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Introduction

On June 15, 2009, a week after opposition candidate Mir Hussein Moussavi lost the Iranian presidential election, the streets of the capital city of Tehran were overflowing with hundreds of thousands of protesters. On losing, Moussavi characterized the victory of the incumbent, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as a "coup," made a public plea to the international community not to accept the results of the election (Borger and Black 2009), and called on his supporters to rally in protest (Worth and Fathi 2009). Iranian citizens responded with the largest public demonstrations in Iran since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 (Fathi 2009).

Not more than six months later, the main opposition candidate for president in Afghanistan, Abdollah Abdollah, boycotted that country's runoff election. When his opponent – the current Afghan president, Hamid Karzai – reluctantly consented to a runoff (after asserting he had won the first round of voting outright), Abdollah, who had finished second, demanded a number of administrative changes to prevent a recurrence of electoral malfeasance, which he alleged had occurred during the first round of the election. Formal talks ensued, with no small amount of U.S. diplomatic involvement, but ultimately this effort did not persuade Karzai to meet Abdollah's demands. The challenger subsequently boycotted the election, refusing to participate in the second round of voting (Filkins and Rubin 2009).

Although these examples unfolded within the distinctive contexts of Iranian and Afghan politics, they highlight patterns of electoral competition and protest that occur across much of the developing world. This book examines the increasingly common trend of opposition-initiated, election-related protest – henceforth termed "electoral protest." Figure 1.1 shows rates of electoral protest from the late 1970s to 2006. Most important to note in this graph is the dramatic increase in the rate of electoral protest since 1991. The total number of elections that have been followed by mass demonstrations has more

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Value on Y-axis generated from two indicator variables:
   Was there boycott?
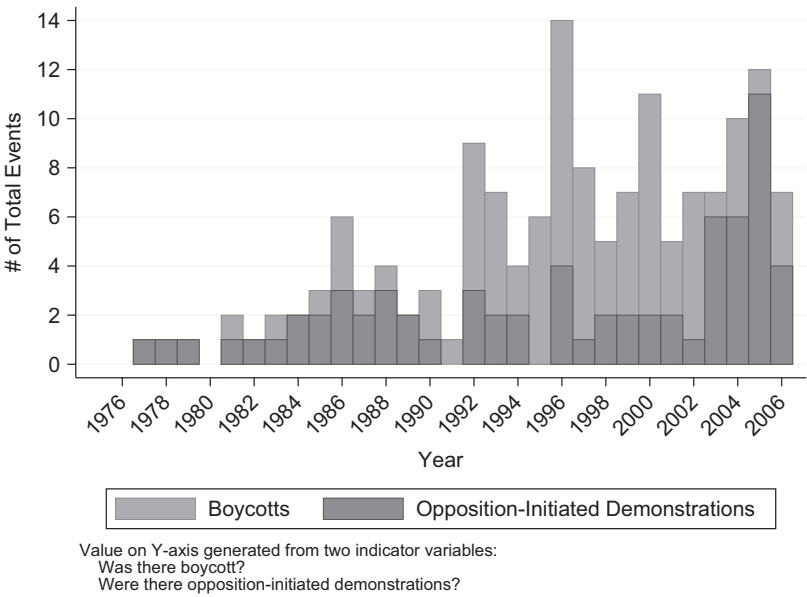   Were there opposition-initiated demonstrations?

FIGURE 1.1. Annual Count of Electoral Protests (1975–2006).

than tripled since the end of the Cold War, and the rate of election boycotts has increased ninefold since the 1980s, with 74 boycotts occurring in 46 different developing countries from 1990 to 2006. Why are members of the political opposition who enjoy the legal right to participate in elections increasingly taking politics beyond the bounds of electoral competition to challenge incumbents with extra-institutional displays of protest? Moreover, what do these contentious choices mean for the future of democracy in the countries where they occur?

In this book, I argue that electoral protests occur when the process of ongoing negotiation between opposition and incumbent actors breaks down. What such protests ultimately mean for democracy will depend on the nature of the attention and support that they generate from either domestic or international actors. Characterizing electoral protest as a breakdown in negotiation is not meant to suggest that incumbent and opposition leaders are everywhere engaged in acts of explicit bargaining, as they were in Afghanistan, but it does capture the dynamics of politics in the developing world where political actors cannot rely on strong, stable institutions for purposes of coordination. In the absence of institutional constraints on behavior, the electoral process requires actors to engage in more strategic interactions over questions that have long been settled in wealthy democracies. For example, opposition parties boycotted the 1992 presidential election in Burkina Faso on the grounds that the incumbent

president was misusing state funds to guarantee an electoral victory.[1] Although such occurrences are common in developing countries around the world, most wealthy countries have well-established rules regarding campaign spending and finance that candidates are not likely to spend their campaign period disputing. Not only do the political consequences of lower levels of economic development necessitate strategic negotiation between incumbent and opposition elites but they also introduce conditions that may cause these negotiations to break down in protest. Incumbent responses to these protests show evidence of further strategic considerations not only of domestic political competition but also of international pressure for democracy. Where the incumbent can enact reforms to appease international actors without the fear of certain electoral defeat, electoral protests can have positive consequences for democracy.

