

Hybrid regimes: An Overview

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Abstract

According to different types of democracy Indexes, hybrid regimes or those in the gray zone, make up the majority of regime transformations in the third wave of democracy. However, after nearly three decades, conceptual confusion about hybrid regimes persists and grows, while obstructing the accumulation of knowledge about the nature of hybrid regimes. This leads to significant political repercussions for democratization.*

This Paper attempts to provide a clearer view of different and overlapping concepts and classifications in this complex field, and sustain development in literature on democratic transformation. To achieve this, we followed an approach based on the classification of concepts and terms in three distinct categories, based on the different trends and successive stages in literature on hybrid regimes. This limits the conceptual stretching and intellectual bias. It also helps to extrapolate the elements of contrast and diversity to highlight the prospects for the transition to those regimes as much as possible. The Paper reached a number of results. The transition paradigm was the product of a previous stage during the strong early days of the third wave.

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Similarly, the subsequent facts have proven that this was not "the end of history." The hybrid regimes expressed these facts through their different patterns that were in multiple directions due to various cases and contexts. Therefore, the transition outcomes are also as accommodating towards the diversity in experiences of different democratic countries.

Keywords: Hybrid Regimes, Transition Paradigm, Democratic Sub-Type, Authoritarian Sub-Type, Separate Category.

*The important examples of democracy indexes include: "Freedom in the World" issued by Freedom House, "Democracy Index" compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), "Polity IV" report by The Center for Systemic Peace, "Transition Index" by Bertelsmann (BTI), and the "Arab Democracy Index" by the Arab Reform Initiative, which focuses only on the Middle East and North Africa region.

Introduction

The third wave of democracy, which was the largest wave**, led to the establishment of a large number of political regimes outside the Western world that were distinct from Western democracies, and qualitatively different as well. These regimes were described as hybrids, located in the "gray" or "political gray" zone, which is the separating area between closed authoritarian regimes, and liberal democracy regimes.

The foregoing led to the production of the extensive literature that sought to classify this category of regimes, and the most prominent challenge faced by the comparative scholars. It was divided into two parts: first, how to conceptualize and classify these regimes without coming into the problem of conceptual stretching. Second, without this, giving rise to bias caused by the conceptual difference. Thus making it difficult for the casual research to evaluate. Moreover, misidentification of the type of regime can have important political implications for democratization processes or regime transitions in the world. However, after nearly three decades, conceptual confusion about hybrid regimes still exist. Scholars still differ about what hybrid regimes are. Some consider diminished subtypes, separate categories, or a clear type of authoritarianism. This led many scholars later to believe in the emergence of a reverse wave of recessions and democratic collapse.

**) The first wave 1828-1926 was described as the "slow" wave that saw 29 democracies in the world, which had a relapse in 1942, bringing the number of democracies in the world down to just 12. The second wave began after the Allied victory in World War II and culminated in 1962 with the world's 36 recognized democracies, which had declined to 30 democracies in the mid-1970s. The third wave started in the mid-seventies and continued until the nineties of the last century. The wave swept across large areas, including countries from Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In total, this wave has witnessed more than 60 countries experience democratic transformations since 1974.

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This research provides a clearer view of different and overlapping concepts and classifications in this complex field, with the aim of enhancing our understanding of the type of regime, and providing researchers with cognizance that helps to continue with the development in the literature of the democratic transition.

The concept of a hybrid regime

The concept of hybrid regimes emerged from the literature of third wave democratization in the nineties of the last century as part of the transition paradigm.^{**} It somehow got stuck in between, regardless of its nomenclature. Later on, it became a cause of the introduction of the so-called literature of the fourth wave. The fourth wave adopted the hypothesis that the transition could lead to democracy or dictatorship (particularly the domination of non-democratic regimes), or perhaps a separate type of regime while giving way to the expansion of the classifications of hybrid regimes differently.^{***1}

The democratization literature uses different terms for conceptualizing hybrid regimes. It describes those models that are located in the broad gray zone between full autocracies and full democracies. Some scholars believe that imperfect democracies and imperfect autocracies can be considered as examples of hybrid regimes, while others believe that

* **The third wave of democratization began in southern Europe with the fall of the authoritarian right-wing regimes in the 1980s, and reached East and South Asia by the mid-to-late 1980s. It then continued in Central and Eastern Europe with the fall of communism in 1989-91, and in Sub-Saharan Africa in the first half of the 1990s following the collapse of one-party regimes.

