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Into the gray zone

The recent trend of “hybridization” of political regimes

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Introduction

The optimism that characterized the first years following the fall of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s soon gave way for a gloomier outlook on the democratic development around the globe. Nearly 30 states – most of them new states – had dumped communism, and not even half of them have established democratic political systems. Instead, the most frequent result of the fall of communism has not been transitions to democracy, but rather transitions from communism to other types of non-democratic rule. A substantial number of countries in other corners of the world that embarked on transitions from authoritarian rule in the wake of what have been labeled “the third wave of democratization” (Huntington 1991) also experienced an initial period of liberalization and democratization followed by change in a more authoritarian direction. A defining feature of this development is that many countries that embarked on transitions from authoritarian rule during the last decades have established a new form of political system – the hybrid regime – where formal democratic institutions such as multiparty elections coexist with a political reality characterized by authoritarian practices and frequent abuses of state resources.

This paper sets out to discuss two main issues related to the global trend of hybridization of political regimes. In the first part of the paper, the concept of hybrid regimes is examined. With the assistance of available indexes and data sources an attempt to single out the hybrid regimes of the world is carried out. The second part of the paper examines some of the theoretical explanations of the global spread of hybrid regimes that might be found in the thus far quite limited literature on the subject. Some thoughts about the usefulness of earlier research on democratic transition and consolidation for empirical analyses of hybrid regimes are also presented.

The recent trend of hybridization

By the mid 1990s, the share of electoral democracies in the world was more than 60 percent, compared to only less than 30 percent in 1974, when the “third wave” took off (Diamond 2005). Since then, however, the spread of democratic governance has slowed down significantly. Summing up the democratic development during the last decade, two broad trends may be identified (Diamond 2005). The first trend is that there has been a

relative stability regarding democracy as a system of government throughout the world. This has been the case in two ways. First, the number of democracies has been relatively stable since 1995. Second, although many democracies perform very poorly, few outright democratic breakdowns have occurred.

The second noticeable trend is that a significant number of the countries that in the past decade have moved away from different types of authoritarianism have *not* transformed into democracies, but have rather descended into ambiguous regimes that combine democratic and non-democratic characteristics, where formally democratic political institutions, such as multiparty electoral competition, masks the reality of authoritarian domination and informal practices (Diamond 2002; 2005; Reich 2002). Some of the most obvious examples of this regime type may be found among the post-Soviet countries. After a short period of democratic optimism following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus transformed from fledging new democracies to increasingly authoritarian practices. This tendency is not in any way a unique post-communist feature, however. Under the demagogic hand of Hugo Chavez, Venezuela has been heading in the same direction during the 2000s. Numerous other examples might be found in Africa and Asia as well (cf. Ottaway 2003; Levitsky & Way 2002; Carothers 2002).

Thus, the third wave of democratization did not only result in a worldwide spread of liberal democracy, but also in the growth of a form of government, an intermediate regime category which today represent the modal type of political regime in the developing world (Schedler 2006b, 3). In fact, the most frequent type of regime transition in the period 1945 to 1998 was not from authoritarianism to democracy – which might be an impression one gets when consulting the massive literature on democratization – but from authoritarian rule to semi-democracy of some kind (Reich 2002). It is also noticeable that transitions from semi-democracy to authoritarianism have been almost as frequent as transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, but have not received much attention within the field of comparative democratization. The data presented in table 1 indicates that the phenomenon of regimes combining democratic and authoritarian elements is not entirely new. In the 1960s and 1970s examples of electoral authoritarian regimes could be found in Mexico, South Africa, Singapore and Malaysia.

Table 1. Regime transitions, 1945–98

<i>Type of transition</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Authoritarian to democracy	46	22.4
Semi-democracy to democracy	15	7.3
Authoritarian to semi-democracy	62	30.2
Democracy to semi-democracy	8	3.9
Semi-democracy to authoritarian	42	20.5
Democracy to authoritarian	32	15.6
Total	205	100

Source: Reich (2002, 12).

The number of hybrid regimes escalated after the demise of Soviet style communism, an event which was one of the most important triggers of this development. During the Cold War many governments rejected liberal democracy outright in the name of “people’s democracy” or in the name of cultural traditions that precluded the egoistic individualism they saw liberal democracy based on. The end of the Cold War meant a dramatic change in this outlook. Today, few governments and intellectuals are officially defending non-democratic types of government. Even old autocrats feel the need to at least pretend devotion to the concept of democracy, often for the sake of international legitimacy and the possibility to receive economic support from the advanced democracies. Many governments, however, are not willing to totally accept the limitations on the extent and duration of their power imposed by democracy. As a result, an increasing number of governments have established formally democratic institutions, which the incumbents often try to circumvent in their efforts to remain in power (Ottaway 2003, 4). Later on, the question about the factors behind this trend will be discussed.

Hybrid regimes and diminished subtypes of democracy

Despite the fact that the last decades have seen the rise of a substantial number of regimes that combine free multiparty elections with varying degrees of autocracy, this development has received surprisingly little attention from the scholarly community. One reason for this might be the “democratic bias” that has come to dominate comparative democratization studies. From the perspective of democratization theory, the worldwide proliferation of hybrid regimes was viewed by and large as setbacks in the global wave of democratization. These regimes – for example Russia, Georgia and Zimbabwe – were

viewed and categorized as cases of “defective democracy”, “pseudo democracy”, “illiberal democracy”, “guided democracy”, and even “authoritarian democracy”, i.e. what Collier and Levitsky (1997) have called “democracy with adjectives”. They were generally described as going through “stucked”, “flawed” or “protracted” transitions to democracy. Thus, by and large, regimes mixing democratic and authoritarian features have been regarded as *democracies* that demonstrate different types of shortcomings. These characterizations assume that hybrid regimes are moving in a democratic direction, which is a misleading assumption that lack empirical support (Carothers 2002; Levitsky & Way 2008).

