Introduction

In this book I provide a theory of how hegemonic-party autocracies sustain their rule and of the process by which those autocracies can undergo democratization, illustrating this theory with the case of Mexico. Hegemonic-party autocracies are remarkably effective at constructing political order (Huntington, 1968). After the True Whig Party, which ruled Liberia from 1878 until 1980, when it was ousted by a military coup; the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), which ruled for seventy-five years, from 1921 to 1996; and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), which ruled for seventy-two years, from 1917 to 1989, the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was the longest-lived autocratic regime of the twentieth century. The PRI governed for seventy-one years, from 1929, when the precursor to the party was created,[1] until 2000, when the PRI lost the presidency to the long-standing opposition party, the National Action Party (PAN). Unlike the MPRP and CPSU, the PRI held regular elections during all these years for all levels of elective office.[2] Parties other than the PRI were allowed to compete, and Mexico continuously replaced government officeholders electorally, including the president.

Like the Mexican PRI, many other autocracies have perpetuated their rule in spite of regular multiparty elections. Some examples are the Senegalese Socialist Party (PS), which governed for forty years, from the nation's independence in 1960. From the time that Senegal became a multiparty state in 1976, the PS continued to rule until it lost the presidential elections in 2000, when the president, Abdou Diouf, was defeated in a

[1] The PNR (National Revolutionary Party) was created in 1929, was renamed the PRM (Party of the Mexican Revolution) in 1938, and subsequently was renamed the PRI in 1946.

[2] The True Whig Party allowed multiparty competition but differs from the Mexican case in that it was highly exclusionary. See Moore (1970).

second electoral round by an opposition candidate, Abdoulaye Wade. On the other side of Africa, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi Party (CCM) has ruled Tanzania since 1964. In 1992, Tanzania changed its constitution to become a multiparty state. Even with the advent of multiparty elections, however, the CCM continues to rule, and its hegemonic position was reaffirmed in the 2000 elections, when President Mkapa was reelected with 70 percent of the vote. In neighboring Kenya, the KANU (Kenya African National Union) formed as the result of the unification of the two most important pro-independence political movements. A de facto one-party state came into existence when the government banned the Kenya's People's Union (KAPU) and its leaders were put in prison. KANU instituted multiparty elections in 1992. In the 2002 elections, this party was finally defeated by Mwai Kibaki, who won a landslide victory in the run-off presidential election as the candidate of the National Rainbow Alliance Coalition (NARC). In southern Africa, President Robert Mugabe's political party, the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF),[3] has won all of the elections since 1980 by large margins. These elections remain quite controversial, however. Gabon, Côte-d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, and Gambia also have been governed by hegemonic-party autocracies for prolonged periods of time.

Further examples can be found outside Africa as well. Despite the fact that opposition parties actively contest the elections in Malaysia, they have not been able to supplant the long-entrenched ruling coalition led by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which has dominated the country's politics since 1957. For nearly four decades, the Kuomintang (KMT) maintained its rule in Taiwan under a state of martial law and emergency rule. Taiwan began democratizing in the mid-1980s, and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was allowed to field candidates for the first time in the 1986 supplementary legislative elections (previously, non-KMT candidates had been required to run as independents). A constitutional reform in 1994 allowed for direct presidential elections

[3] Still supervised by Britain, the first general elections of 1980 were won by the liberation movements, unified into the Patriotic Front (PF). Just before the elections, the PF divided into its original components, the ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union) and the PF-ZAPU (African's People's Union), led by Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, respectively. These factions subsequently split, leaving the ZANU-PF as the sole ruling party. Partly as a result of the inability of the ZANU-PF to penetrate the strongholds of the PF-ZAPU, Mugabe signed a unity agreement in 1987, which merged the two parties into ZANU-PF (Baumhogger, 1999: 965).

to take place in 1996. The reformist Lee Teng-hui was reelected with 54 percent of the vote. The KMT lost enough seats to the DPP, however, to require that members of the two parties negotiate a compromise in order to approve constitutional amendments. The subsequent constitutional reforms led to the abolition of the National Assembly. The KMT was finally defeated in the 2000 presidential elections. Singapore's People's Action Party (PAP) is yet another example of a hegemonic-party autocracy, which has ruled since 1959.

