Survival Through Strength: How Strong Party Organizations Help Authoritarian Regimes Survive

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Abstract

Why do some authoritarian regimes with parties outlive regimes with similar institutions? The institutional turn in comparative authoritarianism has provided a rich literature on how institutions help authoritarian regimes endure. Previous models may explain how party regimes survive longer than non-civilian or personalized regimes, but more needs to be done to explain heterogeneity in the survival rates of regimes with institutions. This paper does this by proposing a theory of how the organizational strength of parties plays a crucial role in regime survival. Strong parties are better able to deliver survival enhancing benefits – such as constraining elites and mobilizing mass support – than weaker parties. To test this hypothesis, I develop a new index of authoritarian party strength which uses data on the permanency of the party's national organization, the breadth of local branches, control of candidate selection, the types of societal linkages, and the level of control over subnational governments. With this new index I provide evidence that all authoritarian regimes with stronger parties are more likely to stave off regime failure than regimes with weaker parties and that this effect is independent of the type of regime.

Introduction

Why do some authoritarian regimes with political institutions, such as parties, survive longer than others with similar institutions? Twenty years ago Geddes (1999b) spurred the institutional turn of comparative authoritarianism (Pepinsky, 2014) by showing that party-based regimes[1] survive longer, on average, than military or personalistic regimes. Since her pioneering work, several scholars have advanced our understanding of authoritarian regimes by theorizing various ways in which party mechanisms facilitate longer survival for these regimes.

While regimes with parties survive longer, on average, than those without, not all authoritarian regimes with parties are effective at staving off dissent and surviving in the short run. For example, Kwame Nkrumah's CPP in Ghana only held power for a few years before facing dissent and being ousted from power. Yet in other cases, such as UMNO's long rule in Malaysia, party regimes have remained in power for decades. Both these cases have been coded as party regimes by certain scholars,[2] but why was it that Nkrumah's party in Ghana failed to solve ruling dilemmas as effectively as UMNO had? One explanation for the disparity between the two is the strength of these parties. Malaysia's UMNO has an extremely robust organization penetrating deep into Malaysian society while the CPP in Ghana was a far weaker organization – lacking deep roots in society and the ability to constrain elites. Thus, in the case of the CPP, institutions were insufficient to enable the regime's survival.

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[1]Geddes identifies party regimes as those in which "access to political office and control over policy are dominated by one party, though other parties may legally exist and compete in elections" (pg. 121).

[2]See Geddes et al. (2014)

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Without a robust party apparatus at his disposal, Nkrumah couldn't solve crucial ruling dilemmas which eventually led to his fall from power after a short tenure.

The literature on comparative authoritarian institutionalism has offered several models which may explain how political institutions, such as parties, extend the life of authoritarian regimes. In these models, parties may extend the life of the regime by co-opting other elites (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Gandhi, 2008; Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014), producing a stronger coalition by increasing the costs of defection (Geddes, 1999a,b; Brownlee, 2007, 2008; Frantz and Ezrow, 2011), providing credible commitments and reducing monitoring problems between the executive and other elites (Magaloni, 2008; Svolik, 2009; Gehlbach and Keefer, 2011; Svolik, 2012; Boix and Svolik, 2013), managing elite promotion and candidate selection (Blaydes, 2008; Svolik, 2011; Reuter and Turovsky, 2014), or by providing a robust party organization organization (Smith, 2005), which can be linked to mass society to manage elections (Solinger, 2001; Magaloni, 2006), promote collective party interests over the individual (Nathan, 2003; Levitsky and Way, 2012, 2013), and distribute rents (Geddes, 2008; Greene, 2010).

This literature has offered several models which may explain the disparity of survival rates between regime types, but are not as well suited to explain the variation that exists between cases such as the CPP in Ghana and UMNO in Malaysia. This has been the case because these models rely on assumptions that parties are capable of solving ruling dilemmas and that their presence in the regime is sufficient to provide these functions. Indeed, many institutional explanations lack a clear theoretical explanation for variation in the efficacy of these institutions which can then be linked

to variation in regime survival rates.[3] In this paper I propose a model of how the organizational strength of authoritarian parties influences regime survival.

In brief, I argue that as the organizational strength of parties increases, the ability of regimes to mobilize both elites and mass society in support of the regime's goals increases as well. I provide evidence for this claim by generating a new indicator of authoritarian party strength using data on parties from the Varieties of Democracy Project. This new measure accounts for the permanency of national party organizations, the presence of local party branches, control over candidate selection, whether the party uses clientelistic or programmatic links, and the level of sub-national partisan control. With this data I show that as the strength of the party increases the odds of a regime's survival inccreases and that this effect operates independent of regime type.

This paper contributes to this now established literature on comparative authoritarianism by offering a theoretical model and new empirical evidence of authoritarian organizational party strength. This is a necessary step forward as it addresses previously unexplained heterogeneity in regime survival and provides a way forward for scholars of authoritarianism to not rely as heavily on assumptions of authoritarian party capacity. Like Meng (2015) and Self and Hicken (2018), this article argues that the strength of authoritarian political parties varies and should explain various outcomes concerning authoritarian regimes. I demonstrate that stronger institutions allow regimes to order and manage complex societies (Huntington, 2006) better than

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[3]For example, the strength of Geddes (1999b) theoretical model lies in explaining how incentives vary *between* types of authoritarian regimes but isn't clear on how there is variation *within* regime types.

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their counterparts with weaker parties. Without a robust party organization, these regimes struggle to penetrate mass society and induce elites to deemphasize their personal interests for that of the party or regime. This paper also identifies a critical role of authoritarian rule at the local level in increasing the survival of regimes – a factor which is often overlooked in a field of research which frequently focuses on elites or mass society.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I review the literature on comparative authoritarian institutions and highlight some of the weakness in this literature. Following this review, I introduce my theory of how party strength influences the odds of regimes survival. I then outline my research strategy, operationalize key variables, and present results of various statistical specifications of my theoretical model. I then discuss the results and conclude.

Comparative Authoritarian Institutionalism

Since the pioneering work by Geddes (1999a,b), several scholars of authoritarianism have offered models explaining the ability of party-based regimes to survive longer than other regime types. For some, legislatures and parties are mechanisms created by an autocrat and the ruling coalition in order to generate credible commitments – ensuring that the autocrat's actions do not deviate too far from the ruling coalition's preferences (Magaloni, 2008; Svolik, 2009; Gehlbach and Keefer, 2011; Svolik, 2012; Boix and Svolik, 2013). Another mechanism frequently used to explain the relationship between party-based regimes and authoritarian regime survival is the role

parties play in co-opting elites that would otherwise choose not to be part of the rul-
ing party. In these models, the party's control over the distribution of rents ensures
that elites toe the line of the regime (Geddes, 1999a,b; Brownlee, 2007, 2008; Gandhi
and Przeworski, 2007; Gandhi, 2008; Greene, 2010; Frantz and Ezrow, 2011; Svolik,
2011; Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014). Additionally, some have posited that parties
increase the longevity of these regimes by inducing elite cohesion through managing
promotion and selection into the regime. Like the rent seeking models, partisan con-
trol over promotion and access to the electoral arena spurs political entrepreneurs
to align with the regime due to their rational interests (Blaydes, 2008; Svolik, 2011;
Reuter and Turovsky, 2014).

These models rely on a rational logic in which institutions, such as parties, struc-
ture payoffs and leave actors the choice to join the regime or defect. Because the
institutions are under the control of the regime, they structure the payoffs so that
elites are more likely to support the regime – increasing its survival by reducing elite
defection against those in power. However, if institutions are created by dictators in
order to solve ruling dilemmas, it is the dictator, not the institution, that is causing
greater regime durability (Riker, 1980; Pepinsky, 2014).

Another weakness of this approach is that these models neglect the party as
an organization and assume that parties are equally capable of solving these ruling
dilemmas due to the rules of the game. As Meng (2015) and Self and Hicken (2018)
argue, the strength of these parties varies across cases and we should not assume that
all parties can generate credible commitments or control the distribution of rents with
equal effectiveness. For this reason, the party organization should be more central

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in this debate. Others have posited how parties as organizations facilitate higher survival rates for these regimes. For example, Magaloni (2006) demonstrates how the party machine of the PRI in Mexico was crucial in generating mass support for the regime over decades of rule.

