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# Electoral Competitiveness in Competitive Authoritarianism in Latin America 1990-2014<sup>1</sup>

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## *Introduction*

Even though the international political situation in the post-cold war world makes it much more difficult for fully authoritarian regimes to get established, we can't say that in the wake of the third democratic wave, all forms of authoritarianism would disappear completely. The very specific constellation of the international political situation led to the creation of competitive authoritarianism, in which democratic institutions exist but incumbent abuse skews the playing field against the opponents<sup>2</sup>. Due to the relatively frequent occurrence of these regimes, competitive authoritarianism has become a major focus of comparative research. Besides the question of regime stability<sup>3</sup>, the interest of researchers has mostly been aimed at the effort to explain how and when the incumbent can be defeated<sup>4</sup> and what affects the level of electoral competitiveness<sup>5</sup>. Although the conclusions of these studies have been undeniably interesting, we also need to address some of the

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<sup>1</sup> Support for this article was provided by the grant *Research of Latin American Politics II* by the Philosophical Faculty of University of Hradec Králové.

<sup>2</sup> Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes", *Democratization*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2013, pp. 107-136.

<sup>3</sup> Jason Browlee, "Portens of Pluralism: How Hybrid Regimes Affect Democratic Transitions", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2009, pp. 515-532; Steven Levitsky, Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Marc M. Howard, Philip G. Roessler, "Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2006, pp. 362-378; Kenneth Green, "The Political Economy of Authoritarian Single-Party Dominance", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 43, no. 7, 2010, pp. 807-834; Valerie Bunce, Sharon Wolchick, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2011; Daniela Donno, "Elections and Democratization in Authoritarian Regimes", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 57, no. 3, 2013, pp. 703-716.

<sup>5</sup> Leah Gilbert, *State Mobilization Strategies and Political Competition in Hybrid Regimes*, Georgetown University, Washington DC, 2012; Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty. Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

limitations of the contemporary research on competitive authoritarianism. As has been pointed out by some authors in the past<sup>6</sup>, there is a certain shortcoming of the existing research in the fact that it draws data mainly from large-N comparative studies. Because of these parameters, the character of our theories is rather universal, with a fairly limited explanatory potential. A feasible solution to this situation is to steer our attention to small-to-medium-N comparisons, which – thanks to closer interaction with data – can help improve the explanatory ability<sup>7</sup>. Another flaw of the existing research is that the large-N comparative studies mostly focus on older (and relatively well-known) examples, omitting many contemporary cases of competitive authoritarianism. A good example of such practice is Latin America, where, in the past ten years, competitive authoritarian regimes have been established in several countries (Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua), but so far, these cases haven't received a lot of scientific attention.

The aim of this study is to react to this situation and offer an explanation of varying degree of electoral competitiveness in competitive authoritarianism in Latin America. For that purpose, this study compares the 41 cases of elections that were carried out between 1990 and 2014<sup>8</sup>, using regression analysis and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA)<sup>9</sup>. This paper takes up the research tradition of setting the goal of explaining variation within one specific regime category. Furthermore, the study tries to use data from the newly accessible database *Varieties of Democracy*<sup>10</sup>, which so far hasn't been used for research on elections in competitive authoritarianism and contains an abundance of variables linked to elections in hybrid regimes. However, the comparative research of competitive authoritarianism in Latin America isn't insightful only from the theoretical point of view, but also from the practical one, as elections have been recently held in some of these regimes and are going to be held in several others over the course of the next two years<sup>11</sup>. It is

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<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Gandhi, Elenn Lust-Okar, "Elections Under Authoritarianism", *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 12, no.1, 2009, pp. 403-422; Yonatan L. Morse, "The Era of Electoral Authoritarianism", *World Politics*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2012, pp. 161-198.

<sup>7</sup> Yonatan L. Morse, "The Era of Electoral...cit.", p. 189.

<sup>8</sup> The 2014 elections are not a part of this study, because to a big extent, it works with data from *Varieties of Democracy*, whose dataset ends with 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Ragin, Sean Davey, *fs/QCA (computer programme), version 2.5*, University of California, Irvine CA, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, Staffan I. Lindberg, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Jan Teorell, David Altman et al. "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v6.2", *Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project*, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Elections in Nicaragua have been carried out at the end of last year and in Ecuador, they should take place at the beginning of this year. In Venezuela, the elections are planned for 2018 and in Bolivia for 2019. As for Venezuela, it's a question whether the opposition will manage to make the sitting president call an early presidential election before the end of his regular presidential term.

therefore of high importance to know which factors affect the chances of the opposition for success.

This article has several important implications for the comparative research on competitive authoritarianism. First, it undermines the value of the natural resources rent and economic statism variables. Although previously, scholars have assumed these factors to have an influence on the level of electoral competitiveness, findings of this research do not confirm this assumption. Second, contrary to the older research by Schedler<sup>12</sup>, this article concludes that some repressive strategies adopted by governments have had a statistically significant impact on the scope of electoral competitiveness. This is interesting when considering that previously, this strategy appeared to be influential only in the case of hegemonic electoral regimes. Third, the empirical part of this article suggests that in the majority of cases the different level of electoral competitiveness can be explained by a relatively small number of variables.

### *Theories and Hypotheses*

What is influencing the level of electoral competitiveness in competitive authoritarianism? Based on a survey of the literature about elections in competitive authoritarianism<sup>13</sup>, this study came with 17 potential explanations which can be divided into the following three main categories. This account is obviously not an exhaustive one. Its purpose is rather to ensure a balance and to employ the widest array of data from the aforementioned *Varieties of Democracy (V-dem)* database<sup>14</sup>.

The first category includes the socio-economic kinds of explanation<sup>15</sup>. The first of them is based on the legendary work of Seymour Martin Lipset<sup>16</sup>,

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<sup>12</sup> Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty. Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> The backbone of the mentioned literary survey consisted of publications highlighted in the introduction.

<sup>14</sup> The majority of variables in V-dem dataset is in 0-4 values, where 0 is the most negative and 4 the most positive value. For the purpose of analysis in this study these variables are reversed. The only exception is the variable "political corruption", as this variable is coded in 0-1 values, where 0 is the most positive and 1 the most corrupt. The final value of all the variables is derived from the average of the values two years before the elections.

<sup>15</sup> Data for socio-economical variables mainly comes from the World Bank World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/>, accessed on 20.8.2016). The final value of all the variables is derived from the average of the values two years before the elections.

