Ruling Parties and Durable Authoritarianism

Jason Brownlee

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Center on Democracy, Development,  
and The Rule of Law  
Stanford Institute of International Studies  
Stanford University  
Encina Hall  
Stanford, CA 94305  
Phone: 650-724-7197  
Fax: 650-724-2996  
http://cddrl.stanford.edu/

About the Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law (CDDRL)

CDDRL was founded by a generous grant from the Bill and Flora Hewlett Foundation in October in 2002 as part of the Stanford Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. The Center supports analytic studies, policy relevant research, training and outreach activities to assist developing countries in the design and implementation of policies to foster growth, democracy, and the rule of law.

About the Author

Abstract: The field of authoritarian subtypes has usefully described the third wave’s undercurrent, an international trend toward plebiscitarian politics among persistent dictatorships. Yet classification does not replace explanation and the proliferation of “authoritarianism with adjectives” risks diverting attention from the core question of comparative regime change studies: Under what conditions do authoritarian regimes become democracies? This paper attempts to reorient the study of contemporary authoritarianism with a theory of ruling parties and coalition management. Whether electoral or exclusionary, authoritarian regimes with ruling parties prove more robust than other nondemocratic systems. Statistical analysis of 135 regimes during the period 1975-2000 shows that the presence or absence of multiparty elections, the key feature of the brand new authoritarianism, has no significant impact on regime survival while party institutionalization remains a strong predictor of regime longevity. Process tracing in four cases with limited multiparty politics details the causal relationship between ruling parties and regime persistence. Egypt and Malaysia evince a pattern of durability in which the dominant party resolves intra-elite conflict and prevents the defection of influential leaders. Iran and the Philippines show that the decline of ruling party institutions generates elite polarization and public rifts, a necessary but insufficient condition for successful opposition mobilization and regime change. Contrary to widespread expectations, elections do not destabilize authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian regimes that have neglected the institutions of coalition maintenance destabilize elections.
Introduction

Over the past thirty years the international shift toward authoritarianism wrapped in plebiscitarian politics has outpaced the spread of competitive democratic institutions known as the “third wave” (Schedler 2000: 6; Diamond 2002: 26-27). Huntington counted thirty-five countries as democratizing (Huntington 1991: 14-15), while, during the period 1975-2000, forty-four states, many of them in sub-Saharan Africa, introduced limited multiparty elections under conditions of continued authoritarianism. The result is that a third of the world’s governments permit constrained pluralistic competition, but prevent the regular rotation of elites, the criterion of a procedural standard for electoral democracy (Schumpeter 1947: 269). As shown in Table 1, this kind of authoritarian rule is the modal form of autocracy today, more than twice as common as fully closed exclusionary authoritarianism without any pretext of pluralism.

Table 1: Political Regimes in the Developing World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World Regions / Regime Types</th>
<th>Liberal Democracy</th>
<th>Electoral Democracy</th>
<th>Electoral Authoritarian</th>
<th>Closed Authoritarian</th>
<th>Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia &amp; Caucasus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Africa &amp; Middle East</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South, SE, &amp; East Asia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>151</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Schedler 2002: 47)

The proliferation of so-called hybrid regimes has drawn increasing attention from scholars in comparative politics (in addition to over a dozen papers at the 2004 APSA Annual Meeting, see Carothers 2002; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002; Schedler 2002; Ottaway 2003). Yet the utility of shifting focus from authoritarian breakdown and democratization to intra-regime type differentiation has not been systematically assessed. Authoritarian sub-types may usefully describe the diverse characteristics of non-democratic politics in what has otherwise been a catchall residual category. However, their explanatory value for the question of regime change remains unsubstantiated. As shown below, the characteristic of being “electoral” does not have a significant effect on authoritarian regime longevity. Rather, the potential for ending authoritarianism depends more on the core institutions through which unelected rulers manage their coalitions. Ruling parties prove especially influential in maintaining dictatorship, both of the exclusionary variety and the brand new authoritarianism in its electoral incarnation.
Consequently, comparativists’ understanding of regime change will be better served by debating rival explanations for the variation between persistence and change, rather than subdividing the non-democratic world further at the risk of unnecessary, if not costly, fragmentation in scholarship.

**Parties vs. Elections in Explaining Regime Outcomes**

From the Estates General in 1789 to the Polish Communists’ elections two centuries later, non-democratic regimes have used participatory institutions to appease opponents and entrench incumbents (Markoff 1996: 101). Following the “stunning” defeats dealt to dictators in the 1970s and ‘80s, Huntington treated inclusionary politics as a fatal misstep for dictatorships, arguing that “liberalized authoritarianism is not a stable equilibrium. The halfway house does not stand” (Huntington 1991: 137: 185). His expectation echoes O’Donnell and Schmitter’s contention that post-World War II autocrats “can justify themselves in political terms only as transitional powers” (1986: 15), DiPalma’s claim “that dictatorships do not endure” (1990: 33), and Przeworski’s idea that “liberalization is inherently unstable” (1991: 58). Meanwhile, an array of research has supported an alternative view, mainly that manipulated elections may reinforce the position of autocratic incumbents (Linz 1975: 236; Hermet 1978: 14; Joseph 1997: 375; Chehabi and Linz 1998: 18; Przeworski and Gandhi 2001: 15-16). How does one reconcile these arguments with those of the first camp?

For the issue of regime change, cross-national statistical analysis indicates the institutions of rule matter more than the absence or presence of elections. Tests of regime survival that incorporate a variable for the presence of absence of limited multiparty elections -the halfway house characteristic that so many regimes exhibited during the period of democratization treated by Huntington- show no significant destabilizing effect in so-called liberalized authoritarianism. Rather, as in an earlier study of authoritarian breakdown (Geddes 1999a), regime endurance continues to depend upon the nature of a country’s political institutions. Single-party regimes remain the most robust type of regime regardless of whether multi-party elections were introduced. For information of regime duration this project utilized Geddes’s dataset, expanding it with the inclusion of eleven monarchies (Bahrain, Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates) and nine post-Soviet states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan). Economic figures were taken from the Penn World Tables 6.1 Finally, the World Bank Database of
Political Indicators (DPI) provided information for the creation of a dummy variable for authoritarianism with elections (Beck, Clarke et al. 2001).

The Database, which covers countries from 1975 to 2000, includes a 7-point scale of legislative and executive electoral competitiveness. The scale for legislative electoral competitiveness is as follows:

1 - No legislature
2 - Unelected legislature
3 - Elected, 1 candidate
4 - 1 party, multiple candidates
5 - Multiple parties are legal but only one party won seats
6 - Multiple parties did win seats but the largest party received more than 75% of the seats
7 - Largest party got less than 75% (Keefer 2002).

