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# Election Boycotts and Regime Survival

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# ELECTION BOYCOTTS AND REGIME SURVIVAL

by

IAN O. SMITH

Under the Direction of Carrie Manning

## ABSTRACT

Election boycotts are a common occurrence in unconsolidated democracies, particularly in the developing world, with prominent examples from recent years occurring in Venezuela, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia. Despite the frequent occurrence of boycotts, there are few studies available in the scholarly literature concerning the effectiveness of electoral boycotts, particularly as a strategy of opposition parties seeking to bring about the end of electoral authoritarian governments. This paper is based in the democratization literature, with a particular focus on the behavior and vulnerabilities of hybrid or electoral authoritarian regimes. Using an original dataset with global coverage including hybrid regimes from 1981 to 2006, this paper uses event-history analysis to determine the efficacy of boycotts in national elections among other risk factors thought to undermine electoral authoritarian regimes as well as the possibilities for subsequent democratization occurring following both contested and boycotted electoral processes.

INDEX WORDS: Elections, Boycotts, Democratization, Hybrid regimes, Electoral authoritarianism

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by

IAN O. SMITH

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Boycotts of elections have been 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 or not election boycotts actually work. Can a political party achieve success 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 many elections around the world, the topic of election boycotts is certainly a relevant topic for study. Of particular concern is why these boycotts should continue to be used by opposition groups despite the fact that they defy the logical conclusion that if given the opportunity to contest and gain influence in the government, a party should use this opening to gradually build support through parliamentary opposition. The goal of studying boycotts is to better understand if and when there are situations in which it is advantageous to the opposition to forgo potential representation in government, and more specifically whether this form of protest can bring about change either by bringing about a change in power by democratic means or whether they break down the electoral system altogether.

The question of the efficacy of election boycotts is also relevant to those who seek to understand the nature of competition in unfair elections, as well as to those interested in policies regarding strategies in unfair elections. These questions seek to provide an answer to opposition parties and democracy promotion groups that are trying to determine the best strategy and allocation of resources to oppose the ruling authoritarian regime in

elections, either to contest the ruling regime in elections or boycott the electoral process altogether.

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. Of these, only Staffan Lindberg's two works on boycotts in Africa during the 1990s have reached publication (Lindberg 2004, 2006). The other works specifically focusing on boycotts comprise a number of conference papers and a PhD dissertation by Emily Beaulieu covering a wide range of issues concerning election boycotts during the 1990s. Her works have a particular focus on the influence of international observers in conjunction with boycotts on democratization (Beaulieu 2006a, 2004, 2006b). Both authors focus largely on answering the question of when boycotts are likely to occur and some of the immediate outcomes of boycotts (Beaulieu 2006b, Lindberg 2004, 2006). In addition to these, Schedler has included election boycotts along with protests and various sorts of incumbent manipulation as one of the factors related to the degree of competitiveness between incumbents and oppositions in authoritarian elections (Schedler 2007).

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 the remainder of studies focus only on cases in Africa (Beaulieu 2006b, Lindberg 2004, 2006, Bratton 1998). Boycotts have not been clearly assessed as a factor that may potentially cause democratization or other risks to hybrid regimes.

My goal is 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 both 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.

In order to assess this my first step will be to review what is known about the nature of election boycotts, focusing on reasons for opposition parties to choose the option of boycotting as opposed to electoral contestation as well as the effects this decision has on regime survival and democratization. The second issue of importance is to determine what composes the universe of regime types to which this study should apply and how they fit into the general literature on regime types and operation. With a definition of these two concepts I can further develop alternative models of the action of boycotts on competition and survival in hybrid regimes and develop testable hypotheses concerning regime survival and boycotts.

## CHAPTER 2

### BOYCOTTS

Election boycotts have become an increasingly common phenomenon since 1990. 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* non-participation 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 2006b). 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.

#### 2.1 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 (2006b). This typology of boycotts allows for different explanations of the causes and results of election boycotts based upon the major characteristics of the particular boycott. The first dimension is of the most importance to this project and is determined simply by the level of involvement in the boycott. Her second dimension, violence, did not produce any meaningful results and will not be used in the current analysis.

In a situation in which the majority of the opposition factions participate in the boycott, a boycott is considered to be major by Beaulieu's typology (2006b). 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 2006b). Lindberg divides the level of participation into categories of total or partial boycott, determined by the proportion of parties participating in the boycott (2004). Schedler uses a four-part typology of boycotts including complete contestation, threatened boycott, partial boycott, and full opposition boycott (2007).