* The difference from the theoretical side between the third wave and the fourth wave that appeared focuses on the difference in the approach of the transition pattern between non-communist transition (Latin America and Southern Europe, in the 1970s and 1980s, and the transition from Communism in Europe and the former Soviet Union (the post-Communist transition).

¹ Michael McFaul, "The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Post-communist World", *World Politics* 54, no. 2 (Jan., 2002): 212-244.

hybrids combine the characteristics of both democratic and authoritarian regimes, fueling a broad debate about conceptual subtypes.²

The importance of the subject stems from the fact that the largest share of the world's regimes have been classified since 2006, as hybrid regimes.³ The Economist's 2020 Index showed that less than 50% of the people live in undemocratic regimes, as out of the 167 countries included in the index, 57 are classified as authoritarian, 35 are classified as hybrid regimes, 52 are classified as flawed democracies, and the rest are full democracies. In other words, at least 52% of these regimes are located in the gray zone, regardless of the terminology used.⁴

Hybrid regimes that combine democratic and authoritarian elements are not new, as they existed in the sixties and seventies of the last century. There were multiparty electoral systems, but they were undemocratic in Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and other cases in Europe.* A number of "Oligarchy" democracies in Latin America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries developed full democracy through the establishment of some of their fundamental political institutions in addition to the principles of restriction and succession of power.⁵

² Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm", *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (2002): 5-21.

³ Kelly. M. McMann, *Economic Autonomy and Democracy: Hybrid Regimes in Russia and Kyrgyzstan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174.

⁴ "Democracy Index 2020: In sickness and in health?", *Economist intelligence unit*, June 25, 2021. <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2020/>

* Among these electoral authoritarianism regimes are: Mexico, Singapore, Malaysia, Senegal, South Africa, Rhodesia, and Taiwan. Historically, there have been many cases in Latin America of limited party competition (elite) with limited privilege.

⁵ Larry Diamond, "Thinking About Hybrid Regimes," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 21-35.

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Scholars put different definitions of hybrid regimes according to their theoretical orientations. Huntington was right when he said that this move towards democracy is not a straight line.

Huntington describes hybrid regimes as:

“Diminished types of autocracy or corrupted democracies, i.e., fragile (halfway-houses) that have stalled in their democratic transitions.”⁶

Morlino defined the hybrid regime:

“A set of institutions that have been persistent, be they stable or unstable, for about a decade, have been preceded by authoritarianism, a traditional regime (possibly with colonial characteristics), or even a minimal democracy and are characterized by the break-up of limited pluralism and forms of independent, autonomous participation, but the absence of at least one of the four aspects of a minimal democracy.”^{7*}

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) defined hybrid regimes as:

“Combination of the elements of authoritarianism with democracy (.....). These often adopt the formal characteristics of democracy

⁶ Samuel. P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 598.

⁷ Leonardo Morlino, “Are there hybrid regimes? Or are they just an optical illusion?,” *European Political Science Review* 1, no. 2 (July, 2009): 282, doi:10.1017/S1755773909000198.

**** The four aspects of minimal democracy according to Morlino are: (a) universal suffrage, both male and female, (b) free, competitive, recurrent, and fair elections, (c) more than one party, and (d) different and alternative media sources. See: Morlino, “Are there hybrid regimes? Or are they just an optical illusion?,” 277.

(while allowing little real competition for power) with weak respect for basic political and civil rights.”⁸

Carnegie describes hybrid regimes as countries that could hold elections, but there are many characteristics generally missing that define democracy in combination. Often, people do not have real means to hold political elites accountable after the elections due to the absence of sufficiently free press, or independent unions to challenge the irregularities. At the same time, judiciary is also usually weak and partisan, which upsets the rule of law and makes the oversight ineffective. Consequently, personal interests prevail as the driving force for the continuation of the hybrid regimes with informal patronage networks and clientele structures which operate in parallel to the formal institutional corruption at high level.⁹

Henry E. Hale defined hybrid regimes as:

“A hybrid regime is a political regime that combines some democratic and some autocratic elements in a significant manner. It is not, however, a mere half-way category: hybrid regimes have their own distinct dynamics that do not simply amount to half of what we would see in a democracy plus half of what we would see in an autocracy.”¹⁰

Levitsky and Way also emphasized the need to distinguish between several types of hybrid regimes in their analysis of the “competitive authoritarianism model” that differs from other categories of hybrid regimes such as, “tutelary” or “guided” democracies, which are

⁸ “International IDEA Strategy 2018–22”, *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, 2018, 11 https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/reference_docs/international-idea-strategy-2018-2022-screen.pdf

⁹ Paul. J. Carnegie, *The Road from Authoritarianism to Democratization in Indonesia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 34.

