

# Measuring and Analyzing Post-Cold War Political Regimes

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Abstract: The third wave of democratization and the end of the cold war significantly altered the map of political regimes around the world. Generally speaking, we can now distinguish between five different regime types: closed authoritarianism, hegemonic authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, electoral democracy, and liberal democracy. This paper develops a coding system to categorize countries as belonging to one of these five regime types in any given year. It then applies these criteria to countries around the world from 1990 to 2005, thus yielding both annual and election-year data for each country. The rest of the paper documents and analyzes the trends in regime type frequency and proportion during this time period. Among other findings, the cross-national data show that competitive authoritarian regimes are by far the most volatile, which we argue is due to the destabilizing effect of elections on these regime types.

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## ***Introduction***

The comparative study of political regimes has made considerable progress in recent years. For decades, most cross-national projects tended to mix together vastly different sets of countries, thus yielding results that were heavily influenced by the advanced industrialized democracies. As a result, these studies highlighted the *absence* of certain economic and political conditions and institutions in the less developed world. In contrast, the recent growth of the study of hybrid regimes and various types of authoritarianism has encouraged scholars to produce more targeted comparisons of countries with similar political systems. This has allowed the field to develop more positive findings about the *presence* of causal factors that impact governance in comparable countries.

What is still lacking in this literature, however, is a combination of these two approaches that would include both an overarching cross-national comparison of all countries and a clear differentiation of regime types, thus allowing comparisons within and across regimes. Such an undertaking is important and useful because it will allow us to document continuity and change over time, showing the stability or volatility of each regime type, as well as the overall trends that have been taking place globally, and exploring the sources for each. This paper takes a first step in that direction.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, we conceptualize post-third wave political regimes, disaggregate them into five types—closed authoritarian, hegemonic authoritarian, competitive authoritarian, electoral democracy, and liberal

democracy—and we develop a coding scheme to operationalize these types and score all countries (with populations greater than 1,000,000) between 1990 and 2005. We then document and analyze trends in regime type frequency and proportion during this time period. The cross-national data suggest competitive authoritarian regimes to be most volatile, which we find is due to the destabilizing effect elections have on these regime types. In the next section, we analyze the trends in frequency and volatility and the differences in regime continuity and liberalization across and within regime types. We conclude by discussing the general results of this preliminary analysis, the observable implications and hypotheses that require more rigorous testing, and our plans for future research.

### *Political Regimes After the Cold War*

The third wave of democratization and the end of the cold war significantly altered the map of political regimes around the world. The collapse of the Soviet Union was the death knell for many communist governments, which were forced to open their political systems and introduce economic reforms. Other non-communist dictators lost foreign patronage and found themselves vulnerable to domestic protest and international pressure. Multi-party elections were held in many African countries for the first time since the decade after independence.

At first, political science scholarship viewed the end of the cold war as initiating a political process in which these authoritarian regimes were in transition to democracies. Much research focused on explaining the sequence by which this democratization process

would take place. But as many “transitions” became stalled, other scholars recognized the need to understand post-cold war political regimes as they exist, rather than based on the extent to which they fell short of a set of standards and criteria that were probably unrealistic in the first place.

How should political regimes be classified, distinguished from one another, and measured empirically? The following section introduces our typology and justifies our measurement criteria.

### **Conceptualization**

Our measurement scheme begins with the background concept of political regimes—the rules and procedures that determine how national, executive leaders are chosen. This concept covers all political systems, including democratic and authoritarian ones. To disaggregate regimes into different types, we compare them based on the sets of rules adopted to select authoritative national leaders and whether they allow for contestation and participation in selection of a government (Dahl 1971). These rules include: first, whether selection is through national elections or through lineage, party decree, or military orders; second, if there are national elections for an executive, whether the rules and procedures allow for contestation; third, whether the elections are free and fair or fraudulent; and finally whether the regime is based on the rule of law and “political and civic pluralism,” or whether the rights and liberties of some individual and groups are still violated (Diamond 1999, 8-13).

Figure 1 presents a tree diagram that illustrates the key distinctions between the five different types of regimes in the world today. The four main factors that distinguish regimes are listed on the left of the figure, and the regime types are listed on the right.

[Figure 1 about here]

Two important caveats are necessary when interpreting this figure. First, it is intended as a typology, not as a linear or teleological progression from one regime to the next. The last decade has shown that, contrary to the “democratizing bias” (Levitsky and Way 2002, 51) of much of the earlier democratization literature, these regime types can be stable and enduring, or can even revert to a more consolidated form of authoritarianism. Second, although we place the institution of elections at the center of our analysis, we do not want to contribute to the literature’s “fallacy of electoralism” (Karl 1995), by focusing on the significance of elections at the expense of other important attributes of democracy. Indeed, democracy involves much more than just elections. Robust civil society, effective and independent legislatures and judiciaries, and a civilianized military are just three of the many factors that are necessary for a consolidated democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996). At the same time, however, democracy cannot be less than free and fair elections. Until a country’s selection of national leaders occurs consistently through a public, competitive, and free and fair process, the deepening of democracy will remain elusive.

### **Regime Types**

Building on the work of Schumpeter, Dahl, Diamond, and others, we distinguish regimes based on the degree of contestation and participation in the selection of national

leaders. *Closed authoritarian* regimes are those in which the selection of a country's leaders is the responsibility of a small group of elites from the ruling family, army, or political party and the citizenry is constitutionally excluded from participating. Thus, there are no multi-candidate national elections; there may be referendums or plebiscites, but no elections that allow for contestation between the incumbent and another candidate. To enforce their monopoly on executive recruitment, the elites ban opposition political parties, rely heavily on repression to maintain political control, and squash free media and civil society.

*Hegemonic authoritarian* regimes are slightly further along on the continuum of participation and contestation. The executive recruitment process does allow for regular, national elections in which there is a choice in candidates (if rival candidates chose to participate rather than boycott) and a substantial segment of the citizenry is able to participate. But restrictions on opposition parties and their political activities, bias in state-owned media coverage, and other forms of repression do not allow for a competitive process and ensure the dominant candidate or party wins overwhelmingly, leading to a *de facto* one-party state.<sup>1</sup> Thus, hegemonic authoritarian regimes violate Bunce's (2001, 45) maxim on the central elements of democracy: "freedom, uncertain results, and certain procedures." In hegemonic authoritarian regimes, the incumbent and ruling party's dominance of the political system ensure there is never any uncertainty in the outcome of national elections; the incumbent almost always prevails.

In *competitive authoritarian* systems, on the other hand, a competitive process exists for the selection of the executive in which there is national participation. In

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<sup>1</sup> Perceiving any chance of a fair contest beyond reach and not wishing to legitimize the electoral victory of the incumbent or ruling party, opposition candidates and parties in hegemonic regimes sometimes boycott the elections out of protest.

addition, there is greater uncertainty in the outcome of the elections between the ruling party and a legal and legitimate opposition, which usually chooses to participate, rather than to boycott. But the incumbent regime still uses fraud, repression, and other illiberal means “to create an uneven playing field between government and opposition” (Levitsky and Way 2002, 53) to try to ensure that it ultimately prevails in the electoral contest, though it sometimes loses (Howard and Roessler 2006).