This book is about the dynamics of democratization in the developing world, and this introductory chapter explains what I mean by "dynamics," "democratization," and "developing world," in that order. The three sections covering these terms introduce key concepts for the book and identify this volume's contributions to existing debates in the literature. This study emphasizes an incremental approach to questions of democratic reform and democratization as a way to provide insight into the mechanisms by which full-fledged regime transitions occur. Furthermore, thinking about how elections work differently in developing countries offers an opportunity to gain insights that may be overlooked given the focus on the authoritarian regime type that has dominated the comparative literature recently. Finally, this book offers a new way to think about the causes and consequences of protest – one in which the strategic considerations of the object of protest are as important as the considerations of the protesters themselves.

DYNAMICS: ELITE NEGOTIATIONS, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES OF ELECTORAL PROTEST

Electoral protest represents a breakdown in the process of ongoing negotiation between incumbent and opposition elites. In this way, it may have more in common with a strike, where negotiations between management and labor have failed, than with other coordinated demonstrations where protest is used to communicate demands to the government. As with strikes, the key actors involved in an electoral protest could find a way to resolve their dispute without fighting and, if they did so, would likely be better off compared with the expected outcome of a fight. Inefficient conflict in the form of electoral protest occurs when incumbent and opposition elites fail to resolve disputes about the conduct of the election in which they are competing. At its core, then, this is a

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[1] Burkina Faso election victory hollow. Reuters. *The Globe and Mail* (Canada), December 2, 1991.

book about how political actors who are not technically on the same "team" still attempt to coordinate their behavior in the context of elections when they cannot rely on strong institutions.

Of particular importance in this theory is the substance of negotiations between incumbent and opposition elites. In the case of strikes, labor seeks higher wages and often more favorable rules, such as union shops, that will improve current working conditions and allow labor to continue to bargain successfully in the future. In the case of electoral protests, the opposition seeks improved access to high office and often more even-handed electoral rules, such as reform of the electoral administration, which will allow it to compete more successfully in the future. Given these goals, the immediate concern of the opposition is the extent to which the incumbent manipulates the election. The notion of electoral manipulation, based on Beaulieu and Hyde (2009), refers to any and all activities the incumbent could undertake to bias the election in his or her favor, encompassing both actions that are technically legal and those that meet the definition of fraud as an illegal and secret attempt to bias the elections in one's favor.[2] If the incumbent and the opposition are successful in reaching agreement, then the incumbent will only engage in an agreed-on level of manipulation and the opposition will participate in the election and accept the outcome. Over the course of the election, however, if the incumbent and the opposition cannot agree on an appropriate level of incumbent manipulation, the opposition may retaliate by staging an electoral protest.

The theory in this book considers two of the standard conditions that cause negotiation, or bargaining, to fail: (1) misrepresentation of private information and (2) commitment problems (cf. Fearon 1995). Actors can have problems reaching a satisfactory agreement if either side misrepresents private information relevant to the negotiations, such as their relative fighting power or the terms of agreement they would find acceptable. Here, the information the incumbent possesses, and may misrepresent, is the extent of manipulation he or she will commit. The opposition may also possess private information about how much manipulation it is willing to tolerate and how much trouble it will cause by waging a protest. If either side has private information and misrepresents it, the other actor may make an inefficient choice that can cause negotiations to break down and lead to protest. If the incumbent believes the opposition is misrepresenting how much manipulation it will tolerate, for example, the incumbent may miscalculate and engage in too much manipulation, causing the opposition to protest.

Even in situations with full information, credibility problems may cause negotiations to break down. Thus, electoral protest may also occur if one side or the other cannot credibly honor the understanding under which both sides are operating. The incumbent may promise a certain level of manipulation, for example, but ultimately may not be able to resist manipulating the elections

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[2] This definition of fraud comes from Lehoucq (2003).

more than agreed. In other circumstances the opposition may not be able to resist protesting, even if the incumbent has held up his or her end of the bargain.