¹⁰ Henry. E. Hale, “Eurasian politics as hybrid regimes: The case of Putin’s Russia”, *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 34, doi: 10.1016/j.euras.2009.11.001.

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competitive regimes in which non-democratic actors like religious or military utilize veto right.¹¹

Diamond described in his study of the hybrid regime, 17 regimes as “mysterious” “because they fall on the blurry boundary between electoral democracy and competitive authoritarianism, with independent observers disagreeing on how to classify them.”¹²

Despite extensive theorizing about hybrid regimes, and considerable attempts to clarify the ambiguous details among various political regimes, it is difficult to find common consent among the scholars about the nature of hybrid regimes, which led to impeding the aggregation of knowledge about the quintessence of hybrid regime.¹³ Therefore, in order to clarify the different directions in defining the concept of research, it is necessary to divide the hybrid regimes into three categories.

The hybrid regime as a democratic sub-type

We use here the term (democratic sub-type) as an alternative to what is described as democratic regimes that fall within the scope of (diminished subtypes),* or in another way those regimes that are described as democracy as a root concept.

¹¹ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 51-65, doi: 10.1353/jod.2002.0026.

¹² Diamond, “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes,” 26.

¹³ Andrea Cassani, “Hybrid what? Partial consensus and persistent divergences in the analysis of hybrid regimes,” *International Political Science Review* 35, no. 5 (2014): 542-558, doi: 10.1177/0192512113495756.

* Diminished subtype: A concept that does not meet the requirements for a full definition of the root concept because it lacks one or more of its specific attributes. See: David Collier and Steven Levitsky, “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research”, *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (1997): 438.

This section of the paper deals with the blurring boundaries between full and partial democracy,***** because the concept of partial democracy, which contradicts the classical concept of liberal democracy, is still present in the discussion about hybrid regimes. The idea of democracy with adjectives has been rigorously rejected.¹⁴ At the same time, indicators of democracy today depend not only on dichotomy but also on progression. *Bollen and Jackman* argue that “democracy is always a matter of degree.”¹⁵

During 1990s, particularly in the second half of that decade, hybrid regimes were viewed as diminished democracies to a large extent, moving towards the consolidation of democracy; meaning they have seen it as transitional, based on the “Transition Paradigm of the 1990s.”¹⁶ It means

* ** This difference lies between the concept of partial democracy, which is termed as (minimal democracy), which the term "electoral democracy" reflects, and the concept of liberal democracy. Minimum definitions of democracy descend from Joseph Schumpeter, who defined democracy as: “a system for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”. See: Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 2nd ed (New York: Harper, 1947), 269.

On the other hand, comes the concept of the ideal system of democracy, which Robert Dahl called (Polyarchy), and includes seven elements: Election officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage, an inclusive right to run for office, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, and associational autonomy. See: Michael Bailey and David Braybrooke, "Robert A. Dahl's Philosophy of Democracy: Exhibited in His Essays", *Annual Review of Political Science* 6, (2003): 99-118, doi: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.6.121901.085839.

¹⁴ Collier and Levitsky, “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research,” 430-451

¹⁵ Kenneth. A. Bollen and Robert. W. Jackman, “Democracy, stability, and dichotomies,” *American Sociological Review* 54, no. 4 (1989): 612-621.

¹⁶ Joakim Ekman, “Political Participation and Regime Stability: A Framework for Analyzing Hybrid Regimes,” *International Political Science Review* 30, no. 1 (2009): 7–31, doi: 10.1177/0192512108097054.

