Electoral System Choice in Transition Countries. The Importance of Driving Forces[1]

Elección de sistemas electorales en los países en transición. La importancia de las fuerzas motrices

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Abstract

This research paper examines the relationship between the type of transition and electoral system choice. The analysis is based upon a country sample of 51 third-wave democracies. The theoretical arguments lead to the hypothesis that countries whose transitions to democracy are driven both by the ruling elites and civic forces apply more permissive electoral systems afterwards. Whenever there is one dominant actor during the transition process, a less permissive electoral system becomes more likely. It is also assumed that countries that have a democratic past tend to rely on the institutional design of that period. The results of a multiple regression analysis confirm the hypotheses and point out that political actors behave strategically and according to their utility function, especially in transition processes, which are characterized by great uncertainty. Ideology does not matter and information from the past is used to predict future developments.

Keywords: electoral system choice, transition, third-wave democracies, electoral threshold, strategic behavior.

Resumen

Este trabajo de investigación estudia la relación entre el tipo de transición y la elección de un sistema electoral. El análisis se basa en una muestra de 51 países de la tercera ola democrática. Los argumentos teóricos llevan a la hipótesis que aquellos países, cuyas transiciones hacia la democracia son impulsadas por la élite gobernante y fuerzas cívicas a la vez, después aplican sistemas electorales más permisivos. Cuando hay solo

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un actor dominante durante el proceso de transición, es más probable la aplicación de un sistema electoral menos permisivo. Se supone también que países con un pasado democrático tienden a basarse en el diseño institucional de aquel periodo. Los resultados del análisis de regresión múltiple confirman las hipótesis y señalan que los actores políticos siguen ciertas estrategias y actúan según sus funciones de utilidad, especialmente durante procesos de transición que se caracterizan por una gran incertidumbre. La ideología no importa y la información del pasado se utiliza para predecir futuros desarrollos.

Palabras clave: elección de un sistema electoral, transición, tercera ola democrática, umbral electoral, comportamiento estratégico.

INTRODUCTION

In the last century and even recently one could observe a lot of transitions towards democracy. In the preceding century, the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the resulting "new" states that established principles far from those of their time within the Soviet system are a major example of political (system) change. But also the departure and turning away from (military) dictatorships in South America or the decolonization of African countries produced a lot of states that had to face a process of transition, more successfully in some and less successfully in other cases.

What all transition countries have in common is that democratic standards were either absent or weak in the period right prior to the transition process. Since countries under dictatorship do not experience democratic elections or just in a former democratic period some time ago, the electoral system is the initial configuration of a new democracy and can determine the future democratic draft, because it critically shapes the state's and the people's first contact with democratic standards.

There is much literature about the first and the second wave of democracies of the early 20th century and about the conditions and contexts that led to the choice of a specific electoral system, but the so-called third wave democracies which started to emerge since the 70's and 80's are far less discussed topics regarding their electoral system choice. Why did some states choose more and others less permissive electoral institutions? And what role did the transition process itself play in this decision?

This research paper tries to answer these questions by examining the relationship between the way of a country's transition and its electoral system choice. My argument here is that whenever two or more actors are responsible for a transition to democracy and have to agree upon its proceeding, a more permissive electoral system will be applied in comparison to transitions where one actor has a dominant position. Beside the way of transition, other possible explanations for the permissiveness of electoral systems, like a country's fractionalization, segregation or former democratic experience are tested as well.

The analysis refers to 51 countries that conducted a transition to democracy in the late 20th century and can therefore be described as third-wave democracies. The sample covers

all continents (except for Oceania) and thus represents and controls for different geographical conditions. The results show that transitions that are jointly driven by civic forces and the ruling elites tend to result in more permissive electoral systems. Instrumental rationality and strategic behavior is more important than ideology in these respects. Also the influence of a previous democratic period is a relevant factor in explaining a post-transition electoral system.

The structure of the research paper is as follows: first, there is an overview of the previous research that reflects the recent and overall academic discourse and the respective literature related to transition countries and electoral system choice. Based on this, theoretical arguments about the mechanisms that are responsible for electoral system choice in transition countries and the way they could work are presented. Hypotheses are derived from this theoretical examination which then are tested in the empirical section of the paper. Multiple regression analysis is applied in the empirical section to obtain interpretable results. After presenting the results, these are discussed and the paper concludes with a summary and an outlook for future research.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

One of the major works concerning electoral system choice and change is that by Rokkan (1970), who deals with the early moves towards proportional electoral systems in the 19th century, which were mainly influenced by the need for minority protection and the extension of the suffrage. Blais, Dobrzynska and Indridason (2005) analyze the impact of the spread of democratic ideas on the adoption of a proportional electoral system in the late 19th and early 20th century and show that this is a highly significant explanation beside prior institutional settings. Carstairs (1980) sketches the development of electoral systems in Western Europe and confirms that the rise of proportional electoral systems is strongly related to an overall emphasis of democratic ideals. By regarding the early socialist parties, Penadés (2006) shows that the preferences for certain electoral institutions are connected to the overall participation strategy pursued by these parties.

