PART I

THE PUZZLE
I

Breakthrough Elections

Mixed Regimes, Democracy Assistance, and International Diffusion

While democracy must be more than free elections ... it also cannot be less.

Kofi Annan

Eventful temporality recognizes the power of events in history ... and events may be defined as that relatively rare sub-class of happenings that significantly transform structures....

William Sewell

From 1998 to 2005, a wave of electoral defeats of authoritarian leaders swept through postcommunist Europe and Eurasia. This surprising run of opposition victories began with the Slovak election in 1998, when Mikuláš Dzurinda, the candidate of the democratic opposition, succeeded in forming a government and thereby ended the assault on democracy mounted by his predecessor, Vladimír Mečiar. Two years later, the Croatian Democratic Union, which had relied on autocratic methods to govern Croatia since its victory in the first competitive elections held in that country a decade earlier, finally lost power to the democratic opposition. The electoral “virus” then spread to neighboring Serbia. Here, popular protests following the September 2000 election for the Yugoslav presidency forced the long-serving dictator, Slobodan Milošević, to respect the verdict of the voters and transfer power to Vojislav Koštunica, the candidate of the liberal opposition. Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 then joined the wave of electoral turnovers. All three of these elections featured developments similar to those that had taken place in Serbia – that is, popular protests in reaction to rigged elections and the empowerment of new political leaders and governing parties.


Part I. The Puzzle

PURPOSE AND PUZZLES

The purpose of this book is to analyze this remarkable run of democratizing elections in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia. These elections are of interest for both empirical and theoretical reasons. First, they were undeniably important political events. At the very least these electoral breakthroughs by

the opposition terminated a trend in all six countries of growing authoritarianism over time, and at most they produced a veritable leap from authoritarianism to democracy. These elections also influenced political developments considerably beyond the borders of the six countries where authoritarian leaders lost power. For example, many of the symbols and much of the rhetoric of Ukraine’s 2004 Orange Revolution resurfaced in the huge demonstrations against Syrian control that took place in Lebanon in March 2005 and nearly three years later in both the campaigns preceding the Kenyan presidential election and the protests that followed. In addition, many of the strategies used by the opposition in Ukraine in 2004 and earlier by students in Serbia from 1998 to 2000 were deliberately redeployed by opponents of the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe and by students in Venezuela opposing the 2007 constitutional amendments proposed by President Hugo Chávez. Protests against irregular elections in Togo and Ethiopia in 2005 and Mexico in 2006 also seem to have been influenced by the precedent and by some of the practices of successful challenges to official election results that took place in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. Finally, the mass demonstrations against electoral fraud that broke
out in June 2009 in Iran following the presidential election bore a family resemblance to the postelection protests that took place in the postcommunist world from 2000 to 2008. In fact, Ayatollah Khameini, a strong supporter of the incumbent and declared victor in that controversial election, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, drew an explicit parallel between the Iranian protests against electoral fraud and those that had brought an end to the Shevardnadze regime six years earlier in Georgia.7

These elections are also of interest because they pose some fascinating puzzles for specialists in comparative and international politics. Why and how did these electoral breakthroughs take place? While it can be argued that electoral defeat is always a possibility when authoritarian leaders allow competition for office, the fact remains that the norm in these countries, as more generally in mixed regimes, has been for incumbent authoritarians to win rather than lose elections.8 This is not surprising. Authoritarian incumbents command far more resources than the opposition, and oppositions in contexts that combine authoritarian politics and competitive elections tend to be divided, disputatious, and thus ineffective. At the same time, citizens in such systems tend to be either relatively supportive of the regime or, if not, unlikely to transfer their votes to the opposition. On the one hand, why bother to vote for the opposition if it cannot win power? On the other hand, why support opposition parties and candidates when they have shown themselves time and again to be more interested in bickering with each other, collaborating with the regime, running lackluster campaigns, and/or boycotting elections than in identifying issues of concern to the electorate and mounting collaborative, ambitious, and therefore credible electoral challenges to authoritarian rule?