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those regimes which have achieved some basic or minimum conditions for democratic governance but suffer from democratic flaws in other respects such as, restricted freedom of expression and information access, low participation of citizens in the political process, and the presence of unelected bodies imposing guardianship restrictions on elected officials, or other power factors that tip the balance in favour of incumbents.¹⁷

Much of the democratization literature has referred to many types of regimes as sub-types forms of democracy, or as undergoing a protracted transition to democracy. Among these types are: semi-democracies (Diamond et al., 1989) (Diamond, Linz, & Lipset, 1995), quasi-democracies (Finer, 1970), exclusionary democracy (Remmer, 1985–1986), electoral democracies (Diamond, 1999 and Freedom House), mixed regimes (Bunce and Wolchik, 2008), partial democracies (Epstein et al., 2006), illiberal democracies (Zakaria, 1997), delegative democracy (O'Donnell, 1994), and pseudo-democracy (Diamond, 2002).¹⁸

Later, Wolfgang Merkel developed the concept of (Defective Democracy), and focused on researching why some hybrid regimes were not able to transition to democracy, as there was a hope among some scholars that these imperfect democracies would adjust themselves.¹⁹ Merkel considers defective democracy to be those regimes that do not meet one of the five requirements for liberal democracy regimes.* She has

¹⁷ Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm”, 10.

¹⁸ Morlino, “Are there hybrid regimes? Or are they just an optical illusion?” 273–296.

¹⁹ Mariam Mufti, “What Do We Know about Hybrid Regimes after Two Decades of Scholarship?,” *Politics and Governance* 6, no. 2 (2018): 113, doi: 10.17645/pag.v6i2.1400.

***** Liberal democracy regimes consist of five partial systems: a democratic electoral system, political rights to participation, civil rights, horizontal accountability, and the assurance that the effective power of government rests in the hands of democratically elected representatives. See: Wolfgang Merkel, “Embedded and Defective Democracies,” *Democratization* 11, no. 5 (2004): 33, doi: 10.1080/13510340412331304598.

divided this category into “Exclusive Democracies,” which present restrictive guarantees of political rights; “Domain democracies” where powerful elites shape and restrict the political behaviour of the elected leaders, and “illiberal democracies” which provide limited guarantees of civil rights.²⁰

Diamond and others have described “Semi-democracy regimes” as those in which the actual power of elected officials is too weak, competition between political parties is severely restricted, or electoral abuses have damaged electoral results. Although somewhat competitive, they still deviate significantly from the popular preferences; or that some political tendencies and interests are unable to organize and express themselves due to the limited civil and political liberties,²¹ and among the examples of the above, we mention one of the most prominent ones.

Electoral Democracies

One of the most prominent of these hybrid regimes that fall into the democratic sub-type are electoral democracies. During the third wave of democracy, Huntington confidently declared that “elections are not only the life of democracy, but the death of dictatorship.”²²

Electoral democracy is defined “as minimalist; the focus is on elections which give people a chance to who shall rule. Liberal democracy in contrast, not only decides elections results but also puts a high value on respect for civil liberties and political rights.”²³

²⁰ Merkel, “Embedded and Defective Democracies,” 33-58.

²¹ Diamond, “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes,” 25.

²² Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 174.

²³ Peter. J. Burnell, “Lessons of experience in International Democracy Support,” *UNU-WIDER Working Paper* 84 (2011): 3.

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The category of electoral democracy was considered the most widespread among the transformation models. By 2006, (123) out of (192) countries, or about three-fifths of the world's countries, were considered “electoral democracies,” however imperfect they may be.²⁴

In his research titled “Is the Third Wave Over?” Larry Diamond focused on three distinct categories of non-authoritarian regimes: pseudo-democracies, electoral democracies and liberal democracies. In order to clarify the concept of electoral democracy, it is necessary to define what distinguishes the three concepts. Diamond considered that what the three categories of “democracies” have in common are the elections for public office that take place at irregular intervals. These categories differ critically in the degree to which they actually allow competition for purposeful participation.²⁵

On the other hand, electoral democracies differ from the liberal ones to the extent that political rights and civil liberties are considered essential to ensure competition and meaningful electoral participation. They are also reinforced between elections and are given greater importance to ensure other democratic functions which is what applies to liberal democracies.²⁶

As for the third category, which is pseudo-democracies, it is according to Diamond “less than minimally democratic but still distinct from purely authoritarian regimes [...]. [They] have legal opposition parties and perhaps many other constitutional features of electoral democracy but fail

²⁴ Alina Rocha Menocal and Verena Fritz with Lise Rakner, “Hybrid regimes and the challenges of deepening and sustaining democracy in developing countries,” *South African Journal of International Affairs* 15, no. 1 (2008): 29-40, doi: 10.1080/10220460802217934.