Boix (1999) examines the choice of electoral systems in advanced democracies in the early 20th century and comes to the conclusion that the electoral system is only subject to change from majoritarian to proportional representation when the ruling parties face new parties which could threat their dominant position in the political arena. Andrews and Jackman (2005) emphasize uncertainty as a main influencing factor in electoral system choice and bounded rationality of the (political) elites. Electoral systems are both cause and result of political and party competition as shown by Benoit (2004).

But also other dimensions regarding electoral systems are considered in the existing literature. Colonial experience, which is among others discussed by Blais and Massicote (1997), plays a major role here. And more generally, the society and its characteristics,

especially in terms of heterogeneity. The respective causal link to the adoption of proportional electoral systems is put forward by Rokkan (1970).

Lijphart and Grofman (1984) specify the characteristics of different electoral systems and the ways states choose or change their electoral institutions respective to these. A general overview of electoral system choice is also given by Colomer (2004): in his edited book case studies from countries all over the world are presented and discussed. There are a lot of studies that deal with the electoral systems of one specific country, mainly of the established democracies. Among others, exemplary works are that of Butler (1963) about Great Britain's electoral systems, those of France by Cole and Campbell (1989) or the contributions in the edited book of Hand, Georgel and Sasse (1979) about several European countries.

The electoral systems of transition countries and countries that implemented democratic electoral institutions in the late 20th century or even later are underrepresented in the academic discussion. There is surprisingly little knowledge about the conditions and actors' intentions that drive the choice of electoral systems in third wave democracies. These democracies are not established and rather new and probably fragile. A fortiori empirical examination would shed light on the political consequences of transition processes and their resulting (democratic) institutions. This research paper tries to unfold the relationship between the way a transition proceeds and (initial) electoral system choice and is therefore a valid contribution to the existing research stock.

ARGUMENTS

Broadly speaking, a transition can be initiated either by the reigning elites or by actors that are not part of the ruling sovereignty, which actually could be one major reason for an overthrow. Of course, also both forces can take effect simultaneously. Whereas a transition that is driven by both civic forces and the reigning elites can be described as an agreed or mixed transition, one that is exclusively initiated and conducted by one side, either from below or above, cannot.

An example for a mixed transition is that of Portugal in the 1970's, whereas the transition process of Greece in 1974 is an example for a civically driven transition and that of Turkey in the early 1980's is one for a transition driven by the power holders and thus both refer to one dominant actor. Whether the actors or the social groups of a country reach a consensus on how the transition proceeds and how the new system should look like has major implications for the electoral system choice.

If the transition of a country is put into effect by a dominant actor, this reflects the superiority of this respective actor. It is thus assumable that the access to power and resources is clearly defined and unequal. If one societal actor is able to impose its will on the others while the transition process, it is likely that this dominance also plays a role in designing the electoral institutions (McFaul, 2002). The dominant actors try to maintain

their status by choosing an electoral system that best fits this purpose. Thus, if the existing holders of power drive the transition process, a high electoral threshold and/or a rather majoritarian electoral system is more likely (Boix, 1999). They will choose an electoral system that keeps the number of parties down to avoid the formation of new interests and parties which emerge through or because of the transition process and could threat their political position.

A non-tested hypothesis by Boix (1999) states that a higher probability for the adoption of a proportional electoral system applies for transitions that are initiated from below. Although one could argue that transitions out of the broader population, that exhibit a more revolutionary character, like the Polish transition in 1989, probably tend to more popular and thus democratic ideals, which would make the adoption of a proportional system more likely (Blais, Dobrzynska & Indridason 2005), such transition processes also refer to the dominance of one group and therefore to the maintenance of power positions.

Sometimes even if the civic forces are dominant, the old elites are admitted a compromise concerning whatever issue to avoid a disturbance of the transition process (Bova, 1991). A lot of transitions in Latin America are an example for that practice (Karl, 1990). It seems that the actors that have a dominant status behave in a way that ensures this dominance. Thus, whenever there is the possibility for one group's hegemony while the transition process and the establishment of a new state, the choice of an electoral system with a high threshold becomes more likely.

It makes no difference which ideology is applied to transform the system or which actors drive this process. The strategy will always be aligned to the utility function with the aim of power maintenance. Whoever is responsible for the regime overthrow and the establishment of a new (democratic) system will either stay in power or come to this power. Hence, the degree of consensus between the respective actors is the crucial factor concerning subsequent electoral institutions. The strategic behavior of the relevant actors is influenced by the context that is inherent in transitions, but not determined, as different outcomes in similar settings show (McFaul, 2002).