<sup>16</sup> Seymour M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 53, no. 1, 1959, pp. 69-103.

which follows economic development<sup>17</sup>. According to this theory, there is a proportional relationship between economic development and electoral competitiveness. The second explanation is focused on short-term economic performances<sup>18</sup>. This point of view suggests that the growth of GDP should raise the chances of the incumbents of being re-elected and hence reduce the level of electoral competitiveness<sup>19</sup>. The third kind of socio-economic explanation is concerned with the amount of state ownership in the economy<sup>20</sup>. A high level of nationalization and state regulations increase the power of the ruling party and *vice versa*<sup>21</sup>. The fourth explanation is attentive to the level of social inequality<sup>22</sup>. According to some scholars<sup>23</sup>, the level of inequality affects the degree of citizens' participation on political issues. In line with this argument, in countries with high inequality, this leads to lower interest of citizens in politics and decreases the political competition. The fifth explanation highlights the role of the mineral rents<sup>24 25</sup>.

“Where fuel or mineral exports generate massive state revenue, state-society resource asymmetries may enable governments to co-opt civil society and starve the opponents of resources.”<sup>26</sup>

The very last explanation is concentrated on international and global factors. The high level of linkage and dependence<sup>27</sup> on the international system is expected to be reflected in the quality of domestic political competition<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Economic development is operationalized as GDP *per capita* in USD in the World Development Indicators (WDI) dataset.

<sup>18</sup> This variable is operationalized as GDP *per capita* growth in USD in WGI dataset.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Haggard, Robert R. Kaufman. *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> This variable is operationalized as State ownership of economy in Varieties of Democracy dataset.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Green, “The Political Economy of Authoritarian Single-Party Dominance”, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 43, no. 7, 2010, pp. 807-834; Kurt Weyland, “Latin America’s Authoritarian Drift. The Threat from Populist Left”, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2013, pp. 18-32.

<sup>22</sup> Social inequality is operationalized as the GINI index in the WGI dataset.

<sup>23</sup> Guillermo O’Donnell, “Horizontal Accountability and New Polyarchies”, *Working Paper of Kellogg Institute*, no. 253, 1998; Wolfgang Merkel “Embedded and Defective Democracies”, *Democratization*, vol. 11, no. 5, 2004, pp. 33-58.

<sup>24</sup> Mineral rents are operationalized as Total natural resources rent (% GDP) in the WGI dataset.

<sup>25</sup> Michael W. Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?”, *World Politics*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2001, pp. 325-361.

<sup>26</sup> Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, “Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism...cit.”.

<sup>27</sup> This variable is operationalized as international trade (% GDP) in the WGI dataset.

<sup>28</sup> Steven Levitsky, Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism...cit.*

The second category includes institutional explanations<sup>29</sup>. The first explanation focuses on the level of corruption<sup>30</sup>. High level of corruption may increase electoral competitiveness, “because it undercuts the ability of leaders to maintain their patronage networks”<sup>31</sup>. The second explanation in this category is based on the *legislative strength*<sup>32</sup>. This explanation is driven by the assumption that:

“Imbalances in executive-legislative relations should find almost direct expressions in electoral imbalances. In the absence of legislative checks and balances, overpowering executives should find it comparatively easy to manufacture wide margins of victory”<sup>33</sup>.

Another explanation follows the number of *electoral cycles*<sup>34</sup> without alternation of power. Unfortunately we have mixed assumptions about causal effect of this variable. Some scholars argue that high number of electoral cycles without alternation of power can decrease electoral competitiveness<sup>35</sup> and other scholars oppose this statement<sup>36</sup>. The last institutional factor which can affect electoral competitiveness in competitive authoritarianism is the timing of the presidential and parliamentary elections. Predictions about the effect of the *concurrent elections* are again uncertain. Moreover, in his recent research, Schedler revealed that the level of electoral competitiveness does not vary between concurrent and non-concurrent elections<sup>37</sup>.

The third and fourth category of the potential explanations are based around actors. The third category includes strategic decisions of the government. On the side of the government, we can talk about different types of repression which can decrease electoral competitiveness, like *ensorship* of

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<sup>29</sup> I choose not to include two of the most used institutional explanations: the difference between the presidential and parliamentary regime and incumbent participation in elections. I decided so because of the specific context of the examined field. The first explanation lacks any meaning in this study, because all regimes are presidential. The re-election of presidential candidate is problematic due to a combination of presidential and parliamentary elections. Moreover, in many cases, presidential re-election is forbidden (Mexico, Paraguay, Guatemala).

<sup>30</sup> The level of corruption is operationalized as political corruption in the V-Dem dataset.

<sup>31</sup> Valerie Bunce, Sharon Wolchick, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders...*cit., p. 40.

<sup>32</sup> Legislative strength is operationalized as Legislative constraints on the executive index in the V-Dem dataset.

<sup>33</sup> Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty...*cit., p. 238.

<sup>34</sup> This variable is operationalized as the number of electoral cycles without alternation in power.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>36</sup> Staffan I. Lindberg, *Democratization by Elections. A New Mode of Transitions*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty...*cit., p. 236.

media<sup>38</sup> and *exclusion*<sup>39</sup> and *intimidation of opposition*<sup>40 41</sup>. The last explanation is concerned with *freedom of civil society organizations*. As Diamond noted:

“While an opposition victory is not impossible in a hybrid regime, it requires a level of opposition mobilization, unity, skills, and heroism far beyond what would normally be required for victory in a democracy”<sup>42</sup>.

In this (at least for opposition) unfortunate situation, one of the causes that can help is a strong presence of civil society organizations, which can again help to balance the power between the ruling party and the opposition<sup>43</sup>. If the ruling party wants to restrict this potential threat, it must keep these two groups divided<sup>44</sup>. In line with this argument, the degree of repression of civil society<sup>45</sup> organizations can affect competitiveness in competitive authoritarianism because if the degree of repression of civil society organization is high, the ruling party maintains its power more easily.

On the side of the opposition (the fourth category of potential explanations), recent research shows the importance of the ability of the opposition party to create a broad coalition before election<sup>46</sup>, more specifically unification of the main opposition forces around one candidate who can better challenge the candidate of the ruling party. In addition to other reasons, a united opposition can better mobilize people to vote against the incumbent, as the electorate feels that the change is possible and the people begin to see the opposition as an alternative governing coalition. A different and more radical strategy of the opposition is *electoral boycott*<sup>47</sup>, which obviously decreases the electoral competition. The last and slightly less radical opposition strategy is

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<sup>38</sup> Censorship of media is operationalized as value of Government censorship effort – Media index in the V-dem dataset.