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 anti-state/anti-system 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 2006b). Parties that take part in minor boycotts often fall within the gray area in which political parties are not considered to be effective parties as having coalitional or blackmail potential, but do qualify under Mainwaring and Scully's definition of political parties as being any "group that *would* present candidates for public office, but is unable to do so either because it is proscribed or because elections are not being held," (2, 1995).

## 2.2 CAUSES

The value of a boycott to an opposition party as opposed to contestation is derived from a number of factors. Schedler 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, or a calculation of the opposition that protest will weaken the effectiveness of incumbent manipulation (2007). When framed in the light of Schedler's 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 (2006). 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 rulemaking process should value the benefits that they believe are derived from protest (following

Schedler's second and third processes).

Beaulieu and Lindberg both attribute this cost-benefit decision to the desire of the opposition to achieve a higher level of electoral fairness in instances of major boycotts (Beaulieu 2006b, Lindberg 2006). 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 is all that stands in the way of incumbent defeat and are willing to bear the costs of leading the boycott (Beaulieu 2006b). These boycotts represent an acceptance of defeat in the short-term game in order to increase the chances of success in the long term game of increased fairness.

Most of the above explanations are attributed to major boycotts, in which the party must make a hard decision on forgoing the real possibility of winning meaningful representation in office. In contrast, minor boycotts are not influenced by concerns of fairness and are led by factions incapable of raising the popular or military support to overthrow the regime, but may use either peaceful or violent boycott tactics to disrupt the polling process in general in order to achieve their political goals (Beaulieu 2006b). Minor boycotts are often associated with small parties that do not have a voter base in the entire space of the country; largely being associated with ethnic minority parties and region-based parties that are unlikely to ever win a significant representation in national office (Beaulieu 2006b).

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

## 2.3 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 2006b, 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 2006b). These effects hold up in testing of developing countries by Beaulieu and of African elections by Lindberg for major boycotts (Beaulieu 2006b, Lindberg 2006). Minor boycotts, because of the small size and influence of minor parties, are not expected to be capable of reducing the turnout significantly unless they take part in a violent disruption of the process (Beaulieu 2006b).

Schedler also finds that the degree of electoral competition (as measured by the difference between the first and second placing parties) is also significantly reduced as a result of election boycotts (2007). This result fits well with Beaulieu and Lindberg's findings, but only provides insight into the degree to which boycotts are followed. All of these results indicate that boycotts when called for are carried out by voters but not much else. The reduction in competition based on election results indicates one of two possibilities: either that the cases in which the bulk of parties boycott are influential enough on the regression model that they cover the effects of partial boycotts, or also that voters do not significantly defect from their party during a boycotted election to vote for another party that remains in the contest. Measuring the degree of political competitiveness based on election results presents an imperfect measure because the boycott conceals the actual balance of power between political factions within a given country.

Electoral violence is the other short term effect considered by both Beaulieu and Lindberg in their research on election boycotts. Beaulieu finds that overall election violence is not significantly increased by the occurrence of all boycott types, but is only related to violence either initiated by the opposition, a far less common type of boy-

cott than the peaceful, Ghandian type of boycott (2006b). Lindberg finds that violence and boycotts in African presidential elections are positively related, with the prospect of boycotts and widespread violence coinciding in 60% of elections (2006). Violence and boycotts are likely to coincide in African elections because both are either responses to or causes of a perception of election unfairness. The reasons for electoral violence may not all be based on opposition activities though. Following Wilkinson's analysis of electoral violence in Indian elections, both opposition and government use identity-based violence to mobilize and motivate the electorate (2004). Also, following Schedler's model of electoral protest, 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 (2007). 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 (2006b)

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 than do the short term effects. Beaulieu 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 in order 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 are shown to lead to significantly increased fairness or the removal of the regime from power (Beaulieu 2006b).

Lindberg 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 leads to gradual democratization than would boycotting or rejecting the



outcome in the same situation (2004, 2006). More generally, Lindberg 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 (2007).

If considered in the framework that Schedler presents of authoritarian elections as a two-level game, the following conclusions can be made from the existing literature on election boycotts (2002). In regards 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 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 contests lead to the increasing acceptance of democratic government (2006).

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORY DEVELOPMENT

All of the theoretical proposals in my model of election boycotts are derived from Schedler's modeling of authoritarian elections as a two-level game. 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 set myself apart from the previous approaches in that I do not take sides on the issue of whether boycotts are an act of pro-democracy protest or another means of authoritarian competition.

