ON THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF POLITICAL COMPETITION

MEASURING POLITICAL COMPETITION IN A BARTOLINIAN WAY

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ABSTRACT

Political competition plays a crucial role in the democratic cycle, be it as a possible mainspring of political participation or as the essential element of democratic accountability and responsiveness. Thus, it is not surprising that many scholars focus on the impact and meaning of political competition. Unfortunately, such is very often misspecified as a unidimensional concept. At least since Stefano Bartolini's seminal paper *Collusion, Competition and Democracy* (1999, 2000), however, there should be no doubt that political competition is a multidimensional issue that should be treated accordingly. Bartolini identifies four independent dimensions of political competition: The conditions of entry to the electoral contest ('contestability'), the elasticity of the voters' demand ('availability'), the distinctiveness of the political offer ('decidability'), and the incumbents' safety of tenure ('vulnerability').

In our paper we suggest an instrument that relies on this Bartolinian notion of political competition and allows us to appropriately measure the four dimensions. By applying this concept to 30 established democracies, we are able to describe the interdependence of the four dimensions and use them to create a typology of different models of competition.

KEY WORDS • competition • democracy • responsiveness

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INTRODUCTION

Political competition is an important, if not the most critical determinant of democracy. Free, fair, and *competitive* elections are seen the minimal precondition in order for a country to be a democracy (e.g., Dahl, 1971; Przeworski et al., 2000; Sartori, 1987; Strom, 1992). Democratic theory considers political competition in at least two different ways: On one hand, it is viewed as the mechanism that ensures responsiveness (Powell, 2004) and accountability (O'Donnell, 1994). On the other hand, it is seen as the pivotal characteristic of control *by* the people. In representative democracies, vertical control is exercised by means of elections (Manin et al., 1999). However, effective elections must be competitive - only competition ensures a real choice and induces the political elite to act responsively. Only when there are several parties that are forced to compete for political power in elections, thus, only when there is a chance to win and lose elections, parties have to deliver on their promises.

Competition plays a decisive role in political theory as well as in the empirical comparative politics literature; there is empirical evidence for the positive impact of competition on different political and social outcomes, such as better representation (Powell, 2000), improved economic performance (Przeworski & Limongi, 1993), less corruption (Binzer, Hobolt, & Klemmensen, 2008; Coppedge, 1993), a higher quality of governance (Cleary, 2007), or even stability in new democracies (Wright, 2008). Furthermore, competition seems to have a positive effect on voter turnout (Franklin, 2004; Jackman, 1987; Sandell & Pacheco, 2008; for an overview of different studies using competition as an explanatory variable, see Bischoff, 2006).

However, even if the concept of competition is widely used, it is understood and measured differently and, thus, seems to be very elusive (Bischoff, 2006). In democratic theory, competition often stands for the electoral process as a whole. The meaning of 'competition' in the different empirical contributions heavily depends on the research question: While voter turnout seems to be affected by the closeness of the race, higher representation is more probable in open systems and the degree of corruption depends on the clarity of responsibility (i.e., the possibility of making specific parties accountable). Whether or not parties compete also depends on the volatility of the electorate. However, even if these four concepts all measure some sort of competition, they have very different meanings.

In his groundbreaking contribution, Bartolini (1999, 2000) clarified the elusive concept of competition. He argued that competition is only one out of four types of social interaction and must be distinguished from conflict, negotiation, and cooperation. Thus, competition can be neither a condition for democracy nor can democracy be a product of competition. Rather, democracy is a condition for competition. Furthermore, there are different dimensions of competition: contestability, availability, decidability, and vulnerability. According to Bartolini (2000), these dimensions are mutually interconnected. There are various relationships between these dimensions and different countries give different weight to the different dimensions.

In this contribution, we attempt to develop measures for the different dimensions that Bartolini theoretically designs. More precisely, for each of the four parts of competition, we deduce and use several variables and combine them to a measure for the dimension. With these four measures at hand, we test Bartolini's assumption

of their mutual interconnectedness. Furthermore, we present a typology of different empirical forms of competition. Our results imply that competition is indeed a multi-dimensional concept and should be treated and used as such.

In the following section, we discuss the contribution of Bartolini (1999, 2000) and present the four dimensions of competition. In section 3, we suggest measures for each of these dimensions. Based on a sample of 30 democratic countries, we use these measures in the next section to test several hypotheses concerning the mutual connections between the dimensions and to develop a typology of different models of competition. Section 5 concludes.

BARTOLINI'S 4 DIMENSIONS OF COMPETITION

In his influential contribution on the discussion of competition (1999, 2000), Bartolini argues in a twofold way that the concept of competition usually used in theoretical and empirical political science is "vague and ambiguous" (1999, p. 436). First, competition must be distinguished from other types of social interaction of different autonomous actors. Second, the relationship of competition and democracy must be redefined. Competition is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for democracy and democracy is not a by-product of competition. Furthermore, the conceptualization of competition depends on the model of democracy.

The first argument bases itself on the assumption that competition is only one out of four types of social interaction among mutually dependent actors. Competition must be distinguished from conflict, negotiation, and cooperation. Competition is similar to conflict in terms of the principle of action and of the goals. In both of these social interaction types, individuals refuse to subordinate their own interests to a common or global interest – as they do in negotiations and cooperational arrangements. However, while in conflict interactions, the goals of the actors are different and they try to inflict damages on each other. In competitive relations, the goals of actors are similar (i.e., obtaining power) and the competitors do not use strength against each other. Contrary to cooperation, the perceptions of the interest in competitive relationships are not complementary, but independent actors do not share and exchange means and information, nor do they advance promises or threats as done in negotiations. The most important distinctive feature of competition – compared to the other three types of interaction – is the unintended consequences imposed on third parties: Competition transforms individually driven interests into socially desirable ends. It is this idea of the invisible hand that makes competition so valuable for the idea of democracy.

However, and this is Bartolini's second argument, the idea of this invisible hand producing the by-product called democracy does not take into consideration the distinct features of competition compared with the three other types of relationship. To fulfill socially desirable ends, competitive relations need a framework of rules, norms, and regulations that can only be installed through cooperation and negotiation. Thus, democracy is a necessary condition of competition and not *vice versa*. Furthermore, Bartolini argues that competition should not be seen as a defining feature of democracy, either. Of course, and foremost put forward by economic theories of democracy based on Schumpeter (1950) and Downs (1957), to be democratic, elec-

tions must be free, fair, and competitive. However, in this case, 'competitive' only means contestable; that is, the electoral market must be open to everyone who wants to participate. Contestability helps to make the government accountable. The regular renewal of the mandate to rule is required for an accountability theory of democracy. Thus, only contestability can be seen at the same time as a necessary condition for competition and as a defining characteristic of democracy. However, contestability is not the same as competition. When competition should lead to socially desired ends, contestability alone is not sufficient. In other words, a democracy must not only embrace accountability but also responsiveness (i.e., the obligation for the government to do what citizens want) (Powell, 2004). Bartolini argues that there are three further necessary conditions of competition in order to ensure responsibility: vulnerability, availability, and decidability.

The probability that politicians indeed do what the citizens want is higher when they cannot be sure that they are going to be re-elected. Thus, they must be electorally vulnerable. However, electoral vulnerability depends on the willingness of the voters to effectively reward and punish incumbents (i.e., to alter their electoral choices). Bartolini calls the overall predisposition for the modification of electoral preferences electoral availability. Finally, voters must be motivated to effectively switch their party choices. This is only possible when there are different and clearly distinguishable offers by different parties, such as when the offer is decidable.

