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Political Competition and Democratic Stability in New Democracies

JOSEPH WRIGHT*

This article examines the way in which the initial level of political competition in a new democracy affects the stability of that regime. The author argues that new democracies with low levels of initial political competition are more likely to fail because those initially excluded from the democratic game seek to subvert the regime in the future. Using data from ninety-two new democracies born since 1946, he finds that a higher level of initial political competition in a new democracy makes for a more durable democracy. New democracies at war and born during the Cold War are less likely to survive. Finally, he finds evidence that new democracies with low levels of initial political competition are also more likely to meet with civil conflict.

Early democratization theorists looked at the histories of modern West European democracies and the United States to parse out insights as to how nations developed democratic institutions and practice.¹ As democratic theory – and later modernization theory – developed, they focused on social class manoeuvring and the level of economic development as key explanatory devices in their stories of democratization. As scholars began asking what factors make a democracy survive, they too found the level of development to be a crucial factor. Empirical studies found that richer democracies rarely fail and that democracies that have survived a long time are also less likely to fail.² Well-entrenched institutions are difficult to overturn, especially when the citizens of that country are relatively well off. These two key insights are of little use, though, to ‘new democracies’, defined as those born in the era following the Second World War – most of which come from beyond Western Europe and North America, have not survived long and are relatively poor.

The best research on the question of democratic survival has appropriately looked at the sample of all democracies within a certain time period.³ These samples, though, are dominated by regime-years for democracies that were rich and had already survived many years. For example, in the Alvarez *et al.* data that span from 1950 to 1990, only 22 per cent of democratic regime-years are from new democracies; the remaining 78 per cent of

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¹ Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1966); Seymour Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: The Free Press, 1967).

² Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi and Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, ‘Modernization: Theories and Facts’, *World Politics*, 49 (1997), 155–83.

³ Robert Bates, Jack Goldstone, Ida Kristensen, David Epstein and Sharyn O’Halloran, ‘Democratic Transitions’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 50 (2006) 551–69; Carles Boix and Susan Stokes, ‘Endogenous Democratization’, *World Politics*, 55 (2003), 517–49; Alvarez *et al.*, *Democracy and Development*; Przeworski and Limongi, ‘Modernization’.

TABLE 1 *Level of Development in Incumbent and New Democracies*

	Income per head (2000 \$)		Income per head (1985 \$)	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Incumbent democracies	9,945	9,687	6,954	6,774
New democracies	4,742	3,599	3,316	2,517
Lived 15 years or more	11,445	11,333	8,003	7,925
Lived less than 15 years	4,334	3,213	3,030	2,247

Source: Michael Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi and Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Note: Dollar conversion using gross domestic product (GDP) deflator.

the democratic regime-years are from incumbent democracies. As Table 1 indicates, the median level of development for incumbent democracies in the sample used by Alvarez *et al.* is nearly three times that of new democracies. Similarly, 62 per cent of the democratic regime-years in their sample of democracies come from democracies that had lasted fifteen years or more, with similar income disparities. While Boix and Stokes do include more new democracies than Alvarez *et al.*, their duration analysis is still dominated by long-lived democracies.⁴ And Epstein *et al.*'s sample runs from 1960 to 2000, again including mostly data from incumbent democracies. Table 1 tells us that the sample of new democracies differs greatly from the sample of all democracies, particularly along a margin (level of development) that is a key part of the story about why democracies endure.

So while earlier studies of democratic survival helped us understand that rich democracies are extremely difficult to overturn, we still know very little about why *new* democracies endure. For students of democratization and policy makers who want to know more about what makes a transition to democracy successful, this is a crucial question that requires analysis of a sample that differs quite dramatically from the sample used in earlier studies of democratic survival.

⁴ Their sample stretches back to 1800, thus including more new democracies than the data published by Alvarez *et al.* in 2000. Boix and Stokes count thirty-two new democracies before 1946 and one incumbent democracy (United States), so this sample captures the democracies when they were 'new' that were included as relatively wealthy incumbent democracies in the Alvarez sample. In this pre-war sample of new democracies, sixteen of the twenty-nine for which we have data on per capita income failed and thirteen survived (per capita income data are from Angus Maddison, 'Historical Statistics for the World Economy: 1–2003 AD', available at <http://www.ggd.net/maddison>, and I count European democracies such as Denmark and Norway, which were occupied by Germany during the Second World War, as having survived). Given the small sample size and the lack of data on useful controls, I conduct a *t*-test for the difference of means between democracies that failed and survived for Log(GDP) and initial level of Political Competition. Though the mean income for new democracies that failed (7.62) is less than the mean income for those that survived (7.77), the difference is not statistically significant. The mean level of initial political competition for those that failed (2.79) is also lower than the mean for those that survived (3.54), and this difference is significant at the 0.10 level. While this test is by no means conclusive, it suggests that even during the first wave of democratization, the level of initial political competition mattered: new democracies with higher levels of political competition were less likely to fail, whereas income does not appear to vary significantly with the failure outcome.

In this article, I look only at a sample of new democracies born since 1946 to answer the question of what makes democracy endure. My starting point for answering this question is the level of initial political competition in the new democratic regime. Some early democratic theorists claimed that restricting political competition in new democracies is necessary for democratic stability. For example, Dahl argued that democracy is most likely to endure when the advent of meaningful political contestation (elections) precedes the extension of political participation – the scenario, according to Dahl, that laid the foundation for some of the world’s most durable democracies.⁵

Later generations of transition scholars picked up on the pervasive practice of restricting political competition in the early years of a new democracy, variously describing new democracies as ‘hybrid regimes’, ‘semi-democracies’, ‘illiberal democracies’, ‘unconsolidated democracies’ and as having ‘perverse institutions’.⁶ Restricting political competition, as we know, can take many forms: an exclusionary pact between elites; institutional devices such as banning parties, restricting suffrage or rewriting electoral rules to exclude a particular group; or simply restricting the policy space, perhaps with a military veto. All of these studies attest to the fact that scholars are well aware that transitions to democracy often entail some form of restrictions on political competition. But whether scholars use elite behaviour,⁷ mass behaviour,⁸ or formal institutions⁹ as the motivation for asking questions about democratic stability, it is important to ask *who* is allowed to participate in the new democratic game. None of the literature discussed thus far explicitly looks at the relationship between the extent of political competition in the early years of a new democracy and the durability of the democratic regime.

In the first section of this article, I look at the literature on democratic transitions to parse out the reasons why scholars think that restricted political competition in the early years of a new democracy makes for a more stable democracy. I also present the alternative hypothesis, discussing why higher levels of initial political competition may increase the longevity of a democracy. In the second section, I discuss the literature concerned with the definition of democracy, thereby specifying the universe of cases for testing whether political competition matters for democratic stability. I also discuss what exactly the key

⁵ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971).

⁶ Terry Karl, ‘The Hybrid Regimes of Central America’, *Journal of Democracy*, 6 (1995), 72–86; Mark Gasioworski, ‘Economic Crisis and Political Regime Change: An Event History Analysis’, *American Political Science Review*, 89 (1995), 882–97; Fareed Zakaria, ‘The Rise of Illiberal Democracy’, *Foreign Affairs*, 76 (November/December 1997), 6–22; Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); Samuel Valenzuela, ‘Democratic Consolidation in Post-transitional Settings: The Military in Latin America’, in Scott Mainwaring *et al.*, eds, *Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1992), pp. 57–104; Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

⁷ Guillermo O’Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1973).

⁸ Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁹ Antonio Cheibub, ‘Minority Governments, Deadlock Situations, and the Survival of Presidential Democracies’, *Comparative Political Studies*, 35 (2002), 284–312; Juan Linz, ‘Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does It Make a Difference?’ in Juan J. Linz and Arturo Valenzuela, eds, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 3–90; Samuel Valenzuela, ‘Latin America: Presidentialism in Crisis’, *Journal of Democracy*, 4 (1994), 3–16.

explanatory variable – political competition – measures. Next, I look at alternative explanations for democratic (in)stability: level of development, economic crisis, international environment, democratic regime type, armed conflict, authoritarian regime type and region. In doing so, I generate control variables for the empirical model. In the fourth section, I test models of democratic stability and examine the relationship between the key explanatory variable, political competition, and the level of economic development. Last, I discuss the results of these tests and their implications for the study of democratic transitions and, ultimately, for the study of democratic theory.