A second and related puzzle focuses on the pattern of these electoral breakthroughs. Why do we see such similar developments in so many countries in one region within such a short span of time? Here, we are struck by the

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parallels between the cross-national spread of electoral challenges to authoritarian rule and the spread of popular protests in the same region a decade earlier that led to the collapse of communism. Is there something special about this part of the world that encourages popular mobilizations against authoritarian rule? This question leads in turn to a more basic issue highlighted by the geography and timing of the breakthrough elections. Was the clustering of these electoral shifts a matter of similar circumstances giving rise to similar, but nonetheless separate, political dynamics, or, as phrases such as “wave” and the “spread of electoral change” seem to imply, a more interconnected cross-national dynamic, wherein the defeat of authoritarian rulers in one country influenced similar electoral turnarounds in the neighborhood?

Third, how can we account for the variations in democratic progress that followed the empowerment of the opposition? While these pivotal elections ended a dangerous episode of de-democratization in Slovakia, they had the different, but even more dramatic, effects in Croatia and Serbia of replacing nearly overnight long-standing authoritarian regimes with democratic orders. In Ukraine, democratic progress after the 2004 election was considerable but, as in Serbia, was accompanied by continuing conflicts among the winners, as well as between the winners and losers in the parliamentary and presidential elections that followed the pivotal 2004 election for the Ukrainian presidency. Finally, the 2003 election in Georgia and the 2005 election in Kyrgyzstan, while leading to the removal from power of long-serving authoritarian leaders, produced a more checkered record with respect to improvements in civil liberties and political rights.

A final puzzle requires us to look beyond our six pivotal electoral episodes and ask why these elections led to turnover, whereas other elections failed to do so – a contrast that it is necessary to explore if we are to develop a compelling explanation of why these electoral shifts occurred and why they moved from state to state. Here, two sets of instructive cases come to the fore. One is


12 See, for example, Radnitz, “A Horse of a Different Color”; Welt, “Regime Weakness and Electoral Breakthrough”; and Mitchell, Uncertain Democracy.
the earlier elections that took place in our six countries – elections that often occurred in circumstances similar to those that had led to electoral turnover, but that had, with the exception of Slovakia, the invariable result of producing a defeat for the opposition. Just as analytically illuminating is another group of elections – that is, those in Armenia in 2003 and 2008, Azerbaijan in 2003 and 2005, and Belarus in 2001 and 2006. In all of these cases, authoritarian incumbents or their anointed successors won power despite striking similarities between these elections and those that had resulted in a transfer of power from authoritarians to democrats. For example, in these three countries as in Serbia in 2000, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005, regimes had become more repressive in the years leading up to the elections; oppositions had succeeded in forming coalitions in order to improve their prospects for winning office; and rigged elections had been followed by large-scale popular protests contesting the official results.

In the chapters that follow, we address these four questions by comparing eleven elections and the political and economic evolution of the nine regimes in which these elections took place (see Table 1.1). Our answers are based upon six years of research that involved conducting more than 200 interviews in Baku, Berlin, Belgrade, Bratislava, Ithaca, Kyiv, Lviv, Moscow, New York, Oxford, Philadelphia, Tbilisi, Washington, D.C., Yerevan, and Zagreb with participants in and analysts of both the elections that led to the defeat of authoritarians and those that failed to do so. Thus, we interviewed members of the U.S. and European democracy assistance community; U.S. ambassadors and their staffs; local academic specialists and journalists; and members of a wide range of political parties, social movements, and civil society organizations (a list of our interviewees may be found in the Appendix). In addition, we benefited from interviews conducted on our behalf by Sara