The main part of Bartolini's contribution (1999, 2000) is devoted to the discussion of the four dimensions of competition, as they are understood as a means for democratic accountability and responsiveness. We provide a brief overview of the main arguments of this discussion to have a sound position to deduce possible measures for these four dimensions of political competition. We thereby follow Bartolini's (1999, 2000) structure.

THE CONTESTABILITY OF ELECTIONS

Contestability ensures that – in principle – everybody can participate in the electoral contest. Bartolini argues that there are three distinct systemic opportunities or barriers that structure the behavior of new and old claimants. First, there are *ex ante* barriers, such as rules and requirements for entering the electoral race. The height of such entry barriers can vary and discriminate against new potential competitors to different degrees. Second, even if the electoral market is open, there can be rules that prevent competitors from winning seats. Thresholds or gerrymandering can diminish the fairness of representation. Third, there can be rules that provide an advantage to incumbents over new parties. Access to media or public money can be easier for parties within the electoral market than for new competitors.

Bartolini discusses two important features of contestability. First, he links the discussion on contestability with his previously discussed argument that competition is only one of different types of social interaction. It is important to note that the different barriers that can be installed to discriminate new competitors can be the result of collusive behavior of incumbents and, thus, a lack of competition. Because every barrier offers an opportunity for collusion and results in a potential threat for responsiveness, high contestability would mean no barriers at all. However, and second, barriers can also help to avoid political chaos. The unlimited openness of the electoral race can lead to an excessive fragmentation of the offer. Too many suppli-

ers would blur the distinctiveness of the offer. Therefore, Bartolini argues that the metaphor of electoral competition as an open market cannot be upheld. Even if there was an economic theory that defines the optimal number of actors for best competition, it would not work for electoral competition because of the monopolistic nature of legislation and due to the fact that barriers of entry are not set by the process of competition itself but outside and independent of this process. Contestability thus should be considered a first dimension of electoral competition that structures the opportunities for new and old potential claimants. The variation of these opportunities defines the openness of the electoral system as well as the degree of collusion among incumbents.

THE ELECTORAL AVAILABILITY

To be responsive, incumbents must anticipate voter reactions. However, the more stable these voter reactions, the smaller the potential threat for incumbents. Hence, incumbents are less required to adopt their actions to the citizens' wants. Thus, what Bartolini calls "the demand side" is crucial for competition: In systems in which voters are not willing to change their party preferences, such as where voter elasticity is low, it makes little sense for parties to compete.

Of course, not only the willingness to switch party preferences but also the willingness to participate in elections plays an important role for competition. In a theoretically ideal competition, all individuals who are eligible to vote go to the polls. They vote for the party they like most or the politician from whom they expect the highest payoff. However, the real world differs from this ideal in several points.

First, electoral participation is far from being complete. In countries with low turnout, it becomes more and more important for parties to mobilize voters. In terms of competition, the non-voters are important as mobilizable potential voters.[3]

Second, we know from electoral research that voters still have strong psychological identifications. Of course, in the past 50 years, there is dealignment from party affiliation (Dalton et al., 1984). However, there are still large parts of the electorate that are not available because they do not switch their party preference because of cultural bonds, their membership in specific organizations, and the like.

Third, as for the voters that indeed go to the polls and that do not have stable identifications with a given party, the question is on what ground they make their party decision. Economic theory distinguishes prospective and retrospective voting. Bartolini argues that, in reality, both choice strategies are used. However, what seems more important is the sensitivity of a potential vote switcher. An available voter normally is not informed about programs or performances of a party, but he must be sensitive to such information. Such sensitivity is higher in countries that have low segmentation, a low degree of political organization, and a lively public sphere. When there are important cleavages due to cultural heterogeneity, when the electorate is encapsulated in political organizations, and when there is only low social

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[3] Switzerland can serve an illustrative case. The incommensurable success, at least for Switzerland, of the Swiss Peoples' Party is mostly due to its capacity to mobilize its potential (Kriesi et al., 2005).

capital in a country, not only is the probability of a high amount of vote-switchers low, but also the sensitivity of such voters.

THE DECIDABILITY OF THE OFFER

The discussion on sensitivity opens the floor for the next dimension of competition: the configuration of the offer. Parties offer programs, issues, and ideologies to the voters trying to convince them. Or, more precisely: trying to mobilize their partisans, trying to convince *and* mobilize non-voters and trying to get the potential switch voters on their sides. However, to be successful, a party must make as clear and visible as possible its position, which must be different from the position of other parties. Decidability – as Bartolini calls the third dimension of competition – thus depends on issue differentiation and the visibility and clarity of this difference.

Again, Bartolini show that economic models are not apt to explain competition. First, in a two-party system, perfect competition would be the situation of two nearly similar parties that compete for the one median voter. However, this situation comes closer to collusion than competition. Second, economic theories are based on the assumption that voters' preferences are stable and exogenous to the process of party competition. However, if this would be real, parties would have no incentive to adapt their programs and hence, there would be no possibility for responsiveness. Bartolini therefore argues that electoral preferences are influenced by party competition: "Party competition becomes the process through which parties and the elite try to shape and modify to their advantage the structure of the electoral preferences" (Bartolini, 2000, p. 37).

To really shape the preferences, a party's offer must fulfill several conditions. First, it must be allowed to make an offer; second, its content must be clear and different from other offers; and third, it must be clear that the offer comes from the party in question. Bartolini discusses these three points in detail.

Competition bears a danger for democracy. A stable democracy depends on a balance between competition and cooperation, conflict, and negotiation. Other than in economic competition, it is the competitors themselves, such as the political elite that decides who is allowed to compete and who is not. An interesting case with this respect is the idea of consociational democracy (Lijphart, 1977; 1999). Because of legitimacy cleavages, the elite define areas of interaction in which competition must not take place.[4] This point shows quite nicely one of Bartolini's main arguments, namely that political competition is based on fundamental collusive preconditions.

However, the question is whether such collusion is necessary for the stability of democracy or whether collusive behavior of incumbents serves as important barrier for competition. This is the case for coalition-making. Because in political competition, there normally is only room for a few competitors and cartelization practices are rational for them. However, coalition-making blurs policy positions and ideologies of parties. Because competition processes are not isolated from party interactions in the parliamentary process, collusion is more probable in systems with significant op-

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[4] Again, we can use Switzerland as an illustrative case. Unlike Belgium, in Switzerland there are no parties that organize the language cleavage. Even if there are significant preference-differences in the various language regions, there are no national parties that fight for language issues.

portunities and incentives for party interactions. It becomes clear that there is only one case where such collusion does not take place: a two party system.

Collusion also can take place concerning salient issues. Parties can try to avoid taking a clear position on important issues. However, when party differentials are muted in key domains, decidability decreases. In political systems that enforce parties to take clear positions on salient issues and in systems that circumvent the removal of important issues from public debate, the decidability of the offer is higher. However, in systems where political agendas can be narrowed by collusive behavior of the competitors, public live becomes trivial (Bartolini, 2000, p. 50).

The mutually interdependence of the dimensions of competition can be shown by a further problem of decidability. As is the case with contestability, there can be competition avoidance by a restriction of the means and resources for electoral competition, such as by unequal access to media.

In conclusion, decidability depends on the height of the obstacles for political cartelization and collusion. It is foremost an institutional and even constitutional question whether competition is decidable or not (i.e., whether incumbents must take a clear and differentiated position that is visible to the voters). The visibility thus depends on the clarity of governmental responsibility (Powell & Whitten, 1993) that is also conditioned by the size of government.

THE ELECTORAL VULNERABILITY OF INCUMBENTS

The most often-used understanding of competition in electoral research is that of vulnerability, which is frequently termed as the closeness of the race. For instance, in participation research, it is argued that the probability that an electoral race will be close enhances an individual's willingness to indeed go to the polls because the chance that this voter's choice can influence the final outcome of the elections increases. There is a second psychological effect of close races at the party level. The more uncertain an electoral outcome, the bigger the probability that incumbents will lose and claimants will win. Thus, competition as well as responsiveness rises.