POLITICAL COMPETITION AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

Dahl asserts that democracy is most likely to endure when the advent of meaningful political contestation precedes the extension of political participation, Britain and Sweden being successful examples.¹⁰ According to Dahl, these countries demonstrate how the rules and norms of competitive elections are first developed amongst a small group of elite. As additional social groups are admitted to the political game, they too are socialized into the rules and norms of the democratic game already agreed upon by the elite. Designing a system of mutual security amongst a small and relatively homogeneous group of elite people is much easier and, hence, more stable than initially designing political institutions that must aggregate and balance the interests of large and diverse groups, particularly given the condition of universal suffrage. If we look at the recent debate over the new Iraqi constitution, we see that this is precisely the problem the constitution writers encountered.

Two of the world's oldest democracies, the United States (1789) and Switzerland (1874) did not grant full participatory rights to all its citizens until the mid-to-late twentieth century. Southern blacks were not permitted to participate until the civil rights movement of 1960s abolished Jim Crow restrictions. In Switzerland, women were not granted suffrage rights until 1971. However, in France during the Revolution, we see the opposite: both political contestation and full political participation proceeded apace, resulting in grave institutional instability. Here, Dahl proceeds to argue that although this formula may be the safest route to polyarchy, this route is nearly impossible when universal suffrage is the international norm. The process of political liberalization in the twentieth century, he explains, faces serious risk under the condition of universal suffrage due to the difficulty of designing institutions that guarantee mutual security for players in the game of mass politics. As Bermeo points out, Dahl's *Polyarchy* is a vociferous normative claim for gradual transition to democracy where the democratic government's toleration of opposition ought initially to be quite minimal.¹¹ If we believe Dahl's logic, states must resort to managing or restricting political competition to ensure democratic stability in a world where states can no longer restrict suffrage rights (at least in name). The literature on new democracies during the most recent wave of democratization certainly notes the pervasive practice of restricting political competition, but does little to explain its impact on democratic stability.

More recently, some scholars argue that unfettered political competition would doom new democratic regimes because the new institutions would not be able to cope with the competing economic demands of all organized sectors of society. For example, Haggard and Kaufman argue that 'new democratic governments face exceptionally strong

¹⁰ Dahl, *Polyarchy*.

¹¹ Nancy Bermeo, 'Rethinking Regime Change', *Comparative Politics*, 22 (1990), 359–77.

distributive pressures, both from groups reentering the political arena after long periods of repression and from established interests demanding reassurance'.¹² Similarly, Bienen and Herbst suggest that in Africa, the middle class and many elites that might favour political liberalization will be opposed to economic reform.¹³ Therefore, 'all good things do not come together', and new liberal democracies face destabilizing pressure to pursue economic reform against the wishes of those who agitate for and underpin liberal democracy.

Striking a similar chord in the popular press, some claim that unrestricted political competition in new democracies may give rise to the election of 'illiberal' democrats who, once elected, will systematically subvert democracy to serve their political ambitions. Zakaria argues that democracy and unrestrained political competition are a threat to 'liberal democratic' regimes and individual rights in general.¹⁴ He cites a handful of historical examples of how unrestrained political competition led to the election of future demagogues, Hitler's rise from the Weimar Republic's democracy being the most prominent. The logic of this argument applies equally to new democracies: Chua argues that the sudden introduction of competitive elections and majority rule in societies with a market dominant ethnic minority leads to political violence and the dissolution of democracy.¹⁵ Others have also recently noted the rise of neo-populist elected leaders in South America, such as Peru's Fujimori and Venezuela's Chavez.¹⁶ The elections that brought them to power were some of the most competitive elections in their respective countries, though some claim they have subsequently worked to undermine democracy. If these observers are correct, *we would expect new democracies with more competition to be less stable.*

However, there are also reasons to believe that unrestricted political competition may make new democracies *more* stable. New democracies that permit all the organized groups that can credibly threaten violence if excluded into the electoral game may be more stable. If these groups are included, they will be less likely to disrupt the democratic process later on. Once relevant players start competing in the democratic game, even the electoral losers may quickly develop a strong interest in preserving a regime that allows them at least an opportunity to win power in any future time period.¹⁷ Given the instability of autocratic regimes¹⁸ and the high costs of losing in the autocratic game (relative to losing in the democratic game), it is reasonable to think that even those groups that have the capacity to overthrow the democratic regime may opt not to do so if they perceive a possibility of winning power in the democratic game. Knowing that a more competitive democracy may keep potential regime saboteurs in the democratic game in the long run, those with the power to design institutions may opt to permit more players into the game. This implies a strategic selection, on the part of the institutional designers, of more competitive

¹² Stephen Haggard and Robert Kaufmann, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 152.

¹³ Henry Bienen and Jeffrey Herbst, 'The Relationship between Political and Economic Reform in Africa', *Comparative Politics*, 29, No. 2 (1996), 23–42.

¹⁴ Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom*, chap. 1.

¹⁵ Amy Chua, *World On Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

¹⁶ Steve Ellner, 'The Contrasting Visions of Populism', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 35 (2003), 117–37.

¹⁷ Adam Pzeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁸ Barbara Geddes, 'The Breakdown of Authoritarian Regimes: Empirical Test of a Game Theoretic Argument' (paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, 1999).

institutions, even at the cost of increasing the probability of losing power in the present or the future. In Appendix A I discuss a simple game to illustrate this strategic choice. If the incumbent elite in a new democracy faces challengers who can credibly threaten to disrupt the political regime violently if they are initially excluded from the democratic game, and if this violence would cost the incumbents more than they get from excluding the challengers, the incumbent will permit the challengers into the electoral competition even though this may decrease the probability the incumbents will win the current or subsequent elections.¹⁹

If unfettered political competition in a new democracy reduces the incentives for potential saboteurs to subvert the democratic regime in the future, then the converse suggests that in polities with restrictions on who can enter the new democratic game, we should see evidence of conflict. Civil conflict occurs because those originally excluded seek power by disrupting the democratic regime. Simply put, if potential saboteurs are excluded in the beginning, they may attempt to subvert the democratic regime in the future. While the main concern of this article is to test the relationship between the initial level of political competition and the durability of a new democracy, one observable implication of the hypothesis is that *low levels of initial political competition should be associated with civil conflict*.

In addition to this strategic logic, scholars have also noted that higher levels of political competition may make democracy more stable by reducing corruption²⁰ or constraining the military.²¹ Last, there may be normative value to highly competitive democracies that endow them with legitimacy that is difficult to subvert, even in the face of economic crisis or conflict.

DEFINING DEMOCRACY, DEMOCRATIC STABILITY AND POLITICAL COMPETITION

Democracy and Stability

Contested elections have an intuitive claim on our sense of what democracy is and is not, and for many scholars Schumpeter's view of competition is the most salient characteristic of what we call democracy.²² There may be more stringent conditions for democracy, such as the inclusion of all willing parties (not excluding ethnic or religious parties or the democratic left), the absence of political violence, or the alternation of rule (opposition candidates winning elections). All of these conditions also have intuitive claims on our sense of democracy. But it is precisely the effect of more stringent conditions on democratic stability that I want to test. If stable democracy is fostered by restricting democratic competition in the early years of the democracy, then in the absence of these stricter conditions we should find the makings of more durable democracies. It is these more stringent conditions that I try to capture in the political competition variable.

Therefore, I use a minimal, procedural definition of democracy (as contested elections) to delineate a newly democratic regime. To illustrate exactly why I use this minimalist definition, let me provide a couple of examples. First, countries like Guatemala and

¹⁹ This model does not attempt to explain the variation in the duration of new democracies directly, and this therefore is not the subject of the empirical tests in this article.

²⁰ Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University, 1993).

²¹ Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

²² Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1942).

El Salvador experienced transitions from military dictatorships in the mid-1980s. In the transition from military dictatorship to (at least a procedurally) democratic regime, these countries conducted contested elections. I code these elections as contested in the sense that while the results were certainly influenced by the retreating military, the election results were not pre-determined. That is, there existed uncertainty as to which candidate would win the presidential election (likewise for most of the legislative elections). The fact that the elections were contested does not mean that the elections were completely free and fair, nor does it mean that all willing candidates were allowed to participate. In both of these countries, the democratic left was excluded until the end of their respective civil wars a decade later, and the administration of these initial elections was undoubtedly marred by political violence, intimidation and explicit procedural attempts to keep urban voters from the polls.²³ It is these types of participation restrictions I wish to capture empirically within the democratic regime period. Therefore, I use the start for democracy in Guatemala as 1985 (the end of the military dictatorship and the advent of contested elections) instead of the more often cited date (2000) when the democratic left was able to participate fully in both legislative and presidential elections. Likewise with El Salvador; the start date in my dataset is 1984, even though the civil war did not end until 1991.

