falling to some other faction by elections in the short term and over time. Alternatively I will investigate whether the decision to boycott or contest an election leads to the breakdown of electoral politics in the country.

Universe of Cases: Hybrid Regimes

A growing body of literature has developed recently considering the intermediate regimes that possess traits of democratic and authoritarian regimes. In general, there is an agreement that there is a type of hybrid regime that falls somewhere between the conventional, closed authoritarian regime and a fully developed democracy or polyarchy (Diamond, 2002; Schedler, 2006). These regimes have been given many different titles: defective democracy, hybrid regimes, semidemocracy, pseudodemocracy, democracy with adjectives, new authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, exclusive republics, guided democracy, illiberal democracy, anocracy, and near-democracy (Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2002; Schedler, 2006; van de Walle, 2002; Zakaria, 1997). For the sake of not confusing readers or adding to the proliferation of terms, I will simply refer to these as hybrid regimes. The most important element of these regimes is that they use elections to provide legitimacy to the regime's continued existence. Following the rapid expansion of democracy since the 1970s and collapse of Marxist–Leninist ideology in the late 1980s, electoral democracy has become widely seen as the only legitimate form of government available for new governments, and even authoritarian regimes have sought to use elections, albeit unfair ones, to be considered legitimate governments (Diamond, 2002; Schedler, 2006).

The discussion of hybrid regimes begins in the debate on defining democracy. Dahl's (1971) discussion of polyarchy and his two dimensions of contestation and participation provide one starting point for measuring hybrid regimes (Munck, 2006). In this typology, hybrids are not only able to exist when one or both dimensions of polyarchy fall short of the ideal, but also remain at a level above a completely closed regime. Andreas Schedler (2006) builds a definition of electoral authoritarian regimes by modifying Przeworski's (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000) thinner conceptualization of democracy. In this case, the top offices of government must be filled by multiparty elections, but the incumbent utilizes manipulation and persuasion to prevent the opposition from ever taking power. The opposition in these regimes is thus, simultaneously demoralized by knowing there is almost no possibility of immediate electoral victory and encouraged by the possibility that they may be able to damage the regime in the long term through participating in the political process (Schedler, 2006).

Schedler's definition of electoral authoritarianism is somewhat restrictive, not including competitive oligarchies, regimes with reserved positions, and those with only loyal oppositions. Other definitions of hybrid regime types vary along the degrees of how competition for power operates. Levitsky and Way (2002) in their discussion of competitive authoritarianism describe the

alternative arrangement of exclusive republics (like Dahl's exclusive oligarchy), and of guided democracies, in which there exist some veto players isolated from electoral competition such as the military or clergy above what may otherwise be fair competition. These definitions of hybrid regimes quite often do not lead to the same set of regimes included in them. Some definitions, particularly Schedler's Electoral Authoritarianism, exclude a large number of regimes from consideration that are included in other authors' defining of their types of hybrid regimes.

Competing Risks to Hybrid Regimes

The primary dependent variable being considered in this study is the duration of hybrid regimes. To test the effects of election boycotts on regime stability, I must also look into what other risk factors are competing with boycotts in hybrid regimes. The nature of competition and the types of threats to survival are critical when attempting to determine which of the competing risk factors are most influential in the survival or demise of these regimes. Certain elements and dynamics of competition drive these risk factors and must be drawn out of the literature on hybrid regimes before proceeding to test the effect of election boycotts on survival.

The consensus in the literature is that while these regimes are not fair regarding political conduct and contestation, the levels of repression and persecution remain relatively moderate. The ruling party tends not to resort to blatant persecution if at all possible, preferring to maintain power through popularity as would a party in a normal democracy, but also willing to use subtle manipulation if necessary to ensure that they cannot lose power through elections (Levitsky & Way, 2002). Schedler represents this dynamic as an instance of nested games differing from those in a conventional democracy. The goals of the actors in electoral authoritarian states can be seen as a two-level game involving goals of power and reform, with the ultimate goal of holding the capacity to modify the rules of the electoral game (Schedler, 2002). Oppositions as well as ruling factions are capable of using the electoral game as a tool to change the future rules, giving each faction a greater chance of taking or retaining control of the rules of the game (Schedler, 2006).

The tools employed by the electoral authoritarian regime depend on a number of factors related to nature of the regime and level of competition it faces. Some such as van de Walle's (2002) contested autocratic regime are so unpopular that they would be unable to win in fair elections, while others hold enough popularity to win fair elections most of the time and use unfair tactics to prevent any unexpected outcomes from occurring. Popular regimes

need not use nearly as many repressive tools and often function very similarly to a political party in fair electoral competition. The difference from a democratic party is that an electoral authoritarian party will resort to manipulation before accepting defeat. Higher levels of repression and repeated instances of repression in hybrid regimes should lead to an increased demand for democratic reform and thus, a higher threat of opposition mobilization and protest against the regime (Schedler, 2009). Hybrid regimes can use a variety of tactics including reserving certain key positions to appointment, excluding or fragmenting opposition parties to the point that none could win, targeted disenfranchisement and manipulation of districts and registration, vote buying, intimidation by either nonsecret ballot or violence, and fraud (Case, 2006).