The problem with vulnerability is that it rests on past events and present feelings. The closeness of the race normally shows up only *after* a given election. Thus, the result of the past election must be taken into consideration. However, the feeling of a lack of safety for incumbents must also be nourished by actual experience. Thus, closeness of electoral outcome is only one dimension of vulnerability. There are also system properties that must be taken into consideration. First, there must be a clear distinction between government and opposition and, second, the electoral availability along this distinction must be large enough to approach the majority of the incumbent party (or parties).

MEASURING THE MULTIDIMENSIONALITY OF COMPETITION

In what follows, we discuss measures for each of the four dimensions. In other words, we look for the "empirical conditions which may push parties to compete one against the other for voters' preferences" (Bartolini, 2000, p. 33). Our empirical analysis is based upon different indicators on the electoral and political systems in 30 es-

tablished democracies between 1995 and 2005. For this contribution, we decided to take the mean values of these indicators, arguing that we are interested in – so to speak – the culture of competition within a given country. Of course, one can argue that the degree of competition depends on a given situation, a specific campaign, or a given initial position of an electoral campaign. However, while this could be true for vulnerability, it is – depending on the age of a given party system - less true for availability and for decidability and foremost for contestability. The latter two dimensions also are determined by relatively stable constitutional settings. The 30 countries in our sample can be seen as relatively old and stable democracies.[5] Of course, with the indicators discussed in the following, it is also possible to analyze cases of "situational competitiveness" (Strom, 1992).

To measure the four dimensions, we decided to choose indicators that cover the aforementioned theoretical arguments that can be combined into a single score. As we are dealing with dimensions of political competition, factor analysis methods are good tools to use. For each dimension we are using a confirmatory factor analysis that is commonly used to test how well a specific set of selected indicators represents a theoretically deduced construct.[6] We then use the resulting factor scores as values for the several dimensions of competition. The factor scores are easy to interpret. Factor scores above 0 indicate a value above average and factor scores below 0 indicate values below average.

MEASURING CONTESTABILITY

In his article, Bartolini defines three distinct and systemic barriers that regulate the openness or, rather, the contestability of an electoral system: *ex ante entry conditions*, *requirements to political return*, and *biases in quasi-integrated systems*. All of these barriers shape the contestability of the political race and should, consequently, be accounted for in measuring this dimension.

EX-ANTE ENTRY CONDITIONS

In almost all electoral systems, parties and candidates have to meet basic requirements in order to be allowed to compete in the electoral race. All of these formal rules may hinder parties and politicians to step into the ring – be it due to a lack of resources or by virtue of psychological reasons (e.g., missing self-confidence or reservation costs). Hence, ex-ante entry conditions limit the number of competitors and, as a result, shape the starting situation for competition (Bischoff, 2006; Elklit & Reynolds, 2002; Hug, 2001). Accordingly, we measure the ex-ante entry conditions with an additive index composed of seven items that capture the degree to which

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[5] The countries and a part of the data base on the Democracy Barometer (Bühlmann et al., 2011; see www.democracybarometer.org). The 30 countries include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
[6] We conducted principal component analysis and set Eigenvalues > 1 as the condition for the creation of factors.

the access to an election is complicated.[7] By adding up all of these indicators, we obtain a measure that reflects the height of the administrative hurdles to becoming an electoral competitor.[8]

REQUIREMENTS TO POLITICAL RETURN

Ex ante entry conditions are not the only barriers that previously or currently exist within the political process of legislative elections. After entering the electoral rally, political parties and competitors commonly face the problem of achieving political return, such as winning seats and, therewith, gaining political power and say. As in the case of the entry conditions, high requirements to political return could cause political contenders to stay away from the election (Bischoff, 2006; Hug, 2001; Tavits, 2006). Therefore, we operationalize the minimum requirements to political return with the vote share of the smallest party that is getting voted in.[9]

NUMBER OF PARTIES RUNNING FOR ELECTIONS

The most important effect of contestability is the prevention of collusion. When entry barriers are high, established parties collectively share political power without facing the risk of new competitors and there is a risk that these parties do not respond to the electoral wishes any more. Normally, such a system is challenged by new parties that take into consideration the voter's preferences. However, this is only realistic when barriers to entry allow for new competitors. The lower the entry barriers, the higher the incentives for new parties to challenge the established parties. In open systems, new political preferences and interests are rapidly admitted to the political process (Macedo, 2005; Morlino, 2005). The effective number of electoral parties, thus, can be seen a proxy for the openness of an electoral system. While parties are rational actors, they only compete when they have a chance to win. This chance is higher when entry barriers are lower. Hence, the more parties run for elections, the lower the entry barriers.[10] We are aware of the danger of some sort of endogeneity that might occur by using a concept that is itself affected by the other variables within the same measure. However, as we are not examining a causal chain within our contestability dimension, this is, at least here, not a relevant technical issue.

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[7] These items are conditions for the registration of parties (compulsory; signatures; fees; other requirements) as well as for single candidates (signatures, fees; reimbursement); source: www.democracybarometer.org.

[8] We used mean values for all 30 countries between 1995 and 2005. To measure contestability, we multiplied the values with -1. Thus, low values indicate high hurdles.

[9] Again, we used mean values between 1995 and 2005 and multiplied these means with -1 to indicate that low values are better for contestability.

[10] We took the mean effective number of electoral parties between 1995 and 2005 as proposed by Gallagher and Mitchell (2008).

Variable	Factor 1
Low height of administrative hurdles	0.54
Low share of smallest party voted in	0.71
Effective number of electoral parties	0.75
Eigenvalue	1.35
Explained Variance	44.9%

Principal Component Analysis; Eigenvalue > 1

Using the factor loadings for each country (i.e., based on simple regressions), we obtain the following picture. Remember, values below 0 indicate below average contestability, whereas values above 0 indicate high contestability (i.e., above average). Figure 1 shows differences in contestability within our country sample. Accordingly, the most open system can be found in Belgium whereas in Malta, contestability is lowest (i.e., the entry hurdles are highest) – with a remarkable gap to all other countries.

FIGURE 1: CONTESTABILITY SCORES BY COUNTRY
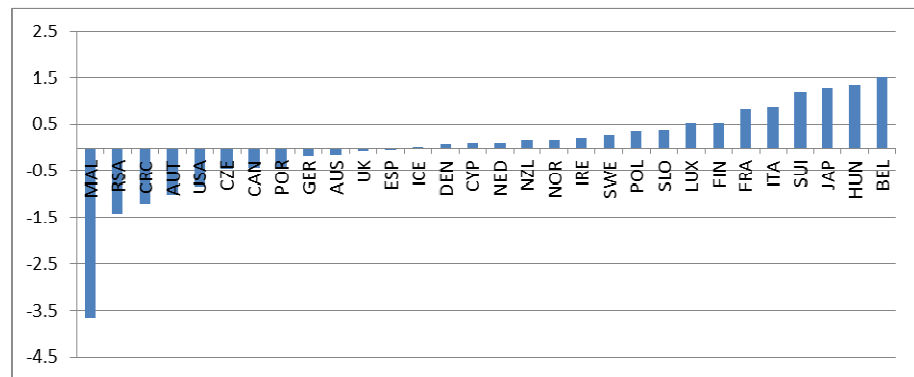
Factor values by country

MEASURING AVAILABILITY

Beside the entry conditions to the supply side of the political market, the demand side, such as the electorate and its behavior, is crucial to competition. A political system where, in advance, the actors of the supply side (i.e., parties and politicians) rest assured that the composition and the configuration of the electorate is not going to change, lacks any incentive for parties and politicians to compete – the election result will not change either way.