<sup>39</sup> Exclusion is operationalized as value of party ban variable in the V-Dem dataset.

<sup>40</sup> This variable is operationalized as value of Election government intimidation variable in the V-Dem dataset.

<sup>41</sup> Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty...cit.*

<sup>42</sup> Larry Diamond, “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes”, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2001, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Steven M. Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995.

<sup>44</sup> Valerie Bunce, Sharon Wolchick, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders...cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>45</sup> Civil society freedom is operationalized as CSO repression in the V-dem dataset.

<sup>46</sup> Opposition coalition is operationalized as dichotomous variable which has to cover the level of opposition cohesion. 1 = broad coalition of opposition forces or partial coalition of opposition forces, 0 = minority coalition of opposition forces or opposition forces are divided. The data for this variable comes from secondary literature about the cases. A list of sources is available upon request.

<sup>47</sup> Electoral boycott is operationalized as Election boycotts in the V-dem dataset.

organizing pre-electoral *protests*<sup>48</sup>. This strategy should help mobilize voters and lead to increased electoral competitiveness<sup>49</sup>.

### *Measuring Competitive Authoritarianism and Electoral Competitiveness*

For the purpose of this study

“competitive authoritarian regimes are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents’ abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage *vis-à-vis* their opponents. Such regimes are competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to contest seriously for power, but they are not democratic because the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of the incumbents”<sup>50</sup>.

Regimes that combine elements of democracy and authoritarianism are not new to political science and this phenomenon has already been conceptualized by a number of other authors<sup>51</sup>. However, what sets competitive authoritarianism apart from the rest of the multifarious family of hybrid regimes is the fact that in this particular kind of regime, the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of the incumbents. Therefore, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way conceptualize only one of the possible categories of hybrid regimes. In the context of Latin America, it is necessary to also mention the conception of Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán<sup>52</sup>. Their work on semi-democratic regimes aims at encompassing a significantly broader category of political regimes between democracy and authoritarianism, such as those where army has a considerable influence over politics<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Electoral protests are operationalized as the number of riots in Phil A. Neel Counting Riots database (<http://www.ultra-com.org/project/counting-riots/>, accessed on 20.8.2016). The final value of all the variables is derived from the average of the values two years before the elections.

<sup>49</sup> Marc M. Howard, Philip G. Roessler, “Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes...cit.”, pp. 371-372.

<sup>50</sup> Steven Levitsky, Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism...cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> For a review of this literature see Vladimíra Dvořáková, Radek Buben, Jan Němec, *¡Que el pueblo mande!*, Sociologické nakladatelství, Praha, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks, Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, “Classifying Political Regimes in Latin America, 1945-1999”, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2001, pp. 37-65.

<sup>53</sup> For more details about the differences between various types of hybrid regimes, see Jaroslav Bílek, “Hybrid Regimes as an Independent Type of Political Regime: A Comparison of Selected Approaches”, *Central European Political Studies Review*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2015, pp. 212-233.

The classification of political regimes in a grey zone<sup>54</sup> for the purpose of the multiple-case study is always fairly tricky. Basically, there are three possible approaches to the problem. First, the composite score, such as those from Freedom House or Polity IV, can be used. However, one potential pitfall of this approach lies in the fact that the aggregate-level evaluations are not useful for the classification of hybrid regimes<sup>55</sup>, because they cannot capture the variability of these regimes in a satisfactory way. According to the recent study of Samuel Handlin<sup>56</sup>, the limits of those evaluations are reflected in their inability to differentiate between democracy and competitive authoritarianism. This problem has much to do with the specific nature of these regimes, above all with their unofficial practices that cannot be easily detected by aggregate-level quantitative evaluations. Second, the in-depth qualitative classification on the basis of precisely established criteria is another way for distinguishing this type of regimes. However, within this approach, it is quite difficult to retain consistency across a greater number of cases.

For these reasons, this study opts for the third approach, which is recommended by Andrea Cassani<sup>57</sup>. It suggests to consider a regime to be competitive authoritarianism only in case that it was classified like this by other authors, which reflects the prevalence of a consensus among researchers. For this purpose, I have explored the works of different authors<sup>58</sup> who have dealt

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2002, pp. 5-21.

<sup>55</sup> Leah Gilbert, Payam Mosheni, "Beyond Authoritarianism: The Conceptualization of Hybrid Regimes", *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2011, pp. 270-297; Geraldo G. Munck, Jay Verkuilen, "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2002, pp. 5-34; Alex Hadenius, Jay Teorell, *Authoritarian Regimes: Stability, Change, and Pathways to Democracy, 1972-2003, Working Paper #331*, 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Samuel Handlin, "Observing Incumbent Abuses: Improving Measures of Electoral and Competitive Authoritarianism with New Data", *Democratization*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1-29.

<sup>57</sup> Andrea Cassani, "Hybrid What? Partial Consensus and Persistent Divergence in the Analysis of Hybrid Regimes", *International Political Science Review*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2014, pp. 542-558.

<sup>58</sup> Larry Diamond, "Thinking About...cit."; *Idem*, "Is Democracy in Decline?", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2015, pp. 141-155; Steven Levitsky, Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism...cit.*; Steven Levitsky, Lucan Way, "The Myth of Democratic Recession", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2015, pp. 46-58; Marc M. Howard, Philip G. Roessler, "Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes...cit."; Daniela Donno, "Elections and Democratization...cit."; Steven Levitsky, James Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism...cit."; Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty...cit.*; Kurt Weyland, "Latin America's Authoritarian Drift...cit."; Scott Mainwaring, Anibal Pérez-Liñán, *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America. Emergence, Survival and Fall*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2013; *Idem*, "Cross-Currents in Latin America", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2015, pp. 114-127.

with the issue of competitive authoritarian regimes in Latin America in the time period used in this study. The results can be seen in Table 1. Its form – introducing respective parliamentary and presidential elections – is determined by the focus of the study, assuming elections as a unit of analysis.