**Table 1.1. Case selection**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date of Election</th>
<th>Type of Election</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>2000⁴</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Parliamentary⁵</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Parliamentary⁵</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>2000⁴</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Parliamentary⁶</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>2003⁵</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Parliamentary⁶</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴ Both parliamentary and presidential elections were held in this year.
⁵ Parliamentary elections held in mixed presidential/parliamentary system.
⁶ Parliamentary elections held in parliamentary system.
Breakthrough Elections

Rzayeva in Azerbaijan, Michael Varnum in Zagreb, and Igor Logvinenko in Kyrgyzstan and from commentaries on these elections and our interpretations of them in roundtables organized on our behalf in Belgrade, Charlottesville, and Yerevan. Finally, we made use of a variety of other materials written by academics, policy makers, and journalists, along with public opinion surveys, statistical compendia, and other documents provided by political parties, civil society organizations, international organizations, and a range of private and public European and U.S. democracy assistance organizations. While all this written information was useful, it was the interviews that gave us the greatest insights into what happened, why, and how.

In the remainder of this chapter, we set the stage for our analysis of electoral continuity and change. We begin by identifying four major debates in comparative and international politics that we will address throughout this study. One involves competing views on the potential for democratic change in regimes that combine authoritarian politics and competitive elections. Another focuses on the controversial question of whether elections can serve as key sites for democratic change. Yet another highlights divergent perspectives on the cross-national diffusion of democracy, and a final debate concerns the question of whether the United States can and should promote democratic change abroad. We end the chapter by laying out our approach, defining key terms, and previewing the chapters that follow.

THEORETICAL DEBATES ABOUT MIXED REGIMES

The third wave of democratization has led to the proliferation of what have been variously termed gray, mixed, hybrid, electoral, or competitive authoritarian regimes, that is, regimes that have the distinctive profile in comparison to full-scale democracies and dictatorships of combining elements of both types of political systems. Depending upon the definition

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13 We also benefited from reactions to our analyses of these events in talks given at the College of William and Mary, the University of Notre Dame, Harvard University, The University of British Columbia, University of California at Berkeley, Indiana University, University of Michigan, The George Washington University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Duke University, The University of North Carolina, University of Florida, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University – SAIS, Stanford University, New York University in Prague, and the American University in Baku, Azerbaijan, as well as at the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC; the University of Florence, Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio, Italy; the Jefferson Institute (Charlottesville and Belgrade); the Institute for the Social Sciences in Moscow; and meetings of the American Political Science Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies.

used, such regimes now constitute between 25 and 30 percent of all regimes in the world today.\textsuperscript{15}

Although these kinds of regimes differ from one another in their precise mixture of authoritarian and democratic politics, they nonetheless share two core characteristics. One is that elections in such political settings are regular and competitive, but take place on an uneven playing field that favors authoritarian incumbents over opposition parties and candidates. The other is that these kinds of regimes are much more likely than either democracies or dictatorships to be located in weak states and to change regime types from one year to the next.\textsuperscript{16} Mixed regimes, in short, are notable for their instability.

Analysts of these regimes, however, disagree not just about what these kinds of polities should be called, but also about why they have become so prevalent, why they evolve in different ways over time, and whether they are best understood as temporary formations or regimes in their own right. All these issues will be addressed throughout this book because all of the elections of interest took place in such regimes. However, there is a final and more fundamental point of contention among analysts that needs to be highlighted here. This is the very different readings by scholars of what motivates authoritarian leaders to “decorate” their regimes with seemingly democratic institutions, and what these explanations imply in turn about the likelihood of more authentic democratic politics in the future. For analysts who focus on democratization and who specialize in regions of the world where transitions from authoritarian rule have produced at least some examples of fully democratic orders, the usual argument is that mixed regimes reflect an uneasy compromise between democrats and authoritarians in which neither side is sufficiently powerful to dictate its preferred rules of the political game. This “rough balance,” according to this view, in addition to the global diffusion of democratic norms and the decisions by international financial institutions and Western governments to tie aid to democratic progress, plays a role in “forcing” authoritarian leaders and their allies to risk their tenure in office and thus their control over the system by holding regular and competitive elections.\textsuperscript{17} Because of the gap between their democratic rhetoric and their often illiberal practices and because of their exposure to possible defeat as a result of electoral competition, therefore, authoritarian leaders in mixed systems are inherently vulnerable to challenges mounted by leaders of the democratic opposition. These considerations have led some scholars to conclude that the

\textsuperscript{15} Diamond, “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes.”