²⁵ Larry Diamond, “Is the Third Wave Over?”, *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996): 20- 37, doi: 10.1353/jod.1996.0047.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

to meet one of its crucial requirements: a sufficiently fair arena of contestation to allow the ruling party to be turned out of power.”²⁷

In a more precise description, Diamond defines the concept of electoral democracy as holding free and fair multi-party elections despite the fact that civil liberties are not fully protected and enforced.²⁸

However, we have to take into account that there are many intermediary forms that fall between these three forms. It should also be worth noting that Andreas Schedler used the electoral democracy term in a wider scope than Diamond, as Schedler believed that elections can be considered democratic only if they fulfill each of the seven items which are (empowerment, free supply, free demand, inclusion, insulation, integrity & irreversibility).²⁹ In Freedom House's usage of the term, all democracies are “electoral democracies” but are not necessarily considered liberal, so even regimes that do not have maximum points in electoral indicators are still considered electoral democracies.³⁰

This does not fit Diamond's classification, which uses the term “electoral democracy” in a different sense than Freedom House. Diamond supposes “electoral democracy” and “liberal democracy” are different categories. Freedom House ranks all liberal democracies as elective, but not the other way around. So, for example, Freedom House considers a country such as, the UK to be a liberal democracy, but it is also electoral, whereas for Diamond it is not.³¹

²⁷ Diamond, “Is the Third Wave Over?,” 25.

²⁸ Diamond, “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes”, 29.

²⁹ Andreas Schedler, “Elections Without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation”, *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 36-50, doi: 10.1353/jod.2002.0031.

³⁰ Morlino, “Are there hybrid regimes? Or are they just an optical illusion?”, 278.

³¹ *Ibid.*

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The hybrid regime as an authoritarian sub-type

We use here the term (authoritarian sub-type) as an alternative to what is described as authoritarian regimes falling within the scope of (diminished subtypes), or authoritarianism as the root concept.

Scholars who adopt a dichotomy approach classification believe that there is no overlap between the types of regimes, so they underestimate the mixed nature of the regime. Some of them believe that the existence of democratic institutions do not principally change the essence of the authoritarian regime itself, and it is better to follow another path to conceptualize the hybrid regime. It is to classify it as an authoritarian subtype, for example, as it is in Schedler's concept of (electoral authoritarian).³² Here we discuss the most prominent models.

Semi-authoritarian regimes

In the last decade of the twentieth century, a large number of regimes have emerged, that combine the characteristics of authoritarianism and democracy. They cannot be classified easily, and the most appropriate label for them is “semi-authoritarianism.”* They are regimes designed to maintain the appearance of democracy, not perfect the democracies struggling to improve and for their self-development.³³

³² Mufti, “What Do We Know about Hybrid Regimes after Two Decades of Scholarship?”, 114.

*****) Such regimes are spread in the countries that succeeded the Soviet Union such as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, as well as many semi-authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa, also in the Arab world such as Algeria, Morocco, and Yemen, and in the Balkans, most governments are semi-authoritarian, in Latin America such as Peru and Venezuela, and in Asia countries such as Singapore and Malaysia are in a semi-authoritarian realm. See: Martha Brill Olcott and Marina. S. Ottaway, “Challenge of Semi-Authoritarianism” *Carnegie Paper 7* (1999): 3-4.

³³ Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003), 3.

Semi-authoritarian are those regimes which “contain elements of both democratic and authoritarian regimes [...]. Although these regimes allow for a certain degree of political freedom and openness; they cannot be regarded as democratic. This is because they lack the essential characteristic of democratic regimes, namely, the ability to transfer power to a new leadership.”³⁴

Semi-authoritarian regimes are hybrid political regimes that permit limited real competition for power and so reduce government accountability, yet they leave sufficient political space for the establishment of political parties and civil organizations, an independent media to function somewhat, and to conduct some political debate. The existing governments and parties do not face the risk of losing their grip on power, not because they are popular but because they know how to play the game of democracy.³⁵

The literature has indicated, at least, four distinct characteristics of semi-authoritarian regimes: the method of generation and transmission of power; decreasing degree of institutionalization; inadequate interconnection between economic and political reforms, and keeping civil society under restrictions. Accordingly, these regimes are characterized by the presence and constancy of mechanisms that effectively impede the transfer of power through elections from the hands of the ruling party or current leaders to a new party or political elite. Therefore, in terms of pattern, holding the election means that the regime is less than completely authoritarian. On the one hand, the election manipulation shows that it is less than completely democratic. However, in this position, there is no ability to challenge the incumbents, since, even if an election is held, there is no chance for competitors to actually challenge the incumbents.