To contrast these examples, consider the cases of Mexico and Tanzania. Both of these countries had nominal elections for many years during dictatorial rule. These elections, though, were clearly not contested elections, in the sense that there did not exist uncertainty about which candidate (or party) would win, until the mid 1990s. Mexico's first contested national election is usually considered to have taken place in 1996, Tanzania's in 1995. These two cases provide a further contrast in that the Mexican opposition (Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) candidate, Vicente Fox) won the presidency in 2000, whereas in Tanzania the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) continues to win elections. Mexico satisfies the alternation rule (beginning in 2000), whereas Tanzania does not. My study is not intended to pick up explicitly on this type of variation, though it should be captured in the competition variable.

I code the start date of a new democratic regime as the year in which a transition from authoritarian or colonial rule took place.²⁴ The reason for this coding technique is to capture any periods of restricted democracy within the duration of the democratic regime, so that we can look at the relationship between the level of initial political competition and democratic stability. Some political scientists and economists have defined political stability in terms of the number of riots, protests or political assassinations, but this specification is used primarily as an independent variable in these studies. In the broader political economy of development literature it is argued that the duration of a democratic regime is instrumental for economic development.²⁵

To classify democratic regime spells, I use Alvarez *et al.* and updates from Cheibub and Gandhi.²⁶ This post-war sample covers both the second and third waves of

²³ William Barnes, 'Incomplete Democracy in Central America: Polarization and Voter Turnout in Nicaragua and El Salvador', *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, 40, No. 3 (1998), 63–101.

²⁴ I use the year of transition (and not the year of the first contested election) so as not to exclude cases where the first contested elections took up to twelve months to organize and carry out.

²⁵ Alvarez *et al.*, *Democracy and Development*.

²⁶ Alvarez *et al.*, *Democracy and Development*; José Antonio Cheibub and Jennifer Gandhi. 'Classifying Political Regimes' (unpublished paper, Yale University, 2003).

democratization²⁷ and allows us to gather information on a host of control variables – for which there is little data before 1946. In sum I have 104 country-regimes, of which sixty-four are right-censored.²⁸

Political Competition

The term *political competition* has been used to capture many concepts – from contested elections, to who can participate in the elections, to how many seats or votes the largest party obtains. Here I concentrate on whether or not institutional restrictions are placed on groups that might otherwise participate in the democratic game. So I employ the Polity IV measure of political competition (PARCOM). This index is a five-point ordinal scale (5 is the highest) that measures ‘the extent to which alternative preferences for policy and leadership can be pursued in the political arena’.²⁹ While this measure of political competition may be a rather blunt measure, it does capture meaningful variation in how much latitude different groups in society have to pursue political power. For example, PARCOM captures the low (2) political competition scores for the brief Argentine democratic regimes during the 1950s and 1960s (1958–61 and 1962–65). This low score should resonate with our understanding of limited political competition during that period of Argentine political history when the largest political organization was banned (the Peronist party) and its leader exiled. Argentina in the late 1980s received a score of 4 on the political competition scale, reflecting the fact that none of the major parties or interest groups was excluded from the electoral process.

This measure is not simply a post-hoc evaluation of political competition wherein the coders award a high score for democracies that have survived and a low score for democracies that we now know have failed. For example, the score for Turkey’s new democracy in 1960 – which subsequently failed – is 4, as is Turkey’s score in 1983 – a new democracy that has yet to fail. Similarly, post-colonial new democracies of similar size and colonial heritage with moderate levels of initial competition, such as Trinidad (1962) and Sierra Leone (1960), received the same score (3), but Sierra Leone subsequently failed while Trinidad survived. Again, the coding is the same for democracies with higher levels of initial political competition (4) that transitioned in the wake of the Cold War, such

²⁷ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

²⁸ Appendix B lists the new democratic regimes included in this study. Some regimes are not used in the empirical analysis due to missing data (e.g. Panama 1949).

²⁹ The five categories are: repressed, suppressed, factional, transitional and competitive. They indicate, respectively: repressed, ‘[n]o significant oppositional activity is permitted outside the ranks of the regime and ruling party’; suppressed ‘[s]ome organized, political competition occurs outside government, without serious factionalism; but the regime systematically and sharply limits its form, extent, or both in ways that exclude substantial groups from participation’; factional ‘[p]olitics with parochial or ethnic-based political factions that regularly compete for political influence in order to promote particularist agendas and favor group members to the detriment of common, secular, or cross-cutting agendas’; transitional, ‘transitional arrangements are accommodative of competing, parochial interests but have not fully linked parochial with broader, general interests – where sectarian and secular interest groups coexist’; competitive regimes ‘[t]here are relatively stable and enduring, secular political groups which regularly compete for political influence at the national level; ruling groups and coalitions regularly, voluntarily transfer central power to competing groups’. It is important to note that this measure does not rely on and is not correlated with measures of formal political institutions such as parliamentarism/presidentialism, district magnitude or electoral rules.

as Madagascar (1993) and Malawi (1994). Madagascar subsequently failed while Malawi has survived.

I assign the score for political competition in the first year of the new democratic regime to each year of the regime. Hence, the key explanatory variable is the *initial level of political competition* and not simply the level of political competition measured in each year of the regime. This is important because the scores for most of these measures decrease dramatically in the year that the regime fails – indicating that the change in the level of political competition is caused by a change in regime type (the democracy fails) and not the other way around. Therefore, there is little cause for concern over possible endogeneity.

I also construct a variable (Delta) to capture the change in the level of political competition that occurs between the last year of the antecedent dictatorship and the first year of the new democracy. Therefore Delta indicates how far the process of democratic political competition has developed in the advent of a new democracy. Some new democracies, such as Chile in 1989, transitioned from authoritarian rule that entailed a relatively high degree of political competition (4), while other new democracies, such as Spain in 1978 or Panama in 1989, transitioned from authoritarian rule where there was much less political competition (1). These three new democracies had the same level of initial political competition (4), but Panama and Spain travelled further to get there. I should note that some new democracies in this dataset were former colonies and therefore there was no independent, antecedent authoritarian regime from which to transition. Therefore, this variable cannot be constructed for these democracies, and the sample size in the models presented below decreases when I include Delta.³⁰

Control Variables

Early modernization theorists first developed a theoretical link between level of development and democracy.³¹ Empirical studies have since found that the levels of development and democracy are positively linked³² and that economic development is a good predictor for the stability of democratic regimes.³³ In the models specified below, then, I include $\ln(\text{GDP}/\text{capita})$.³⁴

O'Donnell inverts the modernization literature, suggesting that a country's level of development combined with the onset of economic crisis can undermine democratic

³⁰ Democracies that transitioned from former colonies and have survived (to date) typically have higher levels of initial political competition – India (4), Mauritius (4), and Trinidad (3) – than those former colonial new democracies that did not survive – Congo Brazzaville (3), Nigeria (3), Pakistan (3), Sierra Leone (3), Somalia (0), and Sri Lanka (0).

³¹ Karl Deutsch, 'Social Mobilization and Political Development', *American Political Science Review*, 55 (1961), 493–514; Seymour Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy', *American Political Science Review*, 53 (1959), 69–105; Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1958).

³² Ross Burkhardt and Michael Lewis-Beck, 'Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis', *American Political Science Review*, 88 (1994), 903–10; Kenneth Bollen and Robert Jackson, 'Political Democracy and size distribution of income', *American Sociological Review*, 50 (1985), 438–57.

³³ Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Alvarez *et al.*, *Democracy and Development*; Przeworski and Limongi, 'Modernization'.

³⁴ A list of variables and data sources is in Appendix C.

regimes.³⁵ Both Linz and Haggard argue that economic crisis can cause regime change,³⁶ while empirically we know that recessionary crises are highly correlated with democratic breakdown³⁷ and coups.³⁸ I therefore include real per capita growth in gross domestic product as a measure of economic crisis. This measure, similar to that used in Gasioworski and Alvarez *et al.*, is the lagged two-year moving average of real GDP/capita for each year of the democratic spell. Including the lagged values ensures that we capture the effect of economic crises on regime change and not the effect of regime change on economic crises. The moving average component ensures that we are capturing economic crisis trends rather than regression to the mean dynamics.