One approach that my model is open to but that is not ventured by scholars on electoral competition is that election boycotts and other protests are not as benign as they appear. Anti-democratic forces may be motivated to use the electoral game in order 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 fair electoral process in order to gain power in future elections (perhaps even by forcing early elections or re-runs of boycotted elections) where the incumbent has been demonized as anti-democratic. 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) rather than a protest by democratic-minded opposition parties against an authoritarian incumbent.

The first set of models proposes that boycotts are an important part of the two-level game between the incumbent and opposition forces over electoral rule making. In the simplest of models, which follows both from Levitsky and Way's idea of linkage and leverage as well as Beaulieu's theories of boycotts as activism, election boycotts of any type if carried through will lead to the increase of international pressure on the regime

to change (Beaulieu 2006; Levitsky and Way 2006). If the regime is sufficiently exposed to these pressures 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 "boomerang effect" (1998). This model claims that the risks to an incumbent regime will increase in the period after the election as reforms that will need to be made to prevent international isolation will weaken the ability of the regime to survive future elections. Alternatively, the impact on regime survival may not come from outside pressure, but rather from the dynamics of the two-level game between the incumbent and opposition, by which boycotts allow for the opposition to form a viable coalition in future elections.

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 repeated 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, but rather by destabilizing and discrediting the electoral process. This model is indifferent on the goal of the opposition in calling for boycotts, whether democratic or authoritarian, but rather considers the possible unintended consequences of boycotting elections. In this model a number of adverse outcomes are possible. Following Case's model of transitions from electoral authoritarianism, the strength of the regime in relation to the opposition may lead to results such as resignation of the government due to protest, or an intervention by either the regime or military in order to stabilize the country (2006). Also the heightened

publicity and polarization of the political process may result in a breakdown in rule, by either state failure or civil war. The hypothesis for this model is that in both long-term and immediate indicators of boycotts should increase the risk of non-electoral executive turnover (coups, civil wars, resignation, foreign interventions, etc). These present the key elements of the destabilization hypothesis of election boycotts.

- Hypothesis 2a: Long term indicators of boycotts should increase the risk of non-electoral regime change.
- Hypothesis 2b: Short term indicators of boycotts should increase the risk of non-electoral regime change.

## CHAPTER 4

### UNIVERSE OF CASES: HYBRID REGIMES

Having already discussed the literature on the causes and effects of boycotts, the next step is to identify where boycotts are likely to be found. Beaulieu focuses her study of boycotts on the developing world, which she defines as those countries that are receiving foreign aid (Beaulieu 2006b). This creates a problem in her design, as one of her key proposals is that dependence on foreign assistance is more likely to bring about democracy in conjunction with election boycotts. Lindberg is not as particular on defining the regime, but instead takes a regional perspective on election boycotts as he looks at the prospects for democratization in Africa (Lindberg 2004, 2006). Given the limitation of these restrictions, I intend to make a global study of regimes falling between consolidated democracy and pure authoritarianism. Using this set provides a number of advantages. First of all, this universe of cases presents one in which there is most likely to be a perception of unfairness by opposition parties that would lead to the decision to make use of unconventional measures such as boycotting an election. The dynamics of elections and protest in hybrid democratic-authoritarian systems are a developing field of study. Finally, the main work covering the topic at present, Schedler's unpublished work on electoral protests, does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question of election boycotts due to his use of the level of electoral competition as the dependent variable; which as stated above creates difficulties in measuring the outcomes of boycotts. For these reasons I will look into the effects of election boycotts on the survival of the incumbent regime.

A growing body of literature has developed recently considering the intermediate regimes that are situated in the disputed areas, having some traits of both 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, semi-democracy, pseudodemocracy, democracy with adjectives, new authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, exclusive republics, guided democracy, illiberal democracy, anocracy, and near-democracy (Diamond 2002, Zakaria 1997, Schedler 2006, Levitsky & Way 2002, van de Walle 2002). The most important element of these regimes is that they use elections in order 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, in order to be considered legitimate governments (Diamond 2002, Schedler 2006).

A key foundation for the discussion of democracy is Dahl's concept of polyarchy, and his two dimensions of regime classification and corresponding four ideal types prove useful for the purposes of classifying hybrid regimes. Of particular interest are the general types of competitive oligarchies, those regimes having elite competition and contestation but with a limited electorate, and inclusive hegemonies, regimes with limited competition but a broad electorate (Dahl 1971). In delimiting electoral authoritarian regimes, Munck uses Dahl's dimensions to limit regimes. Those that allow on the participation dimension more than one faction with at least one mass group are included. When considering the dimension of contestation, two situations can immediately be considered electoral authoritarianism: one is that multiple parties exist, but some that cannot lose elections; the other possibility consists of multiple parties that can all be defeated, but with some major factions banned from competition for political reasons (Munck 2006).