These long-ruling hegemonic-party regimes constitute one of the most common forms of autocracy in the world today. Yet we lack a systematic theory addressing how these autocracies behave: if force is not the key to their political domination, could it be that they retain power because the population supports them? And if so, what accounts for mass support for these autocracies? How can these autocracies survive when they lose the support of the masses? Why do they permit elections instead of simply manufacturing the vote altogether, as occurred in the former USSR and other communist dictatorships? Under what conditions are hegemonic-party regimes expected to commit electoral fraud? What accounts for the establishment of credible commitments to refrain from rigging elections? How do these autocracies democratize? These are some of the central questions I address in this book.

The Point of Departure and the Dependent Variable of the Book

There are several questions about hegemonic-party rule that I do not explore in this book. My theory is not about why hegemonic-party autocracies emerge in the first place. As summarized by Huntington (1970), there are three established theories of why party autocracies emerge. "First, it has been argued, particularly by Africans, that party systems reflect the class structure of societies, and in a society where there are no pronounced differences among social and economic classes, there is no social basis for more than one party" (10). The second view argues just the opposite: the "justification of the single-party is found in the need to counterbalance the fissiparous tendencies of a heterogeneous society" (10). The third view, as advanced by Huntington (1970), is that a "one-party system is, in effect, the product of the efforts of a political elite to organize and legitimate rule by one social force over another in a bifurcated society. The bifurcation may be between socio-economic groups or between racial, religious, or ethnic ones" (11).

The Mexican PRI was established by victorious warlords after a prolonged war in order to construct political order out of chaos. The construction of political order required not only that the warlords give up their arms, but also that a population that had been mobilized for war come to support the new institution.[4] The origins of the PRI can be traced to President Plutarco Elias Calles (1924–28). Calles originated the idea of creating a political party that would draw into a single organization all of Mexico's then-relevant revolutionary leaders, local bosses, and existing political parties, most of which held sway only at the regional level. His National Revolutionary Party (PNR), which was eventually transformed into the PRI, soon became the most important national party organization. In spite of its origin as an essentially elitist organization, by the mid-1930s the ruling party had transformed itself into a party of the masses. President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40) created a dense corporatist institutional structure in order to incorporate peasants and workers into the party – organizing workers into the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) and peasants into the National Confederation of Peasants (CNC). He managed to obtain the loyalty of these groups by providing them with direct material rewards, above all, land reform and social legislation. The goal of this form of "statist corporatism" was to control the masses and manage a peaceful transition to mass politics led by the state (Schmitter, 1974; Malloy, 1977).

Thus, part of the reason the Mexican autocracy was highly *inclusionary* is the legacy of its origins. I leave for further research how it is that politicians were able to build this organization, taking as exogenous the emergence of party autocracy. As Huntington (1970: 10) points out, once a party autocracy takes root, it develops "a life of its own." My theory deals with this last aspect – what I call the "mechanics of the survival and demise" of hegemonic-party autocracy.

Survival Through Electoral Fraud?

When analyzing why hegemonic parties are so resilient, journalists and scholars normally focus on electoral fraud. The prevailing argument is that the incumbent party steals the elections in order to allow the regime to

[4] One possible reason why party autocracies such as the Mexican PRI and the Communist Party autocracies in China and the USSR emerged out of civil war instead of democracy, as set forth by Wantchekon (2004), is that in these autocracies one faction was able to establish supremacy after the civil war, while in his story about the emergence of democracy out of civil war there are two factions that face a stalemate and turn to democratic elections to resolve the stalemate.

sustain itself. There is no doubt that the Mexican PRI committed electoral fraud in the 1988 presidential elections, when the party declared that the new computer system had mysteriously collapsed the night of the elections, and it also committed fraud in many local elections.[5] The 1988 elections were the first seriously contested presidential elections. The official results gave the victory to the PRI's presidential candidate, Carlos Salinas, with 50.7 percent of the vote over 32.5 percent given to a former PRI politician, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the National Democratic Front (FDN), which was eventually transformed into the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). As the recently published memoirs of then-president Miguel de la Madrid attest, there is no doubt that the PRI committed fraud against Cárdenas. What is impossible to establish with the available information is whether the PRI needed the fraud in order to retain the presidency, or if the fraud was rather employed to manufacture a 50 percent vote share for the PRI. The 50 percent vote threshold was decisive because with fewer votes, the PRI would not have obtained the cushioned majority it needed in the Electoral College, composed of newly elected congresspersons, to single-handedly ratify the presidential election (Castañeda, 2000: 86, 232).