Table 1

Cases of Competitive Authoritarianism in the Previous Studies								
Case	Diamond	LevWay	HowRoess	Donno	LevLox	Schedler	Weyland	ML
Bo06L	I	I			I	I	I	
Bo09P	I	I			I	I	I	
Bo09L	I	I			I	I	I	
Bo14P	I	I			I	I	I	
Bo14L	I	I			I	I	I	
Co02P						I		
Dr90P		I						
Dr90L		I						
Dr94P		I						
Dr94L		I						
Dr96P			I	I				
Dr96L			I	I				
Ec06P					I			
Ec07L	I	I			I	I	I	
Ec09P	I	I			I	I	I	
Ec09L	I	I			I	I	I	
Ec13P	I	I			I	I	I	
Ec13L	I	I			I	I	I	
Gu95P			I			I		
Gu95L			I			I		
Ha95P		I		I		I		
Ha95L		I		I		I		
Ha00P	I	I				I		
Ha00L	I	I				I		
Me91L		I	I	I				
Me94P		I	I	I				
Me94L		I	I	I				
Me97L				I				
Me00P				I				
Me00L				I				
Ni90P		I	I	I				
Ni90L		I	I	I				
Ni11P	I	I				I	I	I

Ni11L	I	I				I	I	I
Pe92L		I			I		I	I
Pe95P		I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Pe95L		I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Pe00P		I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Pe00L		I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Pe01P			I	I				
Pe01L			I	I				
Pa91L		I		I				
Pa93P		I		I				
Pa93L		I		I				
Pa98P		I				I		
Pa98L		I				I		
Ve00P							I	
Ve00L							I	
Ve05L	I				I	I	I	I
Ve06P	I				I	I	I	I
Ve10L	I				I	I	I	I
Ve12P	I				I	I	I	I
Ve13P	I							I

Note: Ve(Venezuela), Pa(Paraguay), Pe(Peru), Ni(Nicaragua), Ha(Haiti), Ec(Ecuador), Dr(Dominican Republic), Bo(Bolivia), Co(Colombia), Me(Mexico), Gu(Guatemala).  
L= Legislative Elections. P= presidential election.

Although the conclusions of this analysis are limited, since the authors usually did not analyze exactly the same period of time and because the analysis covers only comparative studies of more cases, the presented results are interesting for both the case selection in this study and the assessment of the current state of research of hybrid regimes. In Table 1, we can see the absence of consensus among researchers regarding some specific cases. On one hand, there are clear-cut cases which are unanimously classified in a certain way, such as Fujimori's Peru. On the other hand, there are also "ambiguous" disputed cases such as Dominican Republic or Paraguay. In general, we can conclude that the level of agreement among the authors is rising over time, which in fact means that among researchers, there is a wider consensus with respect to contemporary cases than regarding the regimes of the 90s.

In the search for the required minimal level of consensus, the study includes only the cases that were classified as hybrid regimes at least in three out of the eight used sources. Although this number seems too permissive at a first glance, if we consider the different time of origin and often very different empirical scope of the texts, it is quite justifiable. This criteria applied, we

acquire 30 cases of elections, a number which is supposed to be rather reliable. The fact that these are rather clear-cut cases increases the validity of the results acquired, because it compensates the requirement of classic statistical studies to use a much greater number of cases to reach representativity. Moreover, to ensure a much larger validity, the regimes that are agreed on by at least two studies are also included as a control sample. This control sample contains exactly 41 cases.

*Table 2*

**Universe of Cases of Elections in Competitive Authoritarianism  
in Latin America 1990-2014**

Sample 1		Control sample		
Bo06L	Me94P	Bo06L	Ha95L	Pe01P
Bo09P	Me94L	Bo09P	Ha00P	Pe01L
Bo09L	Ni90P	Bo09L	Ha00L	Pa91L
Bo14P	Ni90L	Bo14P	Me91L	Pa93P
Bo14L	Ni11P	Bo14L	Me94P	Pa93L
Ec07L	Ni11L	Dr96P	Me94L	Pa98P
Ec09P	Pe92L	Dr96L	Ni90P	Pa98L
Ec09L	Pe95P	Ec07L	Ni90L	Ve05L
Ec13P	Pe95L	Ec09P	Ni11P	Ve06P
Ec13L	Pe00P	Ec09L	Ni11L	Ve10L
Ha95P	Pe00L	Ec13P	Pe92L	Ve12P
Ha95L	Ve05L	Ec13L	Pe95P	Ve13P
Ha00P	Ve06P	Gu95P	Pe95L	
Ha00L	Ve10L	Gu95L	Pe00P	
Me91L	Ve12P	Ha95P	Pe00L	

Note: Ve(Venezuela), Pa(Paraguay), Pe(Peru), Ni(Nicaragua), Ha(Haiti), Ec(Ecuador), Dr(Dominican Republic), Bo(Bolivia), Co(Colombia), Me(Mexico), Gu(Guatemala).  
L= Legislative Elections. P= presidential election.

The dependent variable of the study – electoral competitiveness – is defined as margins of victory in competitive authoritarian regimes. Margins of victory (how close the electoral result was) are usually used as a measure of electoral competitiveness in similar studies<sup>59</sup>. In this study, margins of victory are operationalized as a difference in seat shares between the largest and the

<sup>59</sup> Leah Gilbert, *State Mobilization Strategies...cit.*; Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty...cit.*

second-largest party in legislative elections. Margins of victory in presidential elections are then defined as the difference in valid vote shares between the winning candidate and the one who finished second in the first round of presidential elections. I suppose that the larger the margins of victory, the smaller the electoral competitiveness in the respective elections. In an effort to compare the results with other studies, the classification used in this study is identical to the one used by Schedler in his work<sup>60</sup>.

### *Methods*

Being an Empirical analysis, this study uses regression analysis and QCA. The QCA is a tool for systematic comparison of the cases. The QCA belongs to the family of the set-theoretic data analysis techniques that are “concerned with the systematic matching and contrasting of the cases to establish common causal relationships by eliminating all other possibilities”<sup>61</sup>. The whole category of QCA methods was originally introduced by Charles Ragin<sup>62</sup>. These research methods contain elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches, but in essence use case-sensitive approach<sup>63</sup> because QCA has strong qualitative roots<sup>64</sup>.

