DEFEATING DICTATORS
Electoral Change and Stability in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

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ONE of the most striking outcomes of the third wave of democratization has been the proliferation of competitive authoritarian regimes. While varying from one another in the weight accorded to authoritarian and democratic elements, such regimes share the common feature of tolerating competition for political office. However, struggles for power take place on an uneven playing field where incumbents use a variety of techniques to ensure their reelection; these range from harassment of the opposition and civil society organizations to control over the media to manipulation of vote tabulations.[1] Not surprisingly, competitive elections in such political settings usually lead to continuity, rather than to change in political leadership and governing coalitions.

This generalization even holds in cases where the constitution imposes term limits on chief executives.[2] In these contexts, presidents typically adopt one of three strategies. One is that they introduce

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[1] See Schedler 2006; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002; Levitsky and Way 2007; Roessler and Howard 2009; Schedler 2009; Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen, and O'Halloran 2006; and Carothers 2002. On the durability of such regimes, see Lust-Okar 2004; Lust-Okar 2006; Bellin 2004; and Way 2005a.

[2] McKie 2008.

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amendments to the constitution that allow them to run again; another is that they accept term limits but select a close ally to be their successor; and a third combines the second strategy with an insurance policy involving institutional reforms that constrain the autonomy of the successor. While Milosevic of Serbia and Museveni of Uganda are examples of the first approach and the transition from Kocharian to Sarkesian in Armenia in 2008 is an example of the second, the transfer of power from Putin to Medvedev in Russia in 2008 represents the third option.

Elections in competitive authoritarian regimes, however, have sometimes led to the victory of the opposition.[3] This is precisely what happened, for example, in the elections that took place in the Philippines in 1986, Nicaragua in 1990, Slovakia in 1998, Indonesia in 1999, Mexico in 2000, Madagascar in 2001, and Ukraine in 2004. In fact, from 1996 to 2005 there was a wave of elections in the postcommunist region in particular that ended the rule of authoritarians and brought democratic oppositions to power.[4]

Accounting for Divergent Electoral Outcomes

What explains the contrast between the norm (electoral continuity) and the exception (electoral change) in competitive authoritarian regimes? This article aims to answer this question by comparing eleven elections that were held from 1998 to 2008 in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia. Six of these led to the empowerment of the opposition (as president or prime minister), and five resulted in continuity in leadership and/or governing coalitions. Thus, while parliamentary or presidential elections in Slovakia (1998),[5] Croatia (2000),[6] Serbia (2000), [7] Georgia (2003), [8] Ukraine (2004),[9] and Kyrgyzstan (2005)[10] produced a sharp

[3] For different perspectives on the dynamics involved in the postcommunist cases, see Way 2009; and Bunce and Wolchik 2009b.

[4] This wave of electoral change was followed by a wave of studies of the "color revolutions." See, for example, McFaul 2005; Forbrig and Demeš 2007; Kuzio 2006b; Bunce and Wolchik 2006b; Bunce and Wolchik 2007b; Fenger 2007; Beissinger 2007; and Tucker 2007.

[5] On the Slovak case, see, for example, Bútora, Bútora, and Inštitút pre verejné otázky 1999; Butora, Meseznikov, and Butorova 1999; Fisher 2006; Bunce and Wolchik 2009a.

[6] See Fisher 2006; Irvine 2007; and Fisher and Bijelic 2007.

[7] On the Serbian case, see, for example, Bunce and Wolchik 2009b; Birch 2002; Bieber 2003; Binnendijk and Marovic 2006; Bujosevic and Radovanoivic 2003; Minic and Miljenko 2007; and Pavlovic 2005.

[8] See, for instance, Kandelaki 2006; Welt 2009; Wheatley 2005; Karumidże and Wertsch 2005; Kandelaki and Meladze 2007; and Mitchell 2009.

[9] See Wilson 2005; Ackerman and Duvall 2004; Åslund and McFaul 2006; Binnendijk and