REPLICATING HOWARD AND ROESSLER (2006) WITH COMPARISON TO NELDA MEASURE OF ELECTORAL COMPETITION

In their study of non-founding competitive authoritarian elections between 1990 and 2002, Marc Howard and Philip Roessler ask whether the existence of a broad opposition coalition makes what they call a "liberalizing electoral outcome" more likely in competitive authoritarian elections. A liberalizing outcome is, loosely, a significant episode of political liberalization such as the iconic loss of power by Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic to a united political opposition. They examine the set of competitive authoritarian elections between 1990 and 2002, and use a combination of Polity and Freedom House rankings to identify the relevant universe of elections that are included in their study. They find that opposition coalitions strongly increase the probability of a liberalizing electoral outcome.

The authors' main theoretical insight is that unity among the opposition, all else equal, is more likely to bring down an authoritarian leader or secure a democratic breakthrough within competitive authoritarian regimes. This argument is supported with case-study evidence, which documents how a united opposition front is likely to score a dramatic upset against steep electoral odds. We do not dispute the authors' findings for their specific universe of cases. Because the study relies on Polity and Freedom House to define the universe of competitive authoritarian elections, we use their research as a tool to evaluate the empirical consequences of our alternative measure of competitive authoritarian regimes. We chose the Howard and Roessler study in part because they go much further than other scholars in transparently operationalizing competitive authoritarian elections, and in coding such events using systematic criteria.[1] They also acknowledge and cite recent criticism of Polity and Freedom House, and highlight known problems with "conceptualization, measurement, and aggregation" in these datasets, but justify this use of such indicators to measure competitive authoritarian elections because there "are as of yet not better alternatives that cover countries around the world annually" (368).

Howard and Roessler base their criteria for competitive authoritarian elections on Levitsky and Way's conceptual work on the topic, which includes elections that: (a) are not hegemonic in that contestation is allowed; and (b) are not democratic in that competition is flawed in some way. This measure is also close to the conceptual definition of electoral authoritarianism outlined by Andreas Schedler, although Levitsky and Way (2002) and Diamond (2002) suggest that the category of electoral authoritarian elections contains both competitive authoritarian elections and hegemonic authoritarian elections. In both competitive and electoral authoritarian elections, electoral fraud or other unfair practices may prevent the opposition from claiming a victory that would be theirs if voter preferences were accurately translated into electoral outcomes.

We add the NELDA competition screen as an alternative lower bound for competitive authoritarian elections, and combine the NELDA competition screen with two measures of democracy: using the measure of democracy preferred by Howard and Roessler and using the

[1] Brownlee (2009) represents a very recent and similarly rigorous effort to distinguish between regimes using combinations of existing data.

ACLP data. By using two separate measures of democracy, we show that the empirical consequences of using the NELDA measure of electoral competition are not a function of using an alternative measure of democracy.

The universe of competitive authoritarian elections changes substantially when the NELDA competition screen, rather than FH/Polity, are used to divide authoritarian elections from those that allow competition. Table 1 combines NELDA with the ACLP definition of democracy to make the comparison clear. Using the Freedom House (FH)/Polity criteria (as both the bottom and top cutoff points, where bottom represents non-competition elections and top is democratic elections), Howard and Roessler define a universe of 50 cases.[2] The NELDA/ACLP criteria for "competitive authoritarian elections" identify 60 cases, yet the two sets agree on only 22 elections.

[Table 1 about here]

In addition to employing different measurement of the presence of competition and democracy, Howard and Roessler use an outcome-based measure of performance to exclude elections in which the opposition performed poorly. Following Levitsky and Way, they define all elections in which the incumbent wins by more than 70% as hegemonic elections, and therefore exclude them from their study. Conceptually, we argue that such cases should be included in the competitive authoritarian category when the elections are contested, even if the government wins overwhelmingly. However, because this is a distinct point, we report separate models in order to highlight the consequences of variation in universe of cases (and therefore the variation in results) based on different measures of competitive authoritarianism.