One needs nothing more than this basic assumption – electoral protests erupt when the government and opposition fail to agree about the acceptable conduct of the election – to conclude that electoral protests should be endemic features in the process of either creating or throttling electoral democracy in the developing world today. The question of whether such protest ultimately helps or hinders democratization can only be answered by considering the strategic choices made by the incumbent in response to protest. If electoral protest receives enough support from domestic or international actors, the incumbent should be motivated to respond, if only to avoid continued conflict and a possible violent removal from office. Because future electoral fortunes are at stake, domestic support for protest produces a dilemma for the incumbent: how to respond without implementing the type of genuine democratic reforms that may reduce his or her chances of winning future elections. Where there is domestic support for protest, the incumbent's preferred strategy is to try to appear responsive while making cosmetic changes that will allow for future electoral manipulation. International support for electoral protest, by contrast, can motivate the incumbent to reform the process without the same threat of electoral defeat and may induce him or her to enact reforms of a more genuinely democratic nature.

Causes of Protest

By considering the object of protest as a strategic actor and emphasizing the coordination (or lack thereof) between potential protesters and the state,[3] this theory of electoral protest represents a major departure from work to date on protest. Previous approaches to explaining protest have emphasized the ways in which protest can result from strategic considerations on the part of protesters. Theories of protest based on resource mobilization argue that certain actors facilitate coordination with the goal of encouraging individuals to protest (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Chong 1991). Inspired by the protest activities of the 1960s and '70s in the United States, much of this work focused on how professional movement organizations could overcome collective action problems and thereby induce individual participation. With informational theories, by contrast, the assumption is that individuals will want to protest when they know others are also likely to do so (Lohmann 1994; Tucker 2007). For both resource mobilization and informational theories, then, protest organizers and protesters themselves can be strategic actors who consider the actions of other potential protesters.

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[3] Given the context of electoral competition, my theory characterizes the actor in control of the government as the "incumbent." In this section, however, I use the concept of the "state" to connect my work with the more common state–society dichotomy established in much of the work on protest and social movements.

In the political opportunity structure framework, protesters' strategic considerations are directed at the state. This approach claims that protesters are most interested in acting when they believe that the government is likely to be receptive to their demands (Eisinger 1973; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1989). In a similar vein, the statist approach suggests that the regime itself can encourage or discourage protest simply by virtue of its own strength (Migdal 1974; Skocpol 1979). In contrast to the political opportunity structure orientation, in which certain institutional arrangements or types of leadership suggest a greater openness to protester demands, the statist approach focuses more on the coercive capabilities of the state: Strong states discourage protest, whereas weak states invite it by signaling vulnerability. What none of these theories emphasize, however, is how protest might result from the strategic interactions *between* protesters and the state.

My theory argues that electoral protest occurs when incumbent and opposition actors fail to coordinate on an agreement that would prevent protest by the opposition. Similar to the statist and political opportunity structure approaches, then, this theory emphasizes the role that the state plays in either encouraging or discouraging protest. Unlike these approaches, however, in my theory the state is not an exogenous structural force to contend with, but an incumbent actor pursuing specific goals in anticipation of opposition behavior. In Skocpol's seminal *States and Social Revolutions* (1979), for example, the state does not increase or decrease its coercive capacity with an eye to encouraging or discouraging rebellion. Instead, state strength is largely dependent on the fortunes of war, and ultimately these fortunes determine whether challenges to the state will succeed. By contrast, my theory argues that state actors are strategic, seeking to coordinate with would-be challengers in ways that will defuse their challenge. Protest results when those coordination efforts fail.[4]

The fact that my theory treats protest as a preventable occurrence rather than an inevitability underscores the centrality of elections to this theory. It may not make sense to think of protest as being preventable via bargaining between the state and would-be protesters on every conceivable issue, because the current regime cannot realistically identify and prevent all potential protest. Elections, however, come with formal organizational structures, easily identified actors, and scheduled public events. Thus, even where electoral institutions are arguably weak, as in most of the cases examined in this book, they still provide a focal point (some minimal organizational framework) and identified actors, such that the state could be expected to attempt to prevent protest in a way that might not be realistic in response to other groups considering protest.

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[4] Works such as DeNardo (1985) recognize strategic interaction between protesters and the state, but only at the point where the state is responding to protest, not working to prevent it. Therefore I discuss this work in the next section, "Consequences of Protest."