Yet there are two problems with the view that electoral fraud alone can account for the survival of hegemonic-party regimes. The first is that these parties often rule by either running uncontested or, when the opposition effectively challenges them, winning by impressive margins of victory, manufactured only minimally by fraud. Before the onset of the debt crisis in 1982, which marked the beginning of more than twenty years of economic stagnation, the Mexican PRI was able to win most elections by impressive margins of victory. Electoral fraud played such a minor role during those years[6] that some scholars regarded Mexico as a democracy,

[5] The PRI committed fraud in many local elections, including the infamous case of Chihuahua in 1986, where the ruling party stole the governorship from the PAN. Lujambio (2001) presents an excellent historical overview of how the PAN in Mexico was affected by electoral fraud during its long history of opposing the PRI. Eisenstadt (2004) provides the most comprehensive account of how the opposition parties in Mexico dealt with electoral fraud in the decade of the 1990s.

[6] Molinar (1991) explained this most clearly. He noted that electoral fraud was more prevalent in rural jurisdictions because the opposition normally did not have the reach to monitor the ballots there. In urban political jurisdictions the PRI's leeway to commit electoral fraud was more restricted, as the opposition was normally present to monitor the ballots. In the countryside, however, electoral fraud did not normally make the difference between the PRI winning or losing, because the opposition did not even field candidates in most of the rural jurisdictions. Fraud was mostly employed to boost the party's vote share.

albeit an unusual one – witness the title of one of the best studies of Mexican politics, Frank Brandenburg's (1955) dissertation, "Mexico: An Experiment in One-Party Democracy." In his classic study of democracy, Lipset (1959) also conceived Mexico as belonging to a small group of democracies in the developing world, together with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Uruguay, on the grounds that these countries had shared "a history of more or less free elections for most of the post-World War I period" (74). Mexican elections at the time were no more questionable than, for instance, elections in India or Japan. After 1982, elections in Mexico became more competitive, and the practice of electoral fraud more common. Yet even during this more competitive era, the PRI effectively won in the overwhelming majority of political jurisdictions (e.g., single-member districts, municipalities, and gubernatorial races) largely because the opposition had only a meager presence in most of them.

A focus on electoral fraud as the sole reason for the PRI's survival would thus lead to two erroneous conclusions: first, that Mexico was more democratic in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s than in the 1980s and 1990s, an odd conclusion given that there was considerably more political competition during the latter period and that the electoral institutions were transformed in the 1990s; and second, that the PRI was not able to win elections cleanly, which for the most part it did. Similar electoral dynamics are observable in most hegemonic-party regimes, where the ruling party either runs uncontested in many races or, even when contested, wins by huge margins. This suggests that electoral fraud is only one of the instruments these autocracies have at their disposal to retain power, and that it is not always the most important one. Moreover, as Diamond (2002) points out, authoritarian rulers turn to their nastiest levels of repression, intimidation, and fraud when they are vulnerable, not when their political domination is secured at the ballot box.

The second fundamental problem with the perception that electoral fraud is the sole cause of authoritarian survival is that this viewpoint simply pushes the problem one step back. The Mexican PRI committed fraud in 1988, and twelve years later this same party stepped down from office, peacefully yielding the presidential seat to the PAN's candidate, Vicente Fox. If fraud was the only means by which the PRI had sustained itself in the past, why did this party not resort to stealing the election again in 2000? What allows hegemonic-party autocrats to get away with stealing elections? What prevents them from doing so? The key to understanding

the resiliency of hegemonic parties, and how they democratize, lies in our answers to these questions.