Joined to the expanded Geddes dataset, the DPI allows comparativists to sort authoritarian regimes based on the degree of participation permitted to the opposition. This is a significant advance beyond Polity or Freedom House because it better disaggregates theorized causes, the array of political institutions, from outcomes that may be conflated with levels of political and civic freedom. Used in tandem with Geddes’s measurement of regime breakdown, it allows comparativists to assess claims regarding the dichotomous dependent variable of regime continuity or collapse. As shown in Table 2, no significant relationship obtained between the holding of multiparty elections under authoritarianism and regime breakdown. Rather, military regimes showed a significant destabilizing effect and single-party regimes were found to have a significant bolstering influence on regime survival. Additionally, variables measuring economic performance proved highly significant.

These results merit further investigation, but their initial message for the study of authoritarian durability is compelling and, for the halfway house argument, disconfirming. Elections provide an arena for political contestation. But they are primarily as indicator of regime

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1 It is common to use Polity or Freedom House data to track the political opening of an authoritarian regime. Such studies can reveal much about gradual political changes over time Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen (2002). "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." Comparative Political Studies 35(1): 5-24, Mainwaring, Scott and Anibal Perez-Linan (2003). "Level of Development and Democracy: Latin American Exceptionalism." Comparative Political Studies 11(9): 1031-1067. However, they do not capture well discrete changes within regimes, such as from single- or no-party authoritarianism to multi-party authoritarianism. For the purposes of evaluating Huntington’s hypothesis and the general claim that political opening weakens dictatorship, their measures do not match well with the theory being evaluated. A replicable standard is needed for distinguishing exclusionary authoritarian regimes, those that make no pretext of pluralism, from inclusionary authoritarian systems that may or may not behave as halfway houses. The Database of Political Institutions provides more traction on this problem.
change, rather than an explanatory variable with an independent causal impact. The effect of elections on authoritarian regime duration depends on other factors, such as the management of intra-elite conflict through parties, which determine whether elections become sufficiently competitive to threaten incumbents. Functioning as they are intended, rigged ballot boxes provide domestic and international benefits to autocrats. It is the unintended capacity of elections to remove incumbents from office that makes “electoral authoritarian” regimes vulnerable to societal protest. In sum, elections do not destabilize regimes. Regimes with few or no

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient (s.e.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited Elections</td>
<td>.006 (.013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military regime</td>
<td>.10 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mil.-personal regime</td>
<td>.03 (.029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal regime</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party hybrid regime</td>
<td>-.002 (.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-party regime</td>
<td>-.045 (.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military-personal-party hybrid regime</td>
<td>-.03 (.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monarchy</td>
<td>-.013 (.033)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ln gdp/cap</td>
<td>-.017 (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged growth</td>
<td>-.127 (.06)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 1299 country-years during 1975-2000 (135 regimes)  
Results are from dprobit. Dependent variable is regime breakdown (mean = .057).  
Limited elections dummy variable constructed from the World Bank Database of Political Institutions index of legislative and executive competitiveness. Scores of 5-7 were coded as 1 (presence of multiparty elections). Regional dummy variables and time variables not statistically significant. Full results and datasets on monarchies and Soviet successor states available from author.
institutions for managing elite conflict destabilize elections. The test of elections and political duration reaffirms the significance of political institutions even as it directs our attention to explanations for this link between ruling parties and regime persistence.

Parties provide a site for political negotiation within the ruling elite that represents more than reliable patronage distribution. By offering a long-term system for members to resolve differences and advance in influence, parties generate and maintain a cohesive leadership cadre. It follows that the actions of those inside the regime must be situated within the party, extending purely institutional accounts with recognition of individual agency. At the same time otherwise voluntaristic explanations can be further developed through an investigation of the party organization’s influence on political preferences and actions.

Ruling Parties and Regime Persistence
In the closing chapter of Political Order in Changing Societies, Huntington wrote the “development of… party institutions is the prerequisite for political stability in modernizing countries” (1968: 412). He observed that parties help regimes to organize emergent social forces during periods of rapid socioeconomic change while constituting a new political class for distributing national-level influence. These arguments echo in recent works that treat parties as the ballasts of political regimes (Knight 1992; Craig and Cornelius 1995: 260; Haggard and Kaufman 1995: 305-306; Geddes 1999b: 11). Attention to the role of parties in shaping the actions of political elites holds the potential for substantially advancing purely voluntarist accounts. Discussions of “soft-liners,” those political elites who reach out to moderate opposition movements, tend to leave open the question of what factors distinguish defection from reaffiliation (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 19; Przeworski 1986: 56). Is the decision purely contingent or can it be theorized in terms of general causes? Since the translation of elite conflict into national politics outcomes occurs within the regime’s institutions, elite behavior must be embedded within ruling parties thereby showing the interaction of institutional influence and individual agency.

The ruling party’s capacity for intra-elite mediation is particularly important in non-democratic settings where the maintenance of domination depends on regime cohesion. In a context where individuals seek political influence and material gain, party institutions sustain those preferences while providing a site, the party organization, to pursue them. Diffusion of opportunity through the party’s ranks satisfies individual ambitions and ameliorates conflict between competing factions. Debates can be revisited and loyalty is the salve for today’s losses just as it is the currency for future gains. A contrasting scenario occurs when organizational influence narrows to an impermeable clique. Leaders then pursue a similar goal, career.
advancement, via a significantly different path, the reordering of the political regime. Hence, preferences in their most immediate sense for the individual do not change, but actors’ political intentions and actions shift dramatically. Once leaders have dismantled the party to insulate their closest confederates, fears of exclusion spread in the wider circle of elites. Distance breeds distrust and, ultimately, dissent. No mechanisms exist to mediate inter-factional conflict and debates escalate into battles for political life or death. Erstwhile defenders of the status quo then campaign for reform, rather than waste away in a hierarchy that offers no opportunity for success.

