Introduction

Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, democratically elected governments replaced authoritarian regimes at an astounding rate. From the end of the Portuguese dictatorship in 1974 to the Mexican opposition's victory in 2000, more than five dozen democracies were established or restored in Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Huntington 1991: 14–15; Diamond 1999: 25). Among the most inspiring stories of this so-called third wave of democratization was the 1986 overthrow of President Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines: Filipinos flooded the streets of Manila to end Marcos's regime. Their accomplishment seemed to promise that peaceful opposition could transform repressive regimes into representative ones.

When the people of the Philippines again took to the streets exactly twenty years later, however, their actions were the bellwether of a more troubling trend. On 24 February 2006, Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo declared a state of emergency, closed opposition newspapers, and began detaining alleged conspirators. It was not Arroyo's first encounter with coup plots or mass demonstrations: These were common occurrences in the raucous post-Marcos era. Political instability had plagued the country's last autocrat, and it continued to plague his elected successors.

If twenty years of "People Power" had failed to consolidate democracy in the Philippines, the political trends were considerably bleaker elsewhere. Five time zones away from the Philippines, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak appeared to have evaded the travails dogging Arroyo. Nearly a year earlier, the long-ruling Mubarak had garnered international and domestic acclaim for allowing opposition candidates to participate in the upcoming contest for the presidency. By the day of the Philippine

protests in February 2006, Mubarak had begun his "elected" fifth six-year term in office, whereas the second-place finisher was serving a five-year prison sentence for his activities in the opposition. If Philippine democratization bestowed an ambiguous legacy, the contours of Egyptian authoritarianism were all too stark: Thirty years of political liberalization, including the latest sheen of presidential campaigning, had neither dislodged incumbent elites nor empowered their opponents. Although Filipinos had ousted one dictator and labored to bolster their troubled democracy, Egyptian activists struggled in vain to curtail authoritarianism.

In light of events in the Philippines and Egypt, it is clear that the third wave left both burgeoning republics and durable dictatorships in its wake. Thirty years after the third wave began, the foundations of democracy remained unsteady in many countries, and in others they were utterly absent. The persistence of regimes such as Egypt's under Mubarak has confounded the expectation that authoritarianism was merely a transitional phase before democracy, proving instead that under certain conditions autocracies can last. This stark lesson is not new, but it is novel in the context of trends in political science scholarship. As democracy flourished in unexpected territory, political scientists forecast the downfall of many remaining autocrats. But the well-studied epoch of the third wave was only part of the story. The remainder is a tale of authoritarianism in an age of democratization.

This tale – the story of the embattled Arroyo and the emboldened Mubarak writ large – is the subject of this book's investigation. What forces set these two countries on such disparate paths? What factors distinguish the debility of Marcos's regime and subsequent administrations from the surfeit of authority enjoyed by Mubarak and his predecessors? The basic answer of this book is that institutional differences separate unstable regimes from durable dictatorships. The organizations structuring elite relations and decision making determine whether an autocrat's coalition will fragment, thereby opening space for the opposition, or cohere, excluding rival movements in the process. As the book's first epigraph from Machiavelli implies, undemocratic regimes are not inherently fragile; they weaken when their leaders drive dissatisfied elites into the opposition's ranks. Preventing this from happening entails more than the individual authority of an especially charismatic, willful, or ruthless dictator: It requires organizations, most commonly political parties, that dominate national affairs and regulate elite conflict. Such "ruling parties" generate political power for the members of a dictator's coalition. They thereby bind together self-interested leaders and ensure continued

allegiance. The process is self-reinforcing in two respects: When factions of opportunistic leaders are bound together institutionally, the ruling party provides collective benefits for the coalition's members and draws them centripetally, as it were, to eschew the opposition. And the opposition, denied insider allies, remains weak and marginal to national decision making. Its exclusion compounds advantages already enjoyed by regime elites and magnifies the benefits to insiders of working through the ruling party. Deflecting a democratic tide, ruling parties have been the root cause of regime persistence in much of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

Four Cases, Two Trends

To show how the emergence of democracy and the persistence of dictatorship have hinged on parties, this book draws on original research from Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The cases provide valuable variation along an array of potential explanations for why autocratic regimes fared so differently at holding onto power during the same period, roughly the final quarter of the twentieth century. My approach is explicitly comparative: I look at similarities and contrasts across cases, drawing conclusions based on the links and gaps between putative causes and outcomes of interest. The cases represent the mixed yield of the third wave of democratization, a period during which some dictators suddenly lost power, whereas their peers elsewhere retained it.