There is one property of transitions that makes them both unique and more or less unpredictable. The phase between two regimes and two totally distinct systems is characterized by a great uncertainty. If the existing power relations are messed up, there are no reliable reference points how the power is distributed in the future and how this is or should be reflected in the new institutional setting. Especially if the transition has revolutionary character the configurations of the polity are completely disentangled and power relations not existent anymore (Koopmans, 2004). In these phases disorientation and awareness of endless political opportunities come together (Zolberg, 1972).

Since the electoral system is an instrument that regulates the future power relations, its design is crucial for the groups that claim political power. The respective actors have to organize their preferences according to their expectations about the (future) electorate.

Maximizing their own seats while minimizing those of their opponents seems to be the main principle here (Montero & Lago, 2011). But in moments of transition, the enormous uncertainty hinders political actors from making rational decisions (Andrews & Jackman, 2005). Even if these actors pursue a certain strategy, they cannot gauge the future developments and thus know if their strategy is useful (ibidem; Kaminski, 1999). Thus, risk adverse behavior is to be expected which increases the likelihood of a lower electoral threshold (Boix, 1999).

Because of the lack of information about the future, taking information from the past into account is another option to minimize risks in situations of transition (Andrews & Jackman, 2005). Whenever new information is available that helps to predict future electoral outcomes, strategies will be matched (Montero & Lago, 2011).

Regarding the implications of who drives the transition process and how it proceeds, the above mentioned arguments indicate how different types of transition affect the post-transition electoral system. The contrary characteristics of dominance and consensus in conjunction with the context-related factor of uncertainty lead to the formulation of the first hypothesis:

> *H1: If the transition process is driven by one dominant actor, i.e. the ruling elites or a civic movement, and no consensus is needed, the adoption of an electoral system with a high electoral threshold becomes more likely.*

That also means that a low electoral threshold becomes more likely, if the transition process is characterized by a mixed enforcement. The occurrence of violence is another proxy for consensus, or more precisely agreement of transition. If a transition process is accompanied by high violence, it is assumable that there is a conflict between at least two involved parties about how the transition should proceed and what new system should be employed. One can therefore operationalize the dominance of one actor also by this measure.

Because actors want to maximize their utility function but face great uncertainty in transition scenarios, a backward orientation seems appropriate to gain information and shape the preferences towards one electoral system or another. Hence, the former institutional setting will always play a role in the choice of a new one. This path dependence implies that every institutional choice is a function of previous choices (Pierson, 2000). In the case of transition countries, the mechanism is easy to understand. About former institutional settings knowledge is available and strategy adjustment possible (Lago & Martínez i Coma, 2012). Thus relying on these reduces risk and provides information about the expected outcomes, e.g. the possible distribution of votes and power. This is especially true for transition countries that had a democratic stage before the actual transition and could easily renew this configuration (ibidem; Valenzuela, 1990).

The impact of the historical dimension on a country's (present) institutional framework is closely related to the concept of transaction costs. The change of the status quo is always more expensive than keeping or just slightly modifying it. This is

because different actors have to arrive at an agreement and its improbability increases the more actors are involved, the more cohesive they are and the greater the distance is between them concerning ideology (Tsebelis, 2002). North defines that "transaction costs are the costs of measuring and enforcing agreements" (North, 1990a: 362). The transaction cost theory states that information is costly, the actors' perspectives are subjective and the assertion of agreements is never perfect (ibidem). As a behavioral consequence, the actors' rationality is bounded and the incentive for opportunism is present (Williamson, 1981).

This has important implications for the impact of the way of transition. Every actor wants to keep the (transaction) costs as low as possible, while simultaneously maximizing the profit according to their utility function (North, 1990b). The evading of transaction costs is easier if there is only one driving force of the transition process that is dominant and has the ability to override other opinions. This reflects low transaction costs, because no agreement and less (or no) bargaining is needed while a high share of the profit (an electoral system that secures the dominant actor's position) is ensured. Once there are at least two forces included, the need for consensus exists. Thus the transaction costs increase, as well as the likelihood of risk adverse behavior and mutual conceding to not lose one's own political status and importance. The so occurred higher (transaction) costs can be recouped by the adoption of an electoral system with a low electoral threshold, which makes more permissive systems in such constellations more probable.

The theoretical arguments also indicate that the (political) history, i.e. the previous democratic experience, if existent, determines the post-transition electoral system. This effect is probably enhanced the more sustainable this previous democratic period was, i.e. the more years it endured, and the more recent it was (Lago & Martínez i Coma, 2012). The mechanism of this effect mainly consists of path dependence and a (corresponding) reduction of transaction costs while a simultaneous gain of information. Thus, a second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: The higher the electoral threshold in a (possible) former democratic period of a transition country was, the higher is the actual post-transition electoral threshold.