Since both hegemonic authoritarianism and competitive authoritarianism involve regular elections under conditions that are generally authoritarian, they can be grouped within a larger category that some have called “electoral authoritarianism” (see Schedler 2007). Using the latter term, Larry Diamond writes that “the distinction between electoral democracy and electoral authoritarianism turns crucially on the freedom, fairness, inclusiveness, and meaningfulness of elections” (Diamond 2002, 28). The regime type of *electoral democracy* can therefore be distinguished from electoral authoritarianism (i.e., both competitive and hegemonic authoritarianism) in that the rules ensure a competitive process that are also held under genuinely free and fair conditions. In other words, even if the outcome of elections in electoral democracies are occasionally one-sided, and even if there are sporadic violations of civil liberties, there is a much more level playing field between the incumbent and the opposition. Finally, *liberal democracies* go a step beyond, as they are strictly bound by the state’s constitution and the rule of law, with horizontal accountability among officeholders, protection of pluralism and freedoms, and the lack of “reserved domains of power for the military or other actors not accountable to the electorate” (Diamond 1999, 10).

Having defined and explained our relatively abstract typology of regime types, we still need to show how they can best be measured empirically in the real world. There are two ways in which one can identify how countries should be classified: one is to select cases of based on the “I know it when I see it” formula, namely by analyzing countries independently, and determining which ones fit the overall definition; the other is to establish criteria derived from the coding of other data sources, and to “let the chips fall where they may.” Both are plausible and defensible strategies. We have chosen the latter, thereby avoiding the temptation to select cases based on our subjective judgments, and instead applying a common, precise, and systematic set of criteria based on existing indices. Any classification system is, of course, arbitrary, but by applying these criteria consistently, we aim to contribute a more objective measurement of these regime types—while recognizing that no such measurement is perfect, and that there may still be some disagreement about the inclusion or exclusion of individual cases.<sup>2</sup>

### **Operationalization**

To disaggregate political regimes into the five mutually exclusive types conceptualized in the previous section, we employ the criteria illustrated in Figure 1, working from the first branch until the last. Our universe of cases includes all political regimes in countries with populations over 1,000,000, and it begins from the year 1990 (or the year of the country’s independence) until 2005. Our unit of analysis is the type of political regime in any given country-year.

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<sup>2</sup> In this sense, we are answering the important challenge laid out by Munck and Snyder (2004, 1), who write, “Methodologically, research on hybrid regimes has failed to adequately to address a number of central issues involved in measurement. Most critically, this research has not provided systematic, clear procedures for developing measures that successfully handle intermediate categories and cases.”

To answer the series of coding questions implicit in our conceptualization scheme, we rely on two key sources of information. One is the electoral process itself.<sup>3</sup> Are there national elections for the selection of the executive? Are the elections open for contestation? To what degree are they competitive? Free and fair? To help evaluate the electoral process and the period in between elections, we complement data on elections with information from the two most commonly used indices of regimes, Freedom House (various years) and Polity (various years).<sup>4</sup>

Countries in which there are no multi-candidate national elections for the direct or indirect selection of the executive are coded as closed authoritarian.<sup>5</sup> Regimes with referenda for the president or unopposed “elections” in which rival candidates or parties are formally banned are coded as closed as the citizenry is given no *choice* in the selection of the executive and their participation is inconsequential. Theoretically, alternative institutions other than national elections could allow contestation and participation in the selection of government, and thus be the basis for democracy, but in practice none exists.

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<sup>3</sup> Information on election results came from several sources, including “Elections by Country” from Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections\\_by\\_country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_by_country)), the Election Results Archive (<http://www.binghamton.edu/cdp/era/index.html>), IFES Election Guide (<http://www.electionguide.org/index.php>), African Elections Database (<http://africanelections.tripod.com/>), and newspaper and magazine articles from Lexis Nexis.

<sup>4</sup> To broadly distinguish democratic and authoritarian regimes, we use a combination of criteria from the two most commonly used indices of regimes, Freedom House (various years) and Polity (various years). For a critical evaluation of both Polity and Freedom House, see Munck and Verkuilen (2002). Despite Munck and Verkuilen’s criticisms of these and other indices of democracy—for having problems with conceptualization, measurement, and aggregation—there are as of yet no better alternatives that cover countries around the world annually. By drawing from *both* Freedom House and Polity, we can ensure that there is a much wider degree of consensus than might otherwise be the case if we used only one index exclusively.

<sup>5</sup> The validity of this as a measure of acute authoritarianism is supported by the empirical evidence. Regimes in which there are no national elections for executive recruitment average scores of -7.1 and 6.4, respectively, on the Polity and Freedom House indices.

As long as a regime does not allow multi-candidate national elections for the selection of the executive, it maintains a closed authoritarian score for each country-year. If there is a change in the rules and procedures by which the executive is selected between 1990 and 2005 (i.e., direct multi-candidate presidential elections are introduced), then the closed authoritarian regime is reclassified based on whether the new rules allow for contestation, a free and fair electoral process, and protect rule of law and other freedoms. For example, Egypt was a closed authoritarian regime between 1990 and 2004 as only one candidate (whomever the national assembly selected) was legally allowed to contest the national elections for president. In essence, then the election was a referendum on the incumbent Hosni Mubarak. But in 2005 the constitution was amended to allow for multi-candidate national elections, leading to a reclassification in the country's regime type.

In contrast to closed authoritarian regimes, hegemonic authoritarian regimes hold multi-candidate national elections, but contestation is circumscribed, leading the dominant party or candidate to win overwhelmingly. Comparing and distinguishing regimes based on the degree of contestation is tricky. We use two lagged indicators to gauge these types of regimes. First, they receive scores below the democratic threshold on *both* the Polity and Freedom House indices<sup>6</sup> in the year of the *previous* election, reflecting an unfair (or undemocratic) electoral process. Second, the winning party or candidate received more than 70 percent of the popular vote or 70 percent of the seats in parliament<sup>7</sup> in this *previous* election, reflecting not only an unfair process but one

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<sup>6</sup> The standard thresholds for classifying a country as “free” or “democratic” is a score of 2 or better on the Freedom House ratings of political rights and a Polity score of 6 or higher.

<sup>7</sup> The 70% threshold, while admittedly arbitrary, has been used by other scholars to determine whether an election was competitive (see Levitsky and Way 2002 and Wantchekon 2003).

completely dominated by the ruling party. A regime maintains its hegemonic authoritarian coding in between elections if it stays below the Polity or Freedom House democratic threshold.

Egypt after the constitutional change in 2005 illustrates a hegemonic authoritarian regime. Though opposition candidates were allowed to contest the election, the rules and procedures (e.g., the Presidential Election Commission screening opposition candidates and disqualifying a significant number) ensured Mubarak faced few serious challengers and won easily.