Outside influences have led recently to a growth in the number of regimes using elections to legitimize their rule, and location of regimes (political and physical) can often determine the prevalence of electoral authoritarian regimes. States located in areas dominated by Russia or China today face far fewer pressures to democratically legitimize their rule than their counterparts in the Western sphere of influence (Levitsky & Way, 2006). Size and international influence are also critical factors that can affect the degree of pressure on regimes to draw legitimacy from popular elections. Levitsky and Way (2006) explain these features by the increased costs of repression in loss of aid or trade for states within the Western sphere and thus a tendency for electoral legitimacy to be a more important factor for regimes located within these areas than in others (Levitsky & Way, 2006). This line of linkage as a constraint on regime behavior is supported also by van de Walle's observation that African countries that receive aid are often led to the path of electoral, constitutional government, although not necessarily with free and fair elections (van de Walle, 2002).

The duration of hybrid regimes also varies widely, with some surviving less than a full election cycle, others oscillating to and from closed authoritarianism or democracy, continuing to function for decades, or slowly democratizing (Schedler, 2006). Case (2006) presents a model in which the repressive skill and capacity of the regime are the deciding factors in regime survival. Based on case studies in Southeast Asia, regimes are stable until faced with some form of exogenous shock and must use more manipulative and repressive actions to survive than would be normally needed. The relative balance of opposition power and regime manipulation skills determine the path: Regimes with high levels of manipulative capacity will persist in their current form despite opposition strength, while those with low levels of manipulative capacity will democratize if the opposition is strong, or revert to closed authoritarianism in the case of a weak opposition (Case, 2006).

Powerful regimes, particularly military regimes are often able to hold control by reverting to closed authoritarianism in the face of miscalculating the opposition strength, while personalist and party regimes are much more likely to be forced to step down following a botched manipulation and an unexpected opposition victory (Snyder, 2006).

Boycotts

Election boycotts have become an increasingly common phenomenon in recent decades. When defined as a situation in which a political party or faction that is legally allowed to contest in elections makes a decision to organize *active* nonparticipation in the elections by members and followers rather than contesting, election boycotts have occurred in some form in 13% of all elections and 16% of elections in the developing world (Beaulieu, 2006a). The existing literature on boycotts focuses on three aspects of boycotts: a typology of boycotts, a rational-choice modeling of the causes and motivations of boycotts, and the long-term and immediate effects of election boycotts regarding democracy.

Types

In the most comprehensive study on election boycotts in the developing world available, Emily Beaulieu provides for a two-dimensional typology of election boycotts (Beaulieu, 2006a). This typology focuses on the dimensions of size and the use of violence.[1] Similar schemes focusing on the scope of boycotts have been used as well. Lindberg (2004) divides the level of participation into categories of total or partial boycott, determined by the proportion of parties participating in the boycott. Schedler (2009) uses a four-part typology of boycotts including complete contestation, threatened boycott, partial boycott, and full opposition boycott.

   Major boycotts will be the primary focus of the current analysis. Beaulieu's (2006a) major boycotts occur when the majority of the opposition factions participate in the boycott. Major boycotts (and presumably total boycotts as well) are motivated largely by the level of unfairness of an electoral process in which the opposition does not believe they can win despite their popularity. This leads them to seek reforms to the electoral process that will allow for a greater likelihood of turnover and continued democratic competition (Beaulieu, 2006a). This fits well with Schedler's (2006) two-level approach to unfair elections.

   At the other end of this axis is the minor boycott. These consist of small, minority factions of the opposition and function quite differently from a

major boycott. Parties involved in a minor boycott are most typically ethnic minorities, regional minorities, or antistate/antisystem parties, and these parties are likely to be seeking side-payments from the incumbent regime by causing the elections to be considered unfair rather than protesting the existing levels of unfairness (Beaulieu, 2006a). These vary widely in motivation from a property dispute over a hotel in Albania (BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 2005) to the bombing of polls in Colombia by FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia).