Andreas Schedler uses Przeworski's definition of democracy from *Democracy and Development* in order to classify these intermediate regimes (Schedler 2006). Przeworski's definition of democracy holds the key elements to be as follows: executive office and the legislature must be filled by election; more than one party exists in the polity; and finally, alternation of power occurs in the regimes that are considered democratic (Przeworski

et al. 2000). Schedler's electoral authoritarian regime retains the electoral process but it is not fair, and the incumbent regime uses manipulation and persuasion to prevent the opposition from ever taking power. The opposition is thus simultaneously demoralized by knowing there is almost no possibility of immediate electoral victory and encouraged by the possibility that they may damage the regime in the long term by competing (Schedler 2006).

Electoral authoritarian and hybrid regimes must also be separated not only from fully democratic regimes but also from fully authoritarian regimes. Schedler defines this separation along the following dimensions: top levels of government are open to competition, franchise is not restricted as in competitive oligarchy, head of government is not exempted from competition, opposition must be independent and not a manufactured opposition, and finally, authoritarianism is not defined by the use of power but access to power. Electoral authoritarian regimes also have nearly universal suffrage and are minimally competitive, minimally pluralistic, minimally open, and have limited but systematic manipulation on elections (Schedler 2006). Schedler's definition is a useful starting point for defining hybrid regimes, but it is too restrictive, particularly in not allowing for the inclusion of regimes with restricted offices and electorates, which comprise a small but important subset of regimes in which election boycotts may occur.

Other hybrid regimes may vary along the degrees of how competition for power operates. Levitsky and Way 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 (2002). 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.

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 United States 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.



## CHAPTER 5

### COMPETING RISKS TO HYBRID REGIMES

The dependent variable being considered in this study is the duration of hybrid regimes. In order 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 remains relatively moderate. The ruling party tends not to resort to blatant persecution if at all possible, and prefers to maintain power through popularity as would a party in a normal democracy, but will use subtle manipulation if necessary to ensure that they cannot lose power through elections (Levitsky and 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 both 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 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 (2002). 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 being 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 2007). 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 non-secret ballot or violence; and fraud (Case 2006).

The hegemony of liberal ideology in the international system following the collapse of the Soviet Union has led regimes to increasingly use electoral means to justify their existence (Levitsky & Way 2002). Outside influences have led recently to a growth in the number of regimes using elections to legitimize their rule, and location of regimes (both 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 to the behavior of reducing the pressure to draw legitimacy through popular elections. Levitsky & Way 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 (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 (2002).

The route of development of these regimes can follow one of many paths: gradual democratization, as in Mexico (before the 2006 election at least) and Senegal; sudden regime collapse to democracy as in Peru and Serbia; regression to authoritarianism as in Azerbaijan; or finally the maintenance of a long-term static game (Schedler 2006). Van de Walle presents another option for regime evolution in which the opposition is strong enough to defeat and replace the existing authoritarian regime as another hegemonic and manipulative regime (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).

What determines the survival or demise of electoral authoritarian regimes? Case presents a model in which the repressive skill and capacity of the regime is the deciding factor in regime survival (2006). 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 power of the opposition to the skill of regime manipulation of events 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).

Literature regarding the effects of boycotts on regimes focuses particularly on Africa, a region noted for the high levels of occurrence of hybrid electoral regimes. As stated above, there is a very limited body of literature on boycotts, and once again, the two authors who have written on boycotts in Africa both come to conflicting conclusions. Bratton concludes that boycotts in Africa do not break down democracy, but 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, which can be seen as a dedication to democratic processes by the opposition (1998). Lindberg reaches a different conclusion that the same aim of reinforcing the democratic process is suited best by opposition contestation even in unfair elections, as continued participation by the opposition will eventually lead to democratization (2004). Lindberg also argues that the survival of electoral authoritarian regimes in Africa is determined by their survival of the second contested election, most regimes are considered legitimate after this cycle even if they are not holding free and fair elections (2006).

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 upon 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 conducive 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 both violent or electoral means.

## CHAPTER 6

### MEASURES

In order 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. 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. Boycotts of either type were observed in 32% of the 640 election years in the period of study, equally divided between major and minor boycotts.