Much of the disagreement between the methods of measuring competitive authoritarian elections are cases that the NELDA data code as potentially competitive yet the FH/Polity criteria exclude as authoritarian elections or elections without competition. There are 22 such cases. Of these, the incumbent was replaced in seven elections which are excluded by measures derived from Freedom House and/or Polity scores. For example, the Kenyan 1997 presidential election is not counted as competitive authoritarian by Howard and Roessler because they disqualify cases where Freedom House political rights are at their "worst" value of 7. In this case, however, the NELDA data defines the election as allowing competition and therefore assigns the case to the set of competitive authoritarian elections. As another example, in the 1995 elections in Algeria, the incumbent gained 61% of the vote yet the FH/Polity rule excludes it as a non-competitive regime. Of the cases excluded from Howard and Roessler's study because the regimes scored too low on either Freedom House or Polity scales, Table 1 shows that the incumbent's vote share was less than 70% in seven elections, providing further evidence that aggregate regime type measures are poor proxies for the potential for electoral competition, even if disagrees with our conceptual point that electoral outcomes should not be used to measure the potential competition.

[2] The democracy threshold or upper bound is a FH political rights score of 2 or less or a Polity score of 6 or higher; the autocracy threshold or lower bound is a score of -8 or below on the Polity scale, or 7 on the Freedom House scale.

We replicate Howard and Roessler's universe of cases and results on Model 1 in Table 1, and use this model as a baseline to evaluate how different concepts and measures provided by NELDA influence the results reported in Model 1. To make the comparison clear, we followed Howard and Roessler's coding rules and estimation procedures in performing the analysis unless otherwise stated.[3] Beginning with the unconstrained NELDA list of election events, we excluded events that do not allow minimal opposition competition, selected presidential elections in presidential systems and parliamentary elections in parliamentary systems, and excluded "founding" elections. In order to replicate the coding of founding elections, we used two other variables from the NELDA data. Elections are considered founding if they are the country's first multiparty elections or if regular elections were suspended before the current election, as defined in the online codebook.

Models 2-5 report our findings. Across all four models, the NELDA competition screen is used instead of the FH/Polity rankings to distinguish between contested elections and non-competitive authoritarian elections. Models 2-5 differ from each other in the measure used to exclude democratic elections, whether elections are excluded based on poor opposition party performance, and the precise list of founding elections.

Model 2 uses FH/Polity to exclude democratic elections, and therefore uses the same criteria for competitive authoritarian elections as in Howard and Roessler (Model 1), except that the NELDA data is used to exclude elections without competition rather than FH/Polity. Like Howard and Roessler, Model 2 excludes overwhelming victories. Based on 74 observations, the results show a positive coefficient for the *Opposition Coalition* variable, but the variable does not achieve conventional levels of statistical significance. Its size is substantially different from the coefficient reported in the original study, suggesting that opposition coalitions make less of a difference for the odds of a breakthrough when NELDA data are used. Model 2 does, however, support their finding that opposition mobilization is significantly related to liberalizing electoral outcomes.

In Model 3, we adjust the set of founding elections to reflect nine cases that Howard and Roessler code as founding elections but the NELDA criteria do not code as such because they are not the country's first multiparty elections nor elections that followed the suspension of regular elections.[4] Model 3 replicates Model 2 without these nine cases, and shows that when the set of

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[3] In the interest of space, we refer readers to Howard and Roessler's article for variable definitions and sources. Most of their variables are from widely available datasets, and we used these original sources and followed Howard and Roessler's coding rules. Two variables, *Broad Opposition Coalition* (the main independent variable) and *Incumbent Turnover*, were coded by Howard and Roessler for the 50 elections in their study. We were able to use NELDA to derive a measure of *Incumbent Turnover* but we had no suitable variables in NELDA to help with *Opposition Coalition*. To address this issue, we followed the coding rules outlined in their codebook, and trained research assistants to use their rules. We then assigned research assistants to all cases included in Models 1-5, including those already coded. The recoded cases were used to test inter-coder reliability between the two sets of data, and show that our codings were nearly identical to those used by Howard and Roessler. Their codings are used in the analysis.