\textsuperscript{17} See, especially, Andreas Schedler, ed., Electoral Authoritarianism, and Schedler, “Sources of Competition.”
very existence of mixed systems indicates authoritarian weakness and that the institutions that go along with that weakness provide opportunities for subsequent democratic progress.\footnote{Also see Roessler and Howard, “Post Cold War Political Regimes,” and Pop-Eleches and Robertson, “Elections and Liberalization.”}

A very different interpretation of these regimes, however, has been put forward by analysts who specialize in the study of authoritarianism and who focus on parts of the world where authoritarian regimes have been very successful in resisting the global shift to democratic governance.\footnote{See, especially, James H. Rosberg, “Roads to the Rule of Law: The Emergence of an Independent Judiciary in Contemporary Egypt” (Ph.D. dissertation, Political Science Department, MIT, 1995); Ellen Lust Okar, “Divided They Rule: The Management and Manipulation of Political Opposition,” \textit{Comparative Politics} 36:2 (January 2004), 159–179; Ellen Lust Okar, “Opposition and Economic Crises in Jordan and Morocco,” in \textit{Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance}, ed. Marsha Pripstein Posusney and Michelle Penner Angriste (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005); Ellen Lust Okar, “Legislative Elections in Hegemonic Authoritarian Regimes: Competitive Clientelism and Resistance to Democratization,” in \textit{Democratization by Elections – A New Mode of Transition?}, ed. Staffan Lindberg (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 226–245; Lisa Blaydes, “Authoritarian Elections and Elite Management: Theory and Evidence from Egypt,” unpublished manuscript, April 2008; Pauline Jones Luong, \textit{Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, “Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion under Dictatorships,” \textit{Economics & Politics} 18:1 (March 2006), 1–26; and Peter Solomon, “Courts and Judiciaries in Authoritarian Regimes,” \textit{World Politics} 60:1 (October 2007), 122–145. And see the criticisms of the democracy “bias” offered by Jason Brownlee, “Low Tide after the Third Wave: Exploring Politics under Authoritarianism,” \textit{Comparative Politics} 34:4 (July 2002), 477–498; Marsha Pripstein Posusney, “Enduring Authoritarianism: Middle East Lessons for Comparative Theory,” \textit{Comparative Politics} 36:2 (January 2004), 127–138; and Lisa Anderson, “Searching Where the Light Shines: Studying Democratization in the Middle East,” \textit{Annual Review of Political Science} 9 (2006), 189–214.} Rather than assuming vulnerability, these scholars proceed from the opposite assumption. In particular, they argue that authoritarian leaders in mixed regimes are in fact quite resourceful, that democratic oppositions and civil society groups are often relatively weak, and that the introduction of democratic reforms, such as competitive elections, reflects not so much growing domestic and international pressures on authoritarians to embrace some aspects of democracy as strategic decisions on the part of powerful leaders to enhance their control over the system. According to this analytical perspective, leaders add selected democratic features to the polity in order to expose, divide, and thereby weaken regime opponents; calibrate alliances; fine-tune patronage networks; and, more generally, solve the information problems that are built into the authoritarian political enterprise.\footnote{See note 19 and Ronald Wintrobe, “Dictatorship: Analytical Approaches,” in \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics}, ed. Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 361–396; and Mancur Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development,” \textit{American Political Science Review} 87:3 (September 1993), 567–576.} At the same time, democratic