The regression analysis and set-theoretic methods are not combined too often, although it is one of the possible ways of triangulation<sup>65</sup>. There are two approaches which differ in view on this problem. The first is a purist approach, which argues that regression analysis and set-theoretic methods cannot properly be used together, because both methods differ epistemologically. This study is based on a second (pragmatic) approach, which argues that the epistemological differences are an advantage rather than a drawback, as this allows for two distinct but hopefully complementary points of view of the same research question<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty...cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>61</sup> Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Gisele De Meur, Benoît Rihoux, Charles Ragin, “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as an Approach”, in Benoît Rihoux, Charles Ragin, *Configurational Comparative Methods. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques*, SAGE, Thousand Oaks, 2009, pp. 1-18.

<sup>62</sup> Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1989.

<sup>63</sup> Benoît Rihoux, “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Systematic Comparative Methods”, *International Sociology*, vol. 21, no. 5, 2006, pp. 679-706.

<sup>64</sup> Claudius Wagemann, Carstern Q. Schneider, *Set-Theoretic Methods for Social Science. A Guide to Qualitative Comparative Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Svend-Erik Skaaning, “Explaining Post-Communist Respect for Civil Liberty: A Multi-Methods Test”, *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2007, pp. 493-500.

<sup>66</sup> Barbara Vis, “The Comparative Advantages of fsQCA and Regression Analysis for Moderately Large-N Analyses”, *Sociological Methods and Research*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2012, p. 175.

The main aspects in which both methods differ are the way how these methods work with interacting effects, detect multiple paths (equifinality), and how they tackle limited diversity. Compared to regression analysis, QCA is better adapted to interpretation of an interaction consisting of more than two variables especially in medium-N comparisons<sup>67</sup>, which is the case of this study.

In the way how they detect multiple paths (equifinality), both methods are different, because:

“In regression analysis, if an outcome (dependent variable) occurs and the given cause (independent variable) does not, this counts as negative evidence for the strength of that causal relationship”<sup>68</sup>.

“This means that the factor that influences the outcome in only a subset of cases – but some cases nonetheless – becomes invisible in regression analysis; in fact, it only inflates variance and deflates coefficients. Configurational comparative methods, contrarily, can identify the causal patterns that differ across subsets of cases, allowing for more complex causal narratives to be assessed”<sup>69</sup>.

The last but important difference between these two methods is a limited diversity which is

“a crucial issue for causal inference that, however, is usually overlooked both in case studies and statistical techniques. Diversity is limited when logically possible configurations of relevant conditions do not appear empirically”<sup>70,71</sup>.

While statistical methods are “inductively driven and focus on counterfactual estimation”<sup>72</sup> and this problem is usually hidden from the researcher<sup>73</sup> when working with QCA, the researcher must pay greater attention to this issue.

On paper, researcher can choose one of three ways how to work with logical reminders<sup>74</sup> (complex solution, parsimonious solution, intermediate

<sup>67</sup> Bear F. Braumoeller, “Hypothesis Testing and Multiplicative Interaction Terms”, *International Organization*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2004, pp. 807-820.

<sup>68</sup> Jessica Epstein, Daniel Duerr, Lane Kenworthy, Charles Ragin, “Comparative Employment Performance: A Fuzzy-Set Analysis”, in Lane Kenworthy, *Method and Substance in Macrocomparative Analysis*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008, p. 68.

<sup>69</sup> Barbara Vis, “The Comparative Advantages of fsQCA and Regression Analysis for Moderately Large-N Analyses”, *8th ESPAnet Conference*, Budapest, 2010.

<sup>70</sup> These cases are logical reminders (logically possible but empirically not observed combinations).

<sup>71</sup> Claudius Wagemann, Carstern Q. Schneider, “Reducing Complexity in Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA): Remote and Proximate Factors and the Consolidation of Democracy”, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 45, no. 5, 2006, p. 757.

<sup>72</sup> Barbara Vis, “The Comparative Advantages of fsQCA...cit.”, p. 174.

<sup>73</sup> Claudius Wagemann, Carstern Q. Schneider, “Reducing Complexity in Qualitative Comparative Analysis...cit.”, p. 758.

<sup>74</sup> As this is the first time QCA has been applied in this kind of research, we focus our attention only on the complex solution. This decision was motivated by an attempt to

solution). None of these solutions can solve a situation where we have a greater number of variables. In these situations, QCA usually produces solutions which are too complex or misleading<sup>75</sup>. With regards to this issue, the key problem in every QCA application is the variable selection. Currently, we have about eight ways how to solve this problem<sup>76</sup>.

Because this study combines QCA with regression analysis, variables are chosen by their statistical significance (significance approach). Based on this assumption, QCA is rather a complementary method in this study. The model of regression analysis in this study is an ordinary least square regression analysis with the time series cross-section data. QCA is used in its fuzzy-set variation. Beside “classic” crisp-set QCA, the fsQCA goes beyond 0 and 1 membership score and allows us to capture a degree of membership<sup>77</sup>.

For this reason, every fsQCA analysis begins with calibration of conditions. For each condition, it is important to establish a threshold of full membership in the set (0.95), the threshold of full non-membership in the set (0,05) and cross-over point (0.5), that is, neither more in nor more out of a particular set. Because this study works primarily with interval variables, calibration was carried out by direct method of calibration, when data was standardized by z-score<sup>78</sup>. Exceptions are variables *coalition* and *concurrent election*, which are dichotomous. The minimum level of consistency which I use is 0.90, which is recommended for demanding consistency criteria<sup>79</sup>.

### *Regression Analysis*

The results of statistical analysis in Table 3 demonstrate that some of the tested variables have an impact on the dependent variable. The first tested model contained only economic variables and was successful in explaining approximately 0,42 of variance. The results of the first model show that only economic growth has a statistically significant influence on the margins of victory. If the GDP grows, the margins of victory are also greater. The effect of economic liberty is also

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depict the existing interactions in as detailed way as possible. The use of intermediate solution is not possible, due to the insufficient state of theoretical knowledge in this field.

<sup>75</sup> Edwin Amenta, Jane D. Poulsen, “Where to Begin a Survey of Five Approaches to Selecting Independent Variables for Qualitative Comparative Analysis“, *Sociological Methods & Research*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1994, pp. 23-25; Claudius Wagemann, Carstern Q. Schneider, “Reducing Complexity in Qualitative Comparative Analysis...cit.”, pp. 756-759; Barbara Vis, “The Comparative Advantages of fsQCA...cit.”, p. 174.

<sup>76</sup> Sakura Yamasaki, Benoît Rihoux, “A Commented Review of Applications”, in Benoît Rihoux, Charles C. Ragin, *Configurational Comparative Methods...cit.*, pp. 125-130.