Much ink has been spilled over whether presidential or parliamentary systems offer more stability.³⁹ The detractors of presidentialism claim that presidential systems lack the flexibility to deal effectively with political crises because the 'winner-takes-all' nature of presidential elections leads to divisive and polarized party systems (Linz), or that they breed deadlock when the president cannot secure a legislative majority (Valenzuela). Defenders of presidentialism (Horowitz) contend that the chief concern of presidential detractors should be plurality elections and not presidentialism *per se*. Following Alvarez *et al.*, I distinguish among democratic regimes by including dummies for presidential, parliamentary and mixed institutions.

I include control variables for region and the Cold War, as well. New democracies born after the Cold War may be more likely to survive because of the increased attention and aid paid to promoting democracy in the post-Cold War period, as well as because of the absence of strategic decisions on the part of the Cold War superpowers to intervene in democracies within their spheres of influence.⁴⁰ Regional dummy variables should control not only for systematic variation in something like culture that may have an impact on democratic stability, but also for the type of transition. Much of the transition literature on Latin America and Southern Europe explains democratic transitions as the result of elite bargaining in what amounts to a top-down transition.⁴¹ Bratton and van de Walle, on the other hand, argue that African transitions largely stem from political protest and mobilization among non-elite segments of society.⁴² To the extent that such a

³⁵ O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*.

³⁶ Juan Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown and Reequilibration* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Stephen Haggard and Robert Kaufmann, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

³⁷ Gasioworski, 'Economic Crisis and Political Regime Change'.

³⁸ John Londregan and Keith T. Poole, 'Poverty, the Coup Trap, and the Seizure of Executive Power', *World Politics*, 42 (1990), 151–83.

³⁹ Linz, 'Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy'; Valenzuela, 'Democratic Consolidation in Post-transitional Settings'; Donald Horowitz, 'Democracy in Divided Societies', *Journal of Democracy*, 4, No. 4 (1993), 18–38; Donald Horowitz, 'Comparing Democratic Systems', *Journal of Democracy*, 1, No. 4 (1990), 73–9; Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

⁴⁰ Zachary Karabell, *Architects of Intervention: The United States, the Third World, and the Cold War, 1946–1962* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1999); Mark Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); James S. Coleman Bender, Gerald and Richard L. Sklar, *African Crisis Areas and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

⁴¹ Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*; O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*; Nancy Bermeo, 'Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict During Democratic Transitions', *Comparative Politics*, 29, No. 3 (1993), 305–22; Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁴² Bratton and Van deWalle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*.

characterization is true, regional dummies should capture systematic variation in the type of transition. There are no democratic regime failures for Europe in the data, so I only include a regional dummy for Africa, since it is the only region that differs systematically from the others (Latin America and Asia).

I also include controls for former authoritarian regime type to control for the systematic effect that different types of dictatorships have on the process of transition and the ensuing democratic regime.⁴³ Authoritarian regime type may not only affect the type of transition but also its prospects for success. The institutional legacies of various types of authoritarian regime types and their consequent transitions may, therefore, systematically impact on the durability of the democratic regime. I include authoritarian regime type dummies (military, personal and single-party), following the rubric outlined in Geddes, with the addition of an omitted category for new democracies that were former colonies.

Conflict might also impact on democratic stability by draining public economic resources and thus fuelling opposition not only to the democratic government, but also to the democratic regime.⁴⁴ Similarly, conflict casualties may breed opposition to a democratic regime. Perhaps more salient for our discussion, conflict may require democratic governments to arm segments of the population that oppose the democratic government, which may undermine the democratic regime. Under this scenario, death to democracy stems from conflict because the democrats lose the conflict, thus allowing the winners to install an authoritarian regime (Sierra Leone 1997, Niger 1996), or because the conflict provides the opportunity for democrats to consolidate a return to authoritarian practices (Peru 1992). To measure the impact of conflict, I employ a conflict variable that measures the presence of either an internal or interstate armed conflict.⁴⁵ They delineate three levels of conflict intensity: minor conflict (< 25 deaths/year), intermediate conflict (< 1,000 deaths/year), and war (> 1,000 deaths/year). In the reported models, I only include a dummy variable for war because this is the only category of conflict that registers any empirical significance. It is also important to note that in the sample of new democracies used in this study, 98 per cent of the conflicts are coded as internal conflicts, as opposed to international or internationalized internal conflicts, thus, the war dummy reflects the impact of civil wars.⁴⁶

Economists have shown that ethnic fractionalization is correlated with negative economic growth⁴⁷ and poor governance.⁴⁸ However, the emerging consensus is that political institutions structure not only the creation of ethnic identities,⁴⁹ but their political salience.⁵⁰ Without properly specifying the institutional context within which we would

⁴³ Huntington, *Third Wave of Democracy*; Bratton and van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*; Geddes, 'The Breakdown of Authoritarian Regimes'; Alvarez *et al.*, *Democracy and Development*.

⁴⁴ A. Mintz, 'Guns Versus Butter: A Disaggregated Analysis', *American Political Science Review*, 83 (1989), 1285–93; B. Russett, 'Defense Expenditures and National Well-being', *American Political Science Review*, 76 (1982), 767–77.

⁴⁵ Nils Tetter Gleditsch, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg and Havard Strand, 'Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset', *Journal of Peace Research*, 39 (2002), 615–37.

⁴⁶ This is also the dependent variable used in Table 3.

⁴⁷ William Easterly and Ross Levine, 'Africa's Growth Tragedy: Policies and Ethnic Divisions', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112 (1997), 1203–50; Alberto Alesina, Arnaud Devleeschauwer, William Easterly, Sergio Kurlat and Romain Wacziarg, 'Fractionalization', *Journal of Economic Growth*, 8 (2003), 155–94.

⁴⁸ Rafael La Porta, Florencio Lopez-de-Silanes, Andrei Shleifer and Robert Vishny, 'The Quality of Government', *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, 15 (1999), 222–79.

⁴⁹ Daniel Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁵⁰ Kanchan Chandra, 'Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability', *Perspectives on Politics*, 3 (2005), 235–52.

expect different degrees of ethnic fractionalization to have consequences for democratic stability, there is little reason to expect this variable will affect the duration of new democracies through the breakdown of democratic institutions. Nonetheless, I include ethnic fractionalization as a control variable because the economics literature has repeatedly found a causal relationship between this variable and poor economic growth and governance. In addition, ethnic heterogeneity is a central player in Chua's story of democratic instability.⁵¹

METHODS

To model democratic survival, I employ a time-series, cross-section (TSCS) logit model with controls for time dependence, as recommended by Beck *et al.*⁵² They point out that the parametric duration models (for example, Weibull) and the TSCS logit model are the same models, if one controls properly for time dependence in the logit estimation.⁵³ Controlling for time dependence when using ordinary logit is important because the logit estimates may be biased if the baseline hazard rate is time dependent. To circumvent this problem, they recommend introducing a series of temporal dummies, which are coded as 1 if the regime-year duration is time t and 0 if not. Omitting temporal dummies is akin to assuming that the baseline hazard rate is constant across time – that in every year the democratic regime is just as likely to fail, *ceteris paribus*, as in any other year.

One drawback of using temporal dummies is that including them in the model uses many degrees of freedom. A second problem with using temporal dummies in a logit model is that they may perfectly predict an outcome, and thus those observations are dropped from the analysis. For example, there may be no failures in the tenth year of any regime. If this is the case, then the ten-year time dummy perfectly predicts the no-failure outcome, and is dropped from the analysis. One solution that Beck *et al.* suggest is to include cubic splines as controls for time dependence. These subintervals are joined by a predetermined number of 'knots' and are then fitted to the data. This allows the researcher to control for time dependence, while only using a few degrees of freedom. Given the data used here, this solution also meets with the same problem of perfectly predicting the 'no-failure' outcome. That is, any spline that incorporates durations of fifteen years or more perfectly predicts the 'no-failure' outcome. We know this should be a problem because, in the data, no regime that lasts longer than fifteen years fails.⁵⁴ Thus, this spline is dropped from the analysis, and we are no longer controlling for time in long-lived democracies. To avoid this problem, I simply include time and various exponential transformations of time in the model. For the logit models specified below, I include time, time-squared and time-cubed.⁵⁵ Likelihood ratio tests show that these time transformations are jointly significant, indicating the need to include them as controls for time dependence.

⁵¹ Chua, *World On Fire*.