Unfair electoral processes (indicated by election years that are coded undemocratic by Polity and Freedom House) are a key condition by which competitive authoritarian regimes are classified. But in contrast to hegemonic regimes, the ruling party or executive is not as dominant allowing for an electoral process with a greater degree of contestation, as indicated by the winner receiving less than 70 percent of the vote or seats in the previous election. The same non-election year rule applies for competitive authoritarian regimes as hegemonic authoritarian regimes.

Finally, democratic regimes are distinguished from the authoritarian ones based on passing the democratic Freedom House and Polity threshold. And regimes that receive a score of both 10 on Polity and 1 on Freedom House political rights are coded as liberal democracies. The reverse non-election year applies for democratic regimes: if new rules are decreed due to a coup d'état, change in the government, or change in sentiment of the incumbent that cancel elections, ban opposition parties, or otherwise significantly alter the liberal nature of the regime (reflected in a non-democratic code by both Freedom House and Polity), it is re-classified as closed authoritarian, hegemonic

authoritarian, or competitive authoritarian based on the new rules and procedures by which the executive is selected.

Table 1 summarizes the coding rules employed to operationalize political regimes.

[Table 1 about here]

### **Trends in Regime Types, 1990-2005**

Applying these coding rules to each country-year, we are able to map out the frequency and pattern of regime types between 1990 and 2005. As illustrated by Figure 2, there has been an overall increase in democracies as proportion of total regimes (a 13 percent gain from 1990 to 2005). This shift (in which the proportion of democratic regimes in the world reached 50% for the first time in history) is a consequence of not only the third wave of democratization and the end of the cold war, but also a 5 percent increase in democratic regimes between 1999 and 2005. Most of the increase in democratic regimes, however, has been due to a rise in electoral democracies, the modal regime type from 1992 onward. There has not been a corresponding rise in liberal democracies, which have barely increased since 1990. (See Figure 3).

[Figures 2 and 3 about here]

Similar to the democratic regimes, there has been important variation in the trajectories of different types of authoritarian regimes. The number of closed authoritarian regimes has declined precipitously between 1990 and 2005. Most of the drop in closed authoritarian regimes was due to the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the downtrend continued between 1999 and 2005. In contrast

to closed authoritarian regimes, hegemonic authoritarian regimes rebounded after the end of the cold war, more than doubling from 1992 to 2005.

More volatile have been competitive authoritarian regimes. This type surged after the end of the cold war as incumbents of closed or hegemonic authoritarian regimes, facing incredible international and domestic pressures, were forced to open their political systems. Multi-party elections were held to appease international donors and domestic opposition, but the autocratic incumbents frequently employed force and fraud to try to guarantee their political survival (Joseph 1997; Levitsky and Way 2002). Thus, in 1995 there were almost as many competitive authoritarian regimes as liberal democracies. But over the next ten years the number of competitive authoritarian regimes declined sharply: from 18 percent of total regimes in 1995 to just more than 10 percent for the years 2002 through 2004. In 2005, competitive authoritarian regimes appear to have rebounded somewhat, to 13 percent. The trends in authoritarian regimes are further illustrated in Figure 4.

[Figure 4 about here]

While Figures 2 through 4 illustrate fluctuations in the proportion of regime types between 1990 and 2005, additional information is needed to identify the direction and source of these regime changes and the relative stability or volatility of a regime type. Figure 5 depicts the stability of regimes based on *regime continuity* (whether a regime is the same type from one year to the next). Figure 5 only reports data from 1995 to 2005, in order to avoid the uncertainty surrounding the years immediately after the end of the cold war.

[Figure 5 about here]

Figure 5 reveals the incredible stability of democratic regimes in the post-cold war period. Once a regime becomes a liberal democracy, it is almost guaranteed to remain one. Electoral democracies have proved similarly durable. Between 1995 and 2005, there were only nine incidences out of 539 country-years in which these regimes experienced backsliding into authoritarianism. But there have been even fewer incidences (five out of 539) of electoral democracies becoming liberal democracies. In other words, once a country has reached the level of an electoral democracy, it rarely slides backwards—but it even more rarely improves to the level of liberal democracy. This seems to suggest that electoral democracies are not consolidating into liberal democracies. Is this the case? If so, why? We address these questions below.

Consistent with Figures 2 through 4, authoritarian regimes are more volatile from year to year. Hegemonic regimes are the least volatile. While hegemonic regimes are susceptible to becoming competitive authoritarian regimes (see Figure 6), they never become closed authoritarian regimes (data not shown). This suggests perhaps a surprising commitment to regular multi-candidate elections in these regimes (though the average length of time in between elections in hegemonic authoritarian regimes is considerably longer than in other regimes with elections).

In contrast, competitive authoritarian regimes are the most unstable. Figure 6, which compares the type of regime that results in the year after an election to the one during the election,<sup>8</sup> reveals that competitive authoritarian regimes are particularly susceptible to political change from elections. Nearly one in two elections in competitive

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<sup>8</sup> As closed authoritarian regimes do not have national elections for the executive by definition, there are no data for these regimes.

authoritarian regimes leads to a new regime type, with nine elections (or 17%) leading to hegemonic authoritarianism, and 15 (29%) jumping up to electoral democracies..

[Figure 6 about here]

### ***Analyzing Political Change Across Regime Types***

The variation in the frequency and stability of regime types between 1990 and 2005 raises several interesting questions: What explains the decline in closed authoritarian regimes, along with the corresponding rise of hegemonic authoritarian? Can we account for the volatility of competitive authoritarian regimes relative to the other regime types? Why has both backsliding and consolidation been so rare in electoral democracies, and why do liberal democracies remain unchanged once they have achieved that status? Finally, in addition to an analysis of the trajectories of political regimes, can we notice any trends in the support for civil liberties—both globally and by regime type? In this section, we begin to address these questions by focusing specifically on each of the five regime types in turn, and then turning briefly to the question of civil liberties.

### **The Decline in Closed Authoritarian Regimes and the Rise of Hegemonic Authoritarian Regimes**

One of the striking trends illustrated by mapping the post-cold war regime types is the steady decline in closed authoritarian regimes. The key initial driver for this trend, of course, was the end of the cold war itself and the global spread of democratization. But what explains the downturn in this regime type after 1999? Part of this is due to the stabilization (or partial stabilization) of war-affected countries, such as Liberia, Rwanda,

Congo-Brazzaville, Haiti, Uganda, Yemen, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. Rulers of these countries sought to hold multi-candidate elections as a means to legitimate and consolidate their political control (which many initially gained by force). These rulers, however, exploited the recent and ongoing instability to squelch the opposition and ensure they prevailed overwhelmingly in the election. Consequently, many of these regimes became hegemonic authoritarian regimes, contributing to the corresponding rise in this regime type.

It is also these regimes that explain why, perhaps surprisingly, African countries made up a plurality of hegemonic authoritarian regimes from 1997 until 2005. This seems to run counter to the conventional wisdom that because of their economic weakness and dependence on foreign aid African regimes were prime candidates to become competitive authoritarian regimes: not strong enough to resist domestic and international pressures for competitive elections, but as the premium on holding political power was too high to go down without using force and fraud to try ensure victory. While surely this description and regime classification fit many African countries (Kenya up to 2002; Chad; Ghana up to 2000; Central African Republic), others are proving to be more authoritarian or democratic. This reinforces the need for a systematic scheme to measure regimes across and within regions.