³⁴ Martha Brill Olcott and Marina S. Ottaway, “Challenge of Semi-Authoritarianism,” *Carnegie Paper* 7 (1999): 1.

³⁵ Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, 3.

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Semi-authoritarian regimes have been classified into three types, according to their different internal dynamics and the extent of their potential for change. First, those called "regimes in equilibrium" are characterized by complete stability because they establish a balance between competing forces; secondly, it is called "regimes in decay" in which the balancing factors are weak. It leads to increasingly strong authoritarian tendencies. Third are those regimes in which governments undergo dynamic changes that reduce their ability to maintain the status quo. This provides the possibility of gradual progress towards democracy.³⁶

Electoral authoritarian regimes

One of the more well-established subspecies of the authoritarian root type is electoral authoritarianism. Schedler introduces the concept of electoral authoritarianism as a regime in which leaders “hold elections and tolerate some pluralism and interparty competition but violate democratic norms so severely and systematically that it makes no sense to call them democracies, however, qualified.”³⁷

Schedler presents the concept of electoral authoritarianism as a regime. It supports multi-party elections, which enables the presence of the opposition, and the opposition can win seats in the elections. However the general elections are held in a widespread violation of democratic principles such as, electoral fraud, suppression of the opposition, and manipulation of laws. Electoral authoritarianism differ from the inclusive democracy because of the lack of a level-playing field for the opposition parties. It also differs from the authoritarian regimes. It does not prohibit dissent and criticism, but rather uses state resources and institutions to harass the opposition. Schedler abandons the assumption that such

³⁶ Ottawa, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, 20.

³⁷ Schedler, “Elections Without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation,” 36.

regimes are still somehow in touch with the liberal democratic tradition by placing their sub-type under authoritarianism as a root concept.³⁸

The distinction between electoral democracy and electoral authoritarianism is based on the nature of elections. Every democracy requires “free and fair” elections. Under electoral democracy, elections comply with the minimum democratic standards, but under electoral authoritarianism, they do not meet that minimum. Nowadays, most authoritarian regimes hold some kind of elections, but some of them are fictitious, and some involve a degree of openness and competition that cannot be ignored, so not all of these competitions are equal. It is the nature of these rivalries that separate electoral authoritarianism from closed authoritarianism. Therefore, once elections cross the hard-to-define threshold of openness and competitiveness, the regime acquires a different brand. When the elections are fair and begin to play the desired role in the formation of the authority, both the rulers and the opposition are compelled to work more ardently for the elections.³⁹

To distinguish between the electoral autocracy and closed autocracy, Schedler relies on the criterion of the relative strength of the opposition forces that vary between types (electoral autocracies). He considered the so-called “competitive EA regimes” to be regimes in which autocratic rulers are insecure because the electoral arena is more or less a real battleground in the struggle for power. As for the so-called “hegemonic EA regimes,” the rulers, in this case, are invincible because elections are clearly an exaggeration of self-projection for power. Hence, these sub-systems form clusters nested in a tree (electoral authoritarian regimes).⁴⁰

³⁸ Andreas Schedler, “The Logic of Electoral Authoritarianism,” in *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, ed. Andreas Schedler (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 2006), 1–23.

³⁹ Schedler, “Elections Without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation,” 37–38.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

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In short, the distinction between electoral authoritarianism and democracy depends on the quality of electoral competition. The distinction between the electoral autocracies depends on the degree of electoral dominance of the ruling party. Therefore, when the electoral differences between different types of electoral authoritarian regimes, it is noted that the dominant authoritarian regimes are characterized by an overwhelming electoral dominance of the ruling party (meaning winning more than 70 or 75% of the votes or the number of seats). On the other hand, in competitive authoritarian regimes, opposition parties present greater electoral challenges and receive a larger share of the vote.⁴¹

The foregoing has led to the emergence of questions about the logic and value of authoritarian elections, and international pressure to introduce elections in authoritarian regimes. A number of scholars believe that these elections are more likely to help maintain an authoritarian regime than to strengthen democracy, which in fact requires “pushing for independent economic opportunities, expanding legislative powers, and reducing the resources available to state elites in the center of power.”⁴²

The Hybrid Regime as a separate Category

The conceptual confusion about the content of the Hybrid Regimes has led scholars to shift in their interest from the standpoints of hybridization towards either electoral democracy or electoral authoritarian regimes. In this, the greater empirical focus is on measuring the elements of these regimes through periodic indicators based on databases such as (V-Dem), (Polity IV), (Freedom House), and others. This transformation has resulted in a growing awareness of how different this type of regime is, whether it is considered democratic, authoritarian, or even hybrid. A

⁴¹ Daniela Donno, “Elections and Democratization in Authoritarian Regimes,” *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 3 (2013): 703- 704, doi: 10.1111/ajps.12013.