According to this and Bartolini's considerations, changes of and characteristics within the electorate make votes available and, therewith, induce a specific feature of political competition. There exists at least three basic components that, in this sense, characterize an electorate and the availability of votes: changes in size of the electorate, the voter elasticity, and the voter sensitivity. All of these features shape the availability and should, consequently, be accounted for in measuring this dimension.

CHANGES IN THE SIZE OF THE ELECTORATE

In the case of changes in the size of the electorate, one might first think about the influence of population growth and the demographic transition processes that are involved in continually altering a country's electorate. Although this would be an interesting, up-to-date, and unexamined research question, we are not focusing on this kind of modification. Instead, we are interested in changes in the voter turnout with respect to the precedent legislative election and, therewith, in contractions and extensions of the basic electoral set. Accordingly, we measure this first concept with the change of voter turnout since the last election.

However, the ways in which changes in the size of the electorate and competition are linked are unclear. Does an increase in the number of voters lead to more competition between parties or does a contraction of the electorate intensify the contest as the voter becomes a rare commodity? We argue that, in this case, changes in both directions induce more competition and that moving away from status quo in either way requires the competitive action of parties and contenders. Therefore, we consider the absolute value of electorate change to be the adequate measure for this Bartolinian feature.[11]

VOTER ELASTICITY

Changes in the size of the electorate are not the only source for competitive action. Even without changes in the size and the composition of the electorate, there exists incentives to compete for votes since a certain part of the electorate is commonly known to be willing to change its party preferences. An often-used indicator for the societal willingness to switch party preferences is the electoral volatility. It indicates the net change within an electoral party system resulting from individual vote transfers (Ascher & Tarrow, 1975). Systems with more swing voters and loose party-voter bonds tend, in this understanding, to be more competitive – parties need to offer more and operate proactively to maintain their vote share.[12]

VOTER SENSITIVITY

Voters' elasticity is closely related to their sensitivity. An available voter is normally uninformed about the programs or performances of a party, but he must be sensitive to such information. Such sensitivity is higher in countries with low segmentation and a low degree of political organization. Accordingly, in such countries, the probability of vote-switching is higher, and this induces political competition between electoral contenders. We thus operationalize the voter sensitivity with the percentage share of the voting age population that is neither a member in a labour union nor a professional organization: The higher the share of non-members in a so-

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[11] We used data from UCI's University of California Election Turnout Database (http://www.democ.uci.edu/resources/archive.php). We took the mean of the absolute values of the elections between 1995 and 2005 (considering the election that took place before 1995).

[12] We used basic data from the International-Parliamentary Union (IPU) database on national parliaments (http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp) and from Parties and Elections in Europe (http://www.parties-and-elections.de) to calculate our own electoral volatility data.

ciety, the more sensitive the people are to things such as parties' performances or their programs.[13]

Variable	Factor 1
Absolute turnout change	0.82
Electoral volatility	0.76
Percentage share of non-members	0.67
Eigenvalue	1.71
Explained Variance	56.9%

Principal Component Analysis; Eigenvalue > 1

Again, we use the factor loadings for each country to show the differences between the countries. Availability is the highest in Hungary, whereas in Iceland, the demand side of competition is quite low.

FIGURE 2:   AVAILABILITY SCORES BY COUNTRY
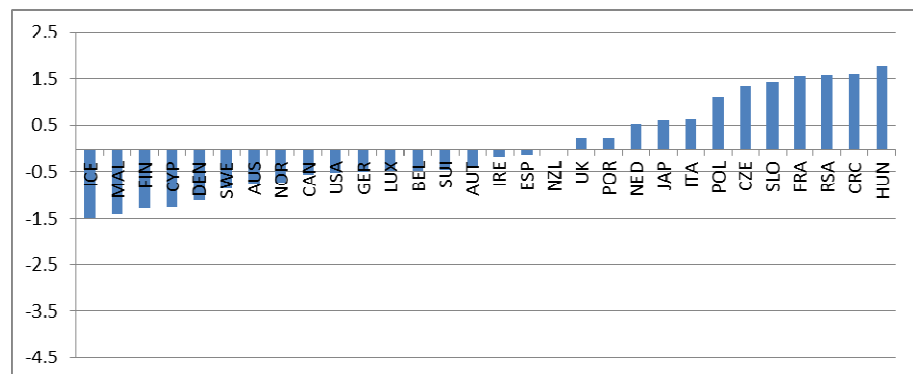
Factor values by country

MEASURING DECIDABILITY

Bartolini argues that competition also depends on the offer. Parties must take a clear position that is distinctive from other parties. Furthermore, the party's responsibility must be as visible as possible. Decidability, thus, is high when there are no possibilities for parties to hide their responsibility (i.e., when there are no opportunities for party interaction and collusive behavior). Of course, an important precondition is that there is an opportunity to choose (Lipset, 1963). However, to be decidable, an electoral system should not give too much choice. We again suggest three variables to measure these features of decidability.

Because competition processes are not isolated from party interactions in the parliamentary process, collusion is more probable in systems with many opportunities

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[13] We summed up the trade union density (according to the ILO) and the share of members in professional organizations (according to different world values surveys) and took the mean of the sums from different years between 1995 and 2005.

and incentives for party interactions. It becomes clear that there is only one case where such collusion does not take place: a two-party system.

GOVERNMENT TYPE

The importance and the transparency of the offer first depend on the type of government (Altman & Pérez-Liñán, 2002; Lupia & McCubbins, 1998). According to Downs (1957), a rational voter punishes or rewards the government party according to his/her evaluation of its performance. However, when there is a coalition in government, it becomes impossible to evaluate this performance. A voter cannot easily decide which party of the coalition is at fault for a given situation of bad economic growth. Further, he cannot determine which party should be rewarded for the low unemployment rate. Thus, decidability is highest in single-party governments, regardless of whether it is a single party majority or a single party minority government, and lowest in broad government coalitions.[14]

GOVERNMENT FRACTIONALIZATION

The same idea is measured with a similar indicator of government fractionalization. It measures the probability that two MPs who are picked at random from among the government parties will be of different parties. We argue again that a system is the more decidable when a government is less fractionalized. Thus, high decidability occurs when the value for this indicator is low. Therefore, we multiplied the probability with -1.[15]

LOW EFFECTIVE NUMBER OF PARLIAMENT PARTIES

The probability of collusion between parties increases with the number of parties. Bartolini argues that collusion normally does not occur in a two-party system that consists of a governmental and an opposition party. The more parties in parliament, however, the higher the incentives to collaborate and the lower the visibility. It becomes very difficult for rational voters to ascribe responsibility for specific political decisions to one party only. In such a case, the voters have fewer possibilities to punish or reward a single party. Hence, the higher the effective number of parties in a given parliament, the less the offer can be decidable.[16]

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[14] We refer to the government type-variable of Armingeon et al. (2010) and recoded a single-party majority government (1) as well as a single-party minority government (5) as 1 and all multi-party types as 0 (a minimal winning coalition, surplus coalition, multi-party minority government). Finally, we took the mean of all recoded years (1995-2005). Thus, there can be values other than simply 0 and 1 in the different countries, depending whether there were changes in government formation (i.e., cabinet size).

[15] We take the govfrac indicator from the DPI (Keefer, 2009)

[16] We used the mean effective number of parliamentary parties between 1995 and 2005 from Gallagher and Mitchell (2008).