⁵² Nathaniel Beck, Jonathan Katz and Richard Tuck, 'Taking Time Seriously: Time-series-cross-section Analysis with a Binary Dependent Variable', *American Journal of Political Science*, 89 (1998), 634–47.

⁵³ Results from parametric duration models using the Weibull distribution are available from the author. The main results presented below do not change using the Weibull models.

⁵⁴ Substantively, this tells us that in the sample of new democracies, it is extremely difficult to overthrow a long-lived democratic regime.

⁵⁵ Including early period splines instead of time and exponential transformations in the model does not alter the results.

A further complication with using the TSCS logit model is that the one outcome of the dependent variable (regime failure) occurs very rarely. While the data contains observations on 104 new democratic regimes and forty of these fail, when we use the TSCS logit model we have observations for each year of every regime until the regime either fails or is censored. This gives us 1,245 observations, with only forty failures. In the models reported below, I employ rare events logit estimation, as suggested by King and Zeng.⁵⁶ Finally, the models below report clustered standard errors, which assumes errors are independent across regimes but not necessarily independent within regimes.⁵⁷

RESULTS

Table 2 reports the results of the basic model. In the first column, I only test the level of development. Consistent with earlier research,⁵⁸ the negative and statistically significant coefficient indicates that wealthier democracies are less likely to fail. In the second column, I add the initial level of political competition. The coefficient for political competition is negative and statistically significant, indicating that new democracies with higher levels of initial political competition are less likely to fail. The coefficient for the level of development, while still negative and statistically significant, drops in value when we add the measure of political competition. In column 3, I add a host of control variables, and the coefficient for level of development, while still negative, is no longer statistically significant at conventional levels – suggesting that the level of development may not be as strong a determinant of democratic survival as we previously thought. In contrast, the coefficient for political competition remains robust. The positive and significant coefficients for Africa, War and the Cold War suggest that these factors make a new democracy more likely to fail. All of the antecedent authoritarian regime variables are positive, though the coefficients for military and single-party regimes are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. These positive coefficients suggest the possibility that new democracies that transitioned from military, personalist or single-party regimes are more likely to meet with failure than new democracies that were preceded by colonial rule. Growth and ethnic fractionalization appear to have no impact on democratic survival. Neither of the coefficients for democratic regime type are statistically significant. Finally, all of the time transformations are significant, suggesting that there is indeed time dependence in the data.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Gary King and Langche Zeng, 'Logistic Regression in Rare Events Data', *Political Analysis*, 9 (2001), 137–63.

⁵⁷ The main results reported below do not change if I employ unclustered standard errors or use uncorrected logit estimates. In fact, the coefficients for the main results are much larger when I use unclustered standard error estimates and uncorrected logit estimates. That is, clustering the standard errors and using rare events logit increases the size of the standard errors and decreases the size of the logit coefficients, making conventional statistical significance more difficult to obtain.

⁵⁸ Alvarez *et al.*, *Democracy and Development*; Boix and Stokes, 'Endogenous Democratization'.

⁵⁹ To explore the time dependence in the model further I re-ran each of the models using a parametric duration model with a Weibull distribution. These tests confirm the existence of time dependence in the data. I estimate a time dependence parameter, $\ln(p)$, for all the models and tested for $\ln(p) = 0$, which is the same as testing whether or not p differs from 1. If $p < 1$ and significantly different from 1, then we would have evidence of democratic consolidation: democracies would be less likely to fail the longer they live, all else equal. The tests indicate that $\ln(p) = 0$ and hence $p = 1$. In fact I find $p > 1$ in all the estimates, suggesting that a process quite the opposite of consolidation takes place. Beck *et al.*, 'Taking Time Seriously', make the point that the p estimate in these duration models is simply an error term that should be included to control for time dependence but that should

In the next three columns, I repeat the first three models, but substitute Delta for initial political competition. Column 4 differs from column 1 only in the sample – which is restricted to those new democracies where it was possible to calculate Delta. In columns 5 and 6, the coefficient for Delta is negative and statistically significant, suggesting that larger increases in political competition in the first year of a new democracy (from the last year of the antecedent regime), lead to more durable democracies. This finding not only supports the hypothesis outlined above, but directly contradicts the argument that Dahl makes concerning the pace of liberalizing political competition in the first years of a new democracy. The coefficient for level of development in column 5 is negative, though not statistically significant, again suggesting that wealth may not be a strong determinant of democratic survival. The only control variables in this estimation that remain robust are War and the Cold War.

Finally, in the last column I add the initial level of competition. Delta and initial political competition are highly correlated (0.59), so it is no surprise that Delta is no longer statistically significant. The coefficient for initial political competition remains robust, even in this specification, suggesting that it is the high level of initial political competition and not the fast pace of political liberalization that makes new democracies more likely to survive. Again, in this model the coefficient for level of development is relatively small and statistically insignificant.

Returning for a moment to the model in the third column of Table 2, in Figure 1, I plot the median predicted probability of regime failure at various levels of initial political competition and Log GDP/capita.⁶⁰ The upper panels display the predicted probability of failure at various levels of initial political competition and Log(GDP) – both for new democracies at war and when there is no conflict. In the upper left panel, we can see that over the range of development (4–10.5) for new democracies at war, the predicted probability of failure falls from about 0.05 to nearly 0. For new democracies not at war, the effect of moving from an extremely poor new democracy to a very wealthy new democracy lowers the probability of failure from about 0.02 to nearly 0. In the upper right panel, we see that over the full range of political competition (1–5), the predicted probability of failure falls from 0.17 to nearly 0 for new democracies at war. For new democracies not at war, the probability of failure falls from about 0.05 to near 0. Since the vertical scale is the same in the left and right panels, it is easy to see that the substantive impact of initial political competition on democratic survival is much larger than the impact of income.

In the lower panels, I repeat this exercise but show the predicted probability of failure for new democracy during and after the Cold War. Again, we can see that the substantive impact of initial political competition is much larger than the impact of wealth – though this difference is much larger during the Cold War period. In the lower right panel, for

(F'note continued)

not be interpreted substantively. Alvarez *et al.*, *Democracy and Development*, by contrast, make explicit substantive interpretations of the p estimates. They find that once they control for level of economic development, the baseline hazard rate estimates (p) are not significantly different from one, concluding essentially that democratic termination is time invariant and that democratic consolidation does not occur. Suffice it to say here that the results support Przeworski's contention that democratic consolidation probably does not occur, though the results do not support the finding that democratic duration is time-invariant.

⁶⁰ Because we cannot directly interpret logit coefficients, these simulations give a sense of the substantive significance of the coefficients. For these simulated predicted probabilities, I set all continuous variables at their mean. The Africa dummy is set to 0; the authoritarian regime type is military; the democratic regime type is presidential; the Cold War is set to 0; and minor and intermediate conflict levels are set to 0.

TABLE 2 *Political Competition and the Duration of New Democracies*

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Log(GDP)	-0.679*** (0.17)	-0.482** (0.17)	-0.491 (0.28)	-0.768** (0.20)	-0.723** (0.21)	-0.470 (0.41)	-0.381 (0.39)
Political Comp _(t=0)		-0.605** (0.13)	-0.645** (0.13)				-0.622** (0.21)
Delta					-0.461* (0.17)	-0.485* (0.20)	-0.112 (0.24)
Growth(MA)			0.004 (0.05)			-0.033 (0.05)	-0.030 (0.05)
Ethnic Fractionalization			0.692 (1.14)			0.975 (1.18)	0.631 (1.26)
Africa			1.271* (0.55)			1.498 (0.83)	1.363 (0.83)
War			1.224* (0.53)			1.073* (0.54)	1.218* (0.53)
Military			2.367** (0.79)			0.409 (0.41)	0.702 (0.47)
Personal			1.501 (0.78)				
Single-Party			2.205* (1.05)			0.499 (0.62)	0.576 (0.70)
Presidential			-0.847 (0.51)			-0.842 (0.52)	-0.908 (0.50)
Mix			-0.383 (0.80)			-0.739 (0.91)	-0.640 (0.87)
Cold War			1.703** (0.55)			1.757** (0.50)	1.547** (0.56)
Duration	-0.018 (0.10)	0.061 (0.12)	0.344* (0.16)	-0.154 (0.13)	-0.060 (0.14)	0.234 (0.24)	0.330 (0.24)
Duration, squared	-0.006 (0.01)	-0.012 (0.01)	-0.024** (0.01)	0.008 (0.02)	-0.001 (0.02)	-0.017 (0.02)	-0.026 (0.02)
Duration, cubed	0.000 (0.00)	0.000* (0.00)	0.000** (0.00)	-0.000 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)	0.000 (0.00)	0.001 (0.00)
Constant	1.838 (1.08)	2.137 (1.11)	-1.906 (2.47)	2.678* (1.24)	2.672* (1.31)	-1.458 (3.26)	-0.653 (3.03)
Observations	1,388	1,381	1,322	1,153	1,153	1,104	1,104