Causes

The value of a boycott to an opposition party as opposed to contestation is derived from a number of factors. Schedler (2009) models electoral protest, including boycotts, as a result of three separate processes: an indicator of the diminished legitimacy of the incumbent regime after repeated manipulation of the political process, the independent calculation of the opposition to shape the outcome of the electoral process, and a calculation of the opposition that protest will weaken the effectiveness of incumbent manipulation. When framed in the light of Schedler's (2006) model of authoritarian competition as a two-level game, the degree to which the parties value each level of the game determines the competing values of contestation or protest. An opposition party that values the short-term values of representation in gaining demands in the legislative process should be more likely to contest, while those parties that consider the control of the rule-making process should value the benefits that they believe are derived from protest (following Schedler's second and third processes).

Beaulieu (2006a) and Lindberg (2006) attribute this cost-benefit decision to the desire of the opposition to achieve a higher level of electoral fairness in instances of major boycotts. These boycotts are likely to occur in situations where either a dominant opposition faction or a broad consensus of parties believe that fraud and manipulation by the incumbent regime are all that stand in the way of incumbent defeat and are willing to bear the costs of leading the boycott (Beaulieu, 2006a). These boycotts represent an acceptance of defeat in the short-term game to increase the chances of success in the long-term game of increased fairness.

Alternative explanations also exist on the decision of parties to boycott an election. Election boycotts may be carried out to mask the weakness of the opposition parties. In these situations, a weak party will avoid contesting the election to appear stronger through the organization of a boycott rather than face an embarrassing defeat in elections, whether fair or unfair (Bratton, 1998; Pastor, 1999). Beaulieu (2006b) attributes this face-saving motivation

largely to minor boycotts although it is conceivable that such motivating factors could prompt even a total boycott if there is a weak opposition facing a popular government that is capable of winning free and fair elections.

Effects

What are the outcomes of election boycotts? Answers to this question have generally been divided into two categories; short-term and long-term outcomes. One of the logical, immediate outcomes of a boycott is a noticeable depression of turnout (Beaulieu, 2006a; Lindberg, 2006). This comes from the understanding that if major opposition parties instruct their followers to avoid the polls, there will clearly be a lower turnout as a direct effect of the opposition boycott. Turnout may be further reduced if the opposition parties time the boycott in such a way that only candidates of the incumbent faction appear unopposed on the ballot (Beaulieu, 2006a). These effects hold up in testing of developing countries by Beaulieu (2006a) and of African elections by Lindberg (2006) for major boycotts.

Electoral violence is the other short-term effect considered by Beaulieu (2006a) and Lindberg (2006) in their research on election boycotts, though neither focuses on the impact of violence on the incumbent's retention of power. Beaulieu finds that overall election violence is not significantly increased by the occurrence of all boycott types, but is only related to violent boycotts initiated by the opposition. Lindberg finds that violence and boycotts in African presidential elections are positively correlated, with the prospect of boycotts and widespread violence coinciding in 60% of elections. Violence and boycotts are likely to coincide in African elections because both are reactions to a perception of electoral unfairness. There are also convincing arguments that the relationship between boycotts and electoral violence is not necessarily a causal one. According to Wilkinson's (2004) analysis of electoral violence in Indian elections, opposition and government use identity-based violence to mobilize and motivate the electorate. Also, Schedler (2009) finds violent demonstrations by the opposition may in fact be a reaction to previous manipulative strategies of the incumbent rather than any innate feature of a boycott. Overall, Beaulieu presents a bleak picture of the prospects for near-term democratic reform by the increased occurrence of violence, reduction of involvement in the electoral process, and lack of opposition representation that occurs (Beaulieu, 2006a).

Long-term effects for boycotts receive a slightly more optimistic outlook for democracy, as measured by an increase in democratization index scores in both studies. Beaulieu (2006a) holds an optimistic view of major election boycotts in relation to the formation of democracy, arguing that they lead to

the creation and establishment of new democracies in conjunction with international assistance. She claims the process of democratization by boycotts to be related to the game where the opposition uses boycotts to either threaten rebellion or undermine international or domestic popular support to force the incumbents to enact reforms that enhance the fairness of the process or to adhere to existing rules in the presence of outside observers. These propositions are partially upheld in her analysis; boycotts do increase the likelihood of election reform and observation in the next election, but neither of these factors is shown to lead to significantly increased fairness or the removal of the regime from power (Beaulieu, 2006a).

The literature on boycotts in African elections comes to mixed conclusions. Bratton (1998) concludes that boycotts in Africa do not break down democracy. Instead, they reinforce the norm that elections are the only legitimate route for change in power and that there is a positive effect caused by the mobilization of the opposition in the boycott. This can be seen as a dedication to democratic processes by the opposition (Bratton, 1998). Lindberg (2004, 2006) is less optimistic about election boycotts; he shows that in African elections opposition participation and concession in elections that are not considered free and fair more often lead to gradual democratization than would boycotting or rejecting the outcome in the same situation. More generally, Lindberg (2006) argues that participation in the electoral process leads to a greater increase in the level of democratization by increasing the level of civil liberties in his studies of African elections, particularly when coupled with external influences.