Apart from the transition process itself and previous democratic experience, there are possibly other factors that influence the choice of an electoral system. It is highly supposable that former colonial experience, a country's fractionalization and/or segregation and, more generally the size of a country (in terms of population) could provide further explanatory power for electoral system choice.

Hence, control variables referring to these aspects are included in the regression models as well. The presented hypotheses are tested by a multiple regression analysis. The country sample, the operationalization of the applied variables, and the methodology are described in the next section.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Country Sample

To empirically test the relationship between the way of transition processes and the permissiveness of electoral systems, a sample of countries is employed that contains all states that experienced a regime change from authoritarian rule since 1974. Greece, Portugal and Spain, which democratized their respective systems in and around that year, are considered as the beginning of the third wave of democracy (Bermeo, 1987; Fishman, 1990; Huntington, 1991) and thus the starting points and oldest transition countries in the sample.

A first selection of countries is based on the sample presented in the study by Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005)[2]. The study identifies all transitions from authoritarian rule since 1972 and codes the properties of these transition processes. The key variables here are the occurrence of violence while the transition process, the sources of this violence, the driving forces of the transition process and the strength of non-violent civic forces. The main proposition tested by this study is if non-violent civic coalitions that drive a transition from authoritarian rule are an indication for a sustainable democratic regime. The country sample contains all transitions occurred worldwide until 2002 and refers to the most recent if a country had more than one. The coding is based upon data of Freedom House and its respective surveys (Freedom House 2012).

Since not all of the 67 transitions reported by Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005) led to democratic regimes in the end and some countries were described as partly free or even not free after transition, the sample, for the purpose of this research paper, was reduced by those transitions that not ultimately led to the establishment of a proper democracy. This was done with the help of the description of the worldwide electoral systems given by Colomer (2004). In his edited book all elections held under democratic principles are reported and described.

Thus, in the final sample of this research paper here, just the transition countries for whom the post-transition elections are reported, are included. This also is connected with the dependent variable which consists of magnitudes of the respective post-transition elections and thus is only properly captured if reliable data exists, which is not the case for pseudo-democracies and authoritarian elections.

In the end, the country sample on which the quantitative analysis is based upon includes 51 transition countries. The unit of analysis is the first election held under democratic principles. Changes of the electoral system after this initial post-transition election are not considered. Just the first elections are carried out in a context of uncertainty and lacking of information and thus relevant for the applied analysis. The regression models which

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2. All information about the country sample and the independent variables is taken from the descriptions in Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005).

control for previous democratic experience consist of 33 observations, since not all 51 countries of the whole sample have a democratic past.

Dependent Variable

The permissiveness of the transition countries' electoral systems serves as the dependent variable in this analysis. A proper and common operationalization, which results in a continuous variable, is the concept of the Effective Electoral Threshold (EET). This concept has the advantage that it recognizes the whole range between the extremes of a majoritarian and a proportional electoral system. The Effective Electoral Threshold, propagated by Lijphart (1994) and similarly by Taagepera and Shugart (1989) measures "the proportion of votes that, for each electoral system, secures parliamentary representation to any party with a probability of at least 50%" (Boix, 1999: 614).

One could criticize that although the real threshold of representation of an electoral system depends on several different factors beside the district magnitude, the formula includes the district magnitude as the only varying quantity (Penadés, 1997). But in so doing the formula reduces the range and complexity of electoral systems to a comprehensible value and it explicitly indicates the proportionality of a given electoral system and implicitly the probability of strategic behavior among parties and voters (Boix, 1999). Also its easy interpretability and straightforward comparability makes it a preferable measurement (Taagepera, 1998). The formula which is used in this research paper is the following:

$$EET = \frac{75\%}{M + 1}$$

where M is the average district magnitude in a given electoral system. The higher the electoral threshold is, the less permissive is the electoral system. Thus a low electoral threshold refers to high permissiveness. The upper bound of the variable is 0.375 and refers to electoral systems with single-member districts and thus is effectively the highest possible value for this variable. The average district magnitudes are taken from the descriptions of worldwide elections in Colomer (2004).

Independent Variables

There are different outcomes to be expected regarding the electoral system, whether the regime change is conducted by compromise between the population and the power holders or if one actor goes it alone. The independent variable is therefore the driving force of the transition process. The operationalization draws on the study by Karatnycky

and Ackerman (2005). They categorize the transitions of the late 20th century according to the respective driving forces. Driving force is defined "as the indispensable factor without whose positive action the transition would not have occurred" (Karatnycky & Ackerman, 2005: 47).

A transition is either driven by "civic forces", "power holders", a "mixed" combination thereof or by "external intervention". For the purpose of this research paper and its theoretical argumentation, a dummy variable is created referring to the occurrence of mixed driving forces of the transition process. Thus, the variable takes on the value "1" if the transition is driven by both civic forces and the power holders and the value "0" otherwise. This is due to a similar expected sign whenever there is only one driving force.