[4] Private correspondence with the authors established that these cases are: Algeria 1995, Cambodia 1998, Central African Republic 1992, Congo 1992, Ethiopia 1995, Fiji 2001, Guinea-Bissau 1999, Niger 1999, Nigeria 1999. An important part of the divergent coding stems from how elections that occur in the immediate aftermath of a coup

founding elections is adjusted to conform to the list favored by Howard and Roessler, the magnitude of *Opposition Coalition* variable increases, and is still shy of statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. More importantly, the size of the effect is substantively different from the original study. Although Model 1 estimates that the presence of opposition coalitions increase the probability of an upset to .8, Model 3 estimates an expected increase of .35 (the baseline when *Opposition Coalition = 0* is comparable in both models).[5] Most of the change between Model 1 and Models 2 and 3 results from using NELDA to identify the set of election events more accurately (see Table 1), and moving away from reliance on FH/Polity to infer potential electoral competition. In every other respect, Model 3 includes cases based on the criteria favored by Howard and Roessler: a definition of democracy based on FH/Polity, a set of non-founding elections per their preferred list, and excluding cases where the opposition performed badly. Thus, Model 3's results are the closest to Howard and Roessler's study, but do not confirm a strong link between opposition coalitions and liberalizing electoral outcomes, and underscore the point that there are substantive consequences to how competitive authoritarian elections are defined.

Model 4 moves away from relying on Polity/Freedom House entirely, instead using ACLP to exclude democratic elections from the set of competitive elections. Opposition coalitions are no longer positively associated with democratic breakthroughs. One should note that ACLP data are sometimes accused of "backwards" coding – observing a liberalizing outcome at time *t* and then using that information to code the political regime at time *t*-1 as democratic on the basis of the outcome at time *t*. If the charge of backward coding of ACLP data has any merit, it might make for an unfair test of the Howard and Roessler study - precisely those elections that result in liberalizing outcomes may be at higher risk of being backward coded as taking place in democracies, leading to attrition in the number of cases with liberalizing outcomes and possible bias in the estimated coefficients. In fairness to ALCP, the project's authors defend their coding rules by arguing that they only code cases retroactively when the formal rules of the game did not change between time *t* and *t*-1. By this logic, the ACLP coding convention should not be an issue in this study. We have examined the data carefully and find only two or three cases where backwards coding is plausible, leading us to conclude that ACLP is still a preferable alternative to the conceptual and measurement problems in FH/Polity.

Model 5 moves further away from outcome-based measures of electoral competition, and closer to our proposed conceptual definition. Model 5 includes elections even when the government won an overwhelming victory (those elections where the government won by more than 70% of the vote but allowed opposition parties to compete in the election). The results change somewhat in this model relative to Model 4, although they continue to show a statistically insignificant relationship between opposition coalitions and liberalizing electoral

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against an elected leader are treated: NELDA does not count those as founding, whereas Howard and Roessler would do. We do not believe that this issue is straightforward or settled.

[5] In Model 1, holding all else equal at median values and changing the *Opposition Coalition* variable from zero to one increases the probability of a liberalizing electoral outcome from .14 to .86. In Model 2, the same simulated change is from .15 to .35.