<sup>77</sup> Charles C. Ragin, *Fuzzy-set Social Science*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000.

<sup>78</sup> *Idem*, *Redesing Social Inquiry. Fuzzy Sets and Beyond*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2008, pp. 86-94.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem*, “Core versus Tangential Assumptions in Comparative Research”, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2005, pp. 10-11.

fundamental but statistically insignificant. The other economic variables are statistically insignificant, with the exception of mineral rent, which corresponded to the theoretical expectations. In contradiction to these expectations, the mineral rent negatively impacts the magnitude of margins of victory.

Table 3

Regression Analysis					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	stepwise
Wealth	-0,357				
Itrade	-0,268				
GINI	-0,15				
Grow	<b>0,617</b>				<b>0,285</b>
Rent	-0,281				
EcFree	-0,503				
concurr.		<b>-0,522</b>			<b>-0,299</b>
Cycle		-0,044			
LegiStre.		0,206			
Corrup.		-0,008			
Ban			<b>0,953</b>		<b>0,423</b>
Censor			<b>0,552</b>		
CSF			0,178		
Intimidi			<b>-0,472</b>		
Boycott				0,198	
Coalition				<b>-0,709</b>	<b>-0,529</b>
Protests				-0,295	
N	30	30	30	30	30
Adj. R2	0,42	0,276	0,63	0,6	0,771

Shaded coefficients = statistically significant ( $p \leq .15$ )<sup>80</sup>.

The institutional variables (model 2) succeeded in explaining 0,27 of variance. The effect of corruption and cycle is almost non-observable. Legislative strength then impacts margins of victory, but in the opposite direction than the theoretical expectation supposed. What is more, the effect is not statistically significant. The most influential institutional factor that is at the same time statistically significant are the concurrent elections. If the elections are concurrent, the margins of victory decline.

Strategic decisions on the part of the government (model 3) explain 0,63 of variance, which represents the best results of all tested models. Apart from freedom of civil society organizations, which has small and statistically insignificant effect on the dependent variable, the other 3 variables show great and statistically significant influence. The effect of party ban and censorship then corresponds to the theoretical expectations. An interesting situation

<sup>80</sup> The chosen level of statistical significance may seem strange, but it is the same level that Schedler used in his most recent book. The choice is thus motivated by an effort to allow the easiest possible comparison of the respective findings.

emerges in case of intimidation of opposition candidates and parties because this strategy negatively influences the magnitude of margins of victory.

In the last separate model, effects of certain kinds of opposition strategies are presented. The model explains 0,6 of variance. All variables meet the theoretical expectations. However, only the effect of pre-election coalition of opposition parties is statistically significant. These results thus corroborate the empirical findings of Howard and Roessler<sup>81</sup> about the fundamental role of opposition coalitions and pre-electoral oppositional protests (although in this study, this effect is not statistically significant) for the margins of victory.

The last model combines the variables that turn out statistically significant on the basis of the previous stepwise analysis. The model is successful in explaining 77% of variance using only four variables. This means that these variables are highly relevant for explaining the margins of victory in the analyzed cases. The influence of all the variables has declined but has maintained the same direction. The coalition variable then demonstrates the smallest decline and at the same time the biggest effect on the dependent variable.

### *FsQCA Analysis*

The first step of a fuzzy-set analysis is always a test for necessity (Table 4). In our case, the results show that with a consistency level of 0.93, absence of coalition of opposition forces is a necessary condition for the presence of large margin of victory. The necessity test for the absence of large margin of victory yields no single necessary condition.

Table 4

Test for Necessity					
Outcome	Big margin of victory	Consistency		Coverage	
Grow	~Grow	0,628	0,751	0,674	0,584
Concurr	~Concurr	0,447	0,552	0,336	0,623
Ban	~Ban	0,626	0,711	0,787	0,5
Coalition	~Coalition	0,064	<b>0,935</b>	0,124	0,55
Outcome	Small margin	Consistency		Coverage	
Grow	~Grow	0,561	0,75	0,731	0,71
Concurr	~Concurr	0,725	0,274	0,663	0,376
Ban	~Ban	0,416	0,86	0,636	0,422
Coalition	~Coalition	0,372	0,627	0,875	0,449

Note: ~absence of condition; shaded coefficients=level of consistency 0,9 or bigger.

The result of the complex solution (Table 5) shows that a membership in the set of large margin of victory is connected to two combinations of conditions. What they have in common is the absence of an opposition coalition. In the first case, we are dealing with a situation in which the

<sup>81</sup> Marc M. Howard, Philip G. Roessler, "Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes...cit.".

opposition can freely participate in elections, but it is not unified. Real examples of such conditions can be observed in parliamentary and presidential elections in Ecuador and Bolivia. In the observed period of time, both countries saw fragmented opposition standing against an incumbent with an unquestionable public support. These reasons likely led to the fact that there was no need to restrict the opposition's participation on the elections in any way<sup>82</sup>. In the second case, the opposition is also fragmented, but in a situation without election concurrence and bad economic development.

Table 5

**Complex Solution Explaining the Level of Electoral Competitiveness  
in Latin America 1990-2014**

Large margin of victory			Coverage
~Coalition	* ~PartyBan		51%
~Coalition	*~Concurr	*~Grow	17%
Small margin of victory			Coverage
Coalition	*~PartyBan	*~Grow	8%
~PartyBan	*~Grow	*Concurr	36%

This combination is a very interesting one, since it suggests that bad economic development is not by itself a factor that would start big changes. An example of this combination is the parliamentary election in Peru in 1992, when Alberto Fujimori managed to win despite a downward economic trend. However, what also played a significant role in Peru was the fact that the party-system was in a serious crisis and traditional political parties faced a major lack of trust of the voters<sup>83</sup>. For a small margin of victory, there are also two combinations. The first one, which is relatively scarce among the analyzed cases (8%), confirms all the theoretical assumptions and its characteristic feature is the presence of both the opposition coalition and an unsatisfactory economic development. The parliamentary election in Venezuela in 2010 can serve as a good example<sup>84</sup>. The second combination confirms the importance of election concurrence and poor economic condition. The presidential election in Peru in 2000 falls into this category, as the difference between the winner – Alberto Fujimori – and the strongest opposition candidate was mere 9% of the

<sup>82</sup> For more information about both of these states, see Antonio R. Mayorga, "Populismo autoritario y transición regresiva: la dictadura plebiscitaria en la región andina", *Latin American Review of Comparative Politics*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2017, pp. 39-69.