Although I recorded minor boycotts as well, only major boycotts are considered in the data analysis. This is because of the wide variation in motives and tactics for minor boycotts. Some are simply protests by minor groups and single-issue parties that could never win representation even in free and fair elections. Only major boycotts fit properly into the model of the two-level game in which a party gives up a certain opportunity to gain representation (the power game) in favor of making a protest against the unfairness of the system (the rule-making game).

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

- **Boycott Short-term effects:** This is a binary variable indicating the presence of a boycott in a given year, coded as described above. Variables considering boycotts of parliamentary and presidential elections separately are also used.

- **Boycott Long-term effects:** This variable and its equivalents for presidential and parliamentary boycotts 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.
- **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 in order 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.
- **Repressive Capacity:** Indicated by the PHYSINT composite score from CIRI that combines indicators for torture, extra-judicial killings, political imprisonment, and disappearance. The index ranges from a value of 0 indicating no protections to 8 indicating full protection in practice.
- **Restrictive Capacity:** Indicated by the EMPINX composite score from CIRI that combines indicators for freedoms of movement, speech, and religion and also worker's rights and political participation. This index ranges from a minimum of 0 for no rights to one of 10 for full rights in practice. This variable is exponentially transformed in order to counteract nonlinear variance in the Martingale residuals for the Cox regression.
- **Linkage and Leverage (partial sample):** Following Levitsky & Way, this original measure combines the region, percent of GDP accounted for by trade with the United States, percent of GDP accounted for by fuel exports, and the relation of a country in alliances with the United States in both the Cold War and War on Terror.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This data was only available for a smaller set of years and was not used in all calculations

- Linkage and Leverage (full sample): Similar to above, but only considers region and alliances in order to avoid missing data problems with GDP data and fuel exports.
- Presidential system: From the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions (DPI), indicates that the highest executive body is elected independently from the assembly (1 Presidential, 0 Other) (Kefer 2005).
- Competitiveness: Competition value from Vanhannen's polyarchy index. Measures the combined proportion of the vote received by all but the top finishing party. This value has been lagged one year to indicate the degree of competition in the previous election.
- Mean District Magnitude: From the World Bank DPI. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>This data was only available for a smaller set of years and was not used in all calculations

## CHAPTER 7

### METHODS

In order 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 semi-parametric 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 et al 2007). 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 semi-parametric 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 upon country cluster, so that successive regimes in the same territory will face a similar elevated or reduced threat.

Four tests will be constructed in order to assess my hypotheses. Each test will be run for combined major boycotts, and then again with presidential and parliamentary elections split. They will also be divided into a full sample test and a reduced sample test. The full sample will not include the electoral system and district magnitude variables and use a simplified version of the linkage and leverage index in order to increase the number of observations under study. The reduced sample will include these variables and use a more precise measure of linkage and leverage, but at the expense of reducing the number of observations that can be studied due to missing data, particularly data from the smaller countries before 1990.



The first set of tests will test the electoral reform hypothesis by investigating the effect of the independent variables on only the regime failures that occur due to electoral turnover. The second set will test the destabilization hypothesis by investigating the effect of the independent variables on non-electoral turnover. The indicator for non-electoral turnover includes the following events: military coup or civil war defeat, state collapse, death or assassination of personalist chief executive, power-sharing deal or resignation, and foreign invasion.

## CHAPTER 8

### DATA ANALYSIS

The full sample model of electoral reform included 267 regimes in 109 countries that were at risk of failure for 1906 years and experienced 133 instances of executive turnover by elections. During the regression process some of the variables showed violations of the proportional hazards assumption for the Cox semi-parametric regression and required corrective measures to be taken.<sup>1</sup>

As is expected, the model of all major boycotts combined (see table 8.1) shows boycotts to have a strikingly negative effect on immediate electoral turnover, with a hazard ratio well below one, indicating that there is a strong impact on risk and a level of significance comfortably above the standard alpha value of 0.01. The long term effects of major boycotts is the opposite, with a hazard ratio showing an increase well above one and significance at the 0.01 level. 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 and the delay in inauguration). The level of competition in the previous election appears to have the opposite impact on survival, but the effect on the risk of electoral turnover is insignificant. As expected, increasing levels of economic development positively impacts the likelihood of electoral turnover, although the results are not quite significant at the 0.05 level.