For others, parties which face constraints (such as conflict) build more robust, durable organizations which reduce factionalism and increase norms which bind elites to the party (Nathan, 2003; Smith, 2005; Levitsky and Way, 2012, 2013). According to this line of reasoning, parties by themselves do not generate elite cohesion. Instead, parties need to be institutionalized and strong to generate the level of cohesion necessary to sustain authoritarian rule. These works generate support for their hypotheses by pointing to the presence of historical events, such as revolutions, as evidence of a strong party. This means, however, they rely on the presence of an antecedent revolution as a proxy for there being a strong party rather than directly measuring the strength of the party.

Because authoritarian regimes are notoriously difficult to study due to a lack of transparency, the field has had to rely on either deep qualitative work, formal modeling, and or large-n panels created by categorical coding of these regimes. Even though the qualitative work provides rich data on these regimes, the mechanisms identified are not easily generalizable. For example, Geddes (2008) critiques Magaloni (2008) for using the PRI as an example in which parties dampened intra-elite conflict following the Mexican Revolution but the type of conflict was unique to the Mexican case and cannot be seen in other cases. The use of individual case studies also often results in authors identifying several potential mechanisms as explanations for

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the durability of the one regime under study without the ability to see how these mechanisms perform in other cases.

For works which try to draw general inferences, the difficulty of obtaining data on authoritarian political institutions has led several analyses to rely on categorical coding of the composition of institutions in these regimes. Works such as Geddes et al. (2014), Wahman et al. (2013), or Cheibub et al. (2010) have made significant contributions to the study of authoritarianism with their data which allowed large scale, systematic comparisons of authoritarian regimes possible. These datasets, however, have opened the door to authors falling prey to observational equivalence where the presence of an institutions has been used as a proxy for multiple mechanisms. Some authors have inferred that one mechanism (e.g. credible commitment) is causing the outcome, when the same coding is used as evidence for another (e.g. co-optation) – leaving authors to rely on strong assumptions about what parties do in these regimes.[4]

In this paper, I argue that authoritarian party strength increases regime durability. I outline specific ways in which the party organization can solve authoritarian ruling dilemmas and improve the odds of regime survival. I then use new data on party organizations to measure and statistically model these specific party characteristics and evaluate how they correlate with regime survival.

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[4]For example, Frantz and Kendall-Taylor (2014) argue that co-optation allows autocrats to draw out the opposition and manage them. However, they measure co-optation by the presence of a party in the regime despite the other mechanisms this measure may be capturing (e.g. credible commitments or control over career advancement).

Durability through Strength

How can stronger parties enable longer survival rates for authoritarian regimes? The theory developed herein does not solely focus on party regimes. Rather, I focus on the party as a distinct actor in a regime – whether the party is the dominant actor in the regime or not.[5] Many regimes boast political parties even if the party is subordinated to other actors such as the regime leader or the military. For example, Indonesia's Golkar was subordinate to the military for much of the New Order yet still played a key role in organizing civilian elites and providing mass support for the regime. This means that partisan mechanisms which may extend the life of a regime may be playing a role so long as there is a party present – whether that party is a dominant actor or subordinate to other actors.

Previous work by Geddes et al. (2014) has sought to measure institutions by categorizing these regimes into types. By coding these regimes in categories, including hybrid types, Geddes et al. (2014) laid the foundation for scholars to begin identifying the role institutions played in the behavior of these regimes. However, because typologies require coders to strictly delineate categories, heterogeneity in certain characteristics of the cases, such as their strength, may not be conceptualized and measured with this approach. Because parties are present in various types of authoritarian regimes we should examine the capacity of these parties to make use

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[5]Some models in comparative authoritarianism require that the party be the dominant actor within the regime for the positive benefits of parties to be in play. The conceptualization of a party regime put forth in Geddes (1999b) requires that a party be the primary actor in determining promotions within the regime as well as policies enacted by the government. Thus, any empirical exercise that uses the Geddes' tripartite typology as a measure of their theoretical model assumes that party-based mechanisms are only functioning in regimes where the party is the dominant actor.

of regime-extending tools available to them.

An organizational-centric model focuses on the capacity of these parties to control career advancement of partisans, whip elites into line, manage elections, and develop roots into mass society. Using data from the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem) I generate a new index of autocratic party strength (explanation of this index to follow) and plot the distribution of party strength across regime types. Figure 1 shows that the strength of parties varies across regimes coded by Geddes et al. (2014). We learn from Figure 1 that parties of varying strengths are found in each regime type and that there is overlap in their distribution. This shows that, for the most part, the coding by Geddes et al. (2014) largely identifies that party regimes have stronger parties, but the typological approach fails to capture the *distribution* of the strength of these parties *within* and *between* these typologies.

This also demonstrates that parties are found in all types of regimes – even in monarchies. It may seem unintuitive that parties exists in monarchies, but this is the case in a few circumstances. This was the case in the Egyptian monarchy where the Wafd incorporated land-owners into the regime at the time. Thus, the Wafd may have facilitated the regimes survival prior to the coup by the Free Officer's Movement – yet is unaccounted for in an approach with strictly defined typologies.

Given that parties exist across the spectrum of regime types, how can the organizational strength of parties generate longer lifespans for authoritarian regimes? Parties are political bodies which function to order society in both democratic and authoritarian contexts (Huntington, 2006). They do so by using their organization to coordinate behavior amongst and between elites and mass society. While parties
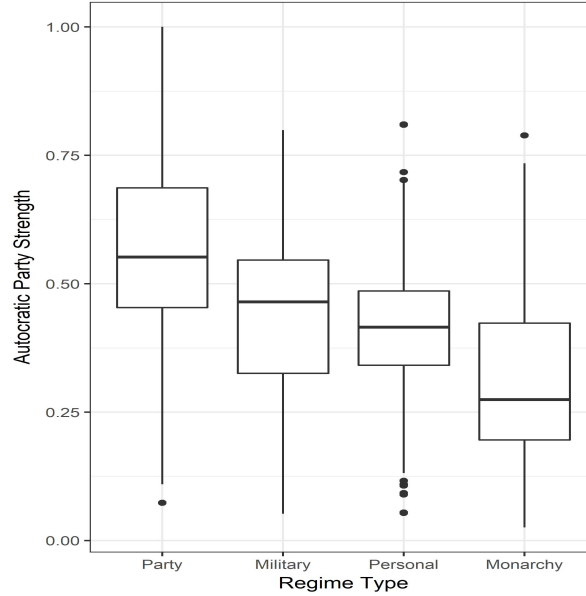
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Figure 1: Distribution of Authoritarian Party Strength by Regime Type

can function in this way, they are not automatically endowed with the capacity to do this. Indeed, the breadth and complexity of partisan organizations varies dramatically across cases with some parties boasting well-developed organizations that penetrate deep into society while others merely function as window dressing.[6]

Building on the intuition of institutionalization put forth in Huntington (2006), I define a strong party as an organization that is able to manage a complex portfolio of objectives at various levels of government. I define a strong party this way because it is applicable in the authoritarian context, where parties do not necessarily have to

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[6]Throughout this section, I refer to Malaysia's UMNO to provided qualitative evidence for the mechanisms outlined. I select UMNO because it functions as a most likely case and serves as a strong illustrative case for the mechanisms proposed. UMNO was in power from the time of independence in 1957 to when it lost power in 2018. Unlike some authoritarian parties, UMNO was not simply created by an autocrat. Instead, UMNO was created by pro-independence activists and established deep organizational roots in Malaysian society.

perform well electorally to be considered strong or institutionalized.[7] This definition also focuses on the strength of the party at multiple levels. A strong party in an authoritarian regime must be able to do more than pass legislation at the national level or serve as a rubber stamp for the head of the regime. Instead, a strong party is one that is able to handle a myriad of tasks, from passing legislation and acting cohesively at the national level, to linking to and mobilizing mass and civil society. This requires an organization that is able to coordinate the behavior of cadres at various levels of government and across different functions.