### **The Volatility of Competitive Authoritarian Regimes**

It is perhaps not surprising that competitive authoritarian regimes have proven to be most volatile as these regimes are inherently contradictory: legitimate procedures (i.e., regular, competitive elections) clash with illegitimate practices (vote rigging, violent

disenfranchisement, and media bias). Although the electoral process is certainly unfair, since the ruling party relies on fraud, coercion, and patronage to try to win the election, the opposition still has an opportunity to defeat the incumbent. Thus, elections generate a real struggle between the incumbent and opposition, which can sometimes lead to unpredictable or uncertain outcomes (Levitsky and Way 2002).

Figure 6 above illustrates the destabilizing effect elections can have on competitive authoritarian regimes relative to other regime types. Our previous research showed that elections in competitive authoritarian regimes are likely to lead to liberalizing outcomes when the opposition forms a coalition, thus increasing its probability of winning the election and raising the costs for the ruling party to use force and fraud to rig the outcome, or if there is incumbent turnover, which can undermine extant patronage networks and lead businessmen and other elites to defect to the opposition (Howard and Roessler 2006). Of the 15 elections in competitive authoritarian regimes that led to electoral democracies, two-thirds were due to incumbent turnover or opposition coalitions (based on data from Howard and Roessler 2006).

Figure 6 also illustrates that elections in competitive authoritarian regimes can lead to backsliding to hegemonic authoritarianism when the incumbent ruler or party decides that the competition is getting too close for comfort and it increases its repressive measures to reduce the risk of defeat. For example, in Guinea prior to the 2003 presidential election the government, led by Lansana Conte, refused to allow the opposition to broadcast advertisements on state-run media, to participate on the electoral commission, or to campaign freely throughout the country, leading the opposition to boycott the presidential election and Conte to win more than 95 percent of the vote. In

Gabon in 2005, Omar Bongo, the incumbent, made concessions to the opposition on the electoral commission (granting them a third of the seats), but instituted a new rule allowing members of the security services to vote two days before the rest of the country, which the opposition saw as an opportunity for vote rigging and double-voting.

One pattern evident in the data is that of the nine competitive authoritarian regimes that experienced backsliding into hegemonic authoritarian regimes during elections is that six of these occurred in the election after the founding election (e.g., Azerbaijan 1993, Cameroon 1997; Mauritania 1997, Tajikistan 1999, Algeria 2000, and Tanzania 2000). Immediately after the cold war, incumbents in these countries were forced to bow to international pressure, open their political systems, and hold multi-party elections. But this opening would prove short-lived as by the next election the incumbent had rigged the system, forced boycotts, and paved the way for complete electoral dominance.

In sum, competitive authoritarianism can be viewed as a residual category—neither liberal or electoral democracy nor closed or hegemonic authoritarianism—which suggests that it is inherently unstable, and thus can “tip” in one direction or another. While these regimes are the most likely to transition to another type, depending on whether the opposition is able to coordinate and oust the incumbent or the incumbent has the strength and cohesion to rig and dominate the political system, there is little risk of the category becoming obsolete. As seems to have occurred in 2005, new governments will slip back into competitive authoritarianism, though unlikely for long.

## **The Stability of Electoral and Liberal Democracies**

Another striking finding, shown in Figure 5, is the remarkable stability of both electoral and liberal democracies. In fact, while in abstract terms it would appear that only a thin line separates electoral democracies from competitive authoritarian regimes, and therefore that countries would probably shift back and forth between the two categories, in reality backsliding rarely occurs. In other words, once a regime has achieved the status of an electoral democracy, it tends to avoid a return to authoritarianism.

Equally noticeable, however, is the lack of continued *progress* from an electoral democracy into a liberal democracy. It appears that electoral democracies remain stuck in a category that ensures a free and fair electoral process, but does not quite guarantee full pluralism and rule of law. At the same time, liberal democracies rarely regress into electoral democracies, as they display the highest level of stability of any of the regime types. This observation seems to put into question some of the assumptions of the democratization literature, which posits a continued progression—not simply of the transition from authoritarianism to electoral democracy, but of the consolidating and deepening of existing electoral democracies themselves.

## **Civil Liberties and Political Regimes**

Another metric one can use to explore the degree of liberalization during this time period is the Freedom House scores on civil liberties. Even though electoral democracies are not becoming full-fledged liberal democracies, is there any evidence that the regimes are becoming more liberal? Figure 7 shows the average scores for all regime types, and it

certainly indicates a steady improvement, particularly from 1994 to 2005. Figure 8 focuses on the trends for each of the regime types. It shows that within each type, the civil liberties scores tend to fluctuate a bit. The hegemonic and competitive authoritarian regimes have moved up and down, with little overall pattern to discern. And the liberal democracies barely varied at all, remaining very close to the best possible score of 1. But the electoral democracies changed noticeably, with a steady improvement from 1994 to 2005. This finding adds an interesting nuance to the point above about the lack of progress within electoral democracies. In short, while they have rarely jumped into the liberal democracy regime type, their protection of civil liberties does seem to show regular progress.

[Figures 7 and 8 about here]

Future research will be required to explain why there has been a steady improvement in civil liberties in electoral democracies during this time, but not other regime types. One compelling argument is that it is the regular holding of elections that is driving this liberalizing trend (Lindberg 2006). However, hegemonic and competitive authoritarian regimes also hold regular elections and have not experienced a significant improvement in human rights.

### ***Conclusion***

In this paper, we have taken a first step towards disaggregating the umbrella concept of political regimes into five specific types—closed authoritarianism, hegemonic authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, electoral democracy, and liberal democracy—each of which is defined conceptually and operationalized empirically with

clear and systematic criteria. This alone is a contribution to a literature that for decades tended to be global and undifferentiated in scope, and in recent years has tended to focus more narrowly on specific types of systems. While still preliminary, the analysis presented in this paper allows us to compare both within and across regime types.