⁴² Ellen Lust-Okar, “Elections under authoritarianism: Preliminary lessons from Jordan,” *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (2006): 468, doi: 10.1080/13510340600579359.

number of scholars have found that hybrid systems are often very robust. They need to be understood for what they are. The terms used to describe such systems must express that content,⁴³ which reinforced the criticism of the prevailing assumptions in the literature of democratic transition. Although the concept of hybrid regimes is theoretically useful for understanding the vast gray zone between ideal democracy and absolute authoritarianism, it is based on vague and conflicting definitions. It often means everything and nothing at the same time. So the concept of the hybrid system was reconsidered, and is seen as a completely separate type, instead of assuming as inherently democratic or authoritarian. In other words, it is no longer seen as Huntington has described it “fragile halfway-houses” that have stalled in their democratic “transitions” or as a diminished subtype of authoritarianism. It is fairly a stable entity. It consists of authoritarian and electoral institutions at the same time, established, legitimized, and unified as hybrid regimes.⁴⁴

There are important reasons and strong empirical evidence to consider Hybrid Regimes as a distinct type, as they do not even behave like semi-democratic or autocratic regimes. As confirmed by comparative studies that have produced results indicating, for example, that Hybrid regimes are more likely to wage war than democracies or authoritarian regimes. It is more likely to cause state failures than democratic or authoritarian regimes and is characterized by lower levels of commercial confidence than in democratic or authoritarian regimes.⁴⁵

Hence, the position of the disagreement among scholars changed. The difference was initially based on defining the unclear boundaries between democratic and non-democratic regimes, then moved from “Democracy

⁴³ Mufti, “What Do We Know about Hybrid Regimes after Two Decades of Scholarship?”, 114-115.

⁴⁴ Feyzi Karabekir Akkoyunlu, “The rise and fall of the hybrid regime: Guardianship and democracy in Iran and Turkey,” (PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014) 10, http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/936/1/Akkoyunlu_Rise-and-Fal-of-Hybrid-Regimes.pdf

⁴⁵ Hale, “Eurasian politics as hybrid regimes: The case of Putin’s Russia”, 35.

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with Adjectives” to “Autocracy with Adjectives”, becoming the dispute about setting ambiguous boundaries between authoritarian and non-authoritarian regimes. Then the dispute today exceeded all of the above, and a number of scholars are calling for the use of the term “Hybrid Regime” for non-democratic and non-authoritarian regimes.⁴⁶ Among the examples of above, we can mention two of them.

Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

In creating their own sub-type, Levitsky and Way take an approach similar to Schedler's. They started by criticizing the teleological bias in the democracy literature that assumes that Hybrid Regimes are (or should be) oriented towards democracy, or describe it as a prolonged democratic transition. Instead, Levitsky and Way argue that such regimes should be categorized as distinct, undemocratic, and not in transition. They assert that 'competitive authoritarian' is a more empirically correct concept.⁴⁷

Competitive authoritarian regimes are described as: “civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents’ abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents.* Such regimes are competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to contest seriously for power, but they are not democratic

⁴⁶ Leah Gilbert and Payam Mohseni, “Beyond Authoritarianism: The Conceptualization of Hybrid Regimes,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 46, no. 3 (2011): 271, doi: 10.1007/s12116-011-9088-x.

⁴⁷ Steven Levitsky and Lucan. A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4.

*Examples of competitive authoritarianism regimes according to Levitsky and Way (Croatia under Franjo Tudjman, Serbia under Slobodan Milosevic, Russia under Vladimir Putin, Ukraine under Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma, Peru under Alberto Fujimori, and post-1995 Haiti, as well as Albania, Armenia, Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, and Zambia through much of the 1990s). see: Levitsky and Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” 52

because the playing field is heavily skewed in favour of incumbents. Competition is thus real but unfair.”⁴⁸