How may parties lead to greater regime survival whether or not the party is the dominant actor (i.e. coded as a party regime) in the regime? First, ruling a polity through authoritarian means requires a regime which can manage its own territory. A territorially expansive party provides a regime with an organization that can extend its reach into society that is spread throughout the territory. Thus, with a party present in most of the territory, the regime has the ability to establish roots throughout society. Should the regime lack a territorially robust party, the ruling party can only penetrate a more narrow portion of society – potentially weakening the base of mass support for the party and/or limiting its ability to monitor society in the periphery.

The benefits of a territorially expansive party can be seen in the case of UMNO

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[7]Here, I choose to set aside the conceptualization of institutionalization developed by Levitsky (1998) because of Levitsky's concept of value infusion. For Levitsky (1998), institutionalized parties are those where the individuals place greater value in the interests of the party than their own. While this certainly may be the case in strong parties, I focus instead on the strength of the party organization rather than the strength of individual's attachments to the organization. I do this for conceptual parsimony but also because value infusion is difficult to measure quantitatively for a large number of cases.

in Malaysia. As a party, UMNO boasted an expansive party organization with approximately 3,500 local branches scattered throughout Malaysia's territory with most branches having several hundred members (Case, 1996). These local branches allowed UMNO to have an active presence at a grass-roots level throughout Malaysia. This presence provided UMNO with a broad coalition – meaning UMNO did not have to rely on a narrow societal sector (solely urban workers or rural peasants) to shore up its rule.

Having a territorially expansive party, however, may not be sufficient for the party to be strong. This party must also be organizationally complex (Huntington, 2006, pgs. 17-21) and able to manage a diverse set of roles. The mere presence of a party office that is vacant more often than not does little to serve the regime. Whether a party can effectively wield its territorial reach to boost mass support will be dependent upon its central organization. As Huntington (2006) argues, organizationally complex institutions are able to handle managing several various tasks – including coordinating local efforts. This wouldn't be possible without a permanent national organization that functions on a continual basis rather than ramping up its presence in the run up to elections. Instead, permanent national organizations are able to coordinate the affairs of local offices, recruit new candidates, and manage party business on a day to day basis. A party with only a shell of a national party organization, on the other hand, lacks the ability to do this on behalf of the regime.

UMNO has been able to make good use of its territorially presence with a strong hierarchal organization that works to coordinate activities across the territory. UMNO's branches are organized into 165 divisions which select a cadre into

leadership and a committee which organizes and manages the party within the division (Case, 1994, 1996). The divisional leaders worked with those in the permanent central party to coordinate party goals and behavior. Thus, UMNO's central party apparatus was able to make use of its deep presence throughout Malaysia and perform critical tasks for its long survival.

What are some of these tasks? One key task to building popular support for the regime may include distributing clientelistic goods. Using a party organization that reaches throughout society, these authoritarian parties can distribute cash or other goods in exchange for support for the regime – one aspect which helped Mexico's PRI to shore up popular support (Magaloni, 2006). On the other hand, deep roots in society may also provide party leadership with local information that helps them craft economic programs which boost popular support. This was the case in Malaysia where delegates tied national economic programs and patronage to local needs. For example, elites often crafted broad developmental programs but also gave party loyalists direct control over local developmental programs or rewarded them with preferential treatment by the state (Crouch, 1996).

In a similar vein, the regime can use its party organization to mobilize mass support – especially in elections (Solinger, 2001). Having local offices throughout the polity boosts the party's ability to drive up turnout in favor of the regime. For example, the territorial presence of Golkar throughout the Indonesian archipelago was used to meet specific electoral quotas (Crouch, 2007, pg. 265) for the regime and helped the regime drive up its electoral advantage. Likewise, UMNO's active local offices played a fundamental role in mobilizing voters in national and sub-national

elections. One key difference between strong authoritarian parties, such as UMNO or the PRI, and weak parties is their ability to dominate sub-national offices. Stronger parties, such as UMNO or the PRI, were able to use their robust organization to out-mobilize their opponents and gain control of local offices for decades.

The presence of a strong party throughout a polity's territory that can distribute clientelistic goods and mobilize voters also raises the bar for opposition parties in their bid to oust the incumbent party. To compete on the same level as a strong ruling party, opposition parties must invest and develop a party (or coalition of parties) that is rivals the incumbent party in strength. The costs of doing so are high, is not simply done in the short run, and helps the ruling party out organize their opposition to hold onto power. This can be seen in the case of the electoral dominance of UMNO in Malaysia from independence until 2018. With over their thousands of local branches, UMNO's enormous territorial presence required the opposition to expand its geographic reach just to come into reach of competing on the same playing field. This took decades of work and difficult coordination amongst the opposition parties. First, parties had to carve out their own niches at the local level, and then slowly expand or build coalitions with other opposition parties. In Malaysia, opposition parties repeatedly failed to build a broad enough electoral coalition across the country until 2018 and were only able to oust UMNO after decades of party building.

In addition to serving as a tool to build mass support for the regime, authoritarian parties can also function to induce elite cohesion. The presence of a regime party alone is insufficient to induce elite cohesion. These parties must be strong enough

to manage the career paths of political entrepreneurs as well as draw from a pool of quality candidates (Svolik, 2011). This means that the party must have centralized and nationalized control over promotion and candidate selection in the party. Parties with more decentralized organizational structures will find it more difficult to force cadres to toe the line should there be alternatives outside of the path created by the party's central body.

A stronger party may also lead to greater elite cohesion by its ability to whip cadres into line through its activist and mass base. When parties have more robust and stronger links with society, activists within the party operate through party bodies (such as congresses or general meetings) or elections to whip elites and punish those that deviate from the party line (Panebianco, 1988). Ambitious politicians are less likely to challenge a ruling party if they are likely to be punished at the ballot box, and thus locked out of influence, for breaking with the regime's party. Thus, with control over career advancement and mass support, the regime party is able to bring politicians into line with the regime. For example, those that sought to challenge Mahathir and UMNO often faced consequences, from being locked out of the government to imprisonment, when they failed to drum up sufficient popular support.

Expectations

The theory outlined above leads to some testable implications for the impact of party organizations on the survival of authoritarian regimes. In general, this model means

that authoritarian regimes, *independent of their regime type*, should survive longer should they have stronger parties.

Hypothesis 1: The odds of a regime's survival will increase as party strength increases.

While this should be the case in general, I expect that a party's strength leads to higher levels of regime survival due to a number of components of authoritarian party strength. This includes the presence of a permanent national organization, the presence of local branches throughout the territory, centralized control over candidate selection, whether it uses clientelism, and control of local governments throughout the territory.

Hypothesis 2: As the components of authoritarian party strength increase, so too will the odds of regime survival.

As previously mentioned, other models suggest several mechanisms which enable regime survival. This includes the ability of parties to generate credible commitments, monitor the executive, and co-opt other elites. The theory provided herein does not assume that parties do not perform these functions. Thus, these other mechanisms may serve as alternative or compatible mechanisms which serve to help regimes endowed ed parties outlast other forms of authoritarianism.

Hypothesis 3: Party-based authoritarian regimes will have higher odds of survival than alternative forms of authoritarianism.

Data

To test how authoritarian party strength influences survival rates of authoritarian regimes I use data coded by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014) to account for failure of an authoritarian regime. I select this data for several reasons. First, this dataset provides one of the largest panels on the lifespan of regimes available – allowing me to model the failure of authoritarian regimes from the post-WWII era to 2010. Second, this dataset is widely used and well known within the comparative authoritarian community making the results from this exercise more easily comparable to other works in the literature. Third, this dataset is also preferable to other datasets (such as Wahman et al. (2013)) because its focus is on the structure of power within the regime, rather than restrictions on the party system. This allows me to also use this dataset to model the composition of institutions (i.e. regime type) which is directly correlated with the emergence and failure of the regime.