If considered in the framework that Schedler (2002) presents of authoritarian elections as a two-level game, the following conclusions can be made from the existing literature on election boycotts. In regard to the short-term game for immediate power, boycotts clearly show that the opposition does not benefit by boycotting. Power is not turned over during elections, and if their goal is democratization, the results of lowered turnout and increased violence do not favor the construction of a robust democracy. Consideration of the second level of the game provides mixed results. If we are to believe Beaulieu's conclusions, democratically-oriented oppositions are able to extract concessions from the incumbent over time through boycotting and in this manner are able to gain victories in the game for control over the processes determining political outcomes. If Lindberg (2006) is to be believed, boycotts are a dead end in both games. In the long term, boycotts allow for a consolidation of authoritarian rule because of a failure of the opposition to establish itself as a viable alternative to the incumbent, and thus blocking the development of the electoral procedures he or she contests leads to the increasing acceptance of democratic government (Lindberg, 2006).

Theory Development

Due to the nature of boycotts as a gamble of short-term losses providing long-term gains, it is reasonable to base models of the effectiveness of boycotts on the model of authoritarian elections as a two-level game (Schedler, 2002; Tsebelis, 1991). Within this two-level game, some key assumptions must first be made. First is that opposition parties view elections as unfair in hybrid regimes. Unfairness in this particular case arises not necessarily from some pure democratic idealism, but instead from the perception that the incumbent is somehow blocking them (and other parties) from gaining power. The second assumption is that opposition parties seek to reduce unfairness at one level of the game, while also seeking to gain power at the other level. From this starting point, I seek to view how boycotts among other threats to regime stability influence the survival of regimes against specific types of failure. In doing so, I do not take sides on the issue of whether boycotts are an act of prodemocracy protest or a means of authoritarian competition.

The foundation of this model is the perception of some degree of unfairness in the electoral system of a country. In this case, fairness revolves around the potential for a faction to control office or power. Opposition parties faced with potential unfairness have a choice to make to best suit their goal of gaining power. An opposition party has two options when faced with unfairness. The first option puts emphasis on the short-term power seeking level of the two-level game. Here, an opposition party will seek to cooperate with the incumbent by contesting elections to achieve side-payments for helping to add legitimacy to multiparty elections without threatening the incumbent's control of power. This option limits the power gained by opposition party, but does ensure some power as a loyal opposition within an unfair system.

The second option is for the opposition to place higher value in the fairness side of the game. This approach focuses on the larger game of controlling the rule-making process. In this situation, the opposition party should boycott the election to reduce the legitimacy of the incumbent's electoral process. This approach seeks a change in regime by reducing the domestic legitimacy of the incumbent. Elections are one of the key sources for regime legitimacy, with elections of some form held in a wide variety of democratic and hybrid regimes (Diamond, 2002; Schedler, 2006). Reducing the legitimacy of the incumbent following a boycotted election should weaken support for the ruling faction over time and make it increasingly difficult for the party in power to remain in power in future elections without increasing the levels of unfairness. Reforms made in attempts to rectify this loss of legitimacy may over time weaken the ability of the regime to defend itself from electoral challengers, making electoral turnover more likely in the future.

Weak or incapable regimes may not be able to survive long with reduced levels of legitimacy.

A corollary to this theory involves the importance of external pressure on regime legitimacy. Levitsky and Way's (2006) theory concerning international linkage and leverage and Beaulieu's (2006a) theories of boycotts as activism mean that election boycotts of any type will lead to the increase of international pressure on the regime to change. If the regime is sufficiently exposed to these pressures, they will be forced to reform the electoral process based on pressures from outside states brought on by internal activists, much like Keck and Sikkink's (1998) "boomerang effect." These pressures may boost the risks that an incumbent regime will experience in the period after the election. Reforms that will be needed to prevent international isolation may weaken the ability of the regime to survive future elections.

Incumbent weakening is not the only possible mechanism for bringing about change by elections. Disparate opposition parties may also be able to coalesce behind a boycott more easily than they would behind their various policy agendas. Following a boycott, opposition parties may be able to push past the tipping point and be more able to defeat the incumbent in subsequent elections (van de Walle, 2006). This follows the pattern seen in Venezuela where the opposition was able to unite following the 2005 boycott of assembly elections to present a unified candidate in the 2006 presidential election (despite the fact they still did not win).

If boycotts do bring about electoral reform or otherwise strengthen the opposition relative to the incumbent, the following hypothesis should be supported by my analysis. Long-term indicators of election boycotts should increase the risk of executive turnover by elections. In election years, turnover by electoral processes should be reduced or unchanged because of the lack of opposition contestation. These are the main components of the electoral model of election boycotts.