For authoritarian regimes ruling parties bring elite cohesion, electoral control, and political durability. The centripetal influence accorded to parties is best theorized not simply in terms of members’ individual preferences, but rather in the way institutions encourage continued loyalty over defection. So long as the organization manages its members’ ambitions, individual pursuits can be the root of continued allegiance. In contrast, the lack of a party regulating elite interaction tends to heighten the allure of working from the outside. Intra-elite rivalry feeds into inter-factional competition, exposing the regime to challenges from previously marginalized foes. The same pattern may obtain in parties systems that have abandoned their interest management function through organizational decay. When mechanisms of reward and sanction weaken, organizational solidarity suffers. Loss of privileges alienates the party’s membership and inclines regime supporters toward the societal opposition (Kalyvas 1999: 337; Herbst 2001: 361; Solinger 2001: 37). Similarly, when parties are deliberately dismantled or left to disintegrate, elite defections brings intra-organizational conflicts into public view. The struggle shifts from direct, but regulated, conflict in the circles of authority to an indirect battle in which leaders turn to the electorate for additional support (Sartori 1976: 49). In this way unsatisfied regimists align with those activists pushing for change. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship of ruling parties to regime persistence and the contrast path in which party decline exacerbates elite conflict. The diagram bounds the argument from institutional origins at one end and the foreclosure or opening of opportunities for regime change at the other, subjects I treat elsewhere (Brownlee 2004).²

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The maintenance of ruling coalitions through party institutions is a sufficient condition for regime endurance. The logical implication is that the breakdown of elite cohesion is necessary but insufficient for regime change. Dictatorships that lose their own elections have experienced a kind of regime deconsolidation, a “crisis of governance” for autocratic rule (Kohli 1990: 400) and a “democratizing moment”(Yashar 1997: 17). This disorder, to the extent that it represents the erosion of anti-democratic incumbents’ positions, is a permissive condition for the development of alternate centers of power. It creates an opportunity from which elite defectors and oppositionists may press for change (Kitschelt 1986: 66-67; McAdam 1996: 35; Meyer 2004: 137). Elite defections and electoral defeats can then ouster incumbents when they are followed by a popular alternative faction willing to confront the regime. Whether or not opposition victories at the polls bring a change of regime depends upon public contests to subordinate prevailing leaders in elected and unelected institutions to the challengers’ campaign for a new system.

The corollary to this argument is that the absence of ruling parties is necessary for regime collapse but, on its own, not sufficient for that outcome to obtain. Party institutionalization accounts for the presence or absence of opportunities for regime change. Understanding what activists make of such opportunities necessitates an attention to the strategy and capacity of the
groups involved. These limits follow Stinchcombe’s admonition against overextending comparative research into realms for which it is ill-suited:

[A] sociological theory of revolution ought not expect to be able to tell who will win in a revolutionary situation, but to tell that there will be a fight with unlimited means, a fight not conducted under defined norms for deciding political battles. Explaining who won, and why, is primarily a problem of military science, not of social science (1965: 170).

The theory linking institutions to political stability thus explains both regime endurance and the absence of endurance, conceived as the opening for regime collapse. By connecting political structures and political agents, the explanation shows when structural opportunities for effective action are opened and how, even in the cases of regime durability, structures influence actors’ preferences, such as the incentive to remain loyal to the regime rather than challenge it publicly.

**Case Studies**

The theory of durable authoritarianism through ruling parties is supported by a cross-regional comparison of incumbents’ electoral victory in Egypt and Malaysia and electoral defeat in Iran and the Philippines (Figure 2). These regimes share in common authoritarian systems that allow opposition groups to participate in national elections. Yet their durability varies in ways not covered by regional attributes of the Middle East or Southeast Asia. Close analysis of their experiences, drawn from field research in all four countries, including the collection of written materials and the conducting of elite interviews, provides causal narratives tracing the political process by which parties bring regime durability.
The capacity of ruling parties for maintaining elite unity in the face of opposition explains regime durability in Egypt and Malaysia and election defeats in Iran and the Philippines that represented opportunities for regime change. Figure 3 shows the variations in electoral performance across the four regimes. Since the early 1970s Egypt’s National Democratic Party (NDP) and Malaysia’s United Malaya National Organization (UMNO) have each survived over a half dozen parliamentary elections, always achieving a super majority of more than two-thirds the
available seats. Party organizations have mediated intra-elite conflict and perpetuated a phenomenon of no elite defections and no electoral defeat. In contrast, the Iranian and Philippine regimes failed to maintain ruling parties (the Islamic Republic Party and Nationalist Party, respectively) and subsequently lost both elite cohesion and electoral control within two to three election cycles.

**Figure 3: Regime Electoral Performance in Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, and the Philippines**

This set enables a combined application of most similar research design within regions (Egypt and Iran, Malaysia and Philippines) and most different case design across regions.

**Table 3: Rival Explanations for Regime Durability and Regime Instability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party institutions supporting elite cohesion</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political-Cultural Explanations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominantly Muslim population (Huntington 1991)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive prior experience with democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
regions (Egypt and Malaysia, Iran and the Philippines). The intra-regional comparisons reveal political contrasts amid shared characteristics. The cross-regional comparisons bring commonalities to the foreground in pairs of otherwise dissimilar countries (Skocpol 1979: 36). Therefore, the cases address a number of prominent explanatory variables. Comparing the causal processes in Iran-Philippines with Egypt-Malaysia enables evaluation of a historical and institutional argument where competing monocausal hypotheses fail to explain the observed variation in outcomes (Tarrow 1999: 10; Lieberman 2001: 1015-1016). (See Table 3 above.) In addition, a comparative study of Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, and the Philippines provides an empirical contribution. While encompassing well over two hundred million people, these “crucial swing states for democracy” (Diamond 2000: 96) have received minimal coverage in recent literature (Hull 1999: 120).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Economic Explanations</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-high economic development (Lipset 1959)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentier state (Mahdavy 1970)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic crisis (Haggard and Kaufman 1997)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Strength Explanations</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support from foreign superpower (US) (Snyder 1992)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong repressive apparatus (Stepan 1988)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elite Level Explanations</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elite cleavages (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite settlements (Burton, Higley et al. 1991)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Societal Explanations</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viable partner outside ruling coalition (Tsebelis 1988)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active civil society, freedom to associate (Linz and Stepan 1996)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass-based Opposition (Bratton and van de Walle 1997)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Explanations</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rule of law, significant independence of judiciary (Linz and Stepan 1996)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plurality voting (Lust-Okar and Jamal 2002)</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Durability</th>
<th>Durability</th>
<th>Instability</th>
<th>Instability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(See Table 3 above.)
Ruling parties provide forums for the diffusion of disagreements and the amelioration of conflicting ambitions over the long-term. The party becomes the site for national-level agenda setting, as well as a distribution network for political and material patronage, reassuring members that unsatisfactory outcomes are impermanent. Egyptian and Malaysian political elites, like their peers in Iran and the Philippines, have disagreed sharply over personal and policy matters. But they have benefited from an organizational infrastructure that accommodates elite interests and alleviates fears that a loss in the short-term will translate into permanent exclusion from the ruling clique. When disagreements threatened to splinter these regimes, leaders reached out to their discontent partisans and mended fences through the reallocation of influential positions in government. Ruling parties enabled interpersonal reconciliation. Intra-elite conflicts were ultimately positive-sum rather than polarizing because dissatisfied leaders could renegotiate issues of significance (e.g., management of the economy, corruption). While such discussions are far from democratic and the head of the party looms large as the ultimate (and sometimes arbitrary) mediator of debate, they are sufficiently diffuse that continued work within the system remains preferable to a campaign for reform from the outside.