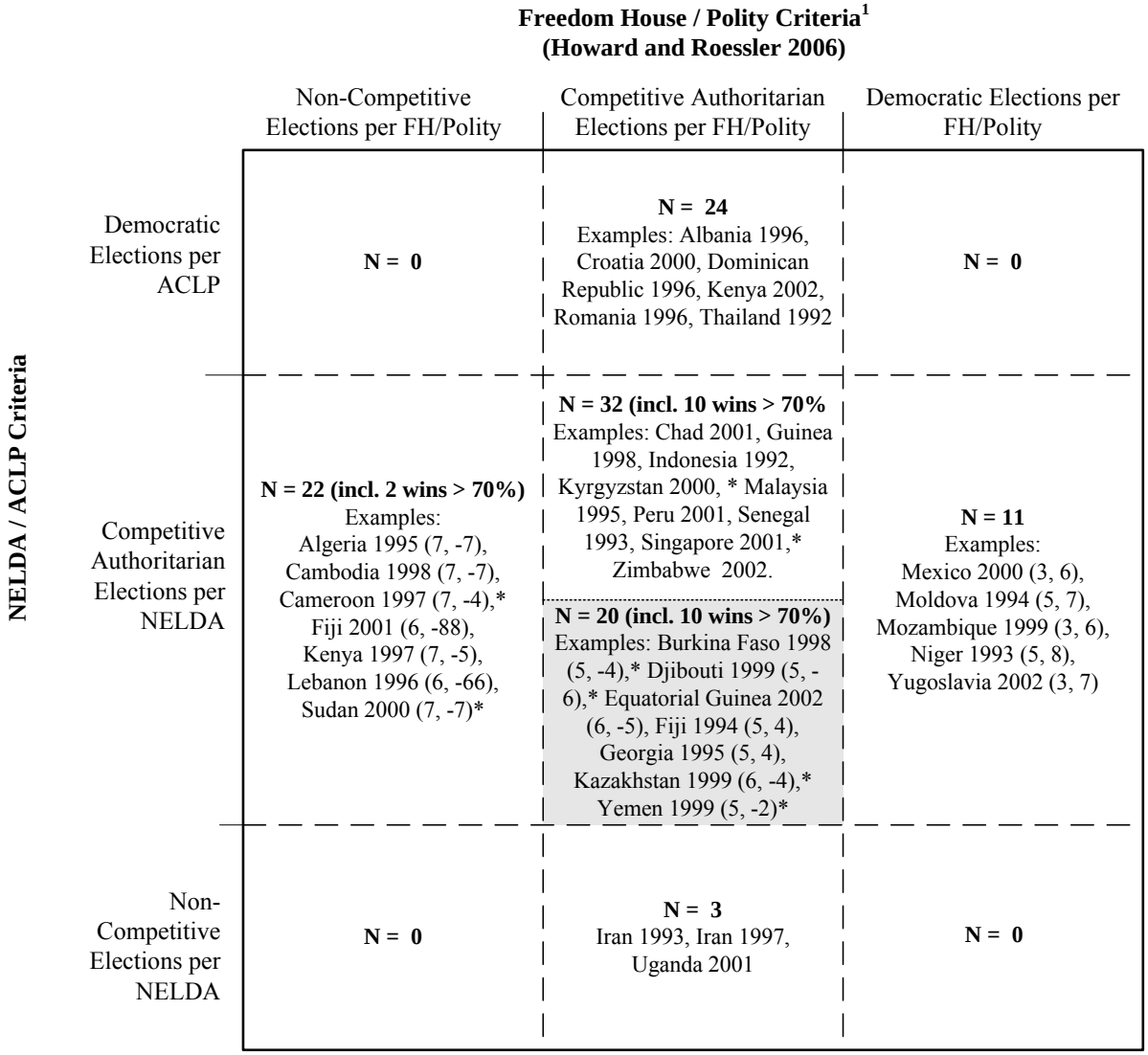
outcomes, and the sign on *Opposition Coalition* continues to be in the opposite direction. Model 5 confirms two auxiliary findings reported by Howard and Roessler: incumbent turnover and opposition mobilization are associated with increased likelihood of a liberalizing electoral outcome. Model 5 also suggests the additional finding that liberalizing outcomes are less likely in elections in parliamentary systems (possibly due to greater incentives for programmatic rather than personalist parties).