The foregoing indicates that these regimes have rules that are acceptable and stable, in which both parties agree that, however flawed the election may be in practice, it remains the primary means of gaining or staying in political power.* In addition, these elections have competitive features, which provoke a real conflict between the incumbent and the opposition, a situation that sometimes may lead to unanticipated or uncertain outcomes. Therefore, the opposition still has a chance to defeat the incumbent, thus opening the door to considerable political liberalization. From this point, competitive authoritarianism can be considered as a residual pattern. Neither electoral nor liberal democracy or dominant or closed authoritarianism, indicates that it is inherently unstable and, therefore, can swing to one side or the other.⁴⁹

Competitive authoritarianism is inherently paradoxical in that democratic mechanisms (i.e., periodic and competitive elections) are undermined through illegal actions such as, electoral fraud, violent denial of voting rights, and media bias. These underlying tensions simultaneously excite and disappoint the expectations of other parties of the possibility of a more liberal regime: the opposition, civil society, voters, and even those moderates and reformists within existing regimes. Thus, the opposition regards the incumbent as the main stumbling block to a more democratic regime of the government, but not similar to closed and dominant authoritarian regimes. Winning is considered as at hand, given that the

⁴⁸ Levitsky and Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” 53

* According to Levitsky and Way, democracies are characterized by four minimum requirements to count as a democracy: 1- free and fair elections 2- the right to vote 3- political rights and civil liberties 4- no political guardianship (military, judicial, religious, etc.) Democratic, in competitive authoritarian regimes these conditions are applied only symbolically with systematic violations. See: Levitsky and Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” 53.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

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institutions for change already exist. Unless the rules of the game are radically changed by the incumbent, and decide to return to the closed or dominant authoritarianism, the change is possible. In fact, when the dominant party or its candidate loses, an electoral disturbance sometimes occurs, despite the great advantage it had.⁵⁰

Electoral patronal systems

Hale believes that electoral patronal systems are among a separate category, as he found that this type represents Hybrid Regimes in Russia and many Eurasian countries,* and it is based on several pillars: First, the official process for obtaining, preserving, and retaining the strongest positions in the country is to hold periodic elections. Second, it is available for real opposition parties to exist, and some of them, at least, can compete in these elections. Third, the system for managing authority relies predominantly on deep networks of patron-client relationships. That is, political transactions contain two types of promises, one is abstract to support broad ideas pragmatism, and the other is tangible promises of personal incentives and private benefits to particular individuals, (jobs or income-earning opportunities help in solving private problems, help for relatives, etc.) in addition to explicit or implicit threats directed to these individuals.⁵¹ The concept of a hybrid regime could be more functional if it is considered a differentiated category from both authoritarian and democratic regimes, as well as their diminished sub-types, which leads the debate away from one of the main conceptual confusions about defining

⁵⁰ Marc Morje Howard and Philip. G. Roessler, "Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 2(2006): 369.

*) Examples of these types of regimes according to Hale are Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. See: Hale, "Eurasian polities as hybrid regimes: The case of Putin's Russia," 33-34.

⁵¹ Hale, "Eurasian polities as hybrid regimes: The case of Putin's Russia," 34-35.

the line between diminished subtypes of authoritarianism and democracy.⁵²

Conclusion

The research reached at a number of results:

- The common view during the seventies and eighties of the last century was that liberation from the authoritarian or autocratic regimes would result in a sure end to these types of regimes, but later facts proved that this was not the “end of history.”
- The prevailing belief that the authoritarian regime and democracy are the two opposite ends of the political spectrum. It, however, no longer accurately represent the current reality because the most prominent and common innovation of the democratic transformation in the nineties was represented by the hybrid regime pattern.
- Authoritarian governments and autocratic leaders have partially adapted to the democratic transition by devising new methods of relatively liberalized regimes while continuing to hold power.
- The spread of hybrid regimes in a large proportion, in the wake of the third wave, and the sustainability of many of them, does not necessarily mean the end of democratic transformations, unless this is the effect of the frustration caused by the excessive hopes of the third wave literature because these regimes are inherently unstable and contradictory. They can lean in one direction or the other.
- In the context of the foregoing, there is a need for more empirical analysis of the accepted definitions in assessing the quality of

⁵² Akkoyunlu, “The rise and fall of the hybrid regime: Guardianship and democracy in Iran and Turkey,” 33.

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democracies after their transition by focusing on the different cases and contexts, for the purpose of accommodating the varying diversity of democracy in the experiences of different countries.

- Finally, it can be concluded that the real goal of governance is to ensure pluralism with stability, and countries everywhere must find their own way to achieve this goal, meaning that the definition of success in the transition can come in many forms, across different cultures and regions, just as success is a subjective idea. ■