TABLE I.

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION OF TRANSITION TYPES

	Frequency	Percentage
Mixed Transition	28	54.9
Civic Transition	15	29.41
Power Holders Transition	6	11.76

Beside the mentioned dummy variable that refers to a mixed transition, there are also created dummy variables that control for the respective complementary configuration, i.e. a transition driven solely by civic forces or the ruling elites. The expected sign is positive for both. The sample distribution of the different transition types is given in table 1.

To control for implications of different measurements of transition type, another operationalization of the independent variable is applied in a separate regression model. The occurrence of violence can serve as another proxy for agreement, or disagreement respectively, between the actors. The data source here is as well the study by Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005). They differentiate between four levels ranging from "non-violent" to "mostly non-violent" transitions up to the occurrence of "significant violence" and "high level of violence". For this research paper, it seems appropriate to distinguish between two levels of violence, namely if (significant) violence occurred or not. Therefore, there is created a dummy variable, coding the upper two extremes as "1" and the lower two as "0".

The other independent variable, referring to hypothesis H2, is the electoral system of a previous democratic period. It is operationalized by the Effective Electoral Threshold of that period. To use the same measurement as for the dependent variable leads to more exact results and facilitates comparability.

The electoral threshold is calculated by the above displayed formula. The average district magnitudes are obtained as well from Colomer (2004). Reference is the latest

democratic election before the authoritarian regime that was deposed in the respective transition. Since not all countries of the sample have a democratic past, this variable is applied in separate models with a reduced number of observations.

Control Variables

Colonial experience reflects another type of path dependence (Blais & Massicotte, 1997; Golder & Wantchekon, 2004). Colonial rulers set institutional settings in their dependencies which are akin to those of their home country, even if the colonial rule takes place at an early stage (in time) and the institutional settings remain inchoate and not comparable to nowadays'. This applies not only directly to the electoral institutions, but also to the structure of the local constituencies and their relations, which influence these indirectly (Mozaffar, 1998).

To control for the colonial experience of the transition countries, a dummy variable is applied that takes on the value "1" if a country is a former colony of the United Kingdom and "0" if not. Since one should avoid categories with only few cases and the influence of the British electoral institutions seems to be the most distinct and significant through single-member districts and plurality rule, just former British colonies are considered here. The expected sign is positive.

Another variable controls for fractionalization. Heterogeneous countries, in terms of ethnicity, language and/or religion, have to secure a certain level of minority representation to ensure political stability (Rokkan, 1970). Proportionality is a main instrument to guarantee governability and stability if a society is heterogeneous and critical cleavages are existent (Lijphart, 1977). If minority representation is not stipulated in the constitution and the electoral institutions ex ante, a low electoral threshold supports (a proportional) representation of the respective groups, or parties respectively, in the parliament and thus in the political arena.

The fractionalization of the transition countries is measured by the fractionalization index of Alesina *et al.* (2003)[3]. They provide separate indices for ethnic, linguistic and religious fractionalization and the mean of these three is used to generate a variable of average fractionalization in this research paper. This variable can be interpreted as the "probability that two randomly selected individuals from a population belong to different groups" (Alesina, *et al.* 2003: 5) and can therefore take on values from 0 to 1. The expected sign is negative.

Beside the pure fractionalization of a country, it seems also to be relevant how the heterogeneity is distributed throughout the country, i.e. how different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups are concentrated within different districts. If a country has very homogeneous districts while the overall state is rather heterogeneous, the segregation of

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3. For information about the measurement of the index and the data sources, see Alesina *et al.* (2003).

this country is high. In highly segregated countries, the cleavages and different groups are not necessarily moderated by a permissive electoral system, since the distribution of these is not uniformly and overall state fractionalization is dealt with on the district level, i.e. geographical areas (cf. Boix, 1999). Such states can apply even a single-member district electoral system without unproportional group or minority representation because the districts can be treated like homogeneous units.

The segregation of the transition countries is measured by the segregation index by Alesina and Zhuravskaya (2011)[4]. They provide separate indices for ethnic, linguistic and religious segregation and the mean of these three is used to generate a variable of average segregation in this research paper. This variable can be interpreted as the "ethnic, linguistic and religious composition of sub-national administrative units (regions) in each country" (Alesina & Zhuravskaya, 2011: 1878) and can therefore take on values from 0 (no segregation) to 1 (full segregation). The expected sign is positive. Since the index does not report values for all countries of the sample, the application of this variable results in a reduced number of 42 observations (by simultaneous inclusion of the electoral threshold of a previous democratic period, the number of observations is reduced to 30).

Another viable dimension is the size of a country. The population (in millions) living in a country is represented in the regression. The inclusion of this variable should control for the different implications that territory and population have for electoral systems and the resulting strategic behavior. For instance, less permissive electoral systems could suit big countries better in terms of coordination (Boix, 1999). The source is the Worldbank database (Worldbank, 2012)[5].