At the very least, these results suggest that determining whether opposition coalitions are a key factor in bringing about liberalizing electoral outcomes is sensitive to the criteria for defining competitive authoritarian elections. The significance and magnitude of the effect of opposition coalitions is not robust to alternative election-based measurement of competitive authoritarian elections. It is sufficient to drop reliance on Polity and Freedom House as measures of non-competitive elections for the estimated effect of *Opposition Coalition* to decrease substantially in size and significance.

[Table 2 about here]

Our results do not disprove Howard and Roessler's argument that opposition coalitions play an important role in democratizing breakthroughs in competitive authoritarian regimes. Much can prevent precise estimations of such an effect, including the un-modeled existence of conditional relationships, the non-randomness of the strategic decision to form a coalition, and the strategic decision of the incumbent government to allow such a coalition to form. Our intuition is that the relationship is conditional on other election-level characteristics, although we maintain that outcome-based measures of electoral competition and reliance on Freedom House and Polity to exclude non-competitive or hegemonic elections introduce unnecessary complications and potential bias into research on hybrid regimes.

Table 1: Comparing Criteria for Competitive Authoritarian Elections, 1990-2002



Note: When parenthesis follow the country year, they include the Freedom House score and the Polity score.

[1]In Howard and Roessler (2006), elections are considered competitive authoritarian elections if they occur in a country with a Polity score that is ≥ -8 and ≤ 6 (where -10 is autocratic and 10 is democratic) and which have a Freedom House score that is ≥ 2 and ≤ 6 (where 1 is democratic and 7 is autocratic). "Founding" elections and elections in which the government wins 70% of the vote or more are excluded.

*Denotes elections in which the government won with 70% of the vote or more, which are excluded in Models 1-4.

Denotes elections that meet the Polity/Freedom House criteria but that were not identified in their study for unspecified reasons.

Table 2: Binary Logit of Liberalizing Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Elections, 1990-2002. Comparing Results with Samples Drawn from Freedom House, Polity, ACLP, and NELDA

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**
Electoral Competition Data Source	FH/Polity	NELDA	NELDA	NELDA	NELDA
Democracy Data Source	FH/Polity	FH/Polity	FH/Polity	ACLP	ACLP
Founding Elections Data Source		NELDA		NELDA	NELDA
Including elections when vote share of winner > 70%	No	No	No	No	Yes
Opposition Coalition	7.72*	0.90	1.56	-0.53	-0.13
	(3.03)	(0.64)	(0.81)	(0.95)	(0.87)
Opposition Mobilization	0.91*	0.34*	0.50**	0.49*	0.57**
	(0.4)	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.21)	(0.21)
Incumbent Turnover	3.15*	0.43	-0.05	1.18	2.16*
	(1.51)	(0.73)	(0.95)	(1.09)	(1.01)
Economic Growth	0.33	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.02
	(0.24)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Foreign Direct Investment	-0.1	-0.03	0.01	-0.06	-0.02
	(0.31)	(0.07)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Foreign Aid	0.01	-0.01	-0.00	0.00	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Parliamentarism	-3.07	-1.96*	-1.98	-2.35	-2.74*
	(2.18)	(0.91)	(1.20)	(1.29)	(1.23)
Regime Openness	-1.04	0.02	-0.76	0.83	0.83
	(0.99)	(0.35)	(0.46)	(0.48)	(0.43)
Prior Liberalizing Change	-1.38	0.06	-0.45	-0.27	-0.16
	(1.73)	(0.66)	(0.82)	(0.93)	(0.87)
Constant	-1.33	-1.40	1.37	-5.83*	-7.09**
	(5.24)	(1.75)	(2.14)	(2.64)	(2.48)
N	50	74	65	60	82

*p < .05; **p < .01. Note: Table entries are regression coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses. The dependent variable is whether or not a country experienced a liberalizing electoral outcome (LEO).