There has been no agreement among scholars on central issues such as the defining features of this type of polity, and what term to use when describing it. Lately, comparative research on post-authoritarian countries has come to focus heavily on the “quality of democracy”, i.e. the benchmarking of institutions against an ideal form of democracy. However, the notion of “quality of democracy” and diminished subtypes of democracy lose its validity when applied to regimes that even fail to live up to minimal democratic standards and norms (Schedler 2006; cf. Jayasuriya and Rodan 2007). If we are dealing with political regimes that do not meet minimal democratic standards we should logically not treat them as democracies, but rather as instances of a different type of regime. Here, as a starting point, the term “hybrid regimes” is proposed as a generic term for characterizing regimes that combine different types of democratic and non-democratic features.

If there is an abundance of different terms seeking to describe this type of political system, i.e. “democracy with adjectives”, the same cannot be said about systematic conceptualizations and classifications. Most empirical studies have been qualitative and have focused on one or a few cases drawing only implicit comparisons (e.g. Way 2002; Way 2005; Schedler 2006a). The few ambitious attempts made to systematically define and conceptualize the phenomenon have not been very parsimonious, with long checklists along different dimensions (e.g. Wigell 2008), making operationalization a difficult task considering the quite substantial number of countries that might come into question. Moreover, such attempts often take definitions of democracy as their departure. Theoretically, the notion of a diminished form of authoritarianism, or “semi-

authoritarianism” might be a better starting point when trying to characterize this regime type (Ottaway 2003; Guliyev 2005). The obsession with democracy and democratization within contemporary comparative politics may be one reason to account for the lack of broader systematic comparative studies of hybrid regimes.¹ It may also partially explain the tendency to define hybrid regimes in negative terms. It is often stated that hybrid regimes are neither democratic, nor completely authoritarian regimes, i.e. they are a different type of polity. Such findings do not provide an answer to the important question about what constitute these differences.

Modern democratization theory and “transitology” have often been criticized for employing too narrow, or minimalist, conceptions of democracy. One consequence of this, according to the critics, has been that many countries that do not meet several democratic standards still are defined as democracies, as long as they perform regular elections with universal suffrage, i.e. “free elections”. This critique is in many cases misplaced, however.² In mainstream democratization research, Dahl’s conception of “polyarchy” has been the dominant definition. Thus, comparative democratization has relied on a robust, though procedural, definition of democracy that perceives not only free and fair elections, but also a number of political and civil freedoms that make the elections truly meaningful, as necessary conditions for democracy (Diamond 2002, 21). Despite this, many countries have political systems that live up to the procedural requirements, but where the citizens’ political rights are violated in different ways (cf. Schedler 2002). Some scholars have tried to overcome this ambiguity and also issues of operationalization by relying on even more procedural and minimal definitions of democracy. However, also a definition of democracy as a system where “its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes” (Huntington 1991, 7) generates complicated questions about classification. The question about fair and honest elections is a critical issue in point. It is not always easy to decide what constitutes fair, honest and

¹ A very welcome comparative contribution is the forthcoming book *Competitive Authoritarianism: The Emergence and Dynamics of Hybrid Regimes in the Post-Cold War Era* by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, which applies a broad comparative perspective, covering five regions: the Americas, Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

² Transitology has also been criticized for putting too much emphasis on the legitimizing function of elections, while downplaying the role of civil society and ordinary citizens in the process of democratic consolidation and legitimization.

free elections. As Diamond (2002, 22) notes, how could we decide if parties have had a fair chance in electoral campaigns and that those entitled to vote have been able to exercise their will freely, and that the results have not been manipulated? Of course, these questions have always been relevant, but have become even more so in recent years, when more regimes than ever before have adopted formal democratic institutions (the *form* of democracy), but fail when it comes to living up to minimal democratic standards. Non-democratic rulers have a long menu to choose from when it comes to manipulation of the political playing field (Schedler 2002, Case 2006; Hartlyn & McCoy 2006).

Assessing the fairness or manipulation of elections is a tricky business (cf. Hartlyn & McCoy 2006), and so is the task of defining hybrid regimes. One of the most ambitious attempts is provided by Levitsky and Way in their 2002 article “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism”, which they argue is a more specific and illustrating term than the broad concept of hybrid regimes.³ In their definition of competitive authoritarianism (CA), Levitsky and Way point to the fact that this type of regime must be distinguished first and foremost from democracy, but also from “classical” authoritarian regimes:⁴

In competitive authoritarian regimes, formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. Incumbents violate those rules so often and to such an extent, however, that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy. Examples include 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 (Levitsky and Way 2002, 52).

To distinguish CA regimes from democracies, Levitsky and Way argue that although democracies from time to time violate the criteria of polyarchy, “such violations are not broad or systematic enough to seriously impede democratic challenges to incumbent governments” (2002, 53). In CA regimes, by contrast, these criteria are violated in such way as to create such an *unfair game* between regime and oppositional forces that it is not

³ Quite illustrative for the wealth of different terms in this field of research, Schedler (2006b) uses the term “electoral authoritarianism” more or less as a synonym to “competitive authoritarianism”. As their title suggests, Levitsky and Way (2008) use “competitive authoritarianism” and “hybrid regime” interchangeably. I will use the term “hybrid regimes”, due to the fact that this type of regime mixes democratic and authoritarian characteristics.

⁴ For an overview of “classical” authoritarian regimes, see Linz (2000); Linz & Stepan (1996); Brooker (2000).

possible to talk about democracy in terms of electoral fairness and respect for political and civil rights:

Although elections are regularly held and are generally free of massive fraud, incumbents routinely abuse state resources, deny the opposition adequate media coverage, harass opposition candidates and their supporters, and in some cases manipulate electoral results. Journalists, opposition politicians, and other government critics may be spied on, threatened, harassed, or arrested. Members of the opposition may be jailed, exiled, or – less frequently – even assaulted or murdered. Regimes characterized by such abuses cannot be called democratic (Levitsky and Way 2002, 53).