After elite negotiations have broken down, my understanding of protest is consistent with the resource mobilization approach, which posits that professionalized entrepreneurs work to mobilize individual protesters. Electoral protests, however, engender the emergence of a different type of entrepreneur: the professional politician. In most work from the resource mobilization approach, entrepreneurs are committed activists whose focus is organizing and mobilizing to protest for a particular cause; however, in the cases of electoral protest I examine, protest is mobilized by individuals whose skills and objectives, first and foremost, are oriented toward competing in and winning elections. The most direct analog in my theory to the resource mobilization perspective would be those pro-democracy activists who organize protests against electoral manipulation. Instead, in the cases I examine, it is individuals who have invested time and resources competing for political office who turn their attention to protest activities. Thus, my work shows that politicians are capable of adopting the resource mobilization approach to encourage protest as a *strategy of electoral politics*, when attempts to avoid conflict through negotiation have failed.

Yet it may be easier for the politicians in question to mobilize protest because of their association with parties in the opposition, which means they often have a background as movement activists. Morgan Tsvangirai, for example, was prime minister of Zimbabwe from 2009 and is also a long-time political rival of President Robert Mugabe. He joined Mugabe's ZANU-PF party when Zimbabwe became independent from the United Kingdom in 1980, but was also very active in the Mine Workers' Unions, having been a miner since 1974. Tsvangirai became secretary general of Zimbabwe's umbrella trade union organization in 1989 and led the unions to form an opposition political party to the ruling ZANU-PF. Given his experience in union leadership, it is not surprising that, as leader of and candidate for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, Tsvangirai would be capable of organizing electoral protest – a capacity that he demonstrated when he organized an election boycott in 2008.

Consequences of Protest

The specific consequence investigated in this study is whether electoral protest motivates incumbents to enact democratic reforms. A number of authors have addressed questions of democratic reform – considering either reforms *from* authoritarianism *to* democracy (Przeworski 1991, Bratton and van de Walle 1997, Acemoglu and Robinson 2006) or additional reforms of ostensibly democratic institutions (Cox 1987, Boix 1999, Lehoucq and Molina 2002, Przeworski 2009). If we take seriously Tilly's (2004) assertion that "(d)emocratization does not mean arrival at full definitive democratic functioning," (14) then we should consider all democratic reforms when thinking about the consequences of protest, whether they originate from authoritarian or democratic regimes. In fact, regardless of regime type, explanations of

democratic reform share many common elements such as greater institutional constraints on political actors and expanded opportunities for participation in political processes.

In this book, I investigate the extent to which reforms undertaken by the incumbent in response to protest are actually democratic or might be attempts to appear responsive while continuing to secure incumbent advantage. Schaffer (2008, 2) claims that many governments in developing countries have enacted "clean election reform" in response to domestic and/or international pressure for more democratic elections; however, such reforms can actually end up having negative consequences for democracy (sometimes intentional, sometimes accidental). For example, clean election reforms can result in vote depression (which frequently affects one group of voters disproportionately), the proliferation of cheating, or general voter alienation (6–8). Particularly where a reform's partisan roots can be identified, Schaffer argues that some of these negative consequences may, in fact, be intentional (13). According to my theory, intentional attempts to use clean election reforms to partisan ends should be more likely when support for protest is largely domestic.

In my theory, incumbents respond to electoral protest based on the information that the protest reveals. Like Przeworski (1991), I characterize democratic reform as coming about through a process of elite negotiation (or "bargaining") and international pressure in the shadow of a violent recourse to protest. Election-related reforms are a way for incumbents to indicate responsiveness to electoral protests and may provide them a way to enhance the credibility of future commitments.

At the same time that incumbents are responding to threat, however, they are also trying to maintain as much of an advantage in the electoral arena as possible – in this way, the theory is also similar to those emphasizing that elites engage in reform to maintain or enhance an electoral advantage. For example, early theories of protest consequences argued that greater popular support makes the government more likely to reform (DeNardo 1985). By contrast, more recent theories emphasize the incumbent's strategic considerations when responding to protest. Bratton and van de Walle (1997) tell a story of incumbent elites instituting reforms in the face of mounting domestic pressure, when international and economic forces had constrained their range of viable responses, while still attempting to manipulate those reforms to their advantage. They show how leaders in Africa often turned to political concessions, such as amnesty for political opposition, relaxations on press restrictions, and reforms within the ruling party, with continued protest yielding constitutional reforms (108–11). Throughout their description and the explanation that follows, however, Bratton and van de Walle are careful to qualify these incumbent responses as representing an attempt on the part of the incumbent to "limit the extent of the power they would have to surrender" (163).

Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) formalize much of Bratton and van de Walle's account in a dynamic model of democratization. Here, as with previous

explanations, incumbents respond to a threat of punishment by citizens by insti-
tuting immediate economic concessions, repression, or an institutional change
(usually democratization). The authors argue that incumbent elites can find
ways to stay in power through a mix of repression and side payments, but
that they cannot improve their credibility without democratic reforms (203).
Przeworski (2009) tests and finds support for Acemoglu and Robinson's model
in the historical extension of male suffrage. Here again, incumbent reform
efforts are characterized as responding to threat – specifically increased protest
activity.

Other authors have found evidence of incumbents undertaking electoral
reforms to enhance their credibility for future negotiations regarding elec-
tions while also attempting to maintain a competitive advantage. Lehoucq
and Molina (2002) describe a situation of gradual reform in Costa Rica where
political elites began to feel their electoral fortunes would be in jeopardy if
they continued to engage in election manipulation; therefore they introduced
meaningful reforms to reduce future manipulation. Building on the logic of
reform outlined by Geddes (1994), they note that most reforms occurred when
political forces were more or less balanced. In periods where one party domi-
nated, that dominant party tended to kill reform legislation (11). In Renwick's
(2010) work on electoral system reform, elites initiate reform when they antic-
ipate electoral advantages from doing so or when they must respond to citizen
pressure, which is mobilized by minority or opposition politicians who favor
reform (211).

Finally, my theory has the potential to help us understand how some demo-
cratic improvements can emerge even in the absence of electoral protest. Lind-
berg (2006a) argues that electoral protests in Africa are futile because they do
not produce democratization and that democratic improvements are actually
more likely to occur when the opposition participates in the election. Based on
the theory presented here, it might not be so much that these elections in which
the opposition participates are leading to democratic improvements as much
as they represent situations in which incumbent and opposition actors were
able to successfully reach pre-election bargains that increased electoral fairness
and resulted in opposition participation.

DEMOCRATIZATION

In addition to encouraging readers to think about protest in terms of elite
negotiation, this study speaks to a specific debate within the comparative liter-
ature concerning elections and democratization. In 1991, Huntington heralded
elections not only as hallmarks of democracy but also as the "death of dicta-
torship" (175). My book joins many other attempts to critically evaluate this
claim that elections can be used as a tool to cultivate democracy, and not simply
as an indicator of where democracy has taken root. Unlike those works that
argue either for or against Huntington's claim, I assert that contextual factors

will determine the ultimate, democratizing effect of elections: Where electoral protests receive domestic support, they are likely to push leaders toward reforms that are more cosmetic than actually effective, whereas international support for electoral protest can help make democratic reforms more likely. Because of my interest in these electoral dynamics, I emphasize a more incremental approach to democratization. Rather than focusing directly on regime transitions, I examine protest events before and after elections and subsequent incumbent responses for evidence of incremental democratic improvements.

In response to Huntington's (1991) assertion, some scholars have argued that undemocratic elections do not foster democratization, but instead function as a means for authoritarian regimes to maintain power (Posusney 2002, Gandhi and Przeworski 2007), distribute patronage (Lust-Okar 2005, Magaloni 2008, Blaydes 2010), or demonstrate the strength of the state (Wedeen 2008, Simpser 2013).[5] Others contend that even undemocratic elections provide real opportunities for liberalization (Howard and Roessler 2006, Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2009), leadership change (Marinov 2006, Tucker 2007, Greene 2007), and improved civil rights (Lindberg 2006a). One final possibility, offered by Brownlee (2007), is that elections in authoritarian regimes simply do not matter: They merely reflect underlying processes that generate cohesion or splits among elites within the regime that ultimately determine regime survival and prospects for democracy.

My argument is that even elections in which incumbents engage in excessive manipulation can have positive consequences for democratization, but that the specific consequences of a given election depend on two factors: (1) whether the opposition chooses to protest before or after the election and (2) what kind of support the protest receives. These factors determine whether elections are followed by democratic reforms or by authoritarian intransigence or backsliding. To understand these dynamics of electoral protest and reform, I argue that we must conceive of democratization as an incremental process and not one that is necessarily linear nor is always accompanied by full-fledged regime transition. I further argue that regime transition should not be assumed to be the endpoint of the democratization process. This approach of skeptical incrementalism follows from Tilly (2004) who, in his study of the history of contentious politics and democratization in Britain and France, describes democracy as "protected consultation" between state and society and counts as democratization "any substantial move toward higher levels of protected consultation" (14). Similarly, Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) argue that it may be more useful to consider "various shades of democracy" when thinking about democratization; they are interested in "all movements in the direction of increased democracy" (17).

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[5] See Brownlee (2011) for a discussion of these explanations in the context of elections in the Arab world.