When the type of election is divided up between boycotts of parliamentary and presidential elections, the outcomes are surprising (see table 8.2). For both types the short-term impact insignificantly increased the risk of electoral turnover, with parliamentary

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<sup>1</sup>Non-linear transformations were used on development, empinx, and linkage and leverage3 in order to correct for non-linear variance in the Martingale residuals. The failure of the transformed empinx and development variables to meet the proportional hazard assumption was also corrected for by including a variable for the interaction with the natural log of time to correct this violation (Box-Steffenmier & Jones 2004).

Table 8.1: Electoral Reform Combined

Independent Variable	Combined Election Types		
	Hazard Ratio (S.E.)	z	$P >  z $
Short-term Boycott	0.230 (0.118)	-2.86	0.004
Long-term Boycott	6.550 (4.520)	2.72	0.006
National Election	47.546 (17.801)	10.31	0.000
Competitiveness	0.999 ( 0.010)	-0.07	0.941
Interacted Comp.	1.012 (0.007)	1.79	0.073
Pres. System	0.768 (0.181)	-1.12	0.264
Development	1.566 (0.361)	1.94	0.052
Interact. Devel.	0.790 (0.104)	-1.78	0.075
Growth	0.988 (0.015)	-0.77	0.441
Repressive Cap.	1.054 (0.054)	1.04	0.297
Restrictive Cap.	0.999 (0.000)	-1.28	0.200
Interact. Rest. Cap.	1.000 (0.000)	2.00	0.045
Linkage and Leverage	1.138 (0.147)	1.00	0.319
<i>Years at risk</i>			1906
<i>Countries</i>			109
<i>Regimes</i>			267
<i>Failures</i>			133

boycotts closer to significance. This may be because of election timing in which both occur in the same year, parliamentary elections are boycotted but presidential elections are won. The most intriguing finding is that boycotts of presidential elections are much more likely to lead to electoral turnover, while parliamentary boycotts have the opposite effect of making turnover extremely unlikely in the long term. This may be because parties boycotting parliamentary elections have a different payoff structure, losing representation makes it harder to set the electoral rules in the future and may only be seen as a good option when the opposition is extremely desperate for outside support. Presidential boycotts on the other hand are more effective due to the all or nothing nature of presidential elections. Here an opposition party can gain in the power game by contesting in the assembly elections as well as gaining in the rule-making game by boycotting a presidential election they would be unable to win because of probable manipulation.

The other variables behave as expected, with both types of elections being influential and increasing the risk of electoral turnover, although not as influential as the boycott of

a presidential election. Presidential systems as well are significantly more insulated from electoral turnover than parliamentary systems, most likely due to the fact that electoral turnover can only occur at presidential elections, rather than the collapse of a coalition government or a move for snap-elections in a parliamentary system. The final variable of interest in this analysis is the degree of restrictive capacity. Unlike expected, as this level decreases (an increase in the index) the ability of the incumbent to survive elections is increased. This may be because these regimes are more popular and need less restriction. Too much weight should not be placed on this finding due to the miniscule effect upon the risk and also the fact that the interaction variable has an opposite and equally miniscule impact. <sup>2</sup>

Table 8.2: Electoral Reform Divided

Independent Variable	Divided Election Types		
	Hazard Ratio (S.E.)	<i>z</i>	<i>P</i> > $ z $
Parl. Short-term	1.556 (0.493)	1.39	0.163
Pres. Short-term	1.037 (0.399)	0.10	0.923
Pres. Long-Term	32.774 (30.265)	3.78	0.000
Parl. Long-term	0.018 (0.022)	-3.29	0.001
Pres. Election	5.023 (1.247)	6.50	0.000
Parl. Election	8.805 (2.285)	8.38	0.000
Competitiveness	1.009 (0.010)	0.95	0.340
Interact. Compet.	1.0081 (0.006)	1.22	0.221
Pres. System	0.504 (0.111)	-3.10	0.002
Development	1.461 (0.285)	1.95	0.052
Interact. Development	0.846 (0.098)	-1.44	0.150
Growth	1.006 (0.015)	0.45	0.651
Repressive Cap.	1.073 (0.050)	1.51	0.130
Restrictive Cap.	0.999 (0.000)	-2.28	0.022
Interact. Rest. Cap.	1.000 (0.000)	2.90	0.004
Linkage and Leverage	0.873 (0.103)	-1.14	0.253
<i>Years at risk</i>			1906
<i>Countries</i>			109
<i>Regimes</i>			267
<i>Failures</i>			133

The destabilization model provides different results. In the large set analysis the

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<sup>2</sup>Reduced sample tests were run on all of these variables as well as district magnitude and a more precise measurement of linkage and leverage. The results showed no meaningful change with either variable and reduced the level of significance, but no change in direction for the other variables from the large set.