While the population size is directly included in the regression model, the surface area is not. But as surface area is highly correlated with population and the index of segregation implicitly takes the surface area of a country into account, the inclusion of this variable is not necessary and would violate one of the underlying assumptions of OLS regression (multicollinearity).

The summary statistics in table 2 report the number of observations, the mean, the standard deviation and the range of the variables.

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4. For information about the measurement of the index and the data sources, see Alesina and Zhuravskaya (2011).
5. The population values refer to the first year of the transition process; since the Worldbank database does not report population values for years before 1980, the values for Greece, Portugal and Spain are taken from Eurostat (Eurostat 2012); since the Worldbank database does not report any values for Taiwan, the value is taken from the National Statistics of Taiwan (National Statistics Taiwan 2012).

TABLE 2.
SUMMARY STATISTICS

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
EET	51	.11	.12	.002	.375
Previous EET	33	.12	.12	.003	.375
Mixed Transition	51	.55	.5	0	1
Civic Transition	51	.29	.46	0	1
Power Holders Transition	51	.12	.33	0	1
Violence	51	.49	.5	0	1
Former Colony (UK)	51	.1	.3	0	1
Fractionalization	51	.4	.19	.07	.83
Segregation	42	.08	.08	.002	.298
Population	51	28.6	43.78	.4	207.8

RESULTS

The results of the multiple regression analysis are presented below in table 3. The estimation was calculated by ordinary least squares (OLS). The log value of the population size was used to approximate a normal distribution. The regression coefficients are listed with the corresponding standard errors in parentheses. More robust estimations lead to similar results and hence no problems of heteroskedasticity and outliers are perceptible. Several models were calculated, each controlling for different ways of operationalization of the variables and/or different numbers of observations.

The first two models take the main independent variable into account that measures whether the transition was driven by mixed forces or not. Model 3 and 4 replace the variable "Fractionalization" by the variable "Segregation" to control for the different implications of this alternative measurement. Model 5 and 6 use the variable "Violence" as key independent variable and as measurement of the type of transition instead of the variable "Mixed Transition". The electoral threshold of a former democratic period is always included in a separate model since not all countries of the sample have a democratic past, which results in a lower number of observations.

Concerning the genuine independent variables, the results lead to the confirmation of both hypotheses. The expected effect of a mixed transition, that is enforced both from below and the ruling elites, can be confirmed for all the respective models. The effect is negative and significant in all models. Thus, if the transition process proceeds by compromise, the permissiveness of the post-transition electoral system is higher, ceteris paribus. The coefficient is the highest and significant at the 1%-level in Model 3, where the variable "Fractionalization" is replaced by the variable "Segregation". It

is significant at the 5%-level in Model 1 and 4 and at the 10%-level in Model 2. The strength of the effect ranges from -0.04 to -0.09. The coefficients are higher in those models where the electoral threshold of a previous democratic period is not applied. Generally, the effect can be described as strong regarding the range of the dependent variable (0.002 to 0.375). The occurrence of (significant) violence does not seem to play an important role when it comes to electoral system choice. The effect of this variable is not significant in both models (Model 5 and 6). And the R-squared value is the lowest of all models.

TABLE 3.

REGRESSION RESULTS (MIXED TRANSITION/VIOLENCE)

Dependent variable	Effective Electoral Threshold (EET)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Mixed Transition	-0.08** (0.03)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.09*** (0.03)	-0.05** (0.02)		
Violence					0.03 (0.03)	0.003 (0.02)
Former Colony (UK)	0.23*** (0.06)	0.06 (0.05)	0.22*** (0.05)	0.07 (0.05)	0.21*** (0.06)	0.043 (0.05)
Fractionalization	-0.01 (0.08)	0.1 (0.07)			-0.02 (0.09)	0.07 (0.07)
Segregation			-0.39* (0.2)	-0.12 (0.14)		
Population (log)	-0.0009 (0.01)	-0.0004 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.001 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.004 (0.01)
Previous EET		0.76*** (0.12)		0.76*** (0.12)		0.82*** (0.13)
Constant	0.14*** (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)	0.14*** (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)	0.11** (0.05)	0.0007 (0.04)
Observations	51	33	42	30	51	33
R-squared	0.36	0.82	0.47	0.83	0.28	0.8

Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Models 2, 4 and 6 include the previous democratic experience of the transition countries and indicate that this is the most determining factor for the post-transition electoral system. The effect of this variable is highly significant (at the 1%-level) and positive in all the respective models. Ceteris paribus, if the previous electoral threshold increases by one unit, the actual electoral threshold increases by 0.76 (Model 2 and 4) or 0.82 (Model 6). This reflects the fact that most of the transition countries that could rely on a former democratic period apply approximately the

same electoral features (number of seats, number of districts, average district magnitude) again in the first post-transition election. The variable not only improved the goodness of fit of the models considerably, but also changed the explanatory power of being a former British colony and the degree of segregation. When the previous electoral threshold is included, the goodness of fit of the models (almost) doubles and the respective models can explain around 80% of the dependent variable's variance.