In sum, CA regimes are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions are viewed as the primary means of access to political power, but in which civil liberties violations, fraud, and abuse of state resources and media are so significant to skew the playing field to the extent that the regime cannot be seen as democratic. Such regimes are competitive, in that democratic institutions is not only a façade, but they are authoritarian in that opposition forces are held back by a highly uneven and dangerous playing field (Levitsky & Way 2008). Democratic institutions do have some real importance and there exist arenas for political contestation, although not fair, where the opposition may challenge, or even defeat, the authoritarian government. “As a result, even though democratic institutions may be badly flawed, both authoritarian incumbents and their opponents must take them seriously” (Levitsky and Way 2002, 53). In addition to these political characteristics, citizens in hybrid regimes are often plagued by high levels of corruption among officials and bad governance in general.

Assessing available data sources and the question of measurement

Having briefly sketched the characteristics of the hybrid regime type, we now turn to the questions about operationalization and possible data sources that may facilitate empirical analysis. If we want to use regime type as a variable in cross-national comparative analyses, we have to come up with some way to classify and order different types of regimes.

A central issue in the literature on political regimes concerns the question if democracy and other regime types should be treated as dichotomous or continuous measurements, or even as intermediate categories (Collier & Adcock 1999; Elkins 2000; Hadenius & Teorell 2005; Munck 2006). The debate has focused on empirical analyses of

democracy, but is of course equally central in empirical studies of all types of political regimes, such as hybrid regimes (cf. Munck 2006; Reich 2002). For example, in a series of publications, Adam Przeworski and associates have argued that democracy is an either/or phenomenon and that the practice of using intermediate categories to measure differences between democratic and non-democratic regimes is nothing short of absurd (Alvarez *et al.* 1996, 21; Przeworski *et al.* 2000; cf. Elkins 2000, 293).⁵ Other scholars, such as David Collier and Robert Adcock (1999), take a more pragmatic stance, arguing that the choice between dichotomous and graded measures should depend on what we intend to use them for. Collier and Adcock's pragmatic approach rejects the idea that there is a single correct meaning for all concepts. They oppose the widely held view that scholars face a choice between generating dichotomous and continuous measures, a view they believe is one of the main obstacles to developing improved measures of political regimes.

Gerardo Munck argues that the supposedly critical choice between regarding a phenomenon in terms of distinctions of "kind" and of "degree" is based on a false dilemma fallacy that "originates in a failure to grasp a deceptively simple point: the most basic decision in measurement, the drawing of a boundary that establishes an equivalence/difference relationship, underlies each and every level of measurement that could possibly be used in constructing a scale" (Munck 2006, 29). All measures involve classifications that distinguish between cases that are relatively similar to and different from other cases in terms of some category. This is a critical point when it comes to grasp why we do not have to choose between dichotomous and continuous measures and why more advanced, higher-level measures is preferable if available (Munck 2006; cf. Elkins 2000).

A real world outlook also points in favor of including intermediate categories, instead of the democracy/non-democracy dichotomy. Regime transitions and consolidation are complex and often drawn out processes and countries undergoing transitions may very well end up as neither democratic nor authoritarian for a long time. The very notion of hybrid regimes suggests that political regime is a phenomenon that may vary both in kind

⁵ Applying Przeworski's (1991, 10) catchy definition of democracy as a "political system in which parties lose elections", all countries of interest in this paper should be considered democratic.

and degree and I will use it first as a category in order to distinguish between different *types* of regimes, e.g. democratic and non-democratic. Regime types could also be classified on an ordinal scale. For example, democracies could be considered to be more democratic than hybrid regimes, which in turn are less authoritarian than autocratic regimes. Freedom House’s classification of regimes as “free”, “partly free” and “not free” is a good case in point (Table 2). Indexes such as Freedom House also make it possible to treat political regime as a continuous variable. The Freedom House index of political rights and civil liberties is not the only available option however. Some of the indexes and classifications that may be found in the literature will now be discussed.

Assessing some available data sources

Starting from the notion that hybrid regimes are non-democratic political systems where democratic procedures are not meaningful, and opposition groups take them seriously as arenas through which they may compete for power, a substantial number of countries attract our attention. If we turn to Freedom House’s 2007 survey – where regimes are classified as “free”, “partly free” or “not free” – 60 countries (31 per cent) are classified as “partly free”, i.e. an intermediate category consisting of regimes where the respect for political rights and civil liberties are limited in some way, but not totally absent (Table 2). It is a very diverse group of countries, covering all regions of the world except Western Europe and North America. The Freedom House index has extensive coverage, classifying the world’s countries annually since 1972, which makes it an excellent choice for quantitative analyses over time.

Table 2. Freedom in the world 2007 according to Freedom House

<i>Type of regime</i>	<i>No. of countries</i>	<i>% of countries</i>	<i>% of world population</i>
<i>Free</i>	90	47	46
<i>Partly free</i>	60	31	18
<i>Not Free</i>	43	22	36

Source: Freedom House (2008).

Even though the Freedom House data perform fairly well in an initial phase to identify political regimes that blend democratic and autocratic features in various degrees, it should nevertheless be complemented with alternative data sources. The group of “partly

free” countries is very wide-ranging and includes clearly autocratic countries like Kuwait, a traditional monarchy where the royal family dominates political life. At the same time it excludes for example Russia, which constitutionally could be seen as an electoral regime, but nevertheless is classified as “not free”.

The Economist Intelligence Unit’s *Index of Democracy* (2006) could also serve as an interesting source of data. This index covers 167 political systems in the world (27 micro-states are excluded) and is based on ratings for 60 indicators, grouped into five categories: *electoral process and pluralism*; *civil liberties*; *the functioning of government*; *political participation*; and *political culture*. Each of these categories is rated on a 0–10 scale. Thus, five sub-indexes are actually produced.⁶ From the scores of the five categories, an overall score is produced by dividing the sum by the number of categories. The countries covered by the Economist’s democracy index are then classified into four types of political regimes, of which one is in fact labeled *hybrid regimes*, consisting of 30 countries (Table 3).

Table 3. Index of democracy 2006 by regime type

<i>Type of regime</i>	<i>No. of countries</i>	<i>% of countries</i>	<i>% of world population</i>
<i>Full democracies</i>	28	16.8	13.0
<i>Flawed democracies</i>	54	32.3	38.3
<i>Hybrid regimes</i>	30	18.0	10.5
<i>Authoritarian regimes</i>	55	32.9	38.2

Source: Economist (2007).