Hypothesis 1a: Long-term indicators of boycotts should increase the risk of electoral turnover.

Hypothesis 1b: Short-term indicators of boycotts should decrease the risk of electoral turnover.

Alternatively, boycotts may bring about an increased likelihood of regime failure not because of electoral reforms that strengthen the electoral process or weakening the incumbent's electoral position, but rather by destabilizing and discrediting the electoral process as a whole. This model considers the possible unintended consequences of regime change by force following an election boycott. The nature and strength of the incumbent regime should be

a factor in the progression of events. Case's (2006) study of electoral authoritarian regimes faced with economic crisis provides a good basis to develop theory for the possibilities of a nonelectoral regime change following an election boycott. This model provides three possible scenarios for a regime facing a crisis of legitimacy. A strong regime may well face the loss of electoral legitimacy by *autogolpe* [self-coup], or otherwise closing the political system. In this case, the regime survives, but the electoral nature of the state does not. Interventions by the military are also a possibility, leading to regime change if the regime and military are not of the same political faction. Finally in weak regimes, the government may be forced to leave due to protests and its inability to govern due to the loss of legitimacy. If there is no faction strong enough to remove an incumbent that is resistant to change, state failure or civil war is a possible outcome of the loss of regime legitimacy.

These effects are possible in the short term, immediately surrounding the time of a boycotted election, or they may possibly be increased in the years following the election. As both are possible, the hypothesis for this model includes long-term and immediate indicators of boycotts should increase the risk of nonelectoral executive turnover (coups, civil wars, resignation, foreign interventions, etc.).

> *Hypothesis 2a*: Long-term indicators of boycotts should increase the risk of nonelectoral regime change.
> *Hypothesis 2b*: Short-term indicators of boycotts should increase the risk of nonelectoral regime change.

The final question is what happens after regime change. This raises the question of whether boycotts are acts of democratic protest as Beaulieu suggests or a clever method for winning the game of authoritarian elections. Antidemocratic forces may be motivated to use the electoral game to gain greater influence over the process and open their way for an eventual seizure of power. A cynical reading of Schedler's approach to protests as part of the two-level game leads to a possibility that a large opposition group may organize boycotts in what may be a reasonably fair electoral process to gain power in future elections where the incumbent has been demonized as antidemocratic. In this model, election protest may represent a backsliding in the democratization process initiated by authoritarian-minded opposition groups in unconsolidated regimes (with either authoritarian or democratic incumbents) just as easily as a protest by democratic-minded opposition parties against an authoritarian incumbent. This proposition will be tested by analyzing the change in the level of political competitiveness of the incumbent regime prior to a regime change and that of the regime that follows the

change, with a focus on the difference between those that experienced boycotts and those in which the opposition continued to contest elections.

Measures

For the purpose of this study, hybrid regimes will be defined following the Polity IV composite subscore value for political competition (Marshall & Jaggers, 2005). This value combines measures for the degree of competition in a given country with the restrictions on that competition. To develop a set of hybrid regimes, all those having a value between fully restricted (1) and fully open (10) were considered hybrids. The first operationalization of regimes is based on measuring executive turnover, and includes the full duration of executives that had during their existence a period of hybrid rule, even if in that particular year, the country would not be considered a hybrid (an uncommon occurrence in the data). This data on regime periods is constructed using U.S. State Department country briefs to determine when regimes started or ended and in what manner the regime ended. When considering spells of hybrid regimes independently of executive factions, the coding of continuous periods of hybrid values constitute a regime.

To test my hypotheses, I will use the same methods for determining boycotts as Beaulieu used in her study of boycotts in developing countries from 1990-2002, by searching through the *Lexis Nexis* database for reports of elections and boycotts in each election year of the regime periods defined above, and using this information to classify these into either minor or major boycotts as described above.[2] According to my operationalization, boycotts are also considered to occur if banned parties make a public call for voters to avoid the polls as a protest to the proscription of their party.[3] Following this methodology, major boycotts were observed in 16% of the 639 election years in the period of study.[4]

Elections were determined from the country histories used to assemble the list of regimes and online election databases, and then confirmed when searching for election boycotts. The values and coding for the other variables will be described below:

- Major boycott short-term effects: This is a binary variable indicating the presence of a boycott in a given year, coded as described above.
- Major boycott long-term effects: This variable is constructed by dividing the number of boycotts having occurred in a regime up to the given year by the age of the regime.
- Election: This is also a binary variable indicating the presence of a national-level election in a given year, coded as described above.