From this data I primarily use the variable *Regime*, which codes a regime into one of several categories, and sample on regimes which are coded as *Military*, *Monarchy*, *Party*, or *Personal*.[8] I also use their variable *Regime Type* which codes for hybrid regimes. As previously mentioned, regimes do not often fit cleanly into one single category. To address this, Geddes et al. (2014) improves the measurement of the complex nature of authoritarian regimes by coding hybrid forms of autocratic rule where parties may rule alongside the military or a personalist authority.

This coding is certainly an improvement upon other coding schemes as it captures

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[8]In the main models I exclude regimes which have duration lengths of over 100 years because they are outliers. This excludes the monarchies of Nepal and Oman but models with this data can be found in the supplementary appendix.
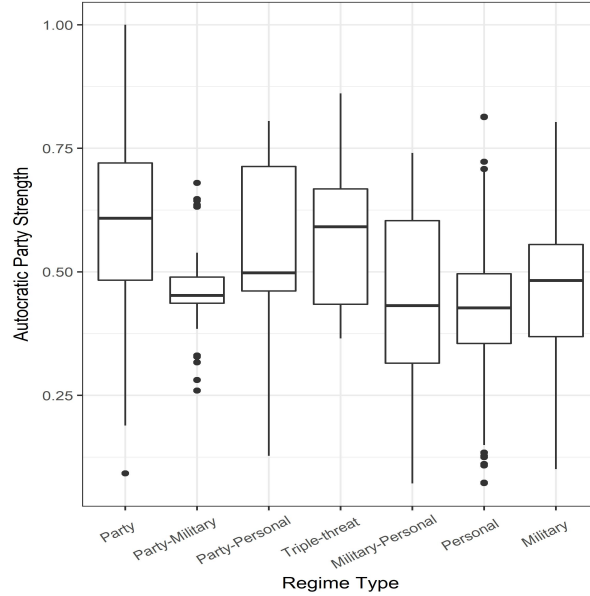
Figure 2: Distribution of Authoritarian Party Strength by Regime Type

greater complexity of these institutions. As can be seen in Figure 2, when coding regimes as hybrids with parties (military or personal hybrids), the distribution of party strength is higher for those with parties than those without (military-party hybrids are the exception). While an improvement upon other schemes or relying on clean categorization this data falls short in capturing the range of party strength across all these regimes – even when accounting for their hybrid nature.

To address this issue, I use data from the Varieties of Democracy Project (Henceforth V-dem) to measure autocratic party strength (Coppedge et al., 2018). To generate their data, V-dem first identifies several experts for each country. These country experts are then surveyed on several topics concerning democracy for any given year. The responses from each expert are then aggregated using a measurement model to reduce coder error and to produce a continuous index for any given

concept. Using this method, V-dem produces a panel for their indicators from the year 1900 to 2016 with wide coverage of countries.

Using data from the V-dem parties section (3.2) I select five separate indices to create a measurement of autocratic party strength. These indices are selected based on theoretical justification as well as due to the fact that V-dem has a limited number of indicies related to parties which are also relevant to authoritarian parties. For the measure of Authoritarian Party Strength (APS) is an index that measures the extent to which political parties are characterized by: (1) permanent national party organizations, (2) permanent local party branches, (3) centralized mechanisms of candidate selection, (4) programmatic (rather than clientelistic) linkages to their social base, and (5) The extent to which a single party controls important policymaking bodies across subnational units. Each of the indices is an ordinal ranking of how parties in the party system rate on these factors and then converted to an interval.

The five indicators are aggregated through simple addition to form a party strength index, reflecting the expectation that each element of the index is partially substitutable. The index is then normalized on a 0 to 1 scale, with higher values associated with higher levels of party strength. If parties all parties are banned by the regime the index is set to zero. The index varies over time by country but is relatively stable as substantive shifts in party strength take time.

Some, such as Meng (2015) have tried to address the issue that other data does not measure the strength of institutions. To solve this, Meng (2015) accounts for whether a party survives the initial transition of leadership within the party. While this is a creative solution for the issue of measuring party strength, it has some critical

weaknesses which the data I use does not. First, the data in Meng (2015) and others do not directly measure the strength of the party. Instead, these other indices rely on proxies of strength. The index of autocratic party strength developed herein, solves this issue by coding the actual organizational characteristics of these parties on a year-by-year basis. Furthermore, the index developed by Meng (2015) is not fully independent of other factors which may influence the survival of a party. While an institutionalized party is certainly more likely to survive leadership transitions, the survival of a party is not solely a function of its strength. Other factors contributing to the failure of a regime or the transition in leadership may also affect the party's survival.[9] Thus, this index is an improvement upon this approach as it does not rely so heavily on circumstances – instead using expert coding to measure the strength of the party at a given time prior to regime failure.

This index is also an improvement upon other forms of data because it measures party strength multi-dimensionally. Where Meng (2015) measures party strength as a function of survival, and Geddes et al. (2014) measures the strength of the party by its relative position to other actors, APS accounts for several different dimensions which contribute to the strength of an authoritarian party. This provides a measure of party strength that is easily generalizable across all regions of the world and is independent of temporal factors.

APS is also an improvement over other proxies of party rule or party strength because it varies over time. Geddes et al. (2014) or Meng (2015) are coded in such a

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[9]Meng (2015) tries to control this by accounting for whether a leader is ousted violently, but there are several other potential factors which may undermine an authoritarian party's ability to survive.

way that temporal variation in the characteristics linked to party strength go largely unmeasured. Geddes et al. (2014) may appropriately capture when a party shifts in its position in the regime (such as being banned by the regime leader), but this requires larges changes to the party. APS improves upon this by capturing more nuanced changes to the composition of the party.

This approach does has a few weaknesses. This index does not directly measure some mechanisms which have been proposed as reasons for how parties improve regime survival. For example, this index does not function as measure of credible commitments, co-optation, or elite cohesion without making strong assumptions. This, however, is not necessarily a step down from other indices which have been used as a proxy for these mechanisms. In these other cases, scholars have had to make the same assumptions about these factors of authoritarian parties when using alternative data to test their models.

Another weakness is that APS measures the average strength of parties in the entire party system. Thus, if only one ruling party is allowed, this index directly measures the strength of the *ruling party*. However, if other parties are allowed in the system, whether pro-regime or opposition, this index will account for their strength as well. To address this issue, I also create an index of restraints place on opposition parties which I then use as a control in models with APS to measure the correlation of autocratic party strength on regime survival. Like APS, the opposition party constraints (OPC) index is an additive index that uses components which capture the extent to which (1) parties are banned, (2) the strength of barriers to entry for opposition parties, and (3) the extent to which opposition parties are autonomous.

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Like *APS*, *OPC*, is aggregated and then normalized from 0 to 1 where higher values indicate a *less* restrictive, or more free, party system.

Because I cannot randomly assign party strength to regimes, I rely on various pre-treatment indices to control for other factors which may affect the life of a regime. First, using the Correlates of War National Material Capabilities data (v5.0) (Singer et al., 1972) I construct a measure of military capacity with data on military expenditures. This data is taken from the CoW NMC dataset and then standardized to the year 2000 U.S. dollar, divided by the total population, and then logged. I use this data to proxy for the strength of the military as an institution which may directly affect the durability of a regime. Robust militaries can contribute to the survival of a regime by ensuring social stability and internal security, as well as by acting as a strong ally within the ruling coalition. Even when parties are weak, strong militaries can play a fundamental role in stabilizing a regime. This can be seen in the case of Indonesia where, prior to the growth and institutionalization of Golkar, the military was the central actor in stabilizing and supporting the New Order.

Using this same dataset, I also account for some other factors which may contribute to the survival a regime. First is the level of modernization which is proxied by the logged level of energy consumption. Here I assume that more modern societies will consume more energy in support of their modern lifestyles. I also use the NMC data to measure the level of urban population. I account for the level of urbanization as others have demonstrated that as countries become more urbanized, they become more likely to transition from authoritarianism to democracy (Wallace, 2013) .