Concerning the control variables, being a former British colony enhances the electoral threshold of transition countries significantly. This effect is always significant at the 1%-level and with an average coefficient of 0.22 in the three respective models very strong. Although this effect becomes insignificant whenever one applies the electoral threshold of a possible previous democratic period. When this additional variable is included, the explanatory power of colonial experience ceases in all three models.

The average of ethnic, linguistic and religious fractionalization, as well as the population size of the transition countries do not influence the permissiveness of the electoral system significantly in none of the models and are therefore negligible explanations. When one includes the average of ethnic, linguistic and religious segregation instead of fractionalization (Models 3 and 4), the effect is negative and significant, at least without controlling for a former democratic period. The coefficient is -0.39 and thus very strong. The algebraic sign though is counterintuitive, because a positive effect was expected due to the implications of homogeneous districts in heterogeneous countries. The goodness of fit is improved by this replacement since Model 3 displays an R-squared value of 0.47 in comparison to 0.36 of Model 1.

Table 4 shows the regression results if one applies the complementary variables of the "Mixed Transition" variable, i.e. the dummy variables for either a transition driven by civic forces or by the power holders. The effect of a civic transition on the post-transition electoral threshold is as expected. It is highly significant and positive. Thus, if the transition process is driven by civic forces, the permissiveness of the post-transition electoral system is lower, ceteris paribus. If there is one dominant actor that is responsible for the proceeding of the transition, a higher electoral threshold becomes more likely. If the variable "Power Holders Transition" is included, this is not affirmed, but also not disproved, since the effect of this dummy variable is not significant in both respective models. The effects of the other independent variables stay the same if one includes the variables that control for transitions driven by one actor.

Based on the third model of table 3, the respective coefficients are used to calculate fitted values for different scenarios, holding the variables of the average segregation and the log of the population constant by their means. One can see the impact of the type of transition and colonial experience on the Effective Electoral Threshold clearly.

TABLE 4.

REGRESSION RESULTS (CIVIC TRANSITION/POWER HOLDERS TRANSITION)

Dependent variable	Effective Electoral Threshold (EET)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Civic Transition	0.09*** (0.03)	0.05** (0.02)		
Power Holders Transition			-0.02 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)
Former Colony (UK)	0.22*** (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	0.22*** (0.06)	0.04 (0.05)
Fractionalization	0.01 (0.08)	0.1 (0.07)	-0.01 (0.09)	0.07 (0.07)
Population (log)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.001 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.004 (0.01)
Previous EET		0.77*** (0.12)		0.83*** (0.12)
Constant	0.08* (0.05)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.12** (0.05)	0.002 (0.04)
Observations	51	33	51	33
R-squared	0.38	0.82	0.27	0.8

Standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

TABLE 5.

FITTED VALUES (BASED ON MODEL 3 OF TABLE 3)

Type of Transition	Former Colony (UK)	Predicted EET
Mixed	No	0.05
Unilateral	No	0.14
Mixed	Yes	0.27
Unilateral	Yes	0.36

In sum, the results of the regression analysis lead to the confirmation of both hypotheses. Colonial experience can serve as alternative explanation for the permissiveness of a transition country's electoral system. A country's segregation of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups seems also to be an explanation for a given electoral threshold, while the pure fractionalization seems not. Possible reasons for the obtained results, interpretations and consequences are discussed in the next section.

DISCUSSION

The results shed light on the way a given transition process itself influences subsequent electoral system design. The main hypothesis tested in this research paper is confirmed and signifies that strategic behavior is the most relevant factor determining the permissiveness of the electoral system. Whenever one actor, either a civic coalition or the ruling elite or any other thinkable actor, has the exclusive power of decision in designing institutional settings, this actor will use this superiority to shape this setting in a way that serves best the respective interests. In most cases, the main interest is the retention of power (cf. Montero & Lago, 2011). Electoral systems are easy to manipulate and massively impact the distribution of (political) power (Sartori, 1968). Thus, ideology does not play an important role when it comes to electoral system choice. Nor is it important whether a transition is initiated from below and is somewhat like a revolution by the people or launched by the ruling elites. Although this difference certainly is important to make and has different implications and consequences for the country in general, it seems that it makes no odds regarding the permissiveness of the new electoral system in a transition country. Political actors are rational and try to maximize their benefits. Thus they act according to their utility function, even in situations where no perfect information is available. This bounded rationality especially applies to countries in transition.