Variable	Factor 1
Single-party government	0.88
Government fractionalization	0.92
Low effective number of parties in parliament	0.86
Eigenvalue	2.35
Explained Variance	78.3%

Principal Component Analysis; Eigenvalue > 1

According to the factor loadings for each country, decidability is the highest in Malta and lowest in Belgium.

FIGURE 3: DECIDABILITY SCORES BY COUNTRY
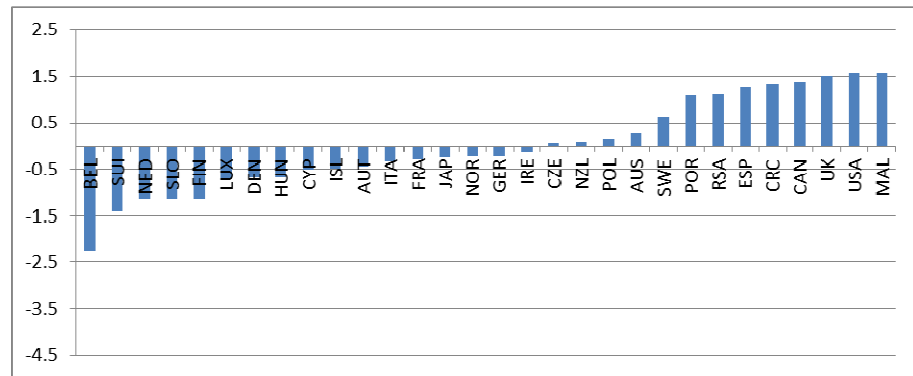
Factor values by country

MEASURING VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability corresponds to the uncertainty of the electoral outcome. It measures the most widely used concept of competition in US literature (Bishoff, 2006): the closeness of the race. To capture this dimension, we suggest three different measures of closeness: the closeness of election results, the degree of concentration of parliamentary seats, and the balance of power between government and opposition.

VOTE DIFFERENCE

The most often-used measure for the closeness of the race is the difference in the obtained votes of the two strongest parties (Blais, 1996). The lower the safety of tenure, the smaller the difference between the two strongest parties is. When the incumbent party cannot be sure to gain the majority of the votes, it will be obliged to act in a responsive way (i.e., to do what all citizens want). Responsiveness further grows as a result of close races because, from a rational choice point of view, it also raises turnout: Close races foster the probability of the importance of a single vote. Thus, the closer the race, the higher the turnout (Blais, 2010; Franklin, 2004).[17]

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[17] We use the data from the Democracy Barometer (www.democracybarometer.org).

SEAT DIFFERENCE

Closeness is normally measured by the vote difference of the two strongest parties. However, this closeness can be measured differently. Depending on the electoral system, there can be a close race concerning the votes which parties obtain that is, nevertheless, not mirrored in the seat difference. Therefore, we further consider the seat difference between the two strongest parties.[18]

BALANCE OF POWERS

We further argue that closeness depends on the party system. In two-party systems with single-party governments, closeness indeed measures the vulnerability of the government. In multi-party systems with coalition governments, however, we should not only consider the difference between the two strongest parties, but also the balance between the government and opposition parties. When there is no chance to change the government coalition, vulnerability is low even when the two strongest parties in the government are very close with respect to the number of votes and seats. We base our balance-of-power indicator on Altman and Perez-Liñan (2002): The Balance of powers (opposition vs. government) as calculated by $C = 1 - abs((G-O)/100)$, where $G = \Sigma g_i^2 / \Sigma g_i$; and $O = \Sigma o_i^2 / \Sigma o_i$. g_i and o_i respectively stand for the seat shares of government and opposition parties. C equals 0 whenever the government (or the opposition) controls the whole legislature and 1 if there is a full balance between government and opposition.[19]

TABLE 4: FACTOR LOADINGS VULNERABILITY

| Variable	Factor 1
Vote difference	0.92
Seat difference	0.98
Balance of powers	0.95
Eigenvalue	2.71
Explained Variance	90.3%

Principal Component Analysis; Eigenvalue > 1

As for the other three dimensions, we use the factor loadings to depict the differences in vulnerability between our 30 countries. According to our measurement of the mean values between 1995 and 2005, vulnerability is the highest in Cyprus. Contrarily, in average, the electoral races are not at all close in South Africa.

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[18] We use the data from the Democracy Barometer (www.democracybarometer.org).

[19] We use the data from the Democracy Barometer (www.democracybarometer.org).
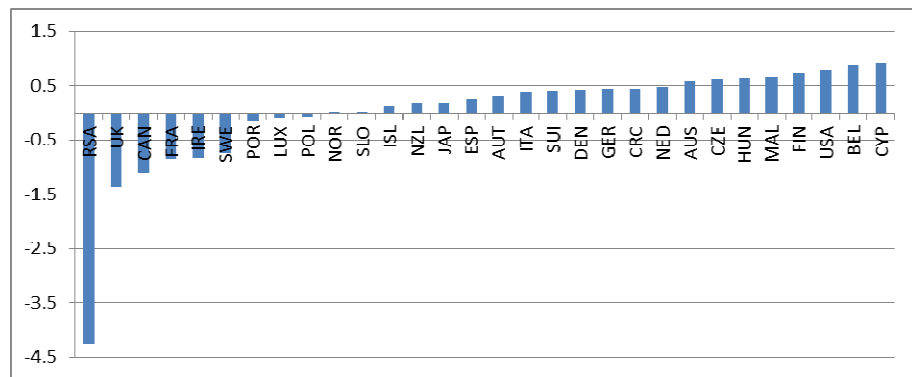
Factor values by country

EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS

With our four dimensions of competition at hand, we can test some of the assumptions that Bartolini makes concerning the relationship between them (Bartolini, 2000: 55ff; section 1) and we can use them as features of different types of competition (section 2).

MUTUAL RELATIONSHIPS OF THE DIMENSIONS OF COMPETITION

Bartolini argues that the four dimensions must not be seen as additive elements of one phenomenon. On the contrary, they can show even mutual constraining relationships. To illustrate this, Bartolini deduces three hypotheses:

(1) He argues that high contestability allows high fragmentation because small and single-issue parties can easily bring their demands into the electoral arena and bypass more established parties. In closed systems, single issues must be articulated and made palatable to more encompassing parties. Thus, Bartolini argues, fragmentation due to high contestability blurs the distinction between government and opposition and, therefore, should have a negative effect on vulnerability.

(2) The second hypothesis depends on the party system. Bartolini argues that vulnerability is highest in a two party system with parties of equal size. However, in such a system, the two parties tend to compete for the median voter and hence are not willing to take clear and distinct positions. Thus, vulnerability has a potential negative effect on decidability unless contestability allows for the entry of third parties.

(3) A high degree of decidability is more probable when voters are, to some extent, volatile, which allows parties to take clear positions. In other words, parties have higher incentives to try to win elections by taking clear positions when they know that voters are not culturally bound to other parties. Too much availability, however, can negatively affect decidability: "a certain amount of vote identification and vote stability is necessary to allow parties to plan the offer" (Bartolini, 2000, p. 58).

	Vulnerability	Availability	Contestability	Decidability
Vulnerability		-0.32	0.18	-0.37
Availability	-0.32		0.16	0.06
Contestability	0.18	0.16		-0.67
Decidability	-0.37	0.06	-0.67	

Two out of the three hypotheses outlined above seems to be confirmed by this first cursory analysis: Vulnerability and decidability indeed correlate negatively (H2) and availability has no clear-cut effect on decidability (H3). However, the connection between contestability and vulnerability is not negative, but (weakly) positive (H1). Thus, the openness and potential fragmentation of the system seems not to impede close races.