- Opposition strength: This value is based on the competition value from Vanhanen's (2000) polyarchy index, but coded through 2006, and it measures the combined proportion of the vote received by all but the top finishing party. This value has been lagged 1 year to indicate the degree of competition in the previous election.
- Competitiveness: This is the Polity IV concept variable for political competition, ranging from a value of 1 representing repressed competition to 10 representing an institutionalized election system.
- Linkage: Following Levitsky and Way, this original measure combines the region, alliance membership, and globalization scores from the KOF Index of Globalization data set (Dreher, 2006).
- Leverage: The companion variable to linkage, this original measure takes into account the amount of trade with Western democracies.
- Development: The value of GDP per capita in constant 2000 dollars from the World Bank World Development Indicators (WDI). The natural log value is used to counteract nonlinear variance in the Martingale residuals for the Cox regression.
- Growth: The percentage change in GDP per capita from the previous year also obtained from the WDI. This is used to indicate economic performance under the incumbent.
- Repression: Indicated by the physical integrity rights index (PHYSINT) composite score from Cingranelli–Richards (CIRI) that combines indicators for torture, extrajudicial killings, political imprisonment, and disappearance (Cingranelli & Richards, 2010). The index ranges from a value of 0 indicating no protections to 8 indicating full protection in practice.

These should influence my dependent variable, regime duration, in the following ways. Increased levels of competition in previous elections should increase the risk of electoral turnover, as the incumbent will be more reliant on manipulation with an established and popular opposition. Along with competition, the more frequently elections are held, the more opportunities for regime termination exist, thus, elections represent an increased risk. Increasing levels of economic development should provide an environment more conductive to democratic reform and should increase the risk of electoral turnover. Linkages to Western democracies should constrain the manipulation options of the incumbent and increase the risk of electoral turnover. As the capacity of a regime to restrict competition and repress opposition members increases, the risk of an electoral defeat should be reduced, though the risk of violent change may increase. Finally shocks and economic crises should also lead to an increased risk of failure by violent or electoral means.

Method

To test the effects of election boycotts and other competing risks on regime survival, I will use event-history analysis. These models determine the degree to which each contributing independent variable influences the dependent variable of duration of the unit in question, in my case a political regime. The event-history tool that I will use is the semiparametric Cox partial likelihood estimation. The choice of this model is mainly due to the risks of incorrectly specifying the baseline hazard function in one of the parametric estimators (Blossfeld, Golsch, & Rohwer, 2007; Box-Steffensmier & Jones, 2004). As the literature on electoral authoritarian regimes provides little in the way of substantive justification for using a given parametric model of regime survival, I will use the Cox semiparametric model to avoid this problem. I will test both models using this method, differing on how the exit condition is specified. Individual country effects that are not accounted for by the independent variables will be managed through the specification of shared frailty based on country cluster, as successive regimes in the same territory will likely face a similar elevated or reduced threat of instability.

Two model specifications are utilized. The first tests the electoral reform hypothesis by investigating the effect of the independent variables on only the regime failures that occur due to electoral turnover. In this model our dependent variable is the time until an incumbent regime is removed by the electoral process. The second set will test the destabilization hypothesis by investigating the effect of the independent variables on the time until nonelectoral turnover occurs. Nonelectoral turnover includes the following events: military coup or civil war defeat, state collapse, death or assassination of a personalist chief executive, power-sharing deal or resignation, and foreign invasion.

Finally, a descriptive analysis is used to make some inferences into what happens to regimes after they end. This will focus first on the nature of the next regime as closed, failed, hybrid, and fully democratic. Finally, I will utilize a simple difference of means test to show whether parties are able to achieve their goal of improved electoral fairness through boycotting. This test focuses on the change in the average level of the Polity IV Political Competition Concept (POLCOMP) variable in the regime that immediately follows the transition from that of the regime that precedes the transition.

Data Analysis

The Cox models covered 1,834 regime-year observations for 264 regimes in 107 different countries. There were 132 instances of electoral regime failure

Table 1. Event-History Models.

Variable	Electoral failure			Violent failure		
	Hazard ratio	SE	$p > z$	Hazard ratio	SE	$p > z$
Major short term	0.274	0.148	.017	0.818	0.748	.826
Major long term	7.208	4.886	.004	0.371	0.465	.429
Election	42.068	15.752	.000	1.145	0.544	.775
Opposition strength	1.071	0.542	.893	2.275	2.103	.374
Competitiveness	1.454	0.092	.000	0.853	0.065	.038
Linkage	0.331	0.377	.331	6.686	13.102	.332
Leverage	1.372	0.350	.215	1.205	0.537	.676
Development	1.206	0.176	.198	0.731	0.184	.213
Growth	0.989	0.015	.486	1.010	0.029	.729
Repression	1.015	0.051	.766	0.805	0.073	.017
Observations			1,834			1,834
Regimes			264			264
Countries			107			107
Failures			132			33
Log likelihood			−452.654			−151.687
χ^2			153.36			12.51
$P > \chi^2$			0.000			0.252

while only 33 instances of violent turnover. Interpreting the Cox model requires a brief note for those unfamiliar with the method. Table 1 shows hazard ratios instead of the coefficients that are typically found in logit or ordinary least squares (OLS) tables. A value of 1 indicates that the variable has no impact at all on the likelihood of an event occurring. Values greater than 1 indicate that the event is more likely to occur while values between 0 and 1 indicate that an increase in the independent variable makes the event less likely to occur.