I also account for economic development using the logged GDP per capita measure

from V-dem (e_migdppcln). I do this account for the possibility that economic wealth does indeed cause democratization (Boix and Stokes, 2003). Lastly, I also measure the natural resource wealth with V-dem's e_Total_Resources_Income_PC indicator which measures the value of a country's petroleum, coal, natural gas, and metals production. This is to account for the potential of the rentier effect in which greater natural resource wealth allows regimes to stave of regime transitions (Ross, 2001).

Overall I select these control variables to improve the estimation of a causal effect of party strength on regime failure. While I cannot randomly assign party strength to ensure the measurement of its independent effect, accounting for these prominent alternative factors reduces the likelihood that models suffer from omitted variable bias. Should the estimated coefficients behave consistently even when accounting for these control variables, we can have greater confidence that autocratic party strength plays a causal role in staving off regime failure.

Regime Survival

To begin the process of modeling regime survival I start with a non-parametric Kaplan-Meier estimator where the estimate of regime survival is modeled by the type of *Regime.* This model is presented in Figure 3. With this model, I substantiate the initial finding presented by Geddes (1999b) that *Party* regimes survive longer than either *Military* or *Personal* regimes. There is only a slight difference in the survival rates of *Party* and *Monarchy* regimes where the probability of *Monarchy* regimes is higher than that of a *Party* regime well into the life of these regimes.
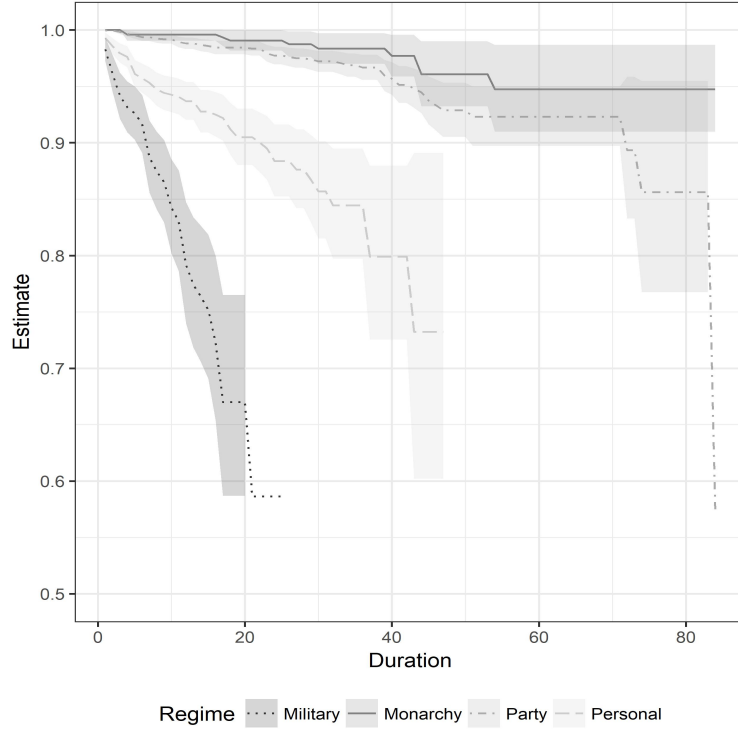
Figure 3: Survival Odds of Authoritarian Regimes by Regime Type

I then model how survival rates of *Regime* vary as a function of *APS*. Again, I use a Kaplan-Meier estimator, and break *APS* into terciles - High, Medium, and Low.[10] The results of this estimator are presented in Figure 4 and show that the probability of a regime surviving, across all regime types, is higher for regimes with parties measured to be in the highest tercile while there is no difference for regimes with *APS* in the middle or lower terciles. This non-parametric estimation supports the theory presented earlier that regime survival is not simply due the presence of a party in a system. Instead, this model shows that the strength of the party matters where stronger parties are associated with longer lifespans for regimes.

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[10]It is common to break variables into specific strata when graphing a Kaplan-Meier function.
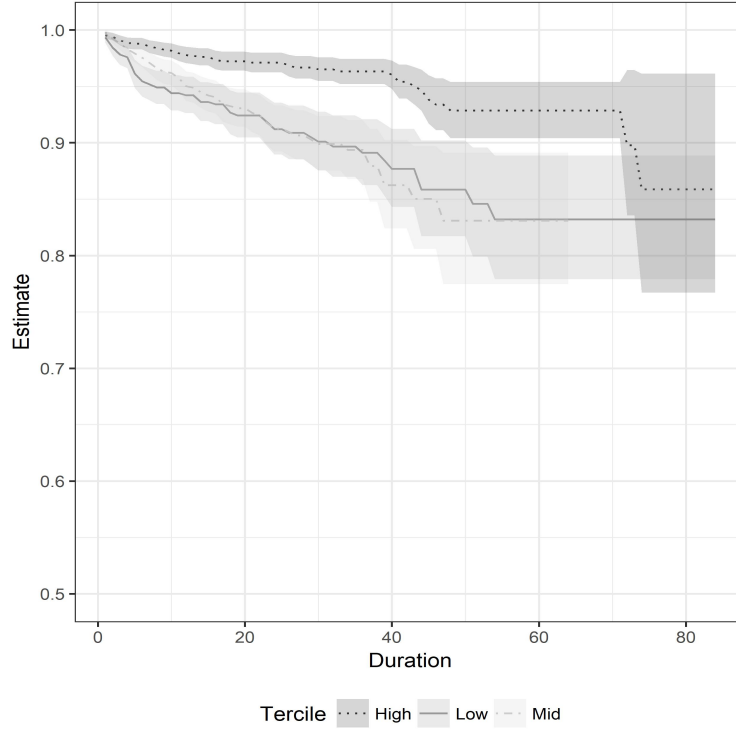
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Figure 4: Survival Odds of Authoritarian Regimes by Party Strength

To model the effect of *APS* on the rates of survival for *Regime* I now use a Cox Proportional Hazards model. I select this approach because it does not assume a specific probability distribution for the time until a regime's death (Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn, 2001). The flexibility of this approach allows me to model the effect of *APS* without needing to directly parameterize the effect of time on a regime's survival, but also allows to me to control for various factors which may influence *Regime* survival. One potential weakness of the Cox Proportional Hazards model is that it does not handle fixed effects parameters which potentially undermines the ability to estimate a causal effect of *APS* on regimes failure. To address this, I estimate the

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same models using a Weibull survival model with time and country fixed effects. I find that the results are robust and consistent to this specification which allows for greater confidence that I have estimated a causal effect.[11]

The first set of models are found in Table 1.[12] Here, I include a set of models where three of the four regime types are measured relative to different baselines. This allows me to measure how the odds of *Regime* survival differ relative to other types while accounting for other factors at the same time. In Models 1 through 3, I set the baseline *Regime* to *Monarchy* to function as the strictest test of the various theories which posit that institutional characteristics of *Party* regimes increase their lifespan. With *Monarchy* as the baseline, I find that *Party* regimes have higher odds of failure (two to almost three times that of a *Monarchy* without controlling for any other factors (Model 1), when only controlling for *APS*, as well as controlling for all other factors (Model 3). This casts doubt on the institutionalist explanation of regime survival as it is clear that *Party* regimes are not unique in their durability. As expected, however, Models 4 through 9 show that *Party* regimes are far less likely to fail relative to *Personal* or *Military* regimes but the odds of a *Party* regime do increase slightly, relative to a *Personal* regime, after accounting for autocratic party strength and other factors.

The results that *Party* regimes have a higher likelihood of failure relative to monarchies suggests that factors, other than institutions, may influence survival. These models, however, do provide greater clarity of how parties may extend the life

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[11]Results for the Weibull specifications are found in the supplementary appendix.

[12]Results in all tables present exponentiated hazard odds. This means that coefficients less than 1 should be interpreted as a reduced likelihood of failure whereas any coefficient greater than 1 means that the risk of failure is increasing.