The *Full democracies* category (index ratings above 8) includes old, consolidated democracies like Sweden, Iceland, Netherlands, and Norway. *Flawed democracies* (ratings from 6 to 7.9) include e.g. South Africa, Chile, South Korea, Taiwan and most post-communist countries in Central Europe. The *hybrid regimes* (ratings between 4 and 5.9) cover among others Russia, Venezuela, Mozambique and Turkey. Finally, we have the *authoritarian regimes* (ratings below 4). Countries like Libya, Turkmenistan and North Korea obviously belong here, but the category also includes Kuwait, Sierra Leone and Morocco, i.e. states that Freedom House designated as “partly free” the same year (2006). Overall, however, the Economist index is strongly correlated to other frequently

⁶ For additional information about definitions, construction of the indexes and coding, see http://www.economist.com/media/pdf/democracy_index_2007_v3.pdf

used democracy indexes, such as the Freedom House scales (FH civil liberties, Pearson's $r = -.911$, FH political rights $r = -.903$, $p < 0.001$)⁷ and Polity IV ($r = .858$, $p < 0.001$).

The list of hybrid regimes according to the Economist index, together with their respective scores on the sub-indexes, is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Hybrid regimes in the world according to the Economist index (2006)

	<i>Overall score</i>	<i>Electoral process</i>	<i>Functioning of government</i>	<i>Political participation</i>	<i>Political culture</i>	<i>Civil liberties</i>
Albania	5.91	7.33	5.07	4.44	5.63	7.06
Singapore	5.89	4.33	7.50	2.78	7.50	7.35
Madagascar	5.82	5.67	5.71	5.56	6.88	5.29
Lebanon	5.82	7.92	2.36	6.11	6.25	6.47
Bosnia	5.78	8.25	3.29	4.44	5.00	7.94
Turkey	5.70	7.92	6.79	4.44	3.75	5.59
Nicaragua	5.68	8.25	5.71	3.33	3.75	7.35
Thailand	5.67	4.83	6.43	5.00	5.63	6.47
Fiji	5.66	6.50	5.21	3.33	5.00	8.24
Ecuador	5.64	7.83	4.29	5.00	3.13	7.94
Venezuela	5.42	7.00	3.64	5.56	5.00	5.88
Senegal	5.37	7.00	5.00	3.33	5.63	5.88
Ghana	5.35	7.42	4.64	4.44	4.38	5.88
Mozambique	5.28	5.25	5.71	4.44	6.88	4.12
Zambia	5.25	5.25	4.64	3.33	6.25	6.76
Liberia	5.22	7.75	2.14	5.00	5.63	5.59
Tanzania	5.18	6.00	3.93	5.06	5.63	5.29
Uganda	5.14	4.33	3.93	4.44	6.25	6.76
Kenya	5.08	4.33	4.29	5.56	6.25	5.00
Russia	5.02	7.00	3.21	5.56	3.75	5.59
Malawi	4.97	6.00	5.00	3.89	4.38	5.59
Georgia	4.90	7.92	1.79	3.33	5.00	6.47
Cambodia	4.77	5.58	6.07	2.78	5.00	4.41
Ethiopia	4.72	4.00	3.93	5.00	6.25	4.41
Burundi	4.51	4.42	3.29	3.89	6.25	4.71
Gambia	4.39	4.00	4.64	4.44	5.63	3.24
Haiti	4.19	5.58	3.64	2.78	2.50	6.47
Armenia	4.15	4.33	3.21	3.89	3.13	6.18
Kyrgyzstan	4.08	5.75	1.86	2.78	5.00	5.00
Iraq	4.01	4.75	0.00	5.56	5.63	4.12

Source: Economist (2006).

Hybrid regimes are to be found in almost every corner of the world, except for North America and Western Europe. There is also a large amount of variation within and across

⁷ The negative sign is an effect of Freedom House's reversed scale, where 1 is most democratic and 7 least democratic.

the different sub-categories. For example, Bosnia and Nicaragua score above 8 on the dimension of the electoral process, while Ethiopia and Gambia come in at 4.00.

The inclusion of political participation and political culture in the conceptualization of democracy sets this index apart from most other regime indexes. The main reason for this, according to the Economist, is that “democracy is more than the sum of its institutions”. Of course, these dimensions may help to capture the overall *quality of democracy* (cf. Diamond & Morlino 2005). But when they are assigned the same importance as free and fair elections, and political and civil rights in determining the *existence* of democracy, the result may be somewhat confusing and misleading (Diamond 2008, 380 fn.13). For example, due to the additive nature of the index, a country could compensate low values on the “electoral process” sub-index with high values on the “functioning of government” and “political culture” to obtain a relatively high rating on the overall index. Singapore is a good case in point. However, compared to the Freedom House’s “partly free” category, which includes a long list of clear-cut authoritarian regimes (e.g. Kuwait and Sierra Leone) while at the same time excluding electoral authoritarian regimes such as Russia, it seems to offer a considerable degree of face validity.

Table 5 relates the Economist “hybrid regime” group of countries with alternative indexes of political regimes. Such a comparison shows an overall good correspondence, but there are some discrepancies that will have to be taken into account. Among the 30 countries classified as hybrid regimes by the Economist, four (Cambodia, Haiti, Iraq and Russia) were considered as “not free” by Freedom House in 2006. These four countries also place themselves among the five worst scores (together with Burundi) on the *World Bank’s* “Voice and accountability” indicator, which measures “the extent to which a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media” (Kaufmann *et al.* 2007, 3). The Worldwide Governance Indicators estimates have a mean of zero, a standard deviation of one, and range from around -2.5 to +2.5. The mean of zero is often used as the threshold for democracy (Berg-Schlosser 2004; 2008). Table 5 also presents the corresponding scores for the rule of law situation, using another indicator from the World Bank. The “rule of law” indicator measures “the extent to which agents have confidence in and

abide by the rules of society, in particular the quality of contract enforcement, the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence” (Kaufmann *et al.* 2007, 3).