Notes: Dependent variable is regime failure. Estimation is rare events logit with standard errors clustered on regime spell. Omitted democratic regime type is Parliamentary and omitted authoritarian regime type is Former Colony. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

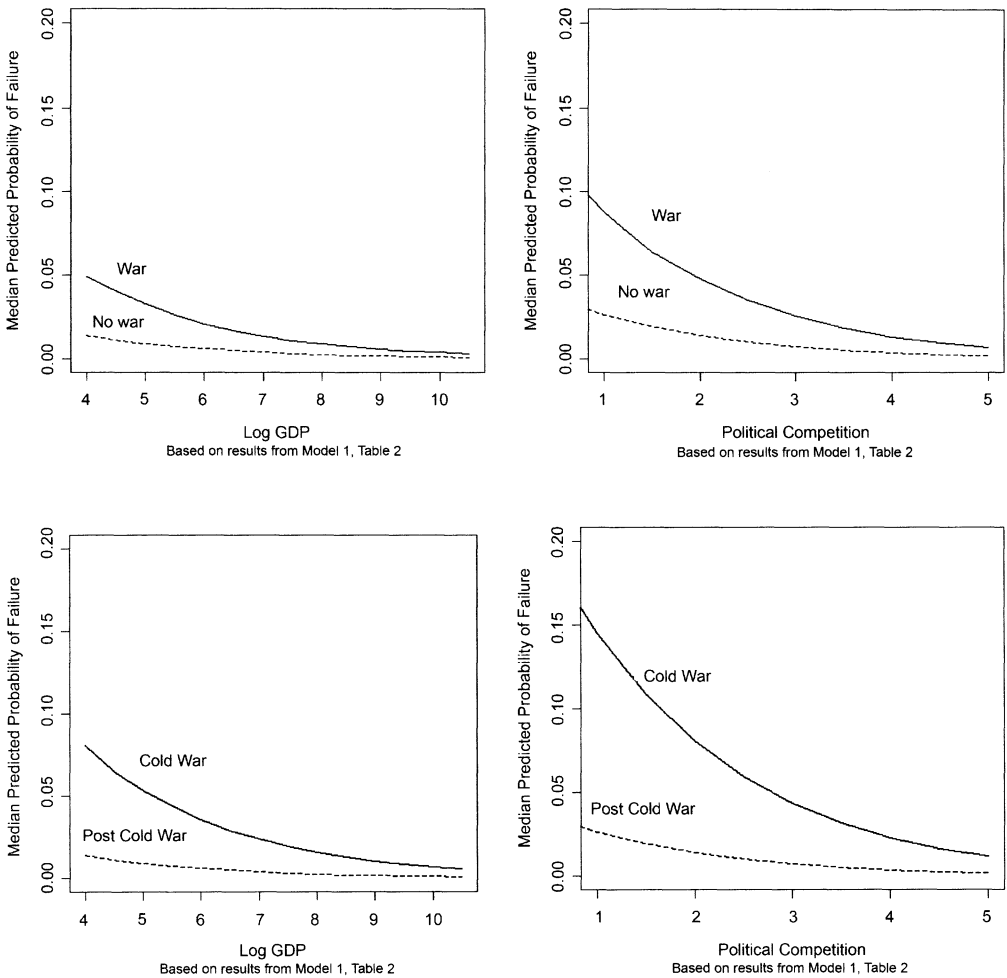


Fig. 1. Political competition, level of development and regime failure

example, a new Cold War democracy with very low levels of initial political competition (1), such as Argentina in the 1960s, is over four times as likely to fail, all else equal, than a new democracy with a relatively high level of initial political competition (4), such as Colombia (1958) or Mauritius (1962): 14 per cent vs. 3 per cent. With these simulations, it should now be clear that the substantive impact of initial political competition on the survival of new democracies is much larger than the impact of income. That said, these simulations also show that wars and the Cold War international environment have a large and negative impact on the survival of new democracies.

In Table 3, I test the hypothesis that lower levels of initial political competition lead to conflict throughout the democratic spell. Recall that a strong association between initial political competition and conflict may be evidence that those who are initially excluded from the democratic game attempt to subvert the democratic regime down the road. The coefficients for initial level of political competition are negative and highly significant in

TABLE 3 *Initial Political Competition and War in New Democracies*

Variables	Model 8	Model 9
Political Comp _(t=0)	- 0.285* (0.12)	- 0.328* (0.13)
Log(GDP)	- 0.072 (0.33)	0.043 (0.34)
Growth _(MA)	- 0.067 (0.04)	- 0.052 (0.04)
Ethnic Fractionalization	2.912 (1.71)	3.002 (1.73)
Colony	- 2.007* (0.84)	- 1.585* (0.77)
Cold War	0.758 (0.46)	0.553 (0.50)
Duration	0.049 (0.03)	0.034 (0.03)
Oil Production		- 7.710 (8.74)
Constant	- 3.326 (2.87)	- 3.559 (2.86)
Observations	1,390	1,103

Notes: Dependent variable is War. See fn. 8. Estimation is rare events logit. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

both models, suggesting that new democracies with low levels of political competition are much more likely to meet with war at some point during their duration. And we saw earlier, war is a strong predictor of regime failure.⁶¹ Ethnic fractionalization has a large, positive and marginally significant ($p < 0.10$) coefficient, suggesting that new democracies with high ethnic fractionalization are more likely to meet with war. Former colonies are also much less likely to meet with war than new democracies that transitioned from an authoritarian regime. Finally, these data suggest that oil production has no impact on the incidence of war in new democracies.⁶²

Briefly summarizing, the results in Table 2 provide strong support for the hypothesis that high levels of initial political competition make a new democracy more likely to survive. Earlier, I argued that one reason this may be true is that new democracies that do not restrict political competition are less likely to fall into civil conflict because potential regime saboteurs have opportunities to gain power through democratic means. Consistent

⁶¹ At first glance, it might appear that these results are endogenous, as five of the eight new democracies in the sample that met with war did so in their first year. This suggests the possibility that it may be war that is causing the low level of initial political competition and not the other way around. However, when I re-run the model with those five cases dropped from the sample, the finding remains strong.

⁶² Oil production data are measured as lagged per capita oil production, taken from Macartan Humphreys, 'Natural Resource, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 49 (2005), 508-37.

with this interpretation, the results in Table 3 provide strong evidence that new democracies with high levels of initial political competition are much less likely to meet with civil war.

PREDICTING INITIAL POLITICAL COMPETITION

Up to this point, I have assumed that initial levels of political competition are randomly distributed amongst new democracies, but we should suspect that this might not be the case because some of the structural factors that we considered as explanatory variables earlier may manifest their impact on democratic survival through the selection of the level of initial political competition. In particular, it may simply be that richer democracies choose a higher level of initial political competition because, following the logic of modernization theory, a more educated and urban citizenry demands more political competition. Or richer democracies may simply be better able to mediate distributional conflicts and thus are more able to cope with intense political competition early in a new democracy. No matter the reason, if richer democracies select higher levels of initial political competition, the robust effect of political competition on democratic survival we encountered earlier may simply be an artefact of this selection.

In addition, some of the control variables in Table 2 are good predictors of initial political competition. Consider, for example, the impact of former authoritarian regime type on the selection of the initial level of political competition. Elites in some types of authoritarian regimes, such as single-party regimes, may see democratization as the best strategy to prolong their rule. When they liberalize – what we observe as democratization – they may systematically choose lower levels of political competition to ensure their continued hold on power through multi-party elections. Indeed, during the 1990s many former single-party regimes in sub-Saharan Africa democratized and, in doing so, successfully remained in power. According to Van de Walle, fifteen former single-party regimes have retained power through multiparty elections, while in nine other countries the former ruling single party is the largest opposition party.⁶³ If these regimes systematically stack the deck in their favour by restricting political competition while other types of new democracies such as former military regimes or colonies do not, the effect of former authoritarian regime type on democratic survival would show up in the initial political competition variable.