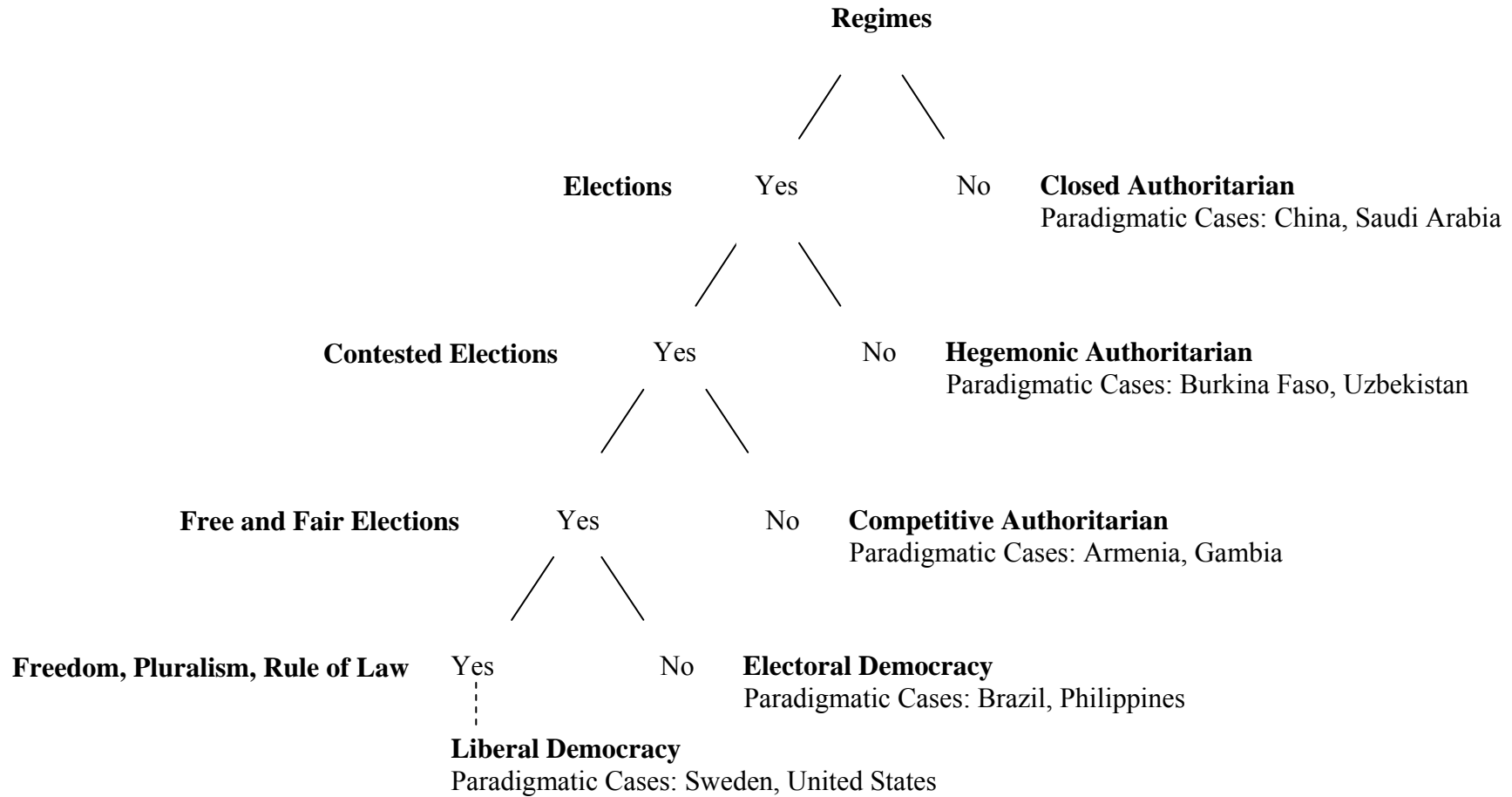
The results show clear differences across the regime types, particularly on the issue of the extent of stability or volatility. Competitive authoritarianism is clearly the most unstable regime type, as it remains vulnerable to the destabilizing impact of elections that can either result in an opposition victory that will lead to an electoral democracy or cause the incumbent to fear defeat to the extent that he imposes even harsher measures that lead to a hegemonic authoritarian regime. Electoral and liberal democracies are remarkably stable, with little backsliding, but equally noteworthy is how rarely countries shift between the two categories. Although many countries have progressed to become electoral democracies, the momentum seems to stop at that point, with only a handful ever becoming liberal democracies.

There are, of course, limitations to this study. Our coding is only as good as the data that goes into the sources we rely upon. There will certainly be disagreements on the classifications of some individual countries. And as the category of electoral democracy seems to grow, having become the modal regime type, clearly more differentiation *within* regime types is called for. Nonetheless, this analysis provides an important first step at classifying and comparing the countries of the world since the end of the cold war, setting the stage for further more rigorous analysis into explaining the variation in regime types across the globe and the effect of regime types on various outcomes, such as protection of civil liberties or political instability.

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**Figure 1. Disaggregation of Political Regimes by Various Dimensions of Democracy**



**Table 1: Operationalizing Political Regimes**

<b>Regime Type</b>	<b>Measurement Criteria</b>
Closed Authoritarianism	No Multi-Candidate National Elections for Selection of Executive
Hegemonic Authoritarianism	$FH \geq 3$ and $Polity \leq 5$ and winner received $\geq 70\%$ of the vote or seats in previous election
Competitive Authoritarianism	$FH \geq 3$ and $Polity \leq 5$ and winner received $< 70\%$ of the vote or seats in previous election
Electoral Democracy	$FH \leq 2$ or $Polity \geq 6$
Liberal Democracy	$FH = 1$ and $Polity = 10$