However, taking the argument seriously, there is no contestability in the sense of openness of the system that lowers vulnerability, but instead there is a fragmentation of the system (i.e., the number of parties). Bartolini argues that high contestability potentially enlarges the number of parties and that the sheer number of parties negatively affects vulnerability. When we take the effective number of electoral parties only, we cannot find a negative correlation with our vulnerability dimension either. In other words, the closeness of the race is not dependent on few parties. We can even take a closer look at our sample by comparing the countries with an effective number of electoral parties below 3.5 (i.e., Australia, Austria, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, United States, Malta, and South Africa) with the countries with a higher number of effective electoral parties. Taking the mean of both country groups, we find low mean values for contestability and vulnerability in the systems with few parties and high respective mean values within the sample of countries with a higher number of parties that want to be elected (table 6).

Countries	Vulnerability	Availability	Contestability	Decidability
Number of effective electoral parties < 3.5 [1]	-0.40	-0.15	-0.96	1.00
Number of effective electoral parties > 3.5 [2]	0.14	0.05	0.35	-0.36

1) Australia, Austria, Portugal, Spain, UK, US, Malta, and South Africa
2) Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, and Switzerland

However, looking even more accurately on the countries with a low number of effective parties, we can at least partly explain why we do not find the suggested connection between decidability and vulnerability. In two out of these eight countries (i.e., the UK and South Africa), vulnerability is exceptionally low. In the other six countries, vulnerability has the suggested relatively high value. The low vulnerability in UK and South Africa, however, can be explained by the specific situations in both countries during the years that we investigate (1995-2005). In the UK, Labour was much

stronger than the conservative party. In South Africa, the ANC, after the abolishment of the apartheid regime, won the elections by a very clear margin.

As for the remaining two hypotheses, bivariate analysis is not very appropriate. According to Bartolini, the connection between vulnerability and decidability is mediated by contestability: the negative effect of vulnerability on decidability should be attenuated by growing contestability. We, therefore, tested interactions between the three dimensions. However, our model shows that vulnerability has a negative impact on decidability, but that this is mediated neither by contestability nor by the effective number of electoral parties.

Again, we take a closer look at our sample. There are 14 countries that meet the assumption of high vulnerability and low decidability (i.e., Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, and Switzerland). In seven other countries (Australia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Malta, New Zealand, Spain, and the US), vulnerability and decidability are high. When we now look at the contestability of these countries, we indeed find a difference, but not in the assumed direction: the mean value for contestability is much lower in the second group (i.e., high values in vulnerability and decidability) than in the first group (i.e., high vulnerability and low contestability). In other words, high vulnerability has a slight negative effect on decidability, but this effect does not seem to be moderated by contestability.

However, Bartolini argues that the interactive effect of contestability should be highest in systems with few parties. In such systems, the few parties are not willing to take clear positions because they are not forced to do so by additional parties that compete. Therefore, we look at the eight countries with a low number of effective electoral parties (see table 6). Austria is the only country with high vulnerability and low decidability. In Australia, Costa Rica, Malta, Spain, and the US, both dimensions show values above 0. In Portugal and South Africa, vulnerability is low and decidability is high. In Austria, contestability is comparatively low (-1.01), and in Australia and Spain, it is highest within this country-group (-0.17 and -0.05). In these three countries, we can indeed observe the suggested effects. However, Malta and the US are cases where we simultaneously have high vulnerability and high decidability. Nevertheless, both systems are quite closed because they show comparatively low values of contestability (-3.66 in Malta and -0.84 in the US).

Finally, we turn to hypothesis 3, the connection between availability and decidability. Here Bartolini suggests a curvilinear effect. Decidability only takes place when there is a certain degree of availability. However, too much availability negatively affects decidability because parties need some stability to plan their offer. Thus, we suggest low decidability in both countries with low availability as well as those with high availability. This effect can be modeled by the squared value of availability. Our linear regression model indeed shows a negative coefficient of this variable, indicating in fact an n-shaped curve. However, the coefficient lacks significance.

Our country sample again allows for a more specific observation. We look at the five countries with the highest values for availability (e.g., Costa Rica, France, Hungary, Slovenia, and South Africa) and the five with the lowest values for availability (i.e., Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Malta). Based on the hypothesis, we would first suggest that these 10 countries all show low values in decidability. This is the

case for seven out of the ten countries, but not for Costa Rica, Malta, and South Africa. All three show comparatively high values for decidability. In Malta, the electoral demand is very stable and, nevertheless, the island country shows the highest value for decidability within the 30-country sample. On the contrary, availability in South Africa and Costa Rica is very high, as is decidability.

In a nutshell, we must refuse the three hypotheses: There is neither a clear-cut connection between the number of parties and vulnerability nor a systematic attenuation of the negative effect of vulnerability on decidability by contestability. Furthermore, we cannot find any significant n-shaped curve relationship between availability and decidability. However, looking more specifically on the different countries, we can at least create some indications for all three hypotheses. Thus – at least with our measures of the four dimensions – it seems that the idea of the multidimensionality of competition is rather a matter of typology than a matter of degree. This turns us to our second empirical part.

TYPES OF COMPETITION

The multidimensional approach of competition has at least two connecting consequences. First, the four dimensions cannot simultaneously be maximized. However, this does not mean that competition is ineffective but that "competition inevitably rests on tough tradeoff between its own dimensions" (Bartolini, 2000, p. 59). Second, thus, the dimensions must be given different weights in the real world. Empirically, we therefore should have found different types of realized competition.

To find such different types, we again follow Bartolini (2000, p. 60 f.) and distinguish three ideal type models of competitive democracies giving different importance to each dimension of competition: a "Downsonian model," a "consociational competitive interaction model," and a "Schumpeterian model."

The least demanding model is the Schumpeterian one. For Schumpeter (1954), competition is most essential for democracy. The distinctive characteristic of the political elite is its appetite for power. In democracies, different parties compete for this power in free, fair, and competitive elections. Competitive elections, according to Schumpeter, means that all existing elites have the possibility to fight for power and that the parties in power can easily be replaced. In terms of the four dimensions, contestability and vulnerability are most important for Schumpeter. However, the other two dimensions are irrelevant. Schumpeter argues that voters' decisions are manufactured (i.e., the results of the campaign of the different parties). Thus, according to this model, it does not matter at all whether competition is decidable or not and whether there is an effective demand in terms of availability.

According to Bartolini, the Downsonian model of competition embraces high vulnerability, high availability, and low contestability. For this model, decidability is irrelevant. According to Downs (1957), parties take strategic positions to win parties. These positions mirror the parties' attempts to anticipate the voters' preferences. In a two-party system, the model predicts a conversion of the parties' programs towards a median voter because each party makes similar anticipations. It follows that the electoral race is very close; in theory, one median voter decides which party wins the election. Thus, vulnerability in a Downsonian competition model should be very high. However, this idea of competition depends on an electorate that is ready to

compare its preferences with the changing program of the parties. In other words, when there is no availability, parties cannot take strategic positions. Because parties should be free to change positions depending on the preferences of the citizens, decidability is not needed. Finally, contestability should be low because this model only works when there are no new parties that can disturb the interplay between the established parties.

The third model lies on the opposite side of the Downsonian one. The consociational model aims at including all relevant interests into political decisions (Lijphart, 1999). The thread of the tyranny of majority (Tocqueville, 1997 [1835]) is met by power-sharing among different interest groups, including minorities. However, such a model does not mean that there is no competition at all (Pujas & Rhodes, 1999). Of course, there is a high inter-party agreement, but in the consociational competitive interaction model, competition must foremost take place at the entry of the political arena. Once elected, parties should search for compromise instead of competition. This is another nice example proving that competition has different meanings and should be treated accordingly. In terms of our four dimensions, the consociational competitive interaction model gives much weight to contestability, whereas vulnerability and availability are reduced.