Table 5. The Economist hybrid regime category in comparison with alternative indexes

	<i>Economist Overall Score 2006</i>	<i>Freedom House political rights/civil liberties/status 2006</i>	<i>WGI Voice and accountability 2006</i>	<i>WGI Rule of law 2006</i>	<i>Polity IV 2006</i>
Albania	5.91	3/3 PF	-0.01	-0.70	9
Armenia	5.89	5/4 PF	-0.72	-0.52	5
Bosnia	5.82	4/3 PF	+0.18	-0.53	(-66)
Burundi	5.82	3/5 PF	-1.04	-0.96	6
Cambodia	5.78	6/5 NF	-0.98	-1.11	2
Ecuador	5.70	3/3 PF	-0.35	-0.96	7
Ethiopia	5.68	5/5 PF	-1.08	-0.64	1
Fiji	5.67	4/3 PF	-0.38	-0.37	-3
Gambia	5.66	5/4 PF	-0.90	-0.27	-5
Georgia	5.64	3/3 PF	-0.16	-0.61	7
Ghana	5.42	1/2 F	+0.37	-0.13	8
Haiti	5.37	7/6 NF	-1.11	-1.56	5
Iraq	5.35	6/5 NF	-1.54	-1.95	(-66)
Kenya	5.28	3/3 PF	-0.18	-0.98	8
Kyrgyzstan	5.25	5/4 PF	-0.70	-1.18	4
Lebanon	5.22	5/4 PF	-0.51	-0.49	7
Liberia	5.18	4/4 PF	-0.55	-0.85	6
Madagascar	5.14	3/3 PF	-0.05	-0.30	7
Malawi	5.08	4/4 PF	-0.31	-0.46	6
Mozambique	5.02	3/4 PF	-0.06	-0.59	6
Nicaragua	4.97	3/3 PF	-0.22	-0.76	8
Russia	4.90	6/5 NF	-0.87	-0.91	7
Senegal	4.77	2/3 F	-0.05	-0.33	8
Singapore	4.72	5/4 PF	-0.07	+1.82	-2
Tanzania	4.51	4/3 PF	-0.26	-0.47	1
Thailand	4.39	3/3 PF	-0.50	+0.03	-5
Turkey	4.19	3/3 PF	-0.19	+0.08	7
Uganda	4.15	5/4 PF	-0.54	-0.50	-1
Venezuela	4.08	4/4 PF	-0.58	-1.39	5
Zambia	4.01	4/4 PF	-0.34	-0.61	5

Note: F = Free, PF = Partly Free, NF = Not Free; -66 = Interruption.

Sources: The Economist (2006); Freedom House; World Bank (2007); Polity IV (2006).

The “not free” countries are also among the worst performers when it comes to the rule of law, with Cambodia, Iraq and Haiti at the very bottom of the list. The very poor ratings on the Freedom House and World Bank indicators – together with the fact that both countries have experienced dramatic periods of turmoil during the measured time period

– suggest that Cambodia, Iraq and Haiti constitute border cases that will have to be further scrutinized. The same is true for Russia. Although rated as “not free”, Russia is often put forth as a model case of a hybrid regime in the literature, and free – however not fair – elections have been held on a regular basis since the 1990s (McFaul 2002; Diamond 2002; Levitsky & Way 2002; Shevtsova 2001).

When consulting the Polity IV index, however, the picture becomes a bit more complicated. In Polity IV, Russia gets the score 7 and is accordingly classified as a *democracy* (scores from 6 to 10).⁸ Haiti is not far behind at a score of 5, and Cambodia at 2, both being classified as “anocracies”.

Two cases in the list pull in the opposite direction. Both Ghana and Senegal are classified as “free” by Freedom House, and have shown a positive political development over the last years. They both score relatively high on the democratically important “electoral process” dimension in the Economist index. This is also indicated by the World Bank ratings. Diamond (2002) classified both countries as “electoral democracies” in 2001, despite the fact that both countries received lower ratings by Freedom House at that time. Based on the Freedom House scores and three other indicators – the share of legislative seats held by the ruling party, the share of the vote won by the ruling party presidential candidate, and the years the incumbent ruler has continuously been in power – Diamond (2002) presents a six fold regime typology. Democratic regimes are divided into two categories: “liberal democracies” (fulfilling both procedural and substantial democratic criteria) and “electoral democracies” (fulfilling minimum democratic criteria, but lacking in terms of political and civil rights).

About seven out of ten democracies are classified as “liberal” (scoring 2.0 or lower on the seven-point Freedom House scale averaging political rights and civil liberties). 31 democracies are considered electoral but not liberal. Diamond considers 17 regimes “ambiguous” in the sense that they fall on the blurry boundary between electoral democracy and competitive authoritarianism, with independent observers disagreeing over how to classify them. According to Diamond, practically all 17 could be classified

⁸ The Polity index, which ranges from –10 to +10, consists of six measures that record key qualities of executive recruitment, constraints on executive authority and political competition. It also records changes in the institutionalized qualities of governing authority. Countries are classified in three regime categories: “autocracies” (–10 to –6), “anocracies” (–5 to +5) and “democracies” (+6 to +10).

as “competitive authoritarian”. That would raise the number of CA regimes from 21 to as many as 38, and the proportion from 11 to 20 percent. Another 25 regimes are defined as electoral authoritarian but in a more hegemonic way. Their elections and other “democratic” institutions are mainly façades, yet they may provide *some* space for political opposition, independent media, and social organizations that do not seriously criticize or challenge the regime.