Egypt and Malaysia’s ruling parties have brought elite cohesion among leaders and electoral control against their foes. By regulating leadership politics, the NDP and UMNO have held together a dominant cadre and repeatedly blocked opposition forces from winning control of government. Moments of tension within the NDP and UMNO show how parties structure conflict in times of difficulty and provide regimes a stabilizing ballast of political membership. The cancellation of the Future Party in Egypt and the dissolution of Semangat ’46 in Malaysia reveal how Egyptian and Malaysian ruling parties structured elite relations, reducing the stakes of conflict and encouraging reaffiliation over rebellion. Subsequently, this fractious unity through ruling parties protected the leadership against threats from outside its ranks. Elite cohesion bolstered electoral control and excluded the opposition through three decades of limited multipartyism. Table 4 shows the NDP and UMNO’s electoral performance over seven election cycles. The opposition failed to make breakthroughs in Egypt (2000) and Malaysia (1990).

Table 4: Results of Parliamentary Elections in Egypt and Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt (NDP)</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>------</td>
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<td>------</td>
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<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia (UMNO-led NF)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* includes the 41% of seats taken by “NDP-independents”


Rather than addressing the typical authoritarian-dominated elections that are unshaded in the table, the focus here is on the resolution of intra-elite clashes and elections that followed in Egypt (2000) and Malaysia (1990), experiences that shook both regimes but did not remove them from power. Political concessions, offered through the party, enticed discontented leaders to rejoin rather than breakaway and compete against the ruling party. The object of explanation is the period of continuous authoritarian rule (Egypt 1976-present, Malaysia 1974-present). “Regime durability” means the ruling elite’s survival of successive limited elections without loss of control of government (i.e., for these cases, maintenance of a two-thirds majority in parliament). However, this macro-level correlation is incomplete without attention to the mechanisms of regime durability through elite cohesion and electoral control. While extended stretches of time provide the trend of regime survival, “crises survived” offer corroborating counterfactual support for an explanation of regime change and regime endurance (Brownlee 2002: 39). Elections that nearly brought the regime’s loss of control over government highlight the causally relevant factors that differed systematically from the conditions of incumbent electoral defeat. Hence, it is the most challenging episodes for regime continuity that reveal moments of tension and strain upon prevailing power arrangements.

**Egypt: The Future Party and NDP-Independents**

While Egypt’s presidents and ruling party have controlled the political system for fifty years, arguably the most influential criticisms have originated within the regime’s own ranks. Cleavages in the ruling National Democratic Party, along overlapping lines of generational and policy differences, have caused tension. The impact of these intra-elite clashes on public political contestation rose during the elections of 1990 and 1995. A shift in electoral law from party lists to individual candidacies in 1990 brought higher parliamentary majorities for the NDP, but also created new opportunities for junior party members to advance. Since seats were no longer reserved for competition between official party standard bearers, ambitious politicians not
nominated by the NDP could run as independent candidates. If successful, they had the option of reaffiliating with the party in place of its defeated representatives. The regime’s parliamentary bloc soon included a large number of these “NDP-independents.” In 1990, an estimated 95 (22%) elected MPs had this profile and in 1995 the number was around 100 (23%) (Zaki 1995: 96; Mustafa 1997: 45). NDP-independents were often new business elites who had benefited from Sadat’s economic liberalization and possessed the wealth to challenge the ruling party’s traditional nominees. Status as an MP offered both legal immunity and influence over government policy (Zaki 1995: 97). The new class businessmen-politicians gained influence during the 1990s as the government embarked on a program of IMF-prescribed structural adjustment and privatization. Yet growing importance for Egypt’s political economy did not translate automatically into greater recognition from the ruling party’s traditional elite. Long-time power holders were slow to cede organizational influence to the up-and-coming capitalists.

Apparently responding to the senior leadership’s intransigence, the NDP’s younger and business-oriented wing circulated a proposal in summer 1999 to form a second ruling party. The “Future Party,” as it was to be called, would compete with the NDP and provide a platform for the ascendant faction. Some leaders of the opposition saw the proposal as an opportunity in which a “small space for democracy” could lead to broader changes. Unfortunately for those anticipating a crack in the regime, the planned party soon disappeared from print or official discussion. One NDP member of the Consultative Assembly (Upper House) recounted that the idea was never formally pursued:

> It’s a party created by some people whose intention is reforming the top of the party. This was a big question among everybody. I don’t know what happened. I don’t know if this was real [or] if it was not true. There wasn’t a decision.

The proposal was not publicized and the party never emerged.

Instead room was made within the NDP to promote Gamal Mubarak, the president’s son, and his allies in the business community, such as ceramics tycoon Mohammed Abul Einein and steel magnate Ahmed Ezz. A political correspondent for Egypt’s leading English weekly

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6 "Mubarak shrugs off pressure for immediate political change," *Agence France-Presse*. 19 September 1999.
described the Future Party as a proposal whose goal of business interest promotion was pursued through other means:

[T]his was an idea. I think it was suggested for the first time by Gamal Mubarak, but they let the leftist party newspaper publish this and see what the reaction of the people will be to it. The [old guard] group of Yusef Waly, Kemal Al-Shazli and Safwat Sharif began to react quickly and to find out what’s going on, if there’s any attempt to get rid of them or not... But at the end the idea was cancelled by the president and his son, who found that it is better to join the party’s ranks to take a leading position in the party and to play a stronger role in reforming the party. They found [that] it is not good to establish a new party, but it is better to remain in the party and to exercise an influence over the party to move it into more a democratic way of doing things.7

As the idea of an alternate party faded attention turned to the existing Future Foundation, led by Gamal Mubarak since 1998 to provide affordable housing for young Egyptians, and the Future Generation Foundation, also headed by Gamal Mubarak and focused on training Egypt’s youth for entering the job market.8 “When [President Hosni] Mubarak was asked about the Future Party he said, ‘The Future? This is the name of a non-governmental organization led by Gamal Mubarak’”.9

The Future Party had been aborted, but an upwardly mobile “young guard” moved to the National Democratic Party’s fore. The NDP’s General Secretariat brought Gamal Mubarak aboard in fall 1999. Ezz, Abul Einein, and another prominent business leader, Ibrahim Kamel, joined the party’s political committee the following February, a decision one member of the General Secretariat said reflected the party’s recognition of the business community as “part of the country’s social forces.”10 The changes sought by the proponents of the Future Party had been accommodated within the ruling party, although differences persisted along the cleavage of Future Party-traditional NDP (new guard vs. old guard). By incorporating not only the president’s son but also a broader set of politically ambitious business leaders, the NDP had created a new coalition that reflected generational shifts in the country’s economy. The long-term viability of this merger was soon tested and proven robust.