same set of regimes is at risk for the same time period, but only forty-two regimes end in non-electoral failures. In this regression, major boycotts have an insignificant effect of increasing the likelihood of destabilization in the short term, which is not surprising if pre-election boycotts are sometimes tied to post-elections protests and refusals to accept the results of the election. In the long term, major boycotts insignificantly reduce the likelihood of turnover by non-electoral means, likely because of the increased possibility of turnover by electoral means as seen in the preceding test. The only variable in this model with a significant influence on regime survival at the 0.05 level is the degree of competitiveness in elections. Higher levels of opposition vote-share tend to decrease the likelihood of a non-electoral turnover of power, once again this is likely because of an increased possibility of electoral turnover. At the 0.1 level of significance, the value for physical repression is also significant and indicates that lower levels of repression are associated with a lower likelihood of non-electoral executive turnover, possibly because of a connection between physical repression and general levels of political violence in a given country.

When non-electoral regime failures (table 8.3) are considered the results are much less clear. In the full sample, major boycotts of any election type had an insignificant result, though the directions were as expected <sup>3</sup>. Short-term impacts tended to increase the risk of regime collapse, while long term results reduced the impact, although the results were extremely insignificant. The only variables in this analysis that came close to having a significant impact on the duration of regimes were the values for restrictive and repressive capacity. Both indicated that for less restrictive regimes there was a lower likelihood for a non-electoral end of the regime, likely because the opposition does not feel a need to take action outside the political system to take power. Of the two, repressive capacity has the greater effect, while restrictive capacity, although significant at the 0.1 level, had almost no impact on regime risk.

When considering the reduced sample (table 8.4), the results were somewhat changed, although no variables were significant at the 0.5 level. <sup>4</sup> The directions on the variables

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<sup>3</sup>When the split election types were used, the results were similar.

<sup>4</sup>The split model was unable to successfully calculate hazard ratios as the likelihood estimates

Table 8.3: Destabilization Large

Independent Variable	Combined, Full Sample		
	Hazard Ratio (S.E.)	z	$P >  z $
Short-Term Boycott	2.161 (1.779)	0.94	0.349
Long-Term Boycott	0.587 (0.798)	-0.39	0.696
Election	0.664 (0.302)	-0.90	0.370
Competitiveness	1.023 (0.017)	1.41	0.160
Interact. Comp.	0.986 (0.009)	-1.37	0.171
Pres. System	0.894 (0.322)	-0.31	0.758
Development	1.214 (0.389)	0.60	0.545
Interact. Devel.	0.794 (0.152)	-1.20	0.229
Growth	0.983 (0.023)	-0.70	0.485
Repressive Cap.	0.880 (0.068)	-1.63	0.102
Restrictive Cap.	0.999 (0.000)	-0.73	0.465
Interact. Rest. Cap.	0.999 (0.000)	-0.67	0.501
Linkage and Leverage	1.375 (0.326)	1.35	0.178
<i>Years at risk</i>			1906
<i>Countries</i>			109
<i>Regimes</i>			267
<i>Failures</i>			42

were unchanged, but the significance levels did change, with restrictive and repressive capacity no longer significant at the 0.1 level. Major boycotts did become significant at the 0.1 level and indicated that there may be a degree of increased risk of non-electoral change in the year of a boycott, although there is a large amount of variation. The enhanced linkage and leverage index appears to indicate that increased ties to Western democracies leads to a slightly increased risk of non-electoral failures, but the degree of impact is very small.

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did not converge, most likely due to the small number of failures.

Table 8.4: Destabilization Small

Independent Variable	Combined, Reduced Set		
	Hazard Ratio (S.E.)	z	$P >  z $
Short-Term Boycott	5.164 (4.765)	1.78	0.075
Long-Term Boycott	0.519 (0.828)	-0.41	0.681
Election	0.697 (0.393)	-0.64	0.523
Competitiveness	0.992 (0.011)	-0.65	0.513
Pres. System	0.668 (0.277)	-0.97	0.332
Development	0.935 (0.182)	-0.34	0.733
Growth	0.996 (0.026)	-0.14	0.886
Repressive Cap.	0.883 (0.087)	-1.25	0.211
Restrictive Cap.	0.999 (0.000)	-1.42	0.155
Linkage and Leverage	1.017 (0.009)	1.91	0.057
District Magnitude	1.004 (0.006)	0.62	0.535
<i>Years at risk</i>			1367
<i>Countries</i>			104
<i>Regimes</i>			219
<i>Failures</i>			26