This book provides a theory of the survival and demise of the Mexican PRI, and in doing so it also sheds new light on the politics of what some scholars call "electoral authoritarianism" and its democratization dynamics. Linz writes that "if I were to write a book on comparative democracies, it would have to include a section on . . . defective or pseudodemocracies, which I would rather characterize as "electoral authoritarian" regimes . . . where a façade covers authoritarian rule" (Linz, 2000: 34). Schedler (2002) calculates that the most common form of autocracy today is hidden behind the façade of elections: "Their dream is to reap the fruits of electoral legitimacy without running the risks of democratic uncertainty" (37). Diamond (2002) and Levitsky and Way (2002) also highlight the prevalence of electoral authoritarianism.

The Role of Elections in Autocratic Regimes

Most autocracies employ at least some repression to disarticulate the opposition – they murder or imprison its leaders (Arendt, 1968; Stepan, 1971; Dahl, 1973; O'Donnell, 1973; Wintrobe, 1998). Evidence suggests that this strategy often backfires: repression can push the opposition into insurgency, which eventually threatens to overthrow the dictator through civil war (see, for example, Wood, 2000). Hegemonic-party autocracies do not ban the opposition, but rather allow elites to organize into independent political parties and to have a place in the legislature.

The conventional argument regarding why autocratic regimes allow elections is that these elections create a democratic façade and thus enhance the regime's legitimacy. For example, according to Crespo (2004), "a hegemonic party like the PRI, insofar as it tried to avoid becoming a one-party system in order to preserve a certain *democratic legitimacy*, had to honor democratic rituals. It was obliged to adopt institutions and procedures typical of a democracy, even though in reality these institutions and procedures lost their original function" (61, emphasis mine).

No doubt autocratic regimes often need to adopt the façade of elections in order to deceive other parties (e.g., international donors). This argument, as Joseph (1999) explains, might to a large extent account for why politicians in some of the poorest single-party autocracies in Africa chose to institute multiparty elections for the first time (although internal political struggles and the discrediting of authoritarian rulers also played a decisive role)

(Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Bates, 2001). But the PRI did not adopt elections in order to enhance its legitimacy. The PRI was designed with the explicit purpose of preventing personal dictatorship. The Mexican revolution was fought under the banners "*sufragio efectivo, no reelección*"[7] and "*la tierra es de quien la trabaja*"[8] against the dictator Porfirio Diaz, who had ruled Mexico for over thirty years. The political pact that symbolizes the end of the revolution – the 1917 constitution – forbade presidential reelection while establishing multiparty elections. After having modified the constitution to allow for his reelection, President Alvaro Obregón was murdered in 1928. After the murder of Obregón, politicians established the predecessor of the PRI with the explicit intent to transit from a system of "*caudillos*" to one of "institutions." The assassination of Obregón established a powerful focal point that would serve to coordinate a rebellion among ruling party politicians against would-be dictators who aspire to get rid of the elections. The PRI was thus a collusive agreement that allowed ruling-party politicians to divide the rents of power among themselves while preventing any single individual from grabbing it all. To make this pact to share power effective, consecutive elections took place with clockwork precision and presidents stepped down from office every six years.

The decision to allow multiparty elections has momentous implications for the dynamics of autocratic survival. Even if their outcome is totally predictable, elections are not simply mass rituals, devoid of significance. My approach underscores four functional roles of elections in autocratic regimes. First, autocratic elections are designed to establish a regularized method to share power among ruling party politicians. The Mexican autocracy was unique in that elections were employed to replace even the highest office, the presidency. In most other hegemonic-party autocracies, the same president is reelected for prolonged periods, while elections are employed as means to distribute power among lower-level politicians. Autocratic regimes reward with office those politicians who prove most capable in mobilizing citizens to the party's rallies, getting voters to the polls, and preventing social turnmoil in their districts. The autocracy thus forces politicians to work for the benefit of the party and to have a vested interest in the survival of the regime. Second, elections are meant to disseminate public

[7] The English translation is "no reelection and the right to have votes effectively counted."
[8] The English translation is "land for the tiller."