Figure 2. Proportion of Regime Types, 1990-2005

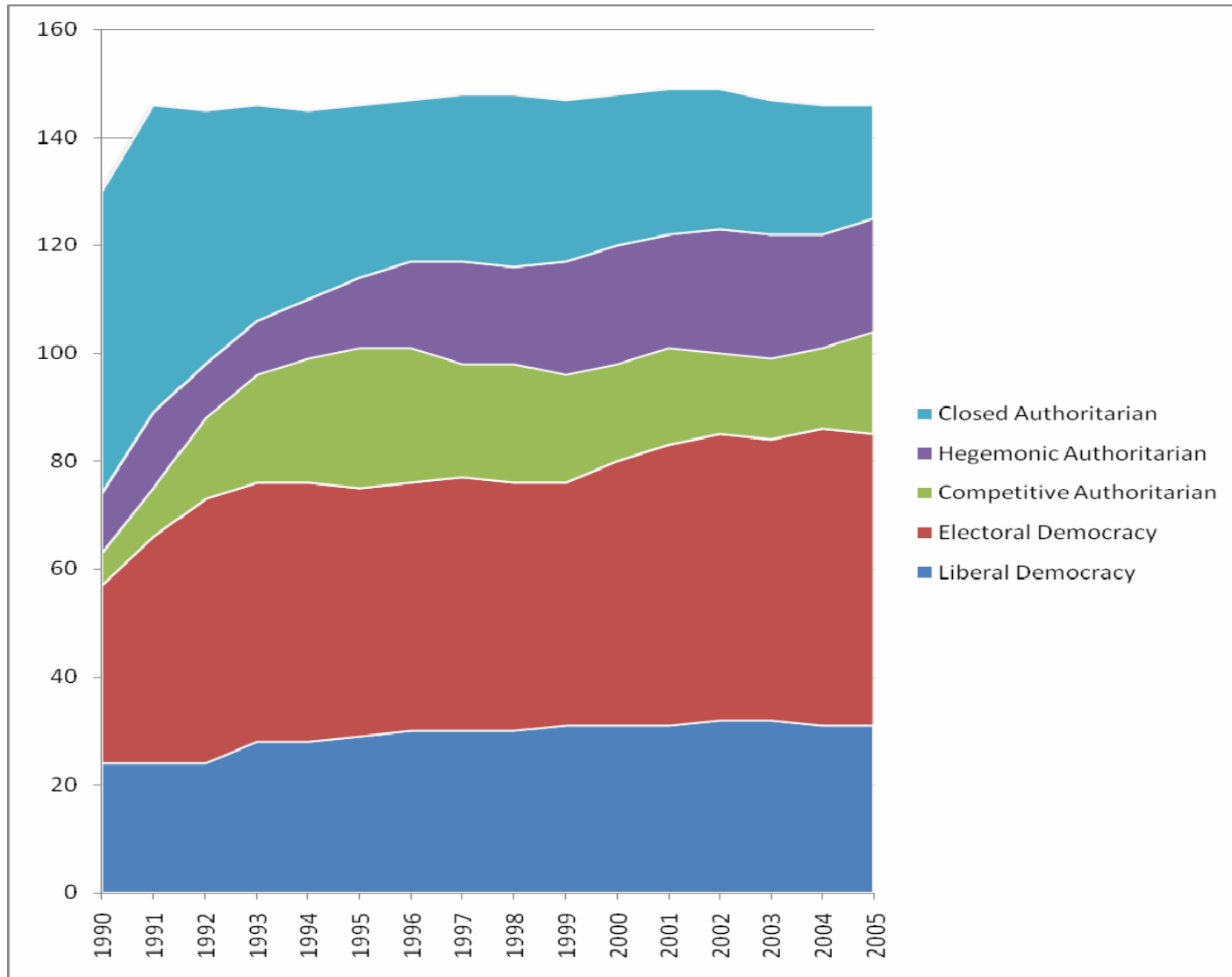
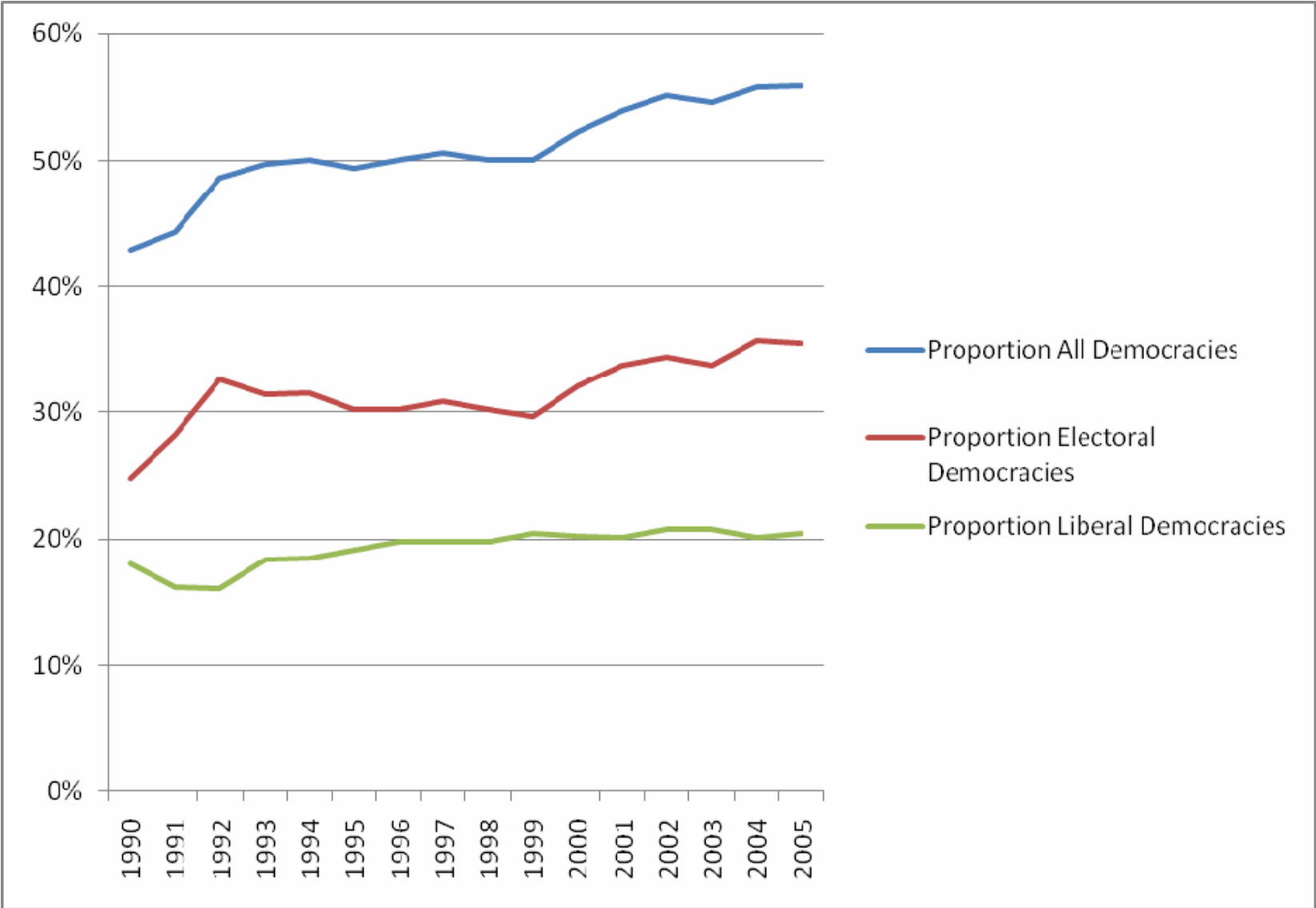
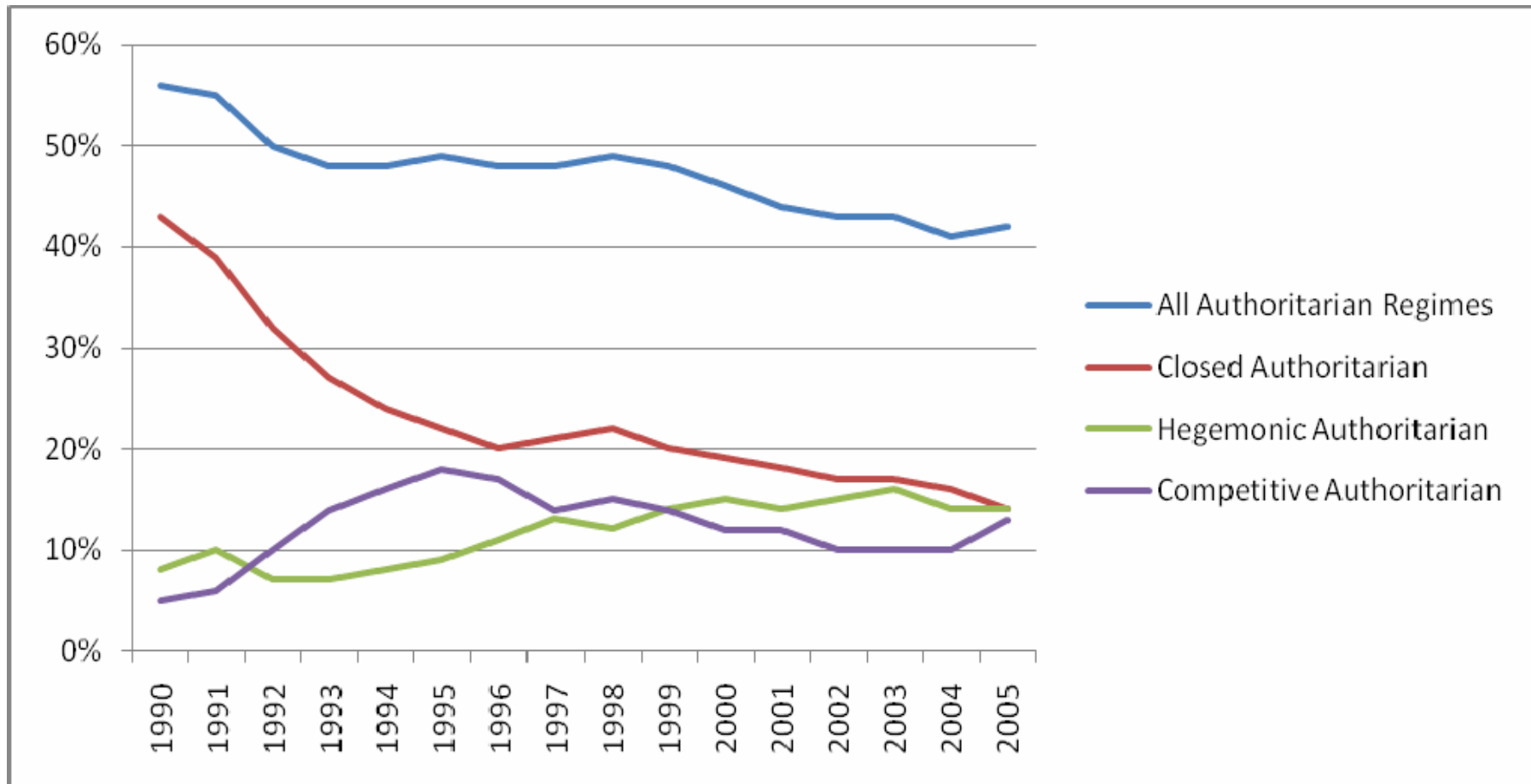