One indicator of the variance in political contestation between the cases is each regime's performance in elections they held and attempted to control. Not all authoritarian regimes permit such elections, but most do, and the practice became increasingly common in the 1980s and 1990s. Results in these "limited elections," manipulated as they are to the advantage of incumbents, act as a barometer of a regime's control over the political arena and the opposition's capacity to contest that dominance. Each of this book's four selected regimes held limited multiparty (or, in the case of Iran, multifactional) elections during the third-wave era. On their own, these elections neither catapulted the opposition into office nor insulated rulers from challenge. In two cases (Egypt, Malaysia), the opposition consistently failed to make electoral gains against the regime, while the other pair of regimes (Iran, the Philippines) proved more susceptible to their opponents' campaigns.

The Egyptian regime currently led by President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak (r. 1981–present) is one of the oldest authoritarian regimes in the developing world. Inaugurated in 1952 by a military coup that overthrew

the country's monarchy, it has been run since then by a small circle of officers and apparatchiks. From 1954 to 1976, party politics was limited to a single organization connected to the president. From 1976 onward, presidents Anwar Sadat (r. 1970–1981) and Mubarak have overseen a period of "guided multipartyism" in which they allowed a total of eight parliamentary elections by 2005. The elections have been overtly autocratic in their process and results: Throughout this period, the ruling party has maintained a supermajority (a two-thirds majority) of seats in the People's Assembly (Majlis al-Sh'ab). Thus, a pluralist veneer has not kept the Egyptian regime from dominating multiparty elections in the same way that it lorded over the single-party polls of a prior period. At best, opposition groups have managed periodically to win approximately a quarter of seats in parliament, but they have never disrupted the hegemony of the ruling political organization established after the 1952 coup. Durable authoritarianism, not democratization, has characterized Egyptian politics for the past half-century.

On the eastern edge of the Middle East, the Islamic Republic of Iran has experienced the kind of open elite conflicts that Egyptian rulers have managed to suppress or mend. Although the Egyptian leadership remains cohesive, Iran's political elite has been rent into competing factions, one of which openly advocates the regime's democratization. This internal contest was not evident in the brutal aftermath of the 1979 revolution, when ascendant religious leaders quashed attempts by rival clerics and lay politicians to codify popular sovereignty in the nascent regime. But a short while later, clergy close to the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (r. 1979–1989) began feuding among themselves. After a brief attempt at operating through a common party, elite factions publicly competed against one another in elections for the country's parliament and presidency. Khomeini's successor, Leader Ali Khamenei (r. 1989–present), failed to insulate himself from opposition, and in the 1990s a well-supported and influential alliance of center-right and left-wing elites collaborated against him and won election. This movement for democratic reform controlled the elected portion of Iran's government for four years, providing an opportunity for political change unparalleled in other autocratic regimes of the Middle East. Underestimating the intransigence of their adversaries, the reformists ultimately squandered this chance at transforming Iran. But as their movement suffered defeat and Khamenei's faction reasserted control, political authority in the Islamic Republic remained weak and contested, vulnerable to the turbulence of elite conflict that Egypt has so consistently evaded.

In Southeast Asia, the experiences of Malaysia and the Philippines mirror the Egyptian-Iranian contrast between elite unity and uncompetitive elections on the one hand and elite discord and contested elections on the other. A third as populous as Egypt and twice as prosperous, the economic dynamo of Malaysia bears striking political similarity to the Middle East's largest state. For more than fifty years, Malaysia has been ruled by a single party, one that has proven invincible in the stilted contest of electoral politics. Given Malaysia's advanced socioeconomic development, its durability as a Southeast Asian autocracy is especially intriguing. In the context of rapid economic growth over the past three decades, Malaysia's ruling party has never lost the supermajority commanded by its parliamentary coalition. This trend of electoral dominance began long before the third wave, in experimental polls held by the British colonial administration. Since Malaysia gained statehood in 1957, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) has trumped its opponents in no fewer than eleven national parliamentary elections. Consequently, the country's premier has always come from UMNO. Between 1981 and 2003, the redoubtable Mahathir Mohamad filled this post, ruling longer than any of his predecessors and nearly coterminously with Mubarak in Egypt. Both men blocked their opponents from power during the very period of world history in which autocrats around the globe seemed to be flailing.