The 2000 races for seats in parliament spurred debate at the party’s highest ranks about developing a more meritocratic system of membership promotion. At issue was how far the NDP should go to incorporate the new capitalist cadres into its official party lists. The stakes were raised by the country’s Supreme Constitutional Court’s decision that the judiciary should monitor

7 El-Din, Gamal Essam (2002). Interview with author. Cairo, Egypt. April 17.
9 El-Din, Gamal Essam (2002). Interview with author. Cairo, Egypt. April 17.
the election process across all polling stations. The NDP and its agents could still be expected to influence the elections, but the SCC’s decision put a premium on NDP candidacy. Thousands sought the party’s imprimatur and the flood of applications forced the party’s leadership to reject many potential candidates. When the NDP completed candidate selections, its choices showed 42% turnover from previous choices, a transformation in the proposed standard bearers that revealed the tension brewing within the new coalition. As one analysis of the 2000 polls reported:

The changes in names reflected strong internal disagreement on the selection of candidates, as this percentage change was the largest in the history of the NDP… This change was the result of undisclosed disputes inside the party between young members under the leadership of Gamal Mubarak and traditional leaders represented by the secretary general, Dr. Yousef Waly, and the organizational secretary, Kamal El-Shazly. The dispute regarded the criteria for selecting candidates. Gamal Mubarak preferred selecting younger candidates who gave a new image to the party. This was rejected by the party’s traditional leadership that had always controlled the selection process.11

In fact, the young Mubarak’s allies were not fully rebuffed. The NDP put forward a mix of traditional and fresh candidates that reflected the organization’s agreement to disagree. Youth comprised a substantial portion of this compromise roster as Kamal El-Shazli stated that one hundred of the candidates were between thirty and forty years old.12 Rather than splitting into two organizations, along the lines of traditionalists versus technocrats, the NDP accommodated the programs of a younger business-oriented corps, gradually released older figures from their hold on the party’s center, and preserved its effective hegemony over the opposition. Subsequently, about 1400 party members who were not chosen tried their luck outside the party as “NDP-independent” candidates, an average of six candidates per contested seat. These party renegades benefited from the judiciary’s involvement and dealt the NDP an embarrassing, but non-fatal blow.

The SCC’s ruling meant elections were spaced over a month, in three stages that enabled judges to cover polling stations country-wide. When the elections began, the NDP faced challengers on two fronts, the official opposition (especially the Muslim Brotherhood and the Wafd Party, which ran candidates all 222 districts) and the wave of disgruntled “NDP-independents.” Hoping they could still rig the process, ruling party candidates were frustrated to find judiciary members would not let unregistered voters cast ballots, nor would they turn over ballot boxes to policemen offering to “help” transport them to the tallying stations. Still, with an

average lag time of six days between the three stages of voting, the NDP found ways to manipulate the outcomes of later races: intervening where the judiciary’s mandate did not reach, beyond the voting room.\footnote{Amin, Nasser (2002). Interview with author. Cairo, Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary. 2 June.} One judge, puzzled why no voters had shown up by midday, went outside to see why. He found state security forces blocking all voters who tried to approach. When he questioned a nearby soldier, he was told, “Your responsibility ends at the door of the school [the polling station]. Once you step outside you are not a judge and I do not recognize you.”\footnote{Amin, N. (2000). Interview with author. Cairo. Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary.}

The elections grew more fraudulent as time passed, with candidates and voters in later races facing obstruction by state security forces as they tried to enter the polling stations. State security forces were directed to concentrate on pro-Muslim Brotherhood voters, particularly in the last third of polling, contested by several of the organization’s senior leaders. One NDP leader explained candidly:

Waly: When I was saying 80% [clean] I meant it, because it was not all clean elections.
Sometimes we had to stop the Muslim Brothers from emerging.

\textit{Interviewer: ‘Had to stop them from getting too many seats?’}

Waly: Yes. Especially a lot in the third stage, because in the first stage not a lot of people entered. In the second stage they entered and they found themselves successful. So in the third stage they didn’t believe it, so they began. They were moving like hell!\footnote{Waly, Sherif (2002). Cairo, Egypt. Interview with author. April 25.}

Despite these obstacles, the Muslim Brotherhood won seventeen of the sixty-three races in which it ran candidates, a marked improvement over their weak showing in 1995 and a sign of the judicial monitors’ efforts at improving the process.\footnote{Mustafa, Hala (2001). The 2000 Elections: General Indicators. \textit{The 2000 People's Assembly Elections}. H. Mustafa. Cairo, Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies [Arabic]: 7-14.} Nevertheless, overall opposition performance fell far short of the 1987 results. Aside from the MB, the official opposition parties took a modest twenty-one seats, including several independents informally affiliated with particular opposition movements.\footnote{Rabei, Amro Hashem Ibid. Political Participation: Qualitative and Quantitative Indicators: 163-208.}

The flood of NDP-independents did not help the opposition, but it brought heavy turnover within the National Democratic Party’s parliamentary roster. Eight People’s Assembly committee chairs, including founding NDP and General-Secretariat member Mohamed Abdellah, lost.\footnote{Reshad, Abdel Ghefar (2000). The 2000 People's Assembly: Analysis of the General FrameworkIbid. M. Alawi, Cairo University Faculty of Economics and Political Science [Arabic].} Only 172 (39\%) of the NDP’s official candidates were successful. Another 181 NDP-
independents, who had not publicized their affiliation despite their unofficial status, were elected and rejoined the party. Thirty-five genuine independents also entered the ruling party’s bloc, giving it 388 (87%) of the contested seats, a comfortable margin above the two-thirds needed to pass legislation and rubber stamp the president’s decisions. Thus, unanticipated levels of competition at the district level troubled the NDP leadership but did not produce an alternative government (Table 5 below). The traditional and new wings of the party had reached a crucial accommodation and scattered electoral defeats did not aggregate into national change.