Table 1: Survival of Authoritarian Regimes – Regime Types

				Dependent variable:					
				Regime Survival					
Baseline:	Monarchy	Monarchy	Monarchy	Personal	Personal	Personal	Military	Military	Military
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Party	1.93**	2.77***	2.02*	0.16***	0.20***	0.23***	0.05***	0.06***	0.05***
	(0.46)	(0.49)	(0.55)	(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.28)	(0.25)	(0.28)	(0.32)
Personal	11.74***	14.11***	8.60***				0.28***	0.30***	0.23***
	(0.48)	(0.49)	(0.53)				(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.24)
Monarchy				0.09***	0.07***	0.12***	0.02***	0.02***	0.03***
				(0.48)	(0.49)	(0.53)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.56)
Military	41.72***	46.43***	38.21***	3.55***	3.29***	4.44***			
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.56)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.24)			
APS	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
N	4,519	4,519	3,471	4,519	4,519	3,471	4,519	4,519	3,471
R^2	0.06	0.07	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.10
Max.Pos R^2	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53
Note:			Exponentiated standard errors in parentheses *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01						

of authoritarian regimes. As can be seen in Table 2 the coefficient for *APS* is stable when accounting for other factors which my influence regime survival. These models suggest that the hazard of a regime failing decreases by a factor of 0.34 when *APS* is average.

These models also provide other notable findings. First, when opposition parties are less constrained, the odds of failure are higher by a factor of nearly 40. On the other hand, as regimes increase military spending, the odds of regime failure decrease by a factor of 0.82. When compared to *APS*, this suggests that regimes which invest and build in stronger parties will likely produce better returns (higher odds of regime survival) than investments into the military. Other factors, such as urban population, natural resources, or overall wealth of the country don't significantly alter the odds of regime survival.

As mentioned earlier, Geddes et al. (2014) seek to account for the complexity in authoritarian regimes by coding *Regime Type* which codes regimes as hybrids if different actors share power. Using this variable, I model the effects of *Regime Type* and *APS* on the probability of regime failure with *Monarchy* set as the baseline. The results are quite similar to Table 1 where *Military* and *Personal* regimes are far more likely to fail. This modeling, however, that having a party in the regime isn't necessarily sufficient to reduce the odds of regime failure relative to the baseline. For example, both *Personal-Party* and *Military-Party* hybrids have higher odds of failure. This finding does not hold with pure *Party* regimes or with *Triple Threat* as the odds of failure for these regimes is statistically indistinguishable from the baseline. The findings for *APS*, on the other hand, are similar to those in Table 1

Table 2: Survival of Authoritarian Regimes – Covariates

	Dependent variable:		
	Regime Survival		
	(10)	(11)	(12)
APS	0.35***	0.32***	0.34***
	(0.42)	(0.50)	(0.58)
Opposition		28.72***	38.26***
		(0.53)	(0.60)
Security		0.70***	0.82***
		(0.05)	(0.06)
Energy			0.84***
			(0.05)
UrbanPop			0.95
			(0.06)
GDPPC			0.97
			(0.14)
Resources			1.00
			(0.0001)
Regime	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,519	4,123	3,471
R^2	0.01	0.05	0.05
Max. Possible R^2	0.53	0.53	0.54

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

and support the hypothesis that strong parties reduce the odds of failure.

The next step is to model how the survival rates of different types of *Regime* vary when interacted with *APS*. I do this because I assume that *Regime* is a residual indicator that is capturing several factors of a type of rule but which are not directly observed. These factors may then interact with the strength of a party to increase the odds of regime survival. This approach also allows us to understand the substantive implications of these results. To do this, I include binary indicators of whether the measure *APS* falls into the middle or highest tercile of *APS* and then interact it with each of the types of *Regime* and then vary the baseline to observe how the odds of survival change across *Regime*. With this approach we can estimate how the odds of failure change when we vary either the regime type or move from one tercile of *APS* to another.

The results in Table 4 show that, even relative to the baseline *Monarchy* (Models 16-17), the odds of regime survival improve dramatically and are higher for *Party*, *Personal*, and even *Military*, when interacted with either the Highest or Middle tercile of *APS*. Remember, in Table 1, *Party* regimes are more likely to fail relative to *Monarchy*. In Table 4, however, I find that when a *Party* regime also has a party system where the average strength of the parties is in the middle or highest terciles, the odds of survival, *relative to Monarchies*, increase enormously and is far less likely to fail than a monarchy. In effect, *Party* regimes with *APS* in the highest tercile face 0.003 of the hazard monarchies do – a substantially lower hazard when considering how, in general, *Party* regimes are more likely to fail than *Monarchy* regimes. This, along with these dramatically lower hazards with *Personal* and *Military* regimes,

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Table 3: Survival of Authoritarian Regimes - Hybrid Regimes

	Dependent variable:		
	Regime Survival		
	(13)	(14)	(15)
Military	63.54***	70.07***	75.62***
	(0.54)	(0.54)	(0.67)
Military-Personal	29.57***	32.30***	26.22***
	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.65)
Party-Military	8.53***	9.49***	6.47***
	(0.89)	(0.90)	(1.02)
Party	1.78	2.58***	1.92
	(0.50)	(0.53)	(0.62)
Triple-threat	0.91	1.27	1.82
	(1.68)	(1.70)	(1.76)
Party-Personal	2.78**	3.78***	4.83***
	(0.67)	(0.70)	(0.86)
Personal	13.08***	15.61***	9.86***
	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.56)
APS		0.36***	0.41**
		(0.43)	(0.56)
Controls	No	No	Yes
N	4,416	4,416	3,380
R^2	0.06	0.07	0.11
Max. Possible R^2	0.52	0.52	0.53
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

provides evidence that, given other factors of authoritarian rule captured by regime type, strong parties matter and reduce the odds of failure for *all* types of regimes.

From this exercise I also find that, when interacting *Regime* with middle or high indicators or *APS*, that the hazard rates for *Personal* and *Party* regimes interacted with *APS* are statistically indistinguishable. In Models 16-17, the hazard rates for *Party* and *Personal* are similar when holding the baseline to *Monarchy*. Even when the baseline is switched to *Personal*, however, the hazard of regime failure for *Party* is not statistically different when controlling for other factors and when *APS* is in the middle or highest tercile.

One note should be made concerning the findings in Table 3 with reference to the hazard odds for *Monarchy* regimes in Models 18-21. The results here suggest that monarchies with strong parties are 190 times more likely to fail (Model 19) relative to *Personal* regimes and almost 68 times more likely to fail relative to *Military* regimes when a strong party is present. This would suggest that strong parties and monarchies do not mix well. The results, however, are almost entirely driven by the post-WWII Egyptian monarchy prior to the Free Officers Movement coup. Within the dataset, there are few country-year observations in which a regime is coded as *Monarchy* and is coupled with an autocratic party in the highest tercile of strength with 40% of the observations drawn from Egypt (years 1946-1952). Thus, within this set of observations, the probability of regime failure is high in monarchies with strong parties.

As a final empirical exercise, I disaggregate the *APS* index into its component parts to observe how these variables explain the increased odds of survival for regimes