In this dubious achievement, Mahathir's regime far surpassed the brittle autocracy of Ferdinand Marcos (r. 1972–1986) in the neighboring Philippines, which has not experienced the prolonged dominance of a sole party since gaining its independence from the United States in 1946. The archipelago nation of ninety million (more populous than Iran or Egypt) has been plagued by weak parties. Consequently, the pattern of elections is essentially the inverse of trends in Egypt and Malaysia. Power oscillates between parties, and politicians are constantly realigning themselves to pursue opportunities for advancement. The prevalence of elite factionalism in the Philippines implies a basic similarity with politics in Iran: Rulers in both countries have a difficult time accumulating and exercising authority. As one leader rises, his or her ascent seems to push other prominent figures into the opposition. Marcos reintroduced multiparty elections under restrictive conditions in 1978 and was ousted from power within two electoral cycles. His defeat by People Power matches (and indeed helped to create) the archetypal narrative of third-wave democratization: An increasingly unpopular ruler used elections as a ploy to sustain his power and inadvertently catalyzed his own defeat. Yet when we place the Marcos regime in the historical context of earlier Philippine

politics and in a comparative perspective with Egypt, Iran, and Malaysia, we can see why that story is incomplete. It was not elections that toppled Marcos but, rather, the underlying volatility of political power in the absence of party institutions, an instability that had plagued presidents of the Philippines before and would trouble those who came after him.

Figure 0.1 depicts the varied electoral performance of regimes in Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, and the Philippines since their founding. The graph provides the share of parliament won by the regime's principal party or faction through elections. For the sake of comprehensiveness, this figure includes the Philippines' period of unsteady democratic rule before Marcos declared martial law in 1972. These data do not reflect consistently free and fair electoral outcomes. Rather, they indicate the regime's relative capacity to manipulate results and marginalize its opponents. In this respect, the Philippine regimes – both democratic (1935–1972) and autocratic (1972–1986) – have been weak compared to those of Egypt and Malaysia. With one exception (the 1969 polls that UMNO froze), these countries' presidents and premiers have consistently prevented the opposition from gaining a substantial hold in the legislature. Iran's regime, like the Philippine regime, has proven less capable of blocking the opposition in its postrevolutionary history.

What Autocrats' Elections Are and Are Not

By the end of the twentieth century, most authoritarian regimes practiced some form of "political liberalization," a broad concept that denotes the lifting of earlier restrictions on individual expression and opposition organization (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986: 7). Yet in many cases, liberalization has not brought democratization: Regimes have permitted opposition movements to contest elections but have stopped short of rotating power or allowing fair elections that would have risked their secure tenure in office. Indeed, given the strong continuities of this period, it might be more accurate to call the third wave a period of plebiscitarian politics, in which liberalization measures backfired on some rulers but did not threaten others, than to consider it a period of democratization.

Scholars have long disagreed about the import of limited elections. Observing authoritarian regimes two centuries apart, Alexis de Tocqueville and Aleksandr Gelman reached contradictory conclusions about the dangers autocrats face when tinkering with political reform. De Tocqueville saw regime concessions as destabilizing: "[E]xperience teaches us that, generally speaking, the most perilous moment for a bad government