To test whether we can find these models of competition in the real world, we recoded the factor scores of the four dimensions into dummies, whereas 1 indicates high values (above 0, or above average) and 0 indicates low values. Theoretically, there are 16 different possible combinations and types of competition (1111, 1110, etc.). In table 7, we filled in the 30 countries in our sample in the different possible cases.

In 12 out of the 16 possible fields, we find empirical correspondence. Thus, there are more types of competition than the proposed three models that occupy 8 cases. This can be taken as a further sign of the complexity of the concept of 'competition.' As still discussed above, there are no clear-cut models of competition but the countries indeed give very different weights to the dimensions. The idea of the mutual interconnectedness of the four dimensions and of different forms and models of competition can be further highlighted by the fact that no country can maximize all four dimensions at the same time (the cell 1111 is empty) and every country has high values in at least one dimension (the cell 0000 is empty as well).

Nevertheless, the three models prove to be quite good approaches. The majority of the 30 countries correspond to the three theoretical models: 13 countries have, simultaneously, time high values in vulnerability and in contestability. Therefore, they belong to the Schumpeterian model of competition. Two countries correspond to the Downsonian model and three countries are placed within the consociational competitive interaction model.

				Vulnerability			
				High		Low	
				Contestability		Contestability	
				High	Low	High	Low
Availability	High	Decidability	High	**SCHUM** *(1111)*	CZE, CRC **DOWNS** *(1101)*	POL *(0111)*	POR, UK, RSA *(0101)*
			Low	HUN, ITA, JAP, NED, SLO **SCHUM** *(1110)*	**DOWNS** *(1100)*	FRA *(0110)*	*(0100)*
	Low	Decidability	High	NZL **SCHUM** *(1011)*	AUS, ESP, USA, MAL *(1001)*	SWE **CONS** *(0011)*	CAN *(0001)*
			Low	BEL, DEN, FIN, ICE, NOR, SWI, CYP **SCHUM** *(1010)*	AUT, GER *(1000)*	IRE, LUX **CONS** *(0010)*	*(0000)*

In brackets: type according to combination (vulnerability, availability, contestability, decidability; 0 = low value; 1 = high value); highlighted cases correspond to the ideal type models: SCHUM = Schumpeterian model; DOWNS = Downsonian model; CONS = consocational competitive interaction model.

Looking at the Schumpeterian countries, namely those with open electoral systems (contestability) and comparatively close races (vulnerability), we can further distinguish according to availability and decidability. It is striking that all countries within this group have low values of decidability except one, New Zealand. Table 5 (correlations) show a negative correlation between decidability and contestability: The openness of the electoral system increases the number of parties and, thus, seems to blur decidability. The exception of New Zealand can be explained by the recent electoral reform. New Zealand introduced PR in 1996. The number of parties as well as the success of small parties only slowly increased after this introduction. Thus, decidability decreased over time, but the mean decidability that we capture is still slightly above 0 in New Zealand (0.09).

There are two important differences concerning availability among the Schumpeterian countries. First, while in Hungary, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, and Slovenia, the mean membership in unions and professional organizations is high (62.3% as a mean of all these countries), it is low in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and

Cyprus (15.4%). The only exception with respect to membership is Switzerland. Second, the two country groups differ in the changes in turnout that are quite remarkable in the group with high availability, whereas in the group with low availability, turnout remains relatively stable.

Only two countries correspond to the Downsonian model: the Czech Republic and Costa Rica. Both countries show high vulnerability and high availability, but low contestability. Both are quite young democracies and show differences to the other countries in our sample foremost with respect to the rapidly decreasing turnout (from 84.7 to 57.9 in the Czech Republic and from 81.1 to 68.6 in Cost Rica between 1995 and 2005) and with respect to significant changes in the party systems. From election to election, there are different numbers of parties as well as different competitors. Thus, the comparatively high availability in these two countries seems to be primarily due to instable party systems and – perhaps also due to this instability – an increasing disillusion among the electorate. Both the decreasing turnout as well as the changing offer of different parties does not match the ideas of Downs, even if vulnerability rests high even under changing offers.

In fact, we would expect four other countries to belong to the Dowsonian type. Indeed, Australia, Malta, Spain, and the US – all remaining in the same type of competition – show high vulnerability and relatively closed systems (i.e., have low values concerning contestability). However, to fulfill the conditions for a Downsonian competition model, they lack availability. Compared to other countries in our sample, the electorates in these four countries are not very volatile.

Three countries fulfill the conditions of the consociational model, namely Sweden, Ireland, and Luxemburg. All three are – according to our data – considered as very open electoral systems (high values in contestability) while availability and vulnerability are comparatively low. It is important to note that these countries are normally not considered as classical consensus countries in the sense of Lijphart (1999; see Vatter & Bernauer 2010, for new data). However, in terms of our ideal types of competition, the low hurdles of entry and the strong and stable attachment of the electorate as well as the clear electoral results of these countries are considered to be consensually competitive. Taking the example of Sweden, we must, however, relativism the notion of consensus. Even if the Swedish party system is very open, and volatility as well as vulnerability is low, this is not due to large party coalitions that share power – as is the initial idea of consociational democracies suggests – but due to the strength of the socialist party in Sweden from 1945 until 2005. Of course, one could argue that the success of this party can also be taken a sign of high responsiveness (i.e., high inclusion of different preferences). Thus, low vulnerability, low availability, and high contestability must not necessarily lead to coalition governments but, nevertheless, can be considered as consensual in terms of our types of competition.

Not only Australia, Malta, Spain, and the US, but also eight additional countries cannot be assigned to one of our three theoretical type of competition:

- In both countries, Austria as well as Germany, contestability, availability, and decidability is low, whereas vulnerability is high. In other words, both countries – at least on average and between 1995 and 2005 – show up to be closed systems where new parties cannot easily compete, in both countries

government often is formed by oversized coalitions and the electorate is rather strongly attached to the big parties. What makes these two countries competitive democracies is the fact that the two big parties have the same size in terms of vote strength (again: in average between 1995 and 2005) as well as a small third party that tip the scales. Whether the two countries also belong to this 'classic vulnerability type of competition' over time would be an interesting question. In Austria as well as in Germany, the crusted party system was at least partly broken open by the third parties (FPÖ and FDP). However, both times, the success of these parties was only moderate. It will be interesting to see whether the 'new' success of the Green Party in Germany will change the type of competition in Germany.

- Due to the party as well as to the electoral system, we would suggest UK to be a further classical Downsonian competition democracy. However, even if there is high availability and low contestability, our data indicates low vulnerability in the UK. This can at least partly be explained by the success of the Labour party during the time span of our analysis: Between 1995 and 2005, the party of Tony Blair was much stronger than the Conservative party. Again, taking a more longitudinal perspective could provide interesting insights concerning the typology.