Table 4: Regime Type Interacted with Autocratic Party Strength

		Dependent variable:				
		Regime Survival				
Baseline:	Monarchy (16)	Monarchy (17)	Personal (18)	Personal (19)	Military (20)	Military (21)
Party	20.65*** (0.90)	29.77*** (1.22)	0.36*** (0.37)	0.36*** (0.44)	0.22*** (0.41)	0.18*** (0.48)
Personal	57.73*** (0.85)	82.70*** (1.14)			0.62** (0.31)	0.50** (0.36)
Monarchy			0.02*** (0.85)	0.01*** (1.14)	0.01*** (0.89)	0.01*** (1.20)
Military	93.25*** (0.89)	163.87*** (1.20)	1.62** (0.31)	1.98** (0.36)		
APS-Mid	3.25* (1.36)	7.15*** (1.63)	0.34*** (0.33)	0.28*** (0.40)	1.72** (0.33)	1.41 (0.37)
APS-High	31.09*** (2.01)	44.99*** (2.25)	0.22*** (0.51)	0.24*** (0.58)	0.76 (0.47)	0.66 (0.59)
Party*APS-Mid	0.07*** (1.65)	0.03*** (2.04)	0.63 (0.63)	0.86 (0.75)	0.13*** (0.63)	0.17*** (0.73)
Party*APS-High	0.003*** (2.41)	0.003*** (2.78)	0.41* (0.79)	0.59 (0.90)	0.12*** (0.77)	0.21*** (0.94)
Personal*APS-Mid	0.11*** (1.52)	0.04*** (1.85)			0.20*** (0.51)	0.20*** (0.61)
Personal*APS-High	0.01*** (2.36)	0.01*** (2.67)			0.29** (0.79)	0.36* (0.96)
Monarchy*APS-Mid			9.49*** (1.52)	25.37*** (1.85)	1.89 (1.52)	5.06** (1.84)
Monarchy*APS-High			141.14*** (2.36)	189.83*** (2.67)	40.72*** (2.30)	67.96*** (2.66)
Military*APS-Mid	0.53 (1.52)	0.20** (1.84)	5.03*** (0.51)	5.02*** (0.61)		
Military*APS-High	0.02*** (2.30)	0.01*** (2.66)	3.47** (0.79)	2.79* (0.96)		
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	4,519	3,569	4,519	3,569	4,519	3,569
R^2	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.09
Max. Possible R^2	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53

with strong parties. The results of this exercise are presented in Table 5. I begin by including all but the subnational component into a single model without any controls (Model 21), add in the same controls present in all other models (Model 22), repeat this by adding in the variable for sub-national control of governments (Models 23-24), and then finish by modeling the survival function with each individual component alone.

Using this approach I find that subnational control of policy making organs is the variable doing most of the work in the aggregated variable. In Models 23 and 24, subnational control is the only variable that is statistically significant. These models suggest that a regime's ability to exert partisan control over subnational governmental organs reduces the hazard of regime failure to 0.61 to that of the baseline hazard. From this approach, I find that individual indicators of a permanent national organization, local branches, centralized candidate selection, and programmatic linkages, do not individually explain variation in regime failure. However, I cannot conclude that these other variables are not useful measurements of autocratic party strength as they are jointly significant in Models 21 and 22 even though no single indicator functions as a significant explanatory variable of regime survival.

That Subnational Control is the only variable strongly correlated with survival rates with this sample may suggest that the index as a whole is unnecessary but this isn't the case for a few reasons. First,the models including all the variables without Subnational Control is jointly significant. Second, when including two regimes that are observed to survive over 100 years (Nepal and Oman), Candidate Selection, Local Branches, and National Organization become significant in some specifications

of the model (see supplementary appendix). This suggests that the index as a whole remains useful in measuring autocratic party strength.

Table 5: Component Factors of Autocratic Party Strength

	Dependent variable:								
	Regime Survival								
	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)	(25)	(26)	(27)	(28)	(29)
Nat Org	1.08	0.90	0.84	0.93	0.88				
	(0.13)	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.17)	(0.10)				
Branches	0.95	0.95	1.18	0.97		0.90			
	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.13)	(0.17)		(0.10)			
Selection	1.21***	0.96	0.92	0.87			0.99		
	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.10)			(0.09)		
Linkages	0.89	1.09	0.88	1.07				1.05	
	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.11)				(0.09)	
Sub-Nat			0.51***	0.60***					0.61***
			(0.06)	(0.08)					(0.08)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	4,519	3,471	4,519	3,471	3,471	3,471	3,471	3,471	3,471
R^2	0.002	0.04	0.03	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.06
Max. R^2	0.53	0.54	0.53	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54	0.54
Wald Test	118**	1308***	153***	1658***	1298***	127***	131***	133***	166***
LR Test	10.94**	156***	149***	205***	155***	155***	153***	154***	202***
Score Test	11**	144***	171***	196***	143***	143***	143***	144***	193***

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

As with previous exercises, I broke these indicators down by tercile to measure whether regimes falling into the middle or higher terciles had significantly better odds
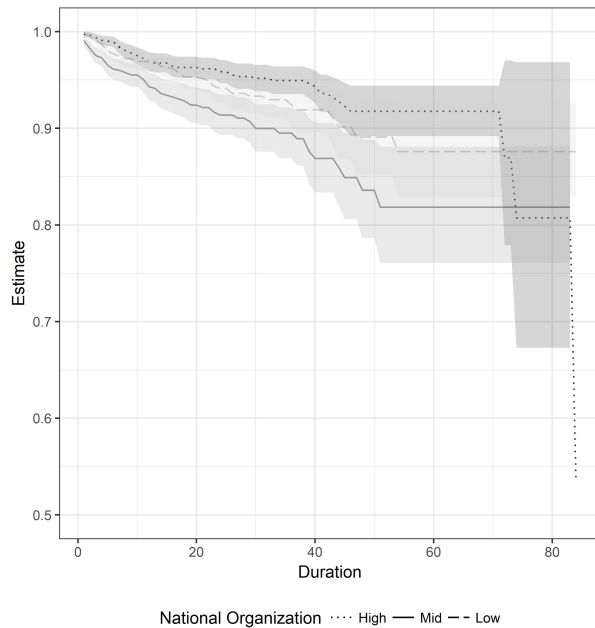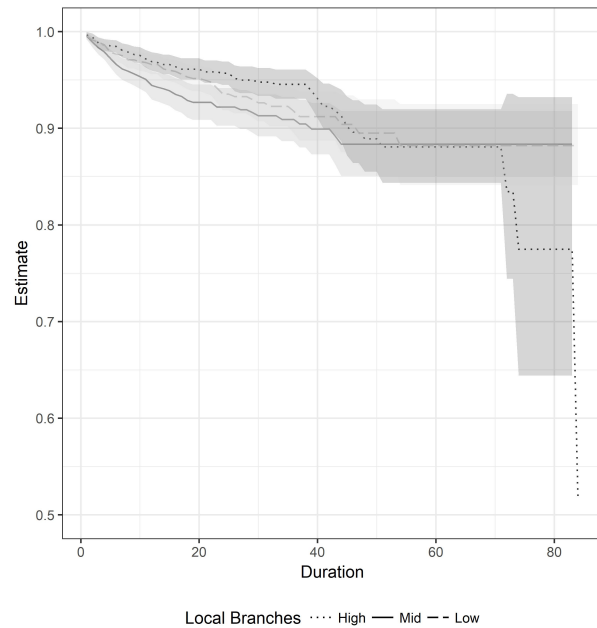
Figure 5: National Organization

Figure 6: Local Branches

of survival and then modeled their survival function using a Kaplan-Meier estimator and present the results in Figures 5-9 In Figures 5 and 6, the survival curve for the highest tercile appears to remain above the middle and lowest terciles well into the life of the regime, but there is significant overlap in the confidence intervals for these indexes. This is also the case when modeling centralized candidate selection (Figure 7) and the type of party linkages (Figure 8).