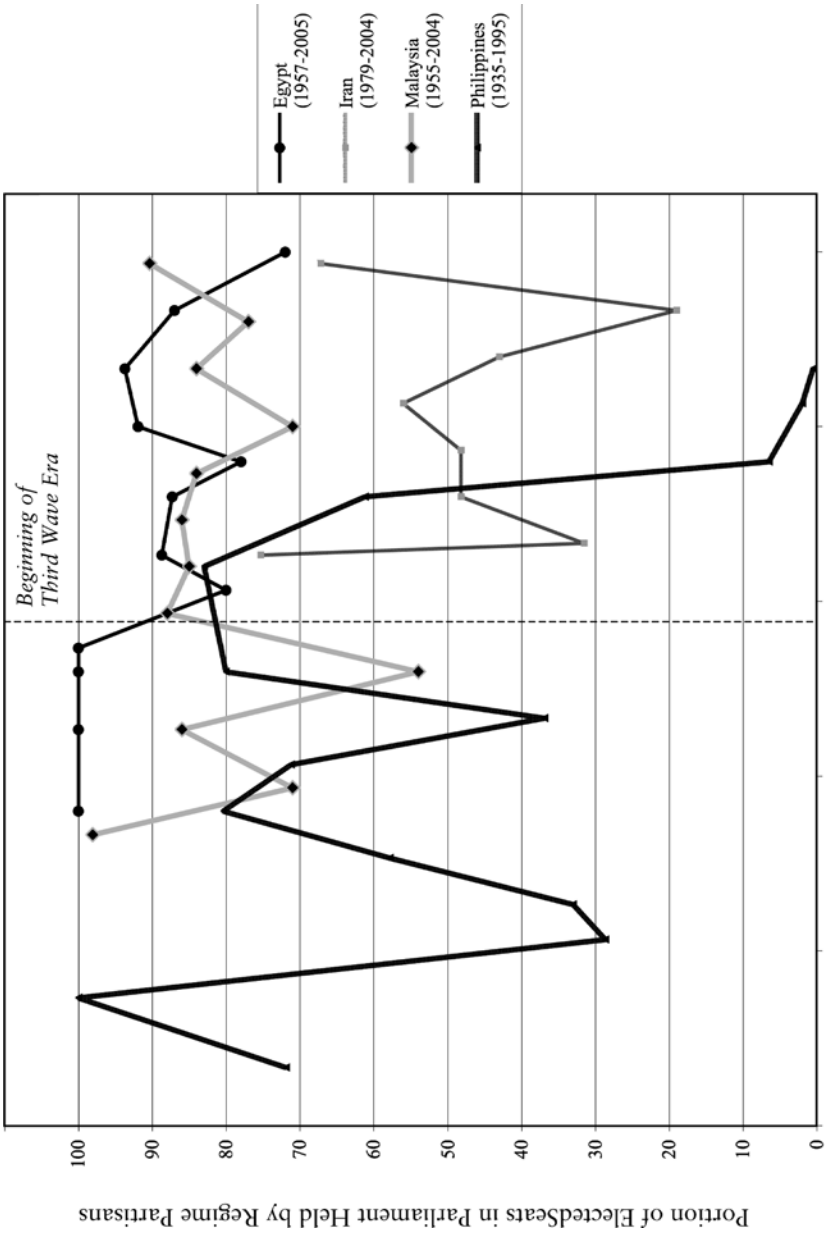

FIGURE 0.1. Regime Electoral Performance in Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, and the Philippines.
Sources: Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook (Oxford, UK: 1999); *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook* (Oxford, UK: 2001), and recent media reports. See individual chapters for citations on the 2000 and 2005 Egyptian elections, the 2004 Iranian elections, and the 2004 Malaysian elections.

is one when it seeks to mend its ways," he declared (Tocqueville 1955: 176–177). In contrast, Gelman thought political openings allowed incumbent leaders to deceive and distract their opponents. "Liberalization is an unclenched fist," he said, "but the hand is the same and at any moment it could be clenched again into a fist" (Brzezinski 1989: 45–46, quoted in Shin 1994: 142–143).

Following de Tocqueville, many scholars have seen inclusion by means of limited elections as a path to change. In their landmark study of transitions away from authoritarianism, Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter contended that post–World War II autocrats "can justify themselves in political terms only as transitional powers" (1986: 15) and saw a slippery slope from liberalization to democratization: "[O]nce some individual and collective rights have been granted, it becomes increasingly difficult to justify withholding others," they claimed (1986: 10). Along the same lines, Giuseppe DiPalma wrote that "dictatorships do not endure" (1990: 33), and Adam Przeworski reasoned that "liberalization is inherently unstable" (1991: 58).

Yet given the enduring and nontransitional nature of many autocracies, these claims overstate the danger elections pose to rulers. Malaysian premier Mahathir's 5–0 record of winning parliamentary elections is less memorable than Marcos's 3–1 record seeking the Philippine presidency, but it is no less significant. Contrary to the intuition that elections destabilize autocracies, many parties like Mahathir's UMNO survive elections on a regular basis. Most of these polls are not single-party affairs but races in which the opposition can participate, sometimes with great verve. The longevity of ruling parties in this context challenges the Tocquevillian perspective on liberalization.

If elections are not the "death of dictatorship" (Huntington 1991: 174), are they instead the autocrat's livelihood? Gelman's description of liberalization as "an unclenched fist" echoes in works that have not only framed elections as a common feature of authoritarianism but even posited that manipulated elections may reinforce and prolong autocratic rule (Linz 1975: 236; Hermet 1978: 14; Joseph 1997: 375; Chehabi and Linz 1998: 18; Remmer 1999: 349; Przeworski 2001: 15–16). Elections, in this view, are not the lid of Pandora's box, unleashing a torrent of political change, they are a safety valve for regulating societal discontent and confining the opposition. The durable authoritarian regimes of Egypt and Malaysia support this view of elections as mechanisms of control. But the opposition's electoral success in Iran and the Philippines signify that opposition activists may turn a regime's pressure valve into a spingboard for entering government.