<sup>83</sup> Bruce H. Kay, "'Fujipopulism' and the Liberal State in Peru, 1990-1995", *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 38, no. 4, 1996, pp. 99-132.

<sup>84</sup> Javier Corrales, Manuel Higaldo, "El regimen híbrido de Hugo Chávez en transición (2009-2013)", *Desafíos*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2013, pp. 45-84.

votes. However, we need to take into account the fact that this particular opposition candidate (Alejandro Toledo) was supported by a relatively broad opposition coalition<sup>85</sup>.

Although the fuzzy-set QCA doesn't offer explanations to all cases, the coverage of the individual solutions stands between 51% and 17% of the empirical reality with large margins of victory and 8%-36% with small margins of victory, which means that the coverage measure is fairly comparable to the level of explained variance, such as R<sup>2</sup>, used in ordinary statistics. Additionally, fuzzy-set analysis also supports the results of the statistical test, as it confirms the assumption that the absence of opposition coalition leads to low electoral competitiveness in competitive authoritarianism. But at the same time, it also shows that the presence of opposition coalition is not necessary to the point of being irreplaceable for reaching a higher rate of electoral competitiveness. These findings thus partially disprove the conclusions of the dominant research in this field, which mostly focuses on the condition of the opposition<sup>86</sup>. In contrast, fuzzy-set analysis also brings forward the impact of the poor economical development, which has so far been rather de-emphasized in various researches on elections in hybrid regimes.

### *A Replication Test With the Control Sample*

Since a relatively low number of cases (N 30) is one of the shortcomings of the presented analysis, a test of the same variables was carried out on a control sample (N 41) in order to reach a higher validity. The results of the statistical test in the Table 4 mostly confirm the conclusions of the first test.

Table 6

Regression Analysis for Control Sample					
	5.	6.	7.	8.	stepwise
<b>Wealth</b>	-0,231				
<b>Itrade</b>	-0,123				
<b>GINI</b>	0,191				
<b>Grow</b>	<b>0,448</b>				<b>0,264</b>
<b>Rent</b>	-0,109				
<b>EcFree</b>	-0,314				

<sup>85</sup> Julion F. Carrión (ed.), *The Fujimory Legacy: The Rise of Electoral Authoritarianism in Peru*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Marc M. Howard, Philip G. Roessler, "Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes...cit."; Valerie Bunce, Sharon Wolchick, *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders...cit.*

<b>concorre.</b>		-0,289			-0,059
<b>Cycle</b>		-0,169			
<b>LegiStre.</b>		0,161			
<b>Corrup.</b>		0,193			
<b>Ban</b>			<b>0,8</b>		<b>1,278</b>
<b>Censor</b>			<b>0,706</b>		<b>0,528</b>
<b>CSF</b>			0,092		
<b>Intimidi</b>			<b>-0,312</b>		
<b>Boycott</b>				0,22	
<b>Coalition</b>				<b>-0,512</b>	-0,123
<b>Protests</b>				0,14	
<b>N</b>	41	41	41	41	41
<b>Adj. R2</b>	0,275	0,075	0,538	0,34	0,71

Shaded coefficients = statistically significant ( $p \leq .15$ ).

After adding more cases, the model composed of entirely economic variables (model 1) can explain a little over 27% of the variance. This is a smaller explanatory potential than what this model had in the main sample of this study, but the direction and impact of most variables remained the same. Again, only economic growth proved to have the biggest and statistically significant impact. The only change from the first model appeared with social inequalities, the impact of which changed from slightly negative to slightly positive. However, the impact is neither significant nor notably high. The results of the institutional model (5) differ from the first sample. In the new sample, these variables don't seem very important, as they only explain 7% of the variance, which is rather little. The direction of the relationship between the variables was preserved, but neither variable is statistically significant anymore and the impact of election concurrence dropped to almost half its previous value, compared to the first model.

The government strategies contained in the third model keep their high explanatory potential, being able to explain 54% of the variation only by themselves. Just like in the first sample, three variables are statistically significant. The only difference from the first model is a surge in the importance of censorship. The strategies of the opposition can only explain 0.34 variance and again, the coalition of the opposition is the most important factor. It is interesting to see a change of the link between the dependent variable and social protests. In the greater sample, the correlation becomes positive, on the contrary

to the theoretical expectations. However, the rate is low, which is why we should not attribute too much importance to this feature.

The stepwise model saw a slight increase in the number of variables, from four to five, and it explains 71% of the variance, which is very solid. In addition to the four variables from the first sample, censorship was added – its impact in the first sample being important, but not significant. On the whole, we can assert that despite the considerably lower impact of election concurrence, the results of this test confirm the conclusions of the first test. No variable was dropped from the stepwise analysis and we also didn't see a significant change of relationship between any of the important variables.

Table 7

## Test for Necessity for Control Sample

Outcome	Big margin of victory	Consistency		Coverage	
Grow	~Grow	0,706	0,68	0,764	0,637
Concurr	~Concurr	0,554	0,445	0,439	0,61
Ban	~Ban	0,694	0,705	0,822	0,614
ensor	~ensor	0,74	0,659	0,746	0,658
Coalition	~Coalition	0,124	0,875	0,254	0,581
Outcome	Small margin	Consistency		Coverage	
Grow	~Grow	0,609	0,78	0,654	0,725
Concurr	~Concurr	0,714	0,747	0,56	0,74
Ban	~Ban	0,554	0,84	0,65	0,731
ensor	~ensor	0,655	0,747	0,656	0,74
Coalition	~Coalition	0,364	0,635	0,744	0,418

Note: ~absence of condition; shaded coefficients=level of consistency 0,9 or bigger.

The FsQCA analysis of a larger sample shows that the tests for necessity (Table 7) yield no single necessity condition for either of the two solutions. However, it should be noted that in the test for negative outcome (low electoral competitiveness), the coefficient of the variable coalition is only very slightly below the requisite threshold of (0,9), standing at 0,87.