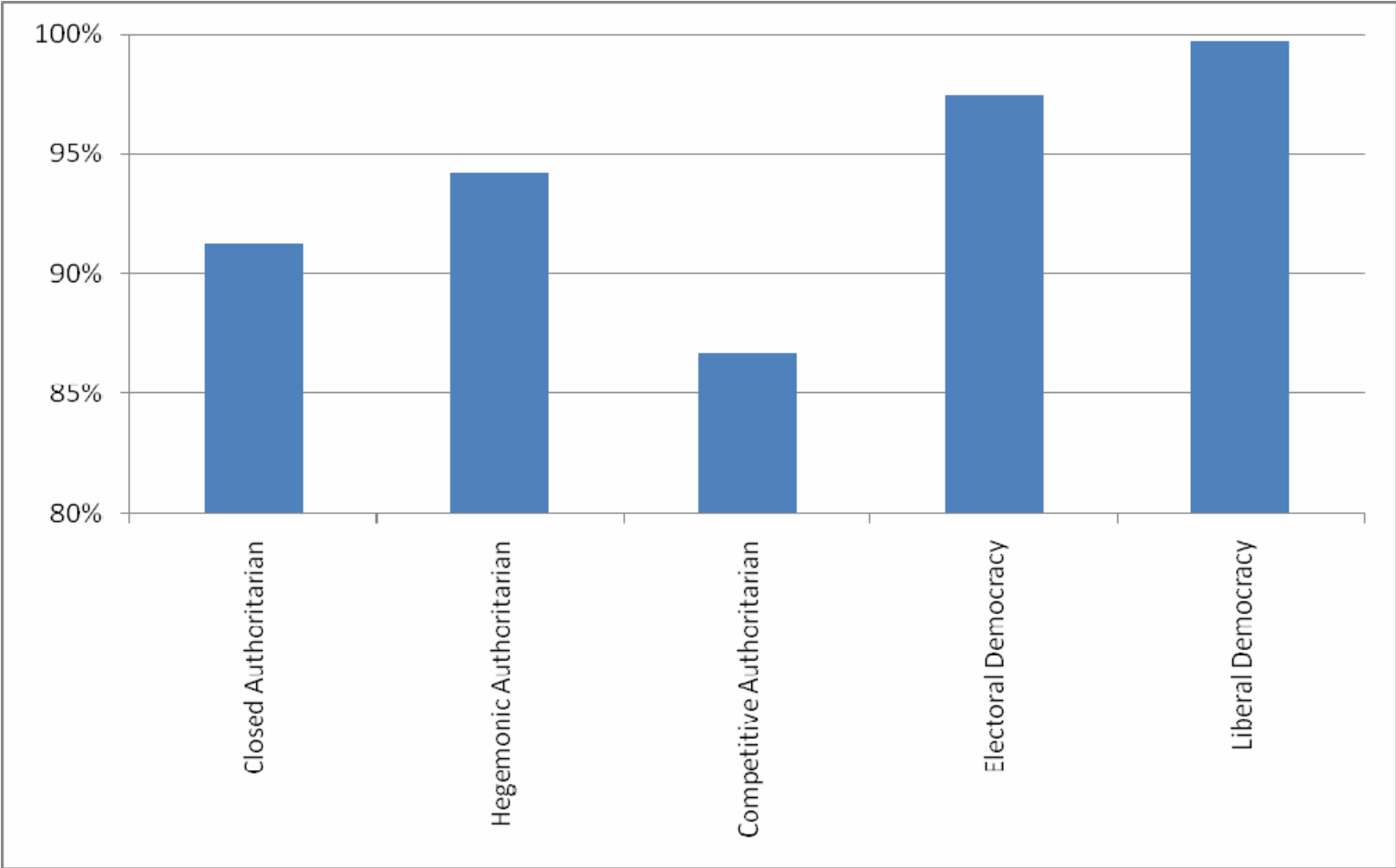
Figure 3. Democracies as Proportion of Total Regimes, 1990-2005