- The remaining five countries all show low vulnerability. If one would take the closeness of the race as a classical concept of competition only, these five countries would not be seen as very competitive ones. However, taking competition as a multidimensional concept, we can show that competition takes very different forms (figure 5).
There is not enough space here to explain the differences between these five countries. However, what the figure aims to show is the variance of very different patterns of competition. When we take the different values of the four dimensions and draw them on four different axes, we get cobwebs that nicely illustrate the different patterns. The size as well as the shapes of the different forms of competitions differ considerably across the countries. While in all of these countries the closeness of the race is comparatively low, this does not mean that these countries cannot be considered as competitive democracies. On the contrary, the shapes indicate very different forms of conflict, negotiation, and cooperation among parties (i.e., very different solutions of political competition).
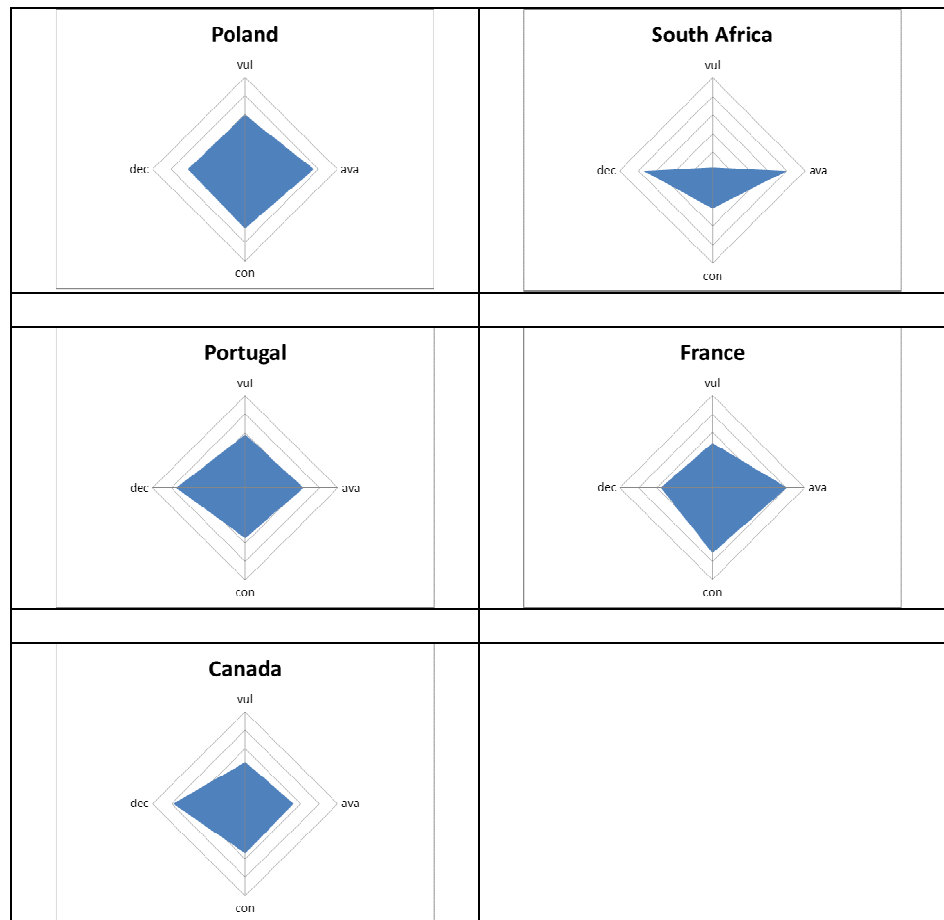
Note: The axes of the cobwebs indicates the factor-scores of the different dimensions of competition (vul = vulnerability; ava = availability; con = contestability; dec = decidability). For reasons of comparability, all axes range from -4.5 (lowest factore score) to 3.0 (highest factor score).

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of political competition is widely used among political scientists and plays a crucial role in democratic political theory and empirical comparative politics. Despite or even because of its broad application, the concept seems to have remained 'elusive' (Bischoff, 2006) and to be used in a 'vague' and 'ambiguous' manner (Bartolini, 1999; 2000).

In his seminal contribution, Bartolini sheds light on the distinctive nature of competition from three different angles. First, competition must be differentiated from conflict, negotiation, and cooperation. Even though all of these forms of social interaction share some basic characteristics with at least one of the other three types, competition is unique in its consequences imposed on third parties because it transforms individually driven interests into socially desirable ends. Second, desirability can only be the case if a framework of rules, norms, and regulations pre-exists. According to Bartolini, such surrounding conditions have to be installed prior to competition, namely through cooperation and negotiation. Hence, democracy is a neces-

sary condition of competition and not *vice versa*. Third, electoral competition is composed of – at least – four mutually interconnected dimensions: contestability, availability, decidability and vulnerability.

Each of these dimensions covers a distinctive feature of political competition and, thus, needs – in pursuing a holistic approach – to be taken into consideration. The contestability and the decidability concepts catch two basic characteristics of the supply side of the electoral market. Whereas the contestability dimension covers the terms and conditions of the market entrance, the decidability side is concerned with the character and the distinctiveness of the political offer. In contrast, the availability dimension treats the demand side of the electoral market and investigates whether and to what extent demand exists. Last but not least, the vulnerability concept refers to what might be called uncertainty of outcome or closeness of the race.

Starting from this firm theoretical and unique basement, we proposed different indicators for each of the four dimensions. Basing on mean values of these indicators between 1995 and 2005 in 30 different established democracies and using confirmatory factor analyses, we are able to show that, in each dimension, the deduced numerical characteristics all measure one underlying construct – probably Bartolini's dimensions.

With the measures at hand, we gave some first empirical insights, answering to the propositions Bartolini made in the reminder of his paper. According to our data, the four dimensions indeed are mutually interconnected. However, while there are bivariate correlations that partly confirm Bartolini's suggestions, the connections between the four dimensions seem to be more complicated is it seems more promising to look at different patterns of competition. Our data indeed shows different models of competition. As suggested by Bartolini, the different countries give different weight to the different dimensions of competition. One can find countries that match well with theoretically deduced types of competitive democracies, and there are also countries with very unique patterns.

All in all, the empirical results should only be seen as first cursory tests for the applicability of the idea of an empirical measurement of the multidimensionality of competition. At least our findings show that it is promising to adopt this idea for empirical analysis. There is no simple model and no simple measure of competition; rather there is a variety of different models of negotiation, collusion, or cooperation between parties.

With this paper, we try to show the potential of treating competition as a multidimensional concept, not only in theoretical but also in empirical terms. Of course, there are many objections: First, one could criticize our method. Our measures for the different dimensions depend on the indicators and the aggregation procedure. A second objection concerns the use of averaged values instead of measuring situational competition (i.e., different single competitions in the different countries). Third, we have to answer the 'so what' question. Does it really matter whether we use a one or a multidimensional measure of competition?

We try to briefly respond to these objections. As for the methodological criticism, we tried different indicators and different methods, such as promax or oblimin rotated factor scores. All in all, the different connections between the four dimensions, as

well as the typology, remain quite stable. Second, we argue that the use of average values (over 11 years) better complains to the idea of different cultures of competition. Of course, the idea of multidimensionality and our data also allows for an analysis of single elections in the different countries.

Third, not only does our data show different interesting patterns of competition between the countries, but first cursory analyses not presented here also show that the different types vary according to political outcome. Within the Downsonian type, turnout is lowest and corruption highest, but the mean issue congruence seems highest.[20] Corruption is lowest in the Schumpeterian type and the highest mean turnout can be found in the countries belonging to the consociational model of competition. When we look at the whole sample and the different dimensions, we can give more fine-grained insights than hitherto analysis of competition. Turnout, for instance, decreases with increasing contestability. The lower the corruption, the higher the value for availability in a country. And decidability negatively affects the issue congruence.

These first results can be taken a sign for the importance of the idea of the multidimensionality of competition. Furthermore, our analysis shows that treating competition as a multidimensional concept has great potential for further research. Our contribution can be seen a first attempt to empirically account for this idea. It should have become clearer that "one should not speak (…) of more or less competition, but rather of a different mix of contestability, availability, decidability and vulnerability" (Bartolini, 2000, p. 60).

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[20] We took the mean turnout between 1995 and 2005 of the parliamentary elections from IPU, the Corruption-Perception Index of Transparency International, and the issue-congruence indicator from www.democracybarometer.org (i.e., the congruence between distribution of left/right positions among voters and distribution of left/right positions among members of parliament (measured by party positions).

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