Table 6. Diamond’s classification of hybrid regimes in 2001

<i>Region</i>	<i>Ambiguous regimes</i>	<i>Competitive authoritarian regimes</i>	<i>Hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes</i>
<i>Post-communist</i>	Armenia (4,4) Georgia (4,4) Macedonia (4,4) Ukraine (4,4)	Bosnia-Herzegovina (5,4) Russia (5,5) Belarus (6,6)	Azerbaijan (6,5) Kazakhstan (6,5) Kyrgyzstan (6,5) Tajikistan (6,6) Uzbekistan (7,6)
<i>Latin America and the Caribbean</i>	Venezuela (3,5) Paraguay (4,3) Colombia (4,4)	Antigua & Barbuda (4,2) Haiti (6,6)	
<i>Asia</i>	Indonesia (3,4)	East Timor (5,3) Malaysia (5,5)	Singapore (5,5) Maldives (6,5) Cambodia (6,5) Pakistan (6,5)
<i>Pacific Islands</i>	Fiji (4,3) Tonga (5,3)		
<i>Africa (Sub-Saharan)</i>	Mozambique (3,4) Tanzania (4,4) Nigeria (4,5) Djibouti (4,5) Sierra Leone (4,5) Zambia (5,4)	Lesotho (4,4) Central African Rep. (4,5) Guinea-Bissau (4,5) Côte d’Ivoire (5,4) Gabon (5,4) The Gambia (5,5) Togo (5,5) Ethiopia (5,6) Kenya (6,5) Cameroon (6,6) Zimbabwe (6,6)	Burkina Faso (4,4) Congo, Brazzaville (5,4) Comoros (6,4) Mauritania (5,5) Chad (6,5) Guinea (6,5) Uganda (6,5) Angola (6,6) Liberia (6,6) Equatorial Guinea (6,7)
<i>Middle East – North Africa</i>	Turkey (4,5)	Lebanon (6,5) Iran (6,6) Yemen (6,6)	Kuwait (4,5) Jordan (5,5) Morocco (5,5) Algeria (5,6) Tunisia (6,5) Egypt (6,6)
<i>N (Mean FH score)</i>	17 (4.0)	21 (5.0)	25 (5.4)

Source: Diamond (2002). Freedom House scores for “political rights” and “civil liberties” within brackets.

Finally, 25 regimes lack all traits of political competition and pluralism, and is accordingly labeled “politically closed authoritarian” regimes (Diamond 2002, 26, 30–

31). Table 6 presents the countries classified as ambiguous, competitive authoritarian and hegemonic electoral authoritarian regimes. The correspondence with the Economist index is pretty good, although a number of differences are noticeable. Quite surprisingly, Diamond classifies Iran – a regime that most other classifications treat as a clear-cut case of autocracy – as a case of competitive authoritarianism.

The main problem with the indexes and classifications investigated so far is that they are very static in nature, capturing only a snap shot of the political development in hybrid regimes. The emergence and institutionalization of hybrid regimes are dynamic processes that might call for a more dynamic analytic approach. This is quite obvious when looking at different classifications from different points in time. For example, post-Soviet Ukraine was a hybrid regime up until the “Orange revolution” in late 2004, and has subsequently gone through a process of democratization, though troublesome and characterized by political turmoil. Slovakia and Serbia are other cases of democratizing hybrid regimes, countries that have gone through a transition from post-communism to democracy (McFaul 2005).

In an attempt to capture the dynamics of hybridization and de-hybridization, Levitsky & Way (2008) single out the trajectories of hybrid regimes in the post-Cold War period. They argue that hybrid regimes followed three broad patterns between 1990 and 2005 (Table 7). The first path is *democratization* of a hybrid regime. Democratization entails the introduction and establishment of free and fair elections, protection of civil and political rights and a leveling of the political playing field in that no single party or candidate dominate access to critical state resources. The second regime outcome is *unstable hybrid regimes*, i.e. cases that have undergone one or more transitions but nevertheless failed to democratize. Non-democratic incumbents are removed from power, but the system of competitive authoritarian remains intact. Successor incumbents inherit the uneven playing field and the state resources that are used to weaken and disadvantage opponents. The third outcome is a *stable hybrid regime*. In these regimes the autocratic incumbents, or their chosen successors, remained in power. This effort has been achieved by the use of electoral manipulation and fraud, abuse of civil liberties and the preservation of the uneven playing field.

Table 7. Trajectories of hybrid regimes, 1990–2005

<i>Democratized hybrid regimes</i>	<i>Unstable authoritarian/hybrid regimes</i>	<i>Stable authoritarian/hybrid regimes</i>	<i>Hybridized democracy</i>
Bulgaria	Albania*	Armenia*	Venezuela*
Croatia	Belarus	Cambodia*	(Peru under Fujimori)
Dominican Republic	Benin	Cameroon	
Ghana*	Georgia*	Ethiopia*	
Guyana	Haiti*	Gabon	
Mali	Kenya*	Malaysia	
Mexico	Madagascar*	Mozambique*	
Nicaragua*	Macedonia	Russia*	
Peru	Malawi*	Tanzania*	
Romania	Moldova	Zimbabwe	
Serbia	Senegal*		
Slovakia	Zambia*		
Taiwan			
Ukraine			

Source: Author's elaboration of Table 1.2 in Levitsky & Way (2008), 82.

* Classified as hybrid regime in the *Economist Index of Democracy* 2006.

I would argue that it would be appropriate to add another path of regime change to Levitsky and Way's three trajectories. They do not take into consideration that hybridization might also be an outcome of *democratic decay*.⁹ The political development in Venezuela is an interesting case in point (cf. Buxton 1999), where the democratic institutions, though unstable and flawed in many ways, have been weakened by constitutional means and the political playing field has become increasingly uneven during Hugo Chavez presidency (cf. Ottaway 2003). Venezuela could thus be considered a somewhat unique case of transition to democracy, and then from democracy to competitive authoritarianism. Peru could constitute another example, which transformed into a hybrid regime during the presidency of Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000). After the ousting of Fujimori, Peru once again embarked on a process of democratization, which makes the country a case of democratized hybrid regime. The list of countries in Table 7 implies that the “the third wave of democratization” was more or less a closed chapter after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989/90. Thus, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War triggered a wave of hybridization rather than democratization (cf. McFaul 2002).

⁹ In their 2002 article, Levitsky and Way briefly discuss this path, but do not elaborate on this issue in their forthcoming book.