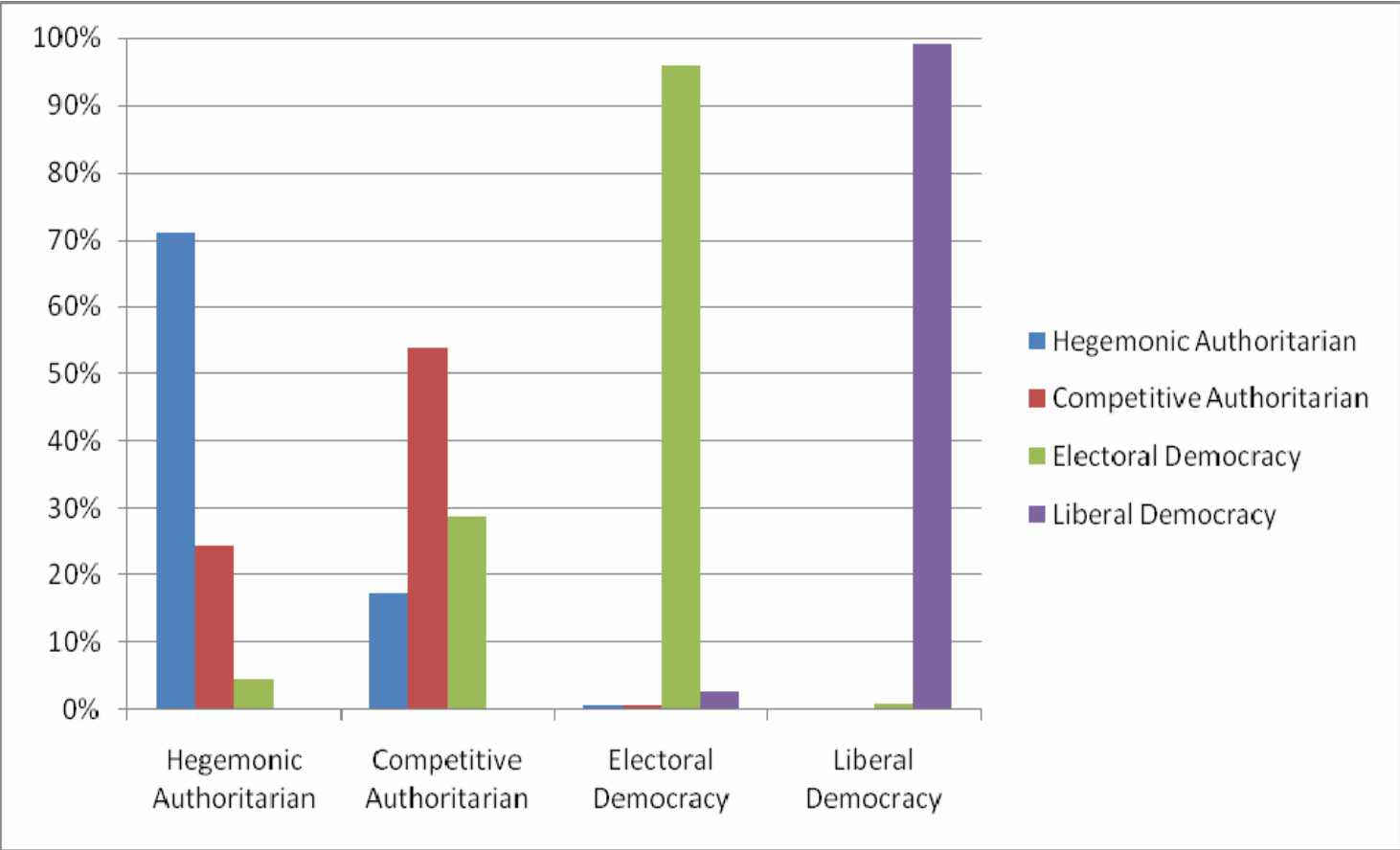
**Figure 4. Autocracies as Proportion of Total Regimes, 1990-2005**



**Figure 5. Regime Continuity, 1995-2005**



**Figure 6. Change in Regime Type in the Year after an Election, 1991-2005<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Excludes founding elections

**Figure 7. Average FH Civil Liberties Scores for All Regimes, 1990-2005**

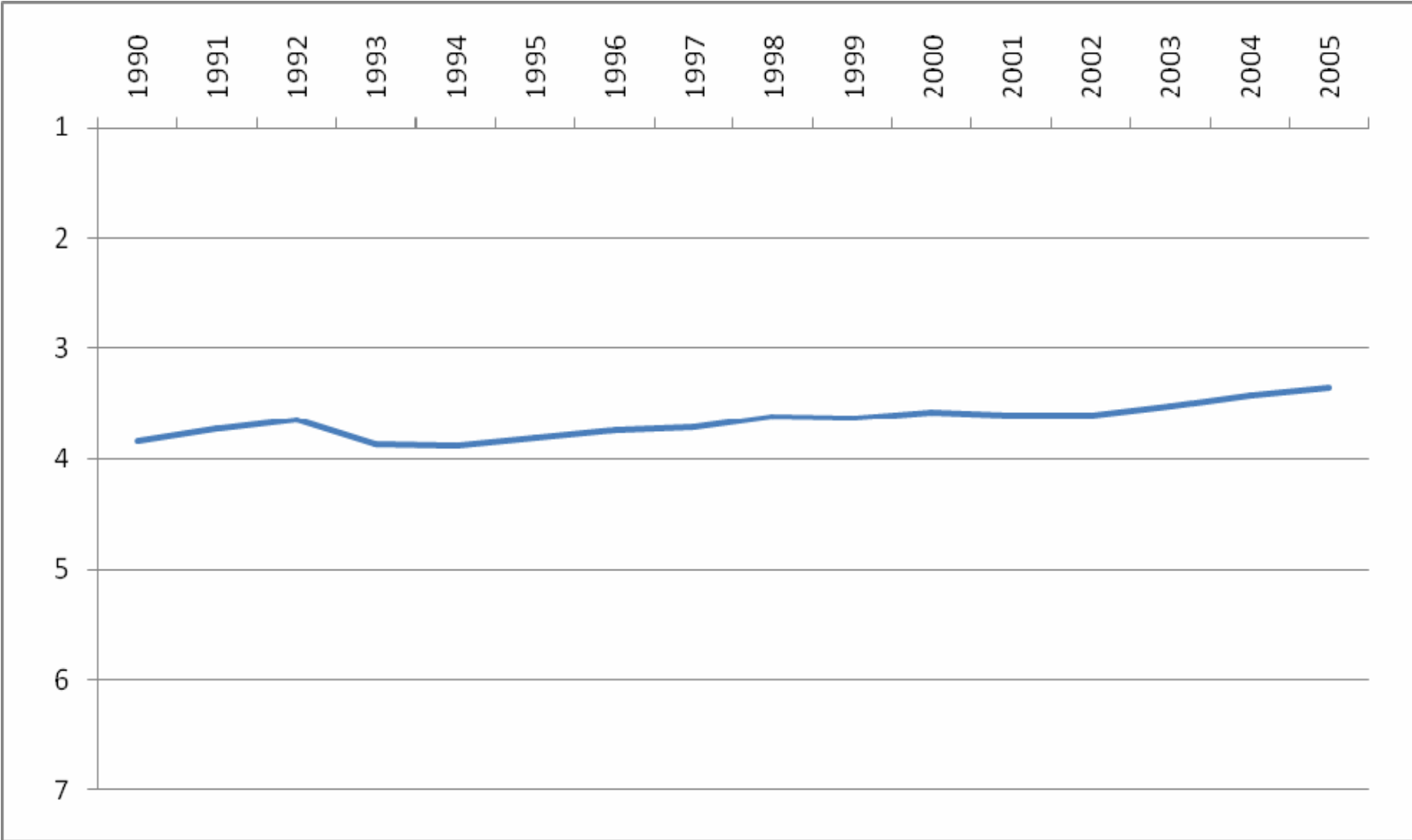


Figure 8. Average FH Civil Liberties Scores Across Regime Types, 1990-2005