The less permissive an electoral system is, the less divided is the power of the dominant actor. Whenever two or more actors are involved in designing the electoral system, a lower electoral threshold and thus a more permissive electoral system becomes more likely. The more permissive an electoral system is, the more actors can participate in the political power. The rational behavior maximizing the utility function does not become less likely in defiance of great uncertainty and lack of information, although these factors may interfere with preferences and strategies (Montero & Lago, 2011). Proportional electoral systems become likely if an agreement on the transition and the new institutional design is necessary. The results of the regression analysis prove that. The occurrence and the level of violence while the transition seem to be irrelevant factors and hence can neither serve as a proxy for agreement or the lack of it, nor serve as a sufficient operationalization of the way of transition.

Another major determining factor for the electoral system design is a country's past. Both former colonial and democratic experience significantly influence the post-transition electoral system. Thus, reduced transaction costs and increased information take effect in these cases. The prototype of the British electoral system, which distinctively propagates plurality rule, first-past-the-post and single-member districts, is clearly recognizable in transition countries of this sample that are former colonies of the United Kingdom. Although there is reasonable doubt about the viability and functionality of these systems for newly democratized countries (Birch, 2005).

The most determining factor of a post-transition electoral system throughout all applied models is experience with democracy and its institutions. The strong and significant effect

of the previous electoral threshold shows that countries tend to rely on these former institutions, regardless who is in charge of the electoral system. Information about the past serves to overcome the lack of information about the future (Andrews & Jackman, 2005). Interesting to know and a possible area for further research would be how the quality of the former (democratic) stages influences the choice for a transfer of these to the present, i.e. how likely a turning away from former institutions is and in what situations this happens.

The results also show that fractionalization in general does not influence electoral system choice significantly. Rather the distribution of the different fractions within one country seems to be important. It is assumable that larger countries have more room to deal with the concentration of different groups and thus can apply even majoritarian electoral systems without violating principles of equity and fair representation (cf. Boix, 1999). That country-specific variables overall affect the electoral system's permissiveness just weakly, implies, as the name suggests, that these factors can hardly be generalized and are specific for every country and take effect in a likewise specific interaction. That they nevertheless play a certain role is not least proved by the significant effect of a country's segregation.

Regarding the methods, one has to say that 30 to 51 observations are sufficient to obtain reliable and interpretable results, but a large-N study would also be desirable. This could be possible, since a lot of countries had more than one transition from authoritarian rule and/or to democracy, but the feasibility remains questionable. Also the analysis in this research paper takes only the first post-transition election into account. Although this is due to the research question, another important insight would be how quickly, if any, changes to this initial electoral system are applied, i.e. if and how political actors learn and how this is reflected in the electoral system. Also worth considering would be an effect of plural political culture and its varying extent in different settings and countries, regarding electoral systems. Although such a comprehensive factor could better be investigated by in-depth case studies. This is also true for the study of possible reasons of failure to establish democratic (electoral) rules (Birch, 2005; Pastor, 1999).

Transition processes and their respective characteristics are still very difficult to operationalize, since such political turnarounds change countries significantly and a lot of different factors must come together to make it happen and especially to make it work (Bunce, 2000; Montero & Lago, 2011; Pastor, 1999; Welzel, 2006). The study by Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005) seems to be the only one that codes third-wave transitions according to their properties. This scarcity of (quantitative) studies makes contributions like this research paper more valuable, but at the same time shows that the research on third-wave democracies and the respective transition processes is still in the early stages. Transitions are phases of disorder, their development is rather unpredictable and key factors are often not clearly identifiable. Notwithstanding these unique attributes and prerequisites, it is important to capture these historical events scientifically to further understand their procedure and mechanisms and to be able to derive possible policy implications.

CONCLUSION

This research paper examined the relationship between the type of transition and the corresponding electoral system choice. Both the hypothesis that a mixed transition makes an electoral system with a low electoral threshold more likely and the hypothesis that a democratic past strongly influences the democratic present are corroborated. Also colonial experience and a country's degree of segregation seem to be relevant factors. The obtained results show that (political) actors behave strategically and according to their utility function. Thus, the electoral system serves as an instrument to maintain or change given power relations. Ideological factors seem to be negligible.

Studies about transition processes and the respective countries will stay highly relevant since a possible fourth wave of democracies is still to come and the developments towards democratic systems in the late 20th century and the early 21st century are fairly underrepresented in the academic discussion. But the conditions and dispositions that lead to breakdowns of authoritarian regimes and to the establishment of democratic norms are of significant importance regarding the research on democracy and its sustainability. Transition processes are a promising field for future research and will even be more challenging regarding worldwide political and economic integration and an advancing interdependence of states. Therefore more data has to be made available on the configurations and courses of transition processes, but also on country-specific factors that influence such system changes and its consequences. The aim of future research should be to obtain more interpretable results that capture the implications of both the transition itself and the design of post-transition institutions. This is desirable not only for academic advancement, but also both for the political debate in general and the improvement of subsidiary policies in particular.

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