*Table 8*

**Complex Solution Explaining the Level of Electoral Competitiveness  
in Latin America 1990-2014 for Control Sample**

<b>Big Margin of victory</b>				
~PartyBan	*~Coalition	*censor		19%
~PartyBan	*~Coalition	*~Concurr	*grow	1%
~PartyBan	*~Coalition	*~grow	*Concurr	1%
PartyBan	*~grow	*~Coalition	*~Concurr	14%
<b>Small margin of victory</b>				
censor	*~Coalition	*~grow	*Concurr	36%
censor	*Coalition	*~grow	~PartyBan	16%

A comprehensive solution for large margins of victory shows four possible ways. The individual combinations are more complicated to interpret, but what they all have in common is the absence of opposition coalition. The solution for small margins of victory shows two different ways. On the whole, the results of this analysis mostly confirm the trends set by the first test. Again, we can see the undeniable effect of some of the contextual factors and the specific impact of the opposition coalition. However, media censorship turned out to be a surprising factor. Based on theoretical assumptions, it should lower electoral competitiveness, but paradoxically, media censorship was present in all the cases where electoral competitiveness was relatively high. In the second solution, where media censorship is present together with an opposition coalition, we can assert that its impact will be lower due to the unity of the opposition. But the first case shows that election concurrence and bad economic results can somewhat weaken the influence of censorship even in the absence of opposition coalition. The results are thus in line with the conclusions of older studies which point to the relatively insignificant effect of media censorship and the lack of one particular omnipotent repressive strategy<sup>87</sup>. Still, we should be cautious when dealing with these findings, since the presented solutions cover only a smaller part of the empirical reality. Compared to the first sample, the fuzzy-set analysis can explain a bigger part of cases with low electoral competitiveness, while in the first sample, it was exactly the other way round.

### *Conclusion and Implications for Future Research*

The aim of this study is to enrich the contemporary debate about electoral competitiveness of authoritarianism by testing the up-to-date findings

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<sup>87</sup> Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty...cit.*, p. 223.

on the cases in Latin America, thus coming up with explanations that would better reflect the empirical reality of the analysed cases. Based on a combination of statistical analysis and set-theoretic analysis, we can say that it is possible to explain the examined problem in a fairly satisfactory way with only a few variables.

Many previous studies saw the main causes of varying degree of electoral competitiveness in key decisions made by the opposition and the government. However, in the context of Latin America, some of the structural factors also turned out to be significant, the most important one being the positive impact of economic growth on the size of the margins of victory. These findings are consistent with the broader theoretical expectations, but – paradoxically – contradict the conclusions of other researches on elections in competitive authoritarian regimes. According to the majority of studies in this field, the impact of economic growth on the result of elections is rather insignificant<sup>88</sup>. The only exception to this trend is the research carried out by Schedler, who claims this variable to be important, but in the opposite direction to what the theoretical premises assume. Schedler's research shows that economic growth rates seem to embolden the opposition<sup>89</sup>. The second significant factor seems to be the concurrence of presidential and parliamentary elections, which – conversely – decreases the rate of margins of victory. However, we know little about what the causal link between this variable and the dependent variable looks like, which is why this issue could prove to be an interesting aim of another qualitative research.

Strategic decisions of governments and the opposition, which previous researches mark as having a notable impact on the elections, seem to be important also in the context of Latin America, but several geographical specifics need to be taken into account. First, some repressive measures adopted by governments have a statistically significant impact on the scope of electoral competitiveness. This conclusion is in contrast with the results of an older research by Schedler<sup>90</sup>, in which these measures appear to be statistically significant only in the case of hegemonic electoral regimes. A second conclusion regarding these strategies is that more public forms of repression, such as intimidation of opposition representatives, are counter-productive, which is why, at least in Latin America, choosing less visible forms of restrictions of electoral competitiveness is a more meaningful approach for the government. The only aspect which – contrary to the theoretical assumptions – doesn't affect the scope of electoral competitiveness in a significant way, is the degree of freedom of civil society organizations. This finding confirms – on a

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<sup>88</sup> Marc M. Howard, Philip G. Roessler, "Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes...cit.", p. 375; Daniela Donno, "Elections and Democratization...cit.", p. 39; Leah Gilbert, *State Mobilization Strategies...cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>89</sup> Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty...cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem.*

larger sample size from Latin America – the prior findings of authors who came to the conclusion that a high degree of freedom of civil society organizations doesn't necessarily by itself have to be an issue for the government, since some organizations can actually help mobilize the public to support the representatives of the regime<sup>91</sup>.

As laid out by the theoretical premises, the most important factor regarding the opposition is its unity. However, it is important to point out that while the inability of the opposition to form a broad electoral coalition can be seen as the key cause of low electoral competitiveness, it doesn't necessarily mean that the existence of such broad coalition automatically leads to high electoral competitiveness. In cases of high electoral competitiveness, the situation tends to be more complex: this study suggests that in addition to the existence of a broad electoral coalition, other variables play an important role as well: the above mentioned institutional factors such as short-term economic indicators and – above all – the aforementioned concurrence of elections. The concurrence of parliamentary and presidential election can, by itself or combined with other factors, lead to a high degree of electoral competitiveness even in situations in which the opposition is divided. However, one very positive outcome is the fact that the presented schemes can often explain as much as twice the variance, compared to previous models, which means that this study significantly expands our ability to understand electoral competitiveness in competitive authoritarianism in Latin America.

The fact that these findings are, to a big extent, based on so far unused data from “*Varieties of Democracy*” as well as some more recent cases of competitive authoritarianism raises the question whether the observed patterns are specific for elections in these particular regimes and only valid for Latin America, or whether these are trends that set apart the current cases of competitive authoritarianism from the ones in the past. Another question linked to the conclusions of the study is, understandably, what the development could be in the future. If the public and violent forms of pre-election repressions of the opposition turn out to be ineffective, does it mean that in the future, we will be able to witness the expansion of more sophisticated ways of influencing the public, such as censorship or other more elaborate forms of propaganda? How is the growing accessibility of the internet (and thus independent media) going to affect these strategies? Is it more effective not to write about the political opponents at all or to spread deliberate falsehoods about them? Can good timing affect the resulting success rate of these steps? The finding about how concurrent elections affect electoral competitiveness (the fact that it is much

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<sup>91</sup> Leah Gilbert, *State Mobilization Strategies...cit.*, p. 76; Samuel Handlin, “Mass Organization and the Durability of Competitive Authoritarian Regimes: Evidence from Venezuela”, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 49, no. 9, 2016, pp. 1238-1269.

harder for the opposition to win elections that are not concurrent) is an important one for the opposition's effort to improve the chances of defeating the incumbents in competitive authoritarianism. At the same time, it should shift our attention towards a more in-depth analysis of the pre-election strategies used by these regimes.