The shift to authoritarianism with multiparty elections, then, does not represent an unwitting step toward full democratization, but neither do manipulated elections automatically protect rulers by reducing international pressure and corralling the opposition. Autocrats' elections, I maintain, are best viewed as one of the later stages in a long political process that may lead either to durable authoritarianism or to opportunities for democratization. When elections deal surprise defeats to autocrats, they culminate opposition groups' efforts to break the regime's dominance. In this sense, election results in authoritarian contexts tend to ratify rather than redistribute the power that competing groups wield.

Manipulated elections do not signify change in themselves, but they do provide a visible indicator of political competition, even as they call for deeper inquiry into the sources of such contestation. Despite being held under conditions that are neither free nor fair, elections under authoritarian regimes provide information about rulers, their critics, and the support competing factions command in the wider population. From Peru to Ukraine, electoral defeats for dictators have become what military withdrawals were in the 1980s: a signal that power has shifted from self-appointed leaders to popularly supported movements. Figure 0.1 confirms that there is nothing inherently competitive about elections in nondemocratic regimes, but surprise victories by Marcos's challengers and Iran's reform movement show that oppositionists can make headway in elections. The "stunning defeats" of incumbents are a sign to look closely at prior events and the hidden arena of a regime's internal politics (Huntington 1991: 178). Because autocrats' elections entail public clashes between opposing political factions, they provide a useful lens for gauging the distribution of power between a regime's coalition and its foes, even when they are corrupted by fraud and interference. When opposition candidates win elections, they demonstrate a capacity for surmounting the imposed constraints on political activity. Such victories may then provide leverage for effecting foundational changes in the allocation and use of national authority. Viewed from another angle, elections provide information about autocrats' control over the influential elites who support them in the electoral subterfuge that allows them to win. The electoral victories of dictators – premised as they are on collaboration against the opposition – evince elite cohesion and internal political stability, whereas electoral losses are the aftershocks of coalitional fissures.

In sum, then, elections under authoritarianism tend to reveal political trends rather than propel them. This interpretation differs from conventional democratization approaches as well as more simplistic, popular

treatments of elections.[1] Viewing elections as symptoms, not causes, of regime change or regime durability directs attention further back in the chain of explanation to the nerve center of authoritarianism: the ruling organization and the coalition it houses.

Ruling Parties and Regime Persistence

Political institutions govern the interactions of individuals and groups. They set out the "rules of the game" (North 1990: 3). In developing countries, these rules are engrained within organizations that comprise a certain set of members. Thus, some bodies, such as political parties, may be both institutions and organizations (Knight 1992: 3). The study of institutions enables us to make sense of how political actors behave and how effective they are at achieving their goals. Without taking institutions into account, we are left to observe major events without the contextual reference points of what motivates the actors involved and what determined their success. Institutions are especially vital in the study of regime change and continuity, when actors engage in a high-stakes conflict to restructure the political system.

By looking at institutions, we can understand the political constraints and inducements that shape behavior and outcomes, such as election results under autocratic regimes. It is natural to imagine democratization movements, as well as dictatorships, as driven by the most prominent leaders involved. Political change thus appears as an archetypal clash between heroes and villains – the Corazon Aquinos challenging the Ferdinand Marcoses of the developing world. But although leadership on both sides plays an important role in determining when and how regimes may reform, rulers and opposition activists operate in a context that predates their entry into politics (Marx 2004 [1852]: 15). Prior history, organizational networks, economic resources, and ideology are among countless variables that influence whether, how, and how effectively actors will push for change or seek to prevent it. Although political leaders stand at the forefront of politics, these less visible factors constantly shape the choices they face and the outcomes they bring about. Recognizing such structural

[1] Journalists' accounts often portray elections – or even the announcement of upcoming elections – as momentous events. The *New York Times*, for example, gave front-page coverage in its national edition to Mubarak's 26 February 2005 announcement that contested presidential elections would be held later that year – the very polls that doomed opposition leader Ayman Nour by virtue of his second-place finish to the guaranteed winner, Mubarak.