To ensure that initial political competition is not simply an artefact of selection, we need to understand the empirical determinants of initial political competition. First, in a bivariate regression, I simply check whether the level of development is correlated with political competition in the first year of new democracy. Table 4 shows that this is the case, but the R^2 value is only 0.16. I repeat this exercise for Delta, with the same finding: a positive statistical correlation, but a very low R^2 (0.08). These correlations suggest that while richer new democracies do choose higher levels of initial political competition, there is a substantial amount of variation in the political competition variable that is measuring something other than the level of development.

Because political competition is an ordered variable, the more appropriate model for explaining initial political competition is an ordered probit. In Table 5, I present the results of a series of probit tests. In the first column I look only at the level of development and, unsurprisingly, it is positively correlated with initial political competition. In the second column, I add a number covariates: former authoritarian regime type, a dummy for Europe,

⁶³ Nicolas Van de Walle, 'Presidentialism and Clientalism in Africa's Emerging Democracies', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41 (2003), 297–321.

TABLE 4 *Predicting Initial Level of Political Competition*

Dependent Variable	Political Competition	Delta
Log(GDP)	0.363** (0.101)	0.304** (0.106)
Constant	0.713 (0.729)	- 0.842 (720)
R^2	0.16	0.087
Observations	94	94

Notes: Dependent variable is initial Political Competition in the first year of the democracy, only. Estimation is OLS. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 5 *Predicting Initial Political Competition*

Variables	Model 10	Model 11
Log(GDP)	0.611** (0.20)	0.310* (0.14)
Personal		- 1.104* (0.47)
Single-Party		- 1.237* (0.52)
Military		- 1.327** (0.45)
Europe		0.446 (0.38)
Ethnic Fractionalization		- 0.768 (0.45)
Previous Democracy		0.359 (0.31)
Cold War		- 0.666* (0.28)
Log Likelihood	- 125	- 118
Observations	93	93

Notes: Dependent variable is Political Competition measured in the first year of the democracy, only. Omitted authoritarian regime type in column 2 is Former Colony. Estimation is ordered probit. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

a dummy for having previously experienced democracy, ethnic fractionalization and a Cold War dummy. In addition to a significant coefficient for level of development, this model indicates that former colonies have a higher level of initial political competition than any of the other types of former regimes, and that the Cold War period was more likely than the post-Cold War period to see new democracies with lower levels of initial political competition. The coefficients for the different types of former authoritarian regimes are

not statistically different from one another, suggesting that the real difference in selecting the initial level of political competition occurs in former colonies and not the different legacies of authoritarian regimes.⁶⁴

These models indicate that structural characteristics, such as the level of development and previously having been a colony, impact the selection of the level of political competition in the first year of a new democracy. One way to deal with this type of selection is to calculate the predicted level of initial political competition based on these structural factors and then subtract this predicted value from the observed value – yielding an estimate of initial political competition net of the selection effect. I do this by first calculating the predicted probability for each level of political competition in the first year of each new democracy from the model in column 2 of Table 5. For example, I calculate the probability, given a certain level of development, ethnic fractionalization, decade and authoritarian past, that democratizers in a particular state would choose each level of political competition (1–5) in the first year of the new democracy. Multiplying each of these probabilities times its respective outcome and adding them together gives us an empirical prediction (based on the covariates in Table 5) of the level of political competition each new democracy would choose in its first year. Subtracting these predicted scores ($PolCompPredict_{t=0}$) based on selection factors from the original political competition index should provide an estimate of the effect of initial political competition net of these selection factors:

$$PolCompOriginal_{t=0} - PolCompPredict_{t=0} = PolCompNet_{t=0}.$$

The observed measure of initial political competition is now broken into two components: one measuring the political competition net of the structural selection effect ($PolCompNet_{t=0}$), and one measuring the predicted value of initial political competition based on structural characteristics (the covariates in the second column of Table 5) of the new democracy ($PolCompPredict_{t=0}$). I replaced the original political competition variable used in the third column of Table 2 with these two new variables, and re-ran the model. Table 6 reports the results of this test. The coefficient for ($PolCompNet_{t=0}$) is the same size and significance ($p < 0.001$) as in the earlier model. This indicates that the effect of initial political competition that I found earlier remains even when I have removed the part of that variable predicted by structural factors such as level of development and former authoritarian regime type. The coefficient for $PolCompPredict_{t=0}$ is also negative, but not statistically significant. A new democracy born during the Cold War also impacts on democratic survival independent of this selection mechanism. With level of development, however, these data suggest that it has little impact on democratic survival in new democracies independent of its effect on selecting initial levels of political competition: the coefficient for Log(GDP) remains statistically insignificant in Table 6.

It should now be clear that this measure of political competition is not simply a proxy for the level of development or any of the other structural factors used to predict initial political competition in Table 5. Wealthier democracies are more likely to choose higher

⁶⁴ I repeat this exercise (analysis not shown) for Delta, but here the results indicate that the level of development is not a good predictor of the difference between the level of political competition in the last year of the antecedent authoritarian regime and the first year of the new democracy. Rather, former authoritarian regime type, a Europe dummy, previously having been a democracy, and ethnic fractionalization are all associated with Delta. The significant Europe and previous democracy coefficients are due to the fact that Germany and Italy liberalized very quickly after the Second World War and Portugal and Spain did so very quickly in the 1970s.

TABLE 6 *Duration of New Democracies*

Variable	Model 12
Political Comp. Net _(t=0)	- 0.647*** (0.14)
Political Comp. Predicted _(t=0)	- 2.168 (2.39)
Log(GDP)	- 0.435 (0.34)
Growth _(MA)	- 0.003 (0.05)
Ethnic Fractionalization	0.508 (1.17)
Africa	1.091 (0.61)
War	1.260* (0.55)
Military	1.876 (1.12)
Personal	1.034 (1.12)
Single-Party	1.699 (1.35)
Presidential	- 0.845 (0.54)
Mixed	- 0.347 (0.85)
Cold War	1.430* (0.70)
Duration	0.519* (0.23)
Duration-squared	- 0.048* (0.02)
Duration-cubed	0.001** (0.00)
Constant	2.585 (5.55)
Log Likelihood	- 115
Observations	1,274

Notes: Omitted authoritarian regime type is Former Colony. Estimation is rare events probit. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

levels of political competition, as the results in Tables 4 and 5 indicate. And former colonies and new democracies born in the post-Cold War period are also more likely to choose higher levels of initial political competition. But the impact of initial political competition on democratic survival remains robust even after I separate out the structural selection component of this variable.

DISCUSSION

I began this article by pointing out that the sample of all democracies is very different from the sample of new democracies along at least one key margin: level of economic development. New democracies in the post-war period are much poorer than incumbent democracies. And we know from earlier studies that rich democracies are very difficult to overturn. This insight, then, appears to offer little hope for new democracies.

But this article points out that when we restrict our sample to new democracies and control for the initial level of political competition, the level of economic development does not appear to be as strong a determinant of democratic survival. Rather, the initial level of political competition, an Africa dummy, war and the Cold War political environment are the significant determinants of democratic survival. This picture not only suggests that the doomsday predictions for rapid democratization that early theorists such as Dahl first offered and which have seen a resurgence in the popular press are probably wrong, but it also offers a more hopeful prognosis than the dictum that poor democracies will fail because they are poor: initial political competition is a variable, unlike level of development or authoritarian legacy, over which transition democracies have some short-term control.

This finding is the result of using the appropriate sample for answering the question at hand. Previous research on democratic survival uses a sample of all democracies – a sample which is dominated by relatively rich democracies that have survived a long time. Given that we know that long-lived democracies are extremely stable, this article posits that the more appropriate sample for understanding the fate of democratic transitions is to look only at new democracies. Methodologically, this is akin to the question that arises in the democratic peace literature as to whether researchers should include the tens of thousands of dyad-years, such as Barbados and Mongolia, for pairs that have almost no possibility of ever attacking each other.⁶⁵

Samples used in previous research also did not include information on the many new democracies born in the wake of the Cold War. As the simulations above demonstrate, new democracies born in the post-Cold War period stand a much better chance of surviving than those born beforehand – again a hopeful trend. In the post-Cold War world, though, civil conflict and the initial level of political competition still matter. And, as I argued earlier, initial political competition and civil conflict are probably causally connected. While the empirical evidence in this article indicates that lower levels of initial political competition increase the probability of civil conflict at some point during the democratic regime, this relationship certainly requires further investigation.