**Table 5: Results of Egypt’s 2000 Parliamentary Elections by Party**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official NDP</th>
<th>“NDP-independents”</th>
<th>Total NDP (including newcomers)</th>
<th>Opposition Parties &amp; Muslim Brotherhood</th>
<th>Independents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175 (39%)</td>
<td>181 (41%)</td>
<td>388 (87%)</td>
<td>38* (9%)</td>
<td>16 (4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bloc includes five independents nominally affiliated with the opposition.


Renewal of the NDP’s mandate further strengthened its leverage against the opposition. The newly consolidated ruling cadre exerted electoral control in later contests that effectively negated the SCC ruling of judicial supervision. Despite the judiciary’s prominent effort to guarantee meaningful polls, contestation in Egypt’s elections returned to levels that proved unthreatening for the regime.

**Malaysia: The Johore Malay Unity Forum and Semangat ‘46**

Despite differences across the two countries in terms of leadership politics and the techniques of electoral manipulation, Malaysia’s experience with a ruling party bringing elite cohesion and electoral victory resembles the Egyptian experience in significant ways. When Musa Hitam distanced himself from UMNO and seemed poised to take the critical constituency of the state of Johore away from the party, a series of overtures restored him and his supporters to their positions in the organization. Consequently, UMNO accomplished another dramatic victory after verging on the brink of defeat.

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20 Rida, Mohammed Abu Ibid."The Political and Social Makeup of the 2000 People's Assembly."
After the ruling National Front coalition’s substantial victory over the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) in 1986 elections, Prime Minister Mahathir faced a leadership challenge from within UMNO’s ranks. Tension surfaced when Deputy Prime Minister Musa left the cabinet after feeling Mahathir was targeting him personally. He describes the decision as follows:

“When I resigned I claimed that it was just genuinely on democratic principles. When the prime minister accused me of attempting many times to kill him politically I said, “I cannot be your deputy. We’ve got a system. I have to be your backup. I will not be comfortable… I will not be able to do my job well when my boss says I’m trying to kill him [politically]…” So I resigned and people said, “Oh, he must be trying to undermine Mahathir.”

Further evidence points to a desire by Mahathir to insulate himself from potential challengers. After Musa’s resignation the prime minister filled the position with a less threatening figure, Ghafar Baba, and shifted several older figures out of the cabinet. Regarding the rift between Musa and Mahathir, other accounts indicate Musa and his allies disagreed with Mahathir over several large government projects (Crouch 1996: 118).

Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Razaleigh, a long-time aspirant to the prime ministership, and Musa, who was still UMNO deputy president, jointly challenged Mahathir and Ghafar in the party’s internal elections. Razaleigh contested the party presidency in the 1987 triennial elections while Musa ran to retain the organization’s vice-presidency, despite being replaced as Deputy Prime Minister by Ghafar. The race fractured the party’s rank and file into two factions: Team A, Mahathir and Ghafar, against Team B, Razaleigh and Musa (Ramanathan and Adnan 1988: 70). Particularly damaging to Mahathir’s “team” was his vow to defy party conventions and remain in the premiership even if he lost his post as head of party. This threat against the organization’s traditional practices irked many UMNO members who saw Mahathir as “flouting the laws of the tribe… [and] acting un-Malay by saying he might not accept the wishes of the party” (Duthie 1987).

In contrast to the rhetoric of self-promotion, Mahathir’s more skillful use of party-based incentives helped him win the day. Through the strategic distribution of cabinet and party positions to undecided delegation leaders, the Prime Minister prevailed (Shamsul Amri Baharuddin 1988: 185). Mahathir took a narrow majority of votes in the race for party president (761 to 718). Ghafar also won, although by an even slimmer margin (739 to 699) (Ramanathan and Adnan 1988: 71). Team A candidates performed similarly well in the races for UMNO’s governing board, the Supreme Council, winning seventeen of the available twenty-five seats

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(Ramanathan and Adnan 1988: 72). The battle could have ended then, but Razaleigh and newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs Rais Yatim resigned their posts the following week, on 29 April. For the top contestants, the election’s aftermath was initially a “winner-takes-all” standoff (Shamsul Amri Baharuddin 1988: 181). Mahathir purged the cabinet of seven remaining Team B affiliates. The resulting escalation of discord threatened to rip UMNO apart. One news story reported, “The Razaleigh-Musa faction… now claims to represent almost half of the nearly 1,500 most important UMNO activists.”

The lines drawn between Mahathir and Razaleigh’s factions held at first, although Team A gained an early advantage in the battle for support of UMNO elites. The alliance between Razaleigh and Musa weakened as Razaleigh drifted further outside of UMNO. As Crouch writes, “While Razaleigh remained adamantly opposed to compromise with Mahathir, some of Musa’s supporters were inclined to look for a modus vivendi” (1996: 119). Similarly Milne and Mauzy recount, “There were noteworthy exceptions of people who were identified in the press as belonging to Team B, who ended up in Team A. Suggestively, no top Team A politicians switched to the other side” (Milne and Mauzy 1999: 43).

The process of reconciliation extended over many months, as Mahathir and the remaining UMNO leadership gradually realized the need to reincorporate Musa and his constituency before new national elections against the opposition. An initial signal of the threat posed by the rift was UMNO’s loss of an unusual by-election in its traditional stronghold, the state of Johore Baru, Musa’s home state. Musa ally Shahrir Ahmad had resigned his UMNO seat in parliament and called a new election in defiance of Team A. Shahrir won handily and his victory margin of over 12,000 votes boded poorly for UMNO in a state sending 18 representatives to the next parliament (1990). The upset victory by Shahrir pointed to Johore’s loyalty to its native sons and Musa carried even greater local prestige. Having served previously as Minister of Education, Musa also had national support among teachers, a core UMNO constituency. A shift by Musa to the opposition bore the potential for country-wide repercussions among the electorate. By early October 1988 the disagreement had not been resolved and Musa physically distanced himself from UMNO, shifting to sit with the independent bloc in parliament.

Soon afterwards Mahathir reached out publicly to both Musa and Razaleigh, announcing:

I would like to invite Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Datuk Musa Hitam to be members of my Cabinet as Ministers without portfolio. This is a sincere invitation… it’s a step towards mending

Initially, Musa declined the offer. However, the following month a group called the Johore Malay Unity Forum, which Musa and Shahrir led, issued a six-point proposal for reconciling Mahathir’s offer with the claims upon UMNO of Musa supporters in Johore. The program provided for the reinstatement of former UMNO officials to their posts as branch and divisional heads. It also included “the automatic acceptance of former UMNO members” into the party. UMNO’s supreme council responded by accepting the unity forum’s proposal, conditional on recognition of the party leadership elected in 1987. A flood of 1300 Johoreans rejoined UMNO the following month and Musa publicly returned to the party on 31 January 1989. Musa stated his reasons were that Mahathir had “given in to quite a lot of suggestions and demands that have been put forward” (Lai Kwok Kin 1989). “Slowly but surely,” he reflected, “the (UMNO) leadership had taken a softer and softer line.”