While these other indicators fail to function differently by tercile, Figure 9 provides clarity for regime survival varies as a function of subnational control. In this case, when when regime parties are able to maintain subnational control at a high level, their odds of survival are almost constant. On the other hand, for regimes that are less capable at maintaining local control, the odds of regime survival decline over
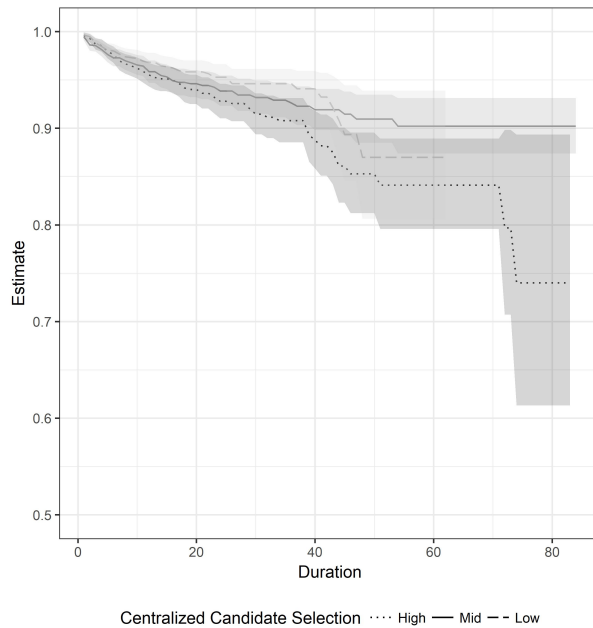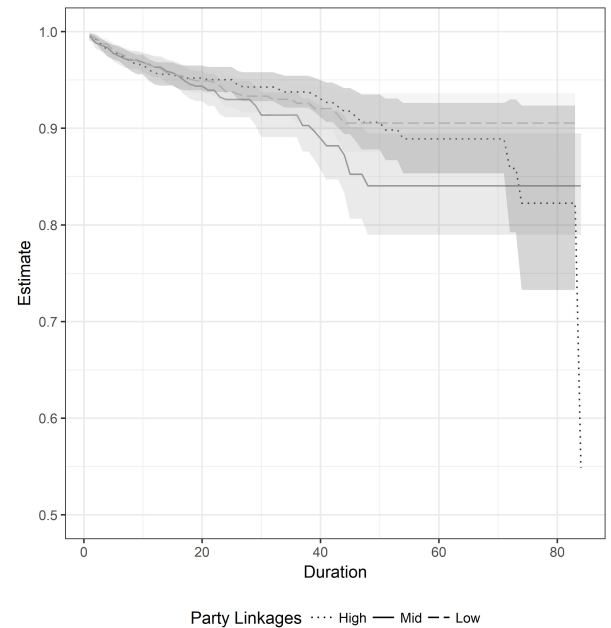
Figure 7: Candidate Selection

Figure 8: Party Linkages

time. It should be noted, that when compared to Figure 3, all of these indicators exhibit higher levels of regime survival than *Military* or *Personal* regime types even in the lower terciles of these indexes. This demonstrates that these characteristics of parties are still associated with longer lifespans for authoritarian regimes.

Conclusion

Nearly 20 years ago, Geddes (1999b) spurred a large literature to emerge seeking to explain why regimes with political parties survived longer than most of their counterparts. This literature has offered various explanations for why parties may lead to longer regimes survival including: co-opting other elites (Gandhi and Przeworski,
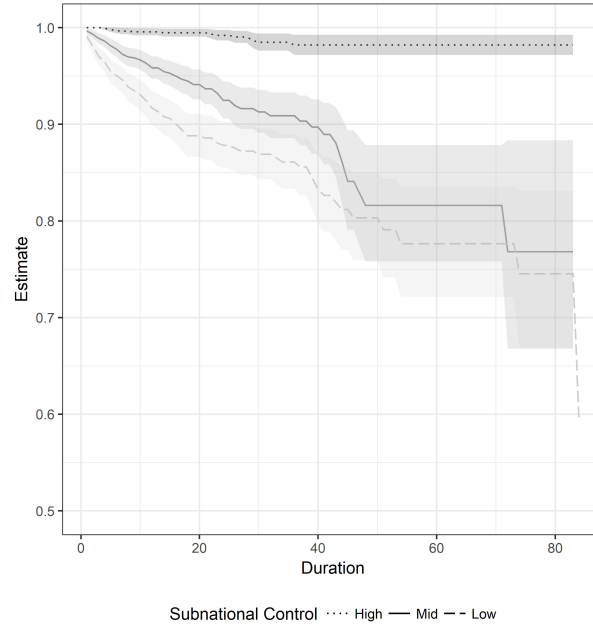
Figure 9: Subnational Control

2007; Gandhi, 2008; Frantz and Kendall-Taylor, 2014), inducing a stronger coalition by increasing the costs of defection (Geddes, 1999a,b; Brownlee, 2007, 2008; Frantz and Ezrow, 2011), providing credible commitments and reducing monitoring problems (Magaloni, 2008; Svolik, 2009; Gehlbach and Keefer, 2011; Svolik, 2012; Boix and Svolik, 2013), managing elite promotion and candidate selection (Blaydes, 2008; Svolik, 2011; Reuter and Turovsky, 2014), or by providing a robust party organization organization (Smith, 2005), which can be linked to mass society to manage elections (Solinger, 2001; Magaloni, 2006), promote collective party interests over the individual (Nathan, 2003; Levitsky and Way, 2012, 2013), or distribute rents (Geddes, 2008; Greene, 2010).

Central to many of these institutional explanations is the assumption that parties

are capable of carrying out these tasks. Diverging from this approach, I propose that parties are not necessarily strong enough to perform these functions and that ordering society requires *strong* institutions (Huntington, 2006). In order to tilt the playing field (Levitsky and Way, 2010) incumbent autocrats must be able to coordinate elite and mass behavior in support of the regime. To do so, they need a strong organization that is able to manage the diverse tasks at hand but the ability to do cannot be assumed by the mere presence of a party. Weak parties are less able at inducing elites and mass society to toe the party line. This means the party needs to be able to manage candidate selection and promotion at a national scale as well as establish and manage party functions at the local level.

By developing a new indicator of authoritarian party strength using data from the Varieties of Democracy project, I have shown that authoritarian party strength matters. Across several specifications, I find strong evidence that the odds of regime failure are reduced dramatically as authoritarian parties become stronger and that this result exists *independent of regime type*. Indeed, I find that odds of survival for *Party*, *Personal*, and *Military* regimes increase when they are endowed with parties in the middle and upper terciles of the authoritarian party strength index. Using this data I also show that much of the variation in longer regime survival due to political parties is attributable to the ability of these parties to maintain subnational control.

The results drawn from this study have implications for how we should think of authoritarian political parties and their role in extending the life of regimes. First, categorical indices of regimes are problematic for understanding how parties influence regime survival. Party-based regimes are not the only ones to have parties – as

military and personalist regimes have parties as well but categorical variables do not capture the diversity of party strength in these regimes. The evidence provided here suggests that parties provide survival enhancing benefits to authoritarian regimes as they become stronger – whether they are the dominate member of the regime or not. The use of categorical indicators make identification of the mechanisms at play difficult as it opens the door to observational equivalence. When categorizations of regime types or the thresholds of party control in the legislature are used, models showing that longer regime survival is due to co-optation is observationally equivalent to those suggesting parties create credible commitments. Thus, we should exercise greater care with the inferences drawn when conceptualizing authoritarian regimes in categorical terms.

A central implication of my findings is that we should place greater emphasis on the local politics of authoritarian rule. Much of the focus of the comparative authoritarian and democratization literature focuses on elites or social structures while leaving local politics to be largely ignored. How is it that some regimes are able to develop and maintain authoritarian rule deeper into societies than others? Not all regimes use strong-arm tactics (such as banning parties at the local level) to hold onto power throughout their territory. Also, why does this local control then wane for some but not for others?

The cracks of Malaysia's UMNO's demise was first seen as they ceded local control to alternative parties rather than losing power dramatically at the national level. Well before their electoral loss in 2018 alternative parties, such as the PAS and DAP, began carving out sub-national enclaves. The growth of these parties at the

sub-national level weakened UMNO's grip on power. From there, these opposition parties began stitching together a coalition that eroded UMNO's dominance in the Malaysian parliament. This set the stage for UMNO's downfall when the leader of UMNO, Najib Razak, was caught in a massive scandal and the former Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, significantly weakened UMNO with his breakaway party BERSATU. Thus, democratization from below may not solely be characterized by mass-movements against authoritarian rule, but instead by the loss of power on the part of the incumbents below the national level.

Future work should provide more insight into subnational factors of authoritarian rule. For example, future work should theorize and establish the origins of strong sub-national parties. Where do these parties come from and why do some establish strong parties sub-nationally while others do not. What factors play a role in the rise of these parties and their ability to hold onto power beyond the national level. Also, how does control of sub-national governments facilitate the survival of the national regime? Does control at the sub-national level facilitate greater control of patronage, ability to manipulate the media, or harasses and handicap opponents than would otherwise be possible with strong national control but weak sub-national control? These are just a few questions that can build off of the implications from these findings.

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