## CHAPTER 9

### INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

Election boycotts appear to have mixed effects, depending on the type of boycott and the time scale considered. Minor boycotts appear to follow no clear pattern<sup>1</sup>. After noting all of the variation within the category of minor boycotts during the process of coding these events, this is not a surprising finding. My anecdotal analysis of minor boycotts indicates that there are many different types. Some consist of the objections of small, religious communities and ethnic groups seeking public attention to their cause by advocating for their followers to reject the election process. These can occur for reasons other than seeking political improvements and in some cases are about issues completely unrelated to the electoral process. Others are more similar to labor strikes in which services critical to the electoral process in a particular community or area are denied, causing disruptions to the process. Yet others are violent and seek not to disrupt the voting by constituents of the group calling for the boycott, but for the general disruption of the election process by destroying election infrastructure (ballots, polling centers, observers, poll workers, etc.).

What this appears to indicate is that boycotts that do not involve a large portion of already organized political parties should not be considered as an influential part of the electoral game, but rather should be considered as another form of general political protest. These minor boycotts are more closely related to general protests, boycotts of government service providers, and strikes than they are to major election boycotts and post-election protest. Because of this, it is not surprising that there was no indication of any clear effect of minor boycotts on the improvement of election processes in hybrid regimes.

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<sup>1</sup>Preliminary analysis included minor boycotts as well as major boycotts in the analysis



As far as major boycotts are concerned, the findings appear to show that they are in fact a useful strategy for those seeking to unseat an incumbent regime. The short term effects on electoral turnover indicate clearly that boycotting an election means sacrificing the possibility of regime change today for the increased possibility of change in the future. The process through which this occurs cannot not clearly determined by the tests used in this study, but some possibilities can be assessed for future analysis.

My findings do not completely refute Beaulieu's proposition that boycotts lead to electoral reforms that improve the future chances of electoral victory by opposition candidates. Her connection of dependence on the West as the main pressure for change however, is not supported in my model, although it is possible that some other operationalization for linkage may provide that connection. This partial failure of Beaulieu's model lends support to the idea that boycotts have some inherent ability to improve the chances of future success by opposition parties. One area deserving of further investigation is what I will call a coalescence model of boycotts. This model is similar to Van de Walle's concept of electoral authoritarian competition as a tipping game in which the opposition is able to come together in order to defeat the incumbent (2006). In this case, boycotts allow an opposition that cannot agree to running a unified candidate or platform to cooperate against the incumbent's attempts to divide the opposition, while at the same time remaining a publicly visible political force.

The relation of executive turnover in the context of democratization depends on how one defines positive democratization. Using the idea of turnover in the executive as a positive indicator of democracy leads to the conclusion that election boycotts are an effective means for bringing about democratic transitions. On the other hand, if democratization means moving from a hybrid regime to consolidated democracy, the evidence appears less optimistic. In the original hypothesis testing for this project, I produced a model designed to measure if regimes are more or less likely to exit hybrid status as democracy or authoritarian as a result of election boycotts. A model testing regime failure as moving from hybrid to either democratic or authoritarian was not included because of

the number of transitions was too small to analyze.<sup>2</sup> Although not a robust statistical finding, this lack of transitions appears to indicate that even though boycotts clearly produce electoral turnover, the new regime is not likely to be significantly more or less democratic than that which it replaces.

As far as the significance of this finding in the context of the general literature on hybrid regimes, it appears to indicate that for the most part these are not transitional regimes indicating an intermediate step in the process of democratization. Rather, these hybrid regimes are a very stable state in which the bulk of countries find themselves becoming consolidated hybrids during the past three decades.

Finally, boycotts appear to be a low-risk option for oppositions in the game of democratization. Even if the ability to bring improvements beyond electoral turnover is questionable, there is not sufficient evidence to point to election boycotts leading to a breakdown of the electoral process. Boycotts may disrupt the particular election in which they occur, but because of the long-term goal of the action, this action does not present an immediate threat to the regime. Indeed, boycotts provide the appearance of government consolidation as the incumbent is able to gain more power in the current election. This also may be a reason for the increased possibility of electoral turnover in the future, as the incumbent following a boycott finds the electoral process to be a secure means of legitimizing rule and overestimates its security, thus opening the regime to future failure when the opposition does decide to contest in future elections.

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<sup>2</sup>The lack of cases meant it was not possible to get conclusive results due to the lack of failures to either type.

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