information about the regime's strength that would serve to discourage potential divisions within the ruling party. By holding elections regularly, winning them by huge margins, painting the streets and towns all over the country in the party's colors, and mobilizing voters in great numbers to party rallies and the polls, the PRI sought to generate a public image of *invincibility*. This image would serve to discourage coordination among potential challengers – most fundamentally, those coming from within the party – and to diminish bandwagon effects in favor of the opposition parties among the mass public. High turnout and huge margins of victory signaled to elites that the ruling party's electoral machine was unbeatable because citizens supported the regime. The message to the disaffected party politicians was that the only road to political success was the ruling party, and that outside of it there was nothing but political defeat. To be sure, the PRI also resorted to ballot stuffing and electoral fraud. However, electoral victories obtained simply by stuffing the ballots were insufficient to convince powerful politicians within the ruling party of the regime's might.

The third functional role of elections in hegemonic-party autocracies is to provide information about supporters and opponents of the regime. Wintrobe (1998) proposes that dictators face a dilemma in that that they cannot ever truly know what the population thinks of them. If the dictator is loved, his power is more secure; if the dictator is despised by his people, he is more vulnerable to challenges from potential opponents. Communist dictatorships relied on a combination of strategies to obtain information about their subjects, including the secret police and informants, and they also used competition among subordinates for scarce resources to their advantage (Wintrobe, 1998; Olson, 2000). Hegemonic-party regimes employ elections as a key instrument for obtaining information about the extent of the party's mass support and its geographic distribution. The hegemonic party uses this information to screen voters according to their political loyalties, rewarding supporters with access to government funds and punishing defectors by withdrawing them from the party's spoils system. In doing so, the hegemonic party creates a market for political loyalty and makes citizens vest their interests in the survival of the regime.

The fourth functional role of elections in an autocratic regime is to trap the opposition, so that it invests in the existing autocratic institutions rather than challenging them by violent means. Gandhi and Przeworski (2001) put this idea succinctly: "Under dictatorship, parties do not compete, elections do not elect, and legislatures do not legislate. What, then, is the role of

these institutions under dictatorship?" (1) They argue that dictators protect themselves by offering particular groups of the potential opposition a place in the legislature. Autocratic legislatures and elections also serve to divide the opposition. As my model in Chapter 8 makes explicit, the nature of the autocratic electoral game is such that some opposition players are invariably better off playing the "loyal opposition" while leaving others to rebel on their own. By selectively coopting the opposition, the autocracy prevents its opponents from forming a unified front to rebel against the regime.

Alternative Theories of Hegemonic-Party Survival

Hegemonic-party autocracies do not conform to the model of what we normally regard as dictatorships. The communist regimes, for example, aspired to total domination "of each single individual in each and every sphere of life" (Arendt, 1968). In part, this goal was achieved by the atomization of human relationships – the destruction of classes, interest groups, and even the family unit – a process in which terror played a key role. Many military dictators were also very repressive. The military governments in South America, for example, employed the systematic extermination, incarceration, disappearance, and torture of union members and left-wing party leaders and their activists (Stepan, 1971; O'Donnell, 1973). The dictatorships of Central America and South Africa used repression to enforce the labor-repressive institutions upon which racial and class segregation was based, and to disarticulate the political organizations of the oppressed (Wood, 2000). Most theories of autocracy are implicitly or explicitly based on the notion of repression. Wintrobe (1998), who provides one of the most systematic theories of the micro-foundations of autocratic rule, argues that the "existence of a political police force and of extremely severe sanctions for expressing and especially organizing opposition to the government (such as imprisonment, internment in mental hospitals, torture, and execution) is the hallmark of dictatorships of all stripes" (34).[9]

Hegemonic-party autocracies are a more benign form of dictatorship. This is not to say that there is no repression at all. The Mexican PRI was no "tea party," as Castañeda (2000: xiv) puts it. However, "neither was it [repression] similar in brutality, systematicity, scope and cynicism to its counterparts in Mediterranean or Eastern Europe, or in the rest of Latin

[9] Linz (2000) challenges the view that repression is an essential characteristic of autocracies.