Through negotiations from afar between himself and his estranged former deputy, Mahathir had succeeded in attracting Musa and his supporters back into the party, well before the next national parliamentary elections could threaten UMNO’s position. Although his hold on the party’s top post appeared vulnerable at points, Mahathir had accomplished a personnel shift he had sought since the 1986 parliamentary elections. His primary rivals were weakened while the party’s general cadre remained loyal. This significant level of elite solidarity, along with the return of Musa’s camp to the party, would prove critical to UMNO’s performance in the approaching elections. While UMNO was regrouping a broad set of political forces had joined together to challenge the ruling party.

Denied the UMNO title, Razaleigh and his partisans, formed a new party called Semangat ’46 (Sprit of ’46), a name that recalled UMNO’s explicitly pro-Malay origins. Despite losing those who had reaffiliated with UMNO, Razaleigh’s group still mounted the stiffest electoral challenge UMNO has faced since 1969. By cooperating with PAS and the DAP, Semangat ’46 built two electoral alliances against the UMNO-led National Front (NF), a rare convergence of opposition factions:

With the prospect of power dangling before their eyes, Malay and non-Malay leaders who had never worked together before found it possible to make compromises—albeit very limited ones—in the interest of defeating the NF... [Despite tensions between them,...] the parties were still able to nominate common candidates in all but one of the peninsular parliamentary seats [which comprise 132 of 180 seats in parliament] (Crouch 1996: 128).

Seeking Malay votes, PAS was glad to work with the more secularist Semangat, since the campaign provided the Islamist organization a chance to retailor its radical image from 1986, when PAS had advocated the creation of an Islamic state. Frustrated by their poor performance in that election, PAS leaders regarded an alliance with Semangat as the only logical alternative to a potential split of anti-establishment Malay votes between the two parties (Khong 1991b: 9).

Calling their partnership the Muslim Unity Movement (Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah) Semangat and PAS together sought votes among the country’s Malay majority, UMNO’s primary constituency. In addition, Semangat curried the support of other ethnic communities by cooperating with the DAP.

Semangat also allied with the DAP, and several smaller opposition parties, to form the People’s Concept (Gagasan Rakyat), which opened a second front against UMNO and the NF. The DAP and the other participating parties accepted a subordinate position to Semangat, the representative of Malay interests. In this way, People’s Concept resembled the NF as a Malay dominant interethnic alliance with the pragmatic goal of breaking the National Front’s two-thirds majority and establishing a two-coalition system (Khong 1991b: 11). “An opposition front offered not just the prospect of more opposition seats in parliament but even the glittering possibility of winning control of government” (Crouch 1992: 34). Covering the spectrum of UMNO’s political opponents, Semangat’s multiethnic coalition promised to succeed where less coordinated efforts had foundered. If ever there was a viable challenge to the decades of control by the dominant party and its partners, this was it. “Ever since the debacle in the 1969 elections, the ruling coalition had seemed quite unshakeable. However, in 1990, the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition appeared vulnerable” (Khong 1991a)

On 5 October 1990 Mahathir dissolved parliament and called new elections for the 20th and 21st of that month, allowing only a nine-day period for campaigning between the end of candidate registration and voting, an even briefer time span for the opposition to prepare than in 1986 (Khong 1991a: 178). “The short campaign period was again a tremendous advantage to the ruling coalition, given the fact that the leaders had already been on the campaign trail for months, and accorded wide publicity in the course of their ‘official’ duties” (Khong 1991b: 21). In
contrast, the opposition was confined to indoor meetings for publicizing their program.\(^{31}\) The National Front first focused upon broad cross-ethnic issues such as improving the general welfare of the country, but when one of the coalition’s constituent parties, largely supported by Christian Kadazans in the state of Sabah, withdrew from the NF, Mahathir’s team changed its approach. The Front then stressed ethnic and religious issues, portraying the opposition’s alliance as sympathetic to Christian interests over Muslim (Malay) goals. “In particular, the leader of Semangat ’46, Tengku [Prince] Razaleigh was projected as having ‘sold out’ the interests of the Muslim community in this bid for power by allowing himself to be used by the Christians” (Khong 1991b: 6).

UMNO’s control over the country’s media allowed the party to make extensive use of this “religious card,” discrediting Razaleigh on television and in print (Khong 1991b: 7). The media’s pro-government bias was one of the principal irregularities cited by a Commonwealth election observation team (Lai Kwok Kin 1990a). UMNO leaders also employed civil servants as campaign workers and offered farm subsidies and other state supports to key constituencies (Khong 1991b: 21-22). Finally, where indirect intervention failed, the regime could rely upon vote buying to win key races, a method unavailable to Semangat because of its relative lack of access to state resources (Khong 1991b: 42).

Against the political machine of UMNO and the NF, the opposition’s challenge proved weaker than expected (Crouch 1996: 127). While Mahathir appealed to his critics to return, the potential of Razaleigh’s movement to rival UMNO faded. “By winning back supporters of the Semangat 46,” Crouch points out, “UMNO was able to weaken the key component of the opposition front” (1992: 40). Although Semangat’s supporters still included “two surviving Prime Ministers, former chief ministers, and members of the royal households” the movement’s drain upon current UMNO elites had waned since the breakaway group’s inception. The overwhelming share of Razaleigh and Musa’s factions had reaffiliated, foremost among them Musa himself (Crouch 1996: 121). Further boosting UMNO’s position was the government’s recovery from its earlier economic woes. In 1990 Malaysia’s GDP growth reached a dynamic 9.4% (Khong 1991a: 179).