Levitsky and Way's definition and classification seems to be the most fruitful so far. It is based on qualitative judgments about the development in the individual countries, strengthening the reliability and validity of the classification. In addition, it also takes into account the *dynamics* of regime change and stability in hybrid regimes, making it a more useful analytical tool than for example the static Economist index, which is nothing more than just a snapshot in time based on a wide array of quantitative indicators from different sources. If we are interested in the emergence and performance of different types of political regimes, the time factor is of obvious importance. In quantitative analyses this is often problematic due to the nature of available data. Often, comparative cross-country data are only available for one or a few points in time, such as the Economist democracy index or the World Values Survey. If our purpose is to study the dynamics and trajectories of different types of regimes, we need time series data. A classification such as Levitsky and Way's makes a useful starting point for further data collection.

The emergence and survival of hybrid regimes: Moving beyond transitology?

What factors contribute to the recent trend of hybridization of political regimes? And what are the prospects for hybrid regimes to democratize? Since these questions could be seen as issues of political transformation and regime change, it might seem natural to look toward theories of regime transition and democratization for guidance. However, making the observation that a substantial number of "third wave democracies" or "transitional democracies" in fact never became democracies implies that the theoretical outlook of the "transition paradigm" might not be very helpful when it comes to explaining hybrid regimes (cf. Carothers 2002; Levitsky & Way 2002; Ottaway 2003).

It is important to note that democratization theory is not a coherent school of thought, but could traditionally be said to consist of at least three broad perspectives, each emphasizing different causal explanatory factors. During the 1960s and 1970s, theories focused on social structures (cf. Lipset 1959; Almond & Verba 1963). The structural modernization paradigm was called into question when "underdeveloped" dictatorships in Latin America democratized in the 1980s. Eventually, the spread of multiparty

elections to Africa in the 1990s meant more or less the burial of the structural school. Drawing on the work by the early forerunners Rustow (1970) and Linz (1978), a new generation of scholars began to emphasize the importance of human agency in democratization processes (cf. O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986; Przeworski 1991). The rationality of political actors and their ability to negotiate and form pacts were perceived as the central factors that could explain democratization in Southern Europe and Latin America. Thus, democracy was seen as the outcome of political actors rather than some superstructure, or the effect of certain necessary societal structures. During the 1990s, another scholarly branch investigated the role of constitutional and institutional design in democratic transition and consolidation (cf. Linz 1990; Sartori 1994; Lijphart & Waisman 1996). Although emphasizing different factors in their explanations of democratization, this generation of scholars echoed the structuralists' strict focus on *domestic* factors (cf. Linde & Ekman 2006).

So, why do hybrid regimes come into existence? Are the reasons to be found in the structures of society, or is it because of bad leaders, badly designed constitutions and institutions or an underdeveloped and disorganized civil society? Recent research on hybrid regimes has in general come to denounce the explanations proposed in democratization studies and transitology. One of the main reasons is that the narrow domestic focus that has dominated the research agenda cannot account for the hybridization of political regimes in the post-Cold War era (cf. Carothers 2002; Levitsky & Way 2002; 2008). Another motivation to look beyond the transitions paradigm stems from its implicit tendency to view transitions from authoritarian rule as going toward democracy. The proliferation of hybrid regimes indicates a need to reconsider a shift from studying politics through the prism of democracy (Snyder 2006, 219).

Hybridization and the international context

One possible starting point is to consider the strand of research that in the 1990s started to analyze the explanatory power of the international context and international factors when it comes to explain success and failure in the third wave of democratization. Scholars such as Pridham (1991; Pridham *et al.* 1997) and Whitehead (1996) argue that democratization cannot be explained without taking the international environment into

account.¹⁰ However, despite the growing interest in various external forces, the relationship between the international environment and regime change remains poorly understood. The most obvious problem is the very few attempts to construct coherent theories building on the many factors and mechanisms listed in the literature. Moreover, Levitsky and Way (2008) argue that most studies have failed to account for the fact that the importance of the international context varies substantially across cases and regions. Drawing on these observations, Levitsky and Way (2005; 2006; 2008) integrate the mechanisms of international influence highlighted in earlier research into a single theoretical framework, consisting of two dimensions: Western leverage and linkage to the West. To a large extent, this endeavor brings together important knowledge from both democratization theory and the growing body of literature on democracy promotion.

Western leverage

Leverage is defined as governments' vulnerability to external democratizing pressure. International, i.e. Western, actors may use leverage in different ways, including political and economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure and military intervention. Leverage is determined by three factors. The first – and perhaps the most important – one is the raw size and military and economic strength. The argument is that weak states with small economies dependent on aid are more vulnerable to external pressure than strong states with substantial military and/or economic power. The second factor is the existence of competing issues on Western countries' policy agendas. In countries where Western governments have important interests at stake (e.g. the Middle East), leverage may be limited and accordingly these regimes will be less vulnerable to external pressure. Finally, the degree of Western leverage is reduced by the existence of regional powers that provide crucial economic and/or military support to autocratic rulers. For example, Russian support to the rulers in Belarus and Ukraine, and South African backing of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe has played an important part for those countries non-democratic development. On the contrary, in Central Europe and the Americas, the

¹⁰ For a short overview of research on the international context and democratization, see Uhlin's chapter in Linde & Ekman (2006).

absence of an alternative power left the EU and the US as the only option, which favored democratization (Levitsky & Way 2008).

With leverage the cost of repression, electoral fraud and other government abuses increases. Leverage alone is rarely sufficient to bring democratization, however. Western pressure has been inconsistent and often ineffective. The instrument of political conditionality seems to be of only minor importance in efforts to achieve more than incomplete democratization. The enlargement process of the European Union is an exception, where political conditionality – in terms of the Copenhagen criteria – proved successful. Perhaps colored by the assumptions of transitology, international actors came to focus heavily on elections, thus to a large extent overlooking necessary democratic components such as civil liberties and free media.

Countries often slipped out of the Western spotlight once elections had been held, even when elections failed to bring democracy (as in Zambia, Kenya, and Peru during the 1990s). As a consequence, although blatantly authoritarian acts such as military coups or the cancellation of elections often triggered strong international reactions during the post–Cold War period, Western pressure routinely failed to deter more subtle abuses of power, including government control and manipulation of the media, harassment of the opposition, and significant levels of electoral fraud (Levitsky & Way 2005, 22).