As expected, the model for electoral failure (see Table 1) shows boycotts to have a strikingly negative effect on the likelihood of immediate electoral turnover with a hazard ratio well below 1, and statistical significance at more than the standard .05 level. This finding follows well with Lindberg, Schedler, and Beaulieu's findings that boycotts do reduce opposition turnout. It also shows that when the bulk of the opposition does not contest, the government is more likely to win the election. The long-term effects of major boycotts are also as expected and are significant at the .01 level. This indicates that boycotts of elections are likely to weaken the incumbent in future elections.

The control variables for other risks to hybrid regimes are not extremely surprising either. Elections, as would be expected have an extremely large

effect on the hazard ratio (electoral turnover cannot happen without an election except for shifts in coalition governments or a delay in inauguration). The degree of political competition also makes electoral turnover more likely at a conventional level of statistical significance. All other values are not statistically significant at conventional levels. Development and leverage come closest, increasing the likelihood of electoral turnover.

The destabilization model in Table 1 provides very different results. Overall, it is worth noting that the model fails the global significance test (likely due to the smaller number of violent failures observed). Neither measure for boycotts is statistically significant at any reasonable level. The only values that were significant at the .05 level were the controls for competitiveness and repressive capacity. Not surprisingly, politically competitive systems were less likely to break down by violent means. Lower levels of physical repression are also not surprisingly correlated with a lower likelihood of violent failure.

The tabulation of transitions from hybrid regimes to other types seen in Table 2 provides more intriguing evidence in what it does not show rather than what it does show. In all, only 36 instances of a regime ceasing to be in the hybrid category occur. Of those that occurred, the outcomes are not exactly promising for democratization. The two largest categories with 11 transitions each are reversions to closed authoritarianism and disruption of rule (civil wars, foreign interventions, and installation of transitional governments). In the case of authoritarian reversions, most were temporary and followed violent transitions of power (Haiti) or botched elections (Algeria). Those that do transition to democracy almost exclusively do so following a long period of uninterrupted, contested elections. This fits well with Lindberg's (2006) model of democratization by elections. When major boycotts are included, it becomes apparent that they are generally associated with disruption or authoritarian retrenchment. In two cases, the reversion happened in the year of the boycott. Algeria in 1991 presents the example of a strong regime losing control of the electoral process and closing the system, while Lesotho in 1985 saw the election and boycott followed by a military coup. Only one case (Hungary) democratized fully following a major boycott. Hungary appears to be the outlier and actually made the partial transition into a transitional government after the boycott and before coming out of the transition into a full democracy.

Finally, the impact of boycotts on the level of fairness in the next regime type is shown in Table 3. In the 209 regime transitions observed, 34 followed at least one major boycott, and 175 did not. Overall the outlook on regime transitions for electoral fairness is not very good. In both sets, the average change between one regime and the next is negative. When the means for

Table 2. Transitions From Hybrid Regimes.

	Major boycott	No major boycott	Total
Autocratized	Algeria 1991[a] Haiti 1990 Lesotho 1985[a]	Bangladesh 1981 Cambodia 1996 Haiti 1984 Kenya 1982 Nigeria 1983, 1992 Panama 1986 Sierra Leone 1991 Sudan 1988	11
Democratized	Hungary 1990	Chile 2005 Gambia 1989 Israel 1998 Mongolia 1995 Panama 1993 Poland 2001 Slovakia 2005	8
Disrupted rule	Comoros 1994 Haiti 2002 Hungary 1988[b] Lesotho 1998	Burundi 2000 Zaire 1991 Guinea-Bissau 1997 Ivory Coast 2001 Liberia 1989 Sierra Leone 1996 Solomon Islands 1999 Uganda 1984	11
Division/merging		Czechoslovakia 1992 Soviet Union 1991 Yemen Arab Republic 1990 Yugoslavia 1991	4
Total	8	28	36

a. Authoritarian reversion occurred in the year of the boycott.
b. Hungary experienced transitional rule before the 1990 transition to democracy.

cases where boycotts have occurred are tested against those that did not have major boycotts, there is a statistically significant difference in the change. While those without boycotts experienced minor reductions in average regime competitiveness, those experiencing boycotts had a significantly lower level of competitiveness following regime change.