Semangat fielded candidates in sixty-one of the 180 single-member districts, more than any other opposition party but significantly less than UMNO, which ran eighty-six candidates. Final results gave Semangat only eight victories while UMNO took seventy-one seats (83% of those it contested). That outcome nearly halved Semangat’s modest parliamentary bloc of fifteen former UMNO members who had broken away after 1987 (Lai Kwok Kin 1990b). Because of

\(^{31}\) "Malaysia Sets Election Date as Opposition Accusations Fly," Ibid. 5 October.
Musa’s popularity in his home state of Johore Baru and his national stature as a former minister of education, there is reason to expect that his continued separation from UMNO would have shifted more races into the opposition’s bloc. The by-election victory of Shahrir and the Johore Unity forum attest to the area’s distaste for Mahathir and support for the dissidents. Indeed, even after Musa and his followers rejoined the party, campaign flyers with Mahathir’s picture were strategically taken down during the election so as to minimize the damage of Mahathir’s unpopularity among Johoreans. Instead of dealing electoral defeat for UMNO, Musa – by reaffiliating after the Johore Unity resolution and the restoration of political status to his assembled followers- enabled UMNO to reassert its electoral dominance. The NF won a 71% majority, maintaining the desired two-thirds majority, although below previous levels (Table 6 below) (Khong 1991a: 164).

Table 6: Results of Malaysia’s 1990 Parliamentary Elections by Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UMNO-led National Front</th>
<th>Semangat ‘46</th>
<th>PAS</th>
<th>DAP</th>
<th>PBS</th>
<th>Independents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
<td>Seats Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127 (71%)</td>
<td>8 (4.4%)</td>
<td>7 (3.9%)</td>
<td>20 (11%)</td>
<td>14 (7.8%)</td>
<td>4 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The defeat of many top Semangat figures, including its deputy president and a number of sitting MPs, reduced the breakaway faction’s chances of enduring independently (Khong 1991b: 41). Had Musa and his affiliates not rejoined the party, the evidence of politics in Johore during the 1987-1990 period indicates that state, and perhaps other parts of the country as well, would have gone against UMNO, bringing a national level shift in political influence. The party’s institutions for resolving conflict through the renewal of elite political status had proven critical to the survival of Mahathir’s regime.

**Party Decay in Iran and the Philippines**

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During their first years of rule, the coalitions of Leader Ali Khamenei in Iran and President Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines were cohesive and helped deny opposition candidates success in the elections held. They excluded challengers and the opposition posed little threat in the elections that followed. Without influential allies inside the regime, the opposition Militant Clerics Association (MRM) in Iran and People Power Party (LABAN) in the Philippines were unable to compete effectively. Parliamentary elections, in Iran in 1992 and in the Philippines in 1978, gave large majorities to the partisans of the ruling elite. Yet neither Khamenei nor Marcos provided robust institutional mechanisms for sealing their partisans’ allegiance through the protection of long-term elite status. In fact they had overseen the dismantlement of existing ruling parties, the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) and the Nationalist Party (NP), meaning their cohorts were bound by personal and informal ties rather than an overarching organizational structure.

When policy and personal disagreements emerged, political elites grew dissatisfied with the top leadership, ultimately defecting and promoting change publicly. Without assurance of their influence over national politics, prominent political figures feared exclusion by their peers. As the prospect of long-term marginalization grew, they began to promote an alternative agenda publicly. Elites unhappy with the direction of the political system and economy then defected to challenger movements, publicly criticized the leadership they had previously backed, and advocated change through the ballot box. Hashemi Rafsanjani led a cohort of pragmatic conservatives known as the Executives of Construction (Kargozoran-e Sazendegi) and Salvador Laurel brought former Nacionalistas into the United Nationalist Democratic Organization (Unido). These organizations benefited from the status and resources their founders carried and could contest the system of electoral controls. The Executives of Construction allied with the leftist Combatant Clerics Association to form the 23rd of May Front. Unido’s effort fueled a reinvigorated People Power Party. These movements then took over the presidency and parliament, transforming the shape of national politics so popular figures had a voice in government. Although these changes did not replace dictatorship with democracy, they broke the authoritarian regimes’ hold on elected institutions and offered an opportunity for further reforms. In Iran reformists won control of the presidency (1997) and parliament (2000), ushering in a new era of debate over the regime’s future, a political conflict between the (still-unelected) clerical bodies and the popularly supported sections of government. The Philippine opposition ousted Marcos from the presidency (1986) and then fought to regain civilian control of the military while establishing greater checks on the abuse of political power.

When dissatisfied elites defected from the coalition, spoke out publicly for reform, competed in elections, and aided marginalized opposition activists, the results were stunning.
Their legacy was more ambiguous. The electoral defeat of autocratic incumbents did not bring regime change. It enabled a process of meaningful contestation from within a system that had been much more restrictive, an opportunity for promoting further pluralism. From that point the opposition’s newly elected representatives could work to expand their influence over other state actors if they were willing to directly confront the remaining elements of the regime (Bermeo 1997: 318-319). In contrast, the result of opposition reticence was likely to be a tense equilibrium of split sovereignty between a popularly elected government and an autocratic assemblage of regular and paramilitary forces. Such was the situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran after the 2000 elections. Still, even after victorious coalitions of defectors and oppositionists subdue the security institutions, they may face repeated rebellions by disgruntled loyalists, as occurred seven times in the administration of Corazon Aquino (Thompson 1995: 169). Hence, the challenges for instituting polyarchy do not end with victory at the ballot box. The defeat of incumbents, often a major focus of democratization campaigns, can mark a substantial phase in “extrication from the authoritarian regime” (Przeworski 1991: 67), but does not in itself terminate autocratic rule.

Conclusion
As the field of authoritarian subtypes continues to grow, comparativists will be well-served by revisiting the core problem that occupied earlier democratization studies: Why do some governments remain autocratic while others develop more pluralist and more accountable systems? The au courant use of democratic forms to obscure authoritarian practices adds an interesting dimension to this old question, but the formulation of new typologies is not innately explanatory. Moreover, the above evidence indicates that a regime’s internal institutions (still) matter more for political durability than the adoption of multiparty elections and other externally-directed survival strategies. Quantitative analysis of 135 regimes during the third wave era found no significant impact of multiparty elections on the survival of authoritarianism. Rather, statistical tests pointed to the continued relevance of the institutions for managing ruling coalitions. Close inspection of four regimes illuminated the causal process by which ruling parties bring regime persistence. Egypt and Malaysia show that parties provide a site for the negotiation of competing elite interests and the long-term provision of agenda-setting influence. The National Democratic Party and United Malays National Organization mended internal rifts that would otherwise have exposed the regime to societal opposition challenges. In Iran and the Philippines conflict escalated, rather than subsiding, because leaders had abandoned party institutions. In the absence of regular mechanisms for diffusing losses across factions and over time, disputes threatened not only both leaders’ material interests, but also their influence in national level agenda setting. The
choice for dissenters was stark: accept marginalization within the regime or bid for influence from the outside. The subsequent collaboration of reluctant reformers and embattled oppositionists created a viable counter coalition and an opportunity for regime change that has not emerged in the ruling party regimes.

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