Thus, leverage alone was often effective in bringing about transitions from autocracy to competitive authoritarianism by introducing multiparty elections, but it was very rarely a sufficient factor fostering deeper democratization and consolidation of new democracies. It should be noted, however, that recent research on African regime transitions has shown that the holding of election in itself is an important democratizing factor:

While this research does not suggest that elections are the only or even the principal causal factor behind democratization, it shows that the repeated holding of elections in new electoral regimes promotes and breeds democratic qualities: *The more successive elections, the more democratic a nation becomes* (Lindberg 2006, 148–149).

Findings like these suggest that it might be too hasty to dismiss the positive effect of leverage in terms of political conditionality in the long run. However, in order to be democratic, elections have to be regular and fair events, and the importance of elections are supposedly even greater if Western countries do not let transitional states out of their

sight after having held only founding elections. In order to contribute to a deepening and consolidation of democracy, conditionality has to be a long term commitment. “Democratic quality tends to improve with third and following elections (Lindberg 2004, 86). Such findings also indicate that it might be too hasty to write off the importance of constitutional and institutional aspects emphasized by the research of democratic transition and consolidation (cf. Fish 2006).

Linkage to the west

Leverage is most effective when combined with extensive *linkage* to the West. Here, linkage means the density of economic, political, diplomatic, social and organizational ties and cross-border flows between a country and the EU, the US and Western-dominated international organizations. They list five dimensions of such linkage: 1) *economic* linkage; 2) *geopolitical* linkage (ties to Western governments, alliances and organizations); 3) *social* linkage (tourism, migration, elite education in the West etc.); 4) *communication* linkage (Internet, telecommunications, access to Western media etc.); and 5) *civil society* linkage (ties to international NGOs, party organizations and other Western networks) (Levitsky & Way 2005, 22–23).

Of course, linkage is not only an “intentional” issue. It is rooted in a variety of factors, such as level of economic development, capitalist economy, and colonial history. It has been argued that the most important source of linkage is geographical proximity, because it brings on interdependence between countries. Taking into consideration the route of “third wave democracies”, there seems to be a strong correlation between successful democratization and closeness to the EU and the US. In the last decades, linkage contributed to democratization and raised the cost of authoritarianism in several ways. It heightened the international recognition and the cost of authoritarian abuse. Linkage also increased the probability of an international response to such abuse. It created new domestic constituencies for democratic norm-abiding behavior and reshaped the balance of power in strengthening democratic forces and weakening and isolating autocrats (Levitsky & Way 2005, 23; 2008, 32). Where linkage has been low, the global democratic “Zeitgeist” spawned by the fall of communism and the end of the Cold War

has in many cases meant improved conditions for authoritarian rulers to legitimize their hold on power through the means of “free” elections.

These two factors – leverage and linkage – are the crucial components in Levitsky and Way’s causal theory of the emergence of hybrid regimes, or competitive authoritarianism as they prefer to call it. The main argument boils down to the fact that different combinations and levels of leverage and linkage produced different outcomes of regime transitions. The empirical evidence provided so far could be more convincing. Investigating the explanatory power of leverage and linkage, and most important the combination of these factors, in a systematic and comparative way is an important task for future research. Both linkage and leverage are possible to operationalize and measure statistically through a number of available data sources, for example the Quality of Government dataset. Data sources like the QoG dataset also make it possible to investigate these questions in a more dynamic manner, thanks to the extensive coverage both in space and time. Of course, the possibility to control for other potential explanatory factors, such as different domestic variables discussed in the literature, should also provide a tougher test of the theory.

Concluding remarks

The last decades, one of the main global trends has been the hybridization of political regimes. A majority of the countries in Africa, Eastern Europe, Eurasia and Asia that embarked on transitions from different types of autocratic rule in the 1990s did not transform into democracies, but to other types of authoritarian rule. Many of them embrace the form of democracy with multiparty elections, but reject essential democratic ideas such as fairness, respect for civil and political rights, free media and the rule of law. On top of this, they often display an impressively bad track record when it comes to quality of government. These hybrid regimes constitute an interesting challenge for comparative politics, and especially for scholars within democratization studies. Conceptually, some consensus seems to have emerged among scholars that these regimes should not be treated as “transitional democracies” or democracies with different types of shortcomings. Rather, they are a new form of authoritarian rule.

The growth of hybrid regimes gives rise to some intriguing challenges for scholars and policymakers alike. What are the main factors behind the trend of hybridization? What are the effects of hybrid regimes when it comes to quality of government? What measures should and should not be taken when engaging in democracy promotion in hybrid regimes?

When it comes to explanations of hybrid regimes, there is much to be done. One important issue concerns the value of recent research on democratization, i.e. democratic transition and consolidation. Although recent research on hybrid regimes emphasizes external factors to a much larger extent than democratization theory, many contributions to the literature have in fact focused on domestic factors, such as elections and manipulation, strategies of incumbents and opposition, state strength and constitutional and institutional design. Despite the rhetoric, similarities to the transition paradigm are not hard to find. Existing works on the importance of political actors (incumbents and opposition) in hybrid regimes come close to the classics of transitology in their emphasis of incumbent strategies and splits within the regime and opposition. As noted earlier, most works have been qualitative analyses of one or a few cases. Thus, the most innovative component is to be found in the fields' critique of the democratic bias that has prevailed within transitology. This is a very important point, however. It is necessary for understanding the nature of the hybrid regime as a distinct regime type.

Furthermore, the geographical and cultural diversity of hybrid regimes calls for cross-regional comparative analyses. The bulk of comparative works on democratization has focused on comparisons between countries within the same geographical region, such as Central Europe, South Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa. These studies have often applied "most similar systems" designs, seeking to explain different outcomes in a small number of countries with similar backgrounds. Explanations of the wide variety of hybrid regimes call for different approaches. The availability of cross-national data today should hopefully encourage scholars to employ extensive comparative research designs than has been the case in transition and consolidation studies.

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