⁶⁵ Gary King and Langche Zeng, 'Explaining Rare Events in International Relations', *International Organization*, 55 (2001), 693–715.

APPENDIX A: CHOOSING INITIAL POLITICAL COMPETITION

This brief game provides the intuitive reasoning why elites with the power to make the rules at the outset of democracy would, under certain conditions, choose a higher level of political competition, even if this means increasing the probability these elites will lose contested elections. At the outset, elites (I will call them *incumbents* (*I*) henceforth) with the power to select the level of political competition can choose either a *high* (*H*) or *low* (*L*) level of political competition – where a low level corresponds with excluding at least one potential electoral *challenger* (*C*) and a high level corresponds with permitting this challenger to contest the election against the incumbent. Conversely, the challenger has a choice over contesting the elections (*not fight* (*N*)) or violently challenging the democratic regime (*fight* (*F*)). The game tree in Figure 2 illustrates the sequence of moves and the payoffs for each outcome of the game, with *I*'s listed first.

Let p be the probability that *I* wins the election when there is a high level of political competition, and $p + \tau$ be the probability that *I* wins under low competition; $\tau > 0$ is the increase in the probability of the incumbent winning an election when the incumbent restricts political competition. We can normalize the benefits from winning (*Victory*) control of the state through an election to one for both the incumbent V_I and the challenger V_C : $V_I = 1$ and $V_C = 1$. Again we can normalize the utility of losing (*Defeat*) an election to 0: $D_I = 0$ and $D_C = 0$. If *C* initiates a violent conflict, *I* loses $c_I > 0$ utility due to the cost of the destabilizing conflict. Pursuing conflict is also costly for *C*: $c_C > 0$.

There are two sub-game perfect equilibria in the game; both have straightforward interpretations.⁶⁶ The strategy profiles for the equilibria are the following: (L, N_H, N_L) and (H, N_H, F_L). In the first equilibrium, there is no conflict, a low level of political competition, and *C* does not pursue conflict under any circumstances. The second equilibrium occurs only if $\tau > c_I$, and results in no conflict and a high level of political competition. Because the cost of conflict for *I* exceeds the benefits of restricted political competition, *I* permits *C* into the electoral game even though this decreases the probability of *I* winning the election: $p < p + \tau$. This second equilibrium, while worse for *I* is better for *C* than the first: $1 - p > 1 - p - \tau$.

I chooses *H*, given *C*'s strategy of (N_H, F_L), when $c_I > \tau$. Thus one interpretation of this game is that when *C* commits to fighting when excluded from electoral competition, the equilibrium strategy of *I* will depend on whether *I* believes *C* has the capacity to inflict enough costs on *I* such that *I* will switch to high competition. Assuming common knowledge, as the game is presented here does, *C* should not pursue (N_H, F_L) unless $c_I > \tau$, and *I* should not permit high competition (*H*) unless the same condition is met.

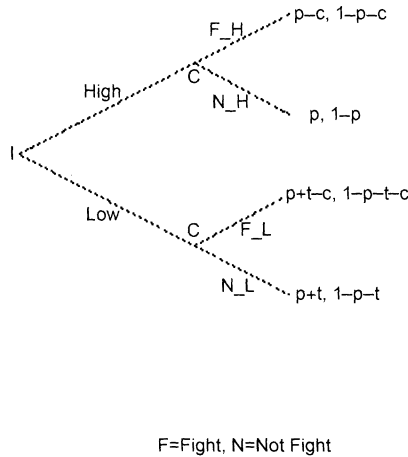


Fig. 2. Choosing initial political competition

⁶⁶ A third Nash (but not SPE) is present (L, F_H, N_L), but makes little intuitive sense as it would require that the challenger fight when political competition is high.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE OF NEW DEMOCRACIES, 1946–2002

Country	Entry	Exit	Country	Entry	Exit	Country	Entry	Exit
Albania	1991	2002	Greece	1974	2002	Paraguay	1993	2002
Argentina	1958	1961	Guatemala	1958	1963	Peru	2000	2002
Argentina	1962	1965	Guatemala	1966	1970	Peru	1956	1968
Argentina	1973	1976	Guatemala	1985	2002	Peru	1980	1992
Argentina	1983	2002	Guinea-Bissau	1999	2002	Philippines	1986	2002
Armenia	1998	2002	Guyana	1992	2002	Poland	1989	2002
Austria	1948	2002	Haiti	1994	1995	Portugal	1974	2002
Bangladesh	1991	2002	Honduras	1956	1963	Romania	1990	2002
Benin	1968	1972	Honduras	1981	2002	Russia	1991	2002
Benin	1991	2002	Hungary	1990	2002	Senegal	2001	2002
Bolivia	1969	1971	India	1947	2002	Sierra Leone	1961	1966
Bolivia	1982	2002	Indonesia	1999	2002	Sierra Leone	1996	1997
Brazil	1948	1963	Israel	1948	2002	Slovakia	1992	2002
Brazil	1985	2002	Italy	1946	2002	Slovenia	1991	2002
Bulgaria	1990	2002	Ivory Coast	2000	2002	Somalia	1960	1968
Burundi	1993	1994	Japan	1947	2002	South Korea	1987	2002
Central African Rep.	1979	1981	Latvia	1991	2002	South Africa	1994	2002
Central African Rep.	1994	2002	Lithuania	1991	2002	Spain	1979	2002
Chile	1989	2002	Madagascar	1993	2002	Sri Lanka	1948	1977
Colombia	1958	2002	Malawi	1994	2002	Sudan	1985	1989
Congo Brazzaville	1960	1962	Mali	1991	2002	Tanzania	1996	2002
Congo Brazzaville	1992	1997	Mauritania	1978	1980	Trinidad	1962	2002
Congo Brazzaville	2000	2002	Mauritius	1968	2002	Taiwan	1996	2002
Costa Rica	1949	2002	Mexico	1996	2002	Thailand	1957	1958
Croatia	2000	2002	Mongolia	1992	2002	Thailand	1973	1976
Czech Rep.	1992	2002	Mozambique	1994	2002	Thailand	1988	1991
Dominican Rep.	1978	2002	Nicaragua	1985	2002	Thailand	1992	2002
Ecuador	1948	1962	Niger	2000	2002	Turkey	1961	1980
Ecuador	1966	1972	Niger	1993	1996	Turkey	1983	2002
Ecuador	1979	2002	Nigeria	1960	1965	Uganda	1980	1984
El Salvador	1984	2002	Nigeria	1979	1983	Ukraine	1992	2002
Estonia	1991	2002	Nigeria	1999	2002	Uruguay	1984	2002
West Germany	1949	2002	Pakistan	1947	1956	Venezuela	1958	2002
Ghana	1969	1972	Panama	1949	1950	Zambia	1991	1996
Ghana	1979	1982	Panama	1952	1967			
Ghana	1996	2002	Panama	1989	2002			

APPENDIX C: VARIABLES AND SOURCES

Variables	Sources
Political Competition	Polity IV
Competitive Participation	Polity IV
Log GDP	Penn World Tables (WDI updates)
Growth	Penn World Tables (WDI updates)
Africa	
Authoritarian Regime Type	Geddes 1999
Single Party	
Military	
Personalist	
Colony (omitted)	
Democratic Regime Type	Freedom House
Presidential	
Parliamentary (omitted)	
Mixed	
Cold War	<i>Year < 1990</i>
War	Gleditsch 2002
Ethnic Intensity	Fearon and Laitin 2003
Oil Production	Humphreys 2005

Sources: Polity IV data set (version p4v2000) [Computer file]. College Park: University of Maryland, Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2000; Alan Heston, Robert Summers and Bettina Aten, Penn World Table Version 6.1, Center for International Comparisons at the University of Pennsylvania (CICUP), October 2002 (updates from the World Development Indicators, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2005); Barbara Geddes, 'The Effect of Regime Type on Authoritarian Breakdown: Empirical Test of a Game Theoretic Argument' (paper given at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, Ga., 1999); Freedom House, see < <http://www.freedomhouse.org> > various years; Gleditsch *et al.*, 'Armed Conflict'; James Fearon and David Laitin, 'Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War', *American Political Science Review*, 97 (2003), 75–90; Humphreys, 'Natural Resource, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution'.