Table 3. Difference of Mean Change in Regime Average POLCOMP by Major Boycott.

	Observations	*M* Δ POLCOMP	[90% CI]
No boycott of regime	175	−0.6520	[−0.9274, −0.3766]
Boycott of regime	34	−1.4796	[−2.2124, −0.7467]
Combined	209	−0.8276	[0.0477, −0.5269]
t		1.7837	
Degrees of freedom[a]		43.307	

a. Uses Satterthwaite's measure due to unequal variances in samples. Difference is significant at $p = .05$, one-tailed test.

Interpretation and Conclusion

A number of important conclusions can be drawn from the preceding analysis regarding hybrid regime survival and more specifically, the role of election boycotts in that survival. First, major election boycotts are clearly an important part of the electoral landscape in hybrid regimes and have a number of key impacts. There is ample evidence that the major boycott does play into the game of unfair elections through the two-level game's payoff structure. The chances of immediate change by elections are greatly reduced by boycotts, but the likelihood that the incumbent will lose in a future election is significantly higher when the opposition boycotts. The precise causal mechanism cannot be drawn from the analysis above, but the evidence is consistent with the theory that the incumbent's electoral strength relative to the opposition is reduced following major election boycotts. Overall, the evidence is more consistent with the domestic legitimacy model than the international impacts, as there is little evidence in this set that international pressures impact hybrid regime survival. Additional research focused on tracking the strength of the opposition after elections may well provide more clarity on whether incumbent weakening, opposition coalescence, or a combination thereof is driving this effect.

Major boycotts are also clearly shown to be a part of the electoral game. They have no clear impact at all on the risk of a regime failing due to violent means, while they have clear impacts on the likelihood of electoral regime change. The evidence presented here clearly refutes the second set of hypotheses on the impact of boycotts on nonelectoral regime change. While major boycotts may reduce the legitimacy of the incumbent in future elections, they do not appear to reduce the legitimacy of elections as a mode of transition. Major boycotts are not necessarily destructive of the election process, but

may not be beneficial for democracy either. The evidence points to major boycotts as an act clearly embedded in the hybrid regime's electoral game. Opposition parties may seek greater fairness when they are in opposition, but if they win, fairness is not necessarily their number-one goal anymore. Regimes that replace an incumbent following boycotts follow a pattern of actually being more unfair than the incumbent that they replaced. Oppositions that choose to boycott elections appear to be playing a two-level game in which they sacrifice sharing power now for the chance of consolidating power in the future, rather than one of sacrificing sharing power for future democracy.

A number of important findings regarding the survival of hybrid regimes beyond boycotts can also be drawn from this analysis. The model testing the likelihood of electoral and violent changes of regimes shows that hybrid regimes that live by the ballot box die by the ballot box, and those that live by the sword die by the sword. Regimes using less repression are more likely to end by electoral turnover while those that use more repression are more likely to fail by other means. Boycotts play into this mostly on the side of authoritarian electoral competition, usually leading to a change in executive power in a hybrid system, but sometimes leading to backsliding or state collapse, and rarely to immediate democratization. Lindberg's democratization by elections approach also gets some support from this analysis, but with reservations. Elections do tend to bring down hybrid leaders, but do not necessarily lead to democracy. Contesting elections does seem to be more helpful in driving transitions from hybrids to democracy than boycotting. The problem of course is one of endogeneity in that consolidating democracy is in part defined by repeated, high quality elections, while hybrid regimes are defined by poor-quality or unfair elections. Finally, international pressure may well get more than its fair share of attention in bringing down regimes. Neither measure of international linkage or leverage had any clear impact on the survival of hybrid regime executives.

Overall, this article brings into focus some major questions that run through the literature on hybrid regimes. The role of election boycotts in electoral transitions and the nature of those transitions points to a new realm of politics within hybrid/electoral-authoritarian regimes. One important call to the literature is to look at electoral behavior and protest outside of the context of democratization and in the context of competition. It also points to a need to consider hybrid regime politics beyond the model of a battle between an authoritarian incumbent and opposition seeking reforms for a democratic future. Instead, we should investigate the long-term battle between those who control competition now and those who do not, but seek to control the process in the future.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

Notes

1. The peaceful–violent dimensions do not provide any relevant results and is not pursued further in this particular article.
2. Minor boycotts were excluded from the analysis as mentioned above.
3. Banned parties are not common in the set and should have the same effect on the legitimacy of a regime as those allowed to run, despite the fact they do not face any loss at the level of winning seats. The model was also run with banned parties excluded, with almost no difference.
4. Minor boycotts were present in a similar number of cases.

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