

Local-Level Democratic Backsliding? The Consolidation of Aspiring Dominant-Party Regimes in Hungary and Poland

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Aspiring dominant-party regimes often institute major institutional and political reforms at the national level to ensure they retain control. However, subnational politics are an important, understudied component of regime consolidation. This study uses mayoral races in Hungary and Poland from 2006 to 2018 to examine two factors that may inhibit dominant-party regime consolidation in local politics: strategic coordination among opposition parties and the use of two-round, i.e. runoff, electoral systems. While we find little evidence that strategic coordination can lead to widespread opposition success in single-round systems, we do find that increasing the number of candidates decreases the likelihood of the aspiring nationally dominant party winning in the first round while not affecting the second round. As such, two-round mayoral elections may be an important buffer to dominant party-regime consolidation and may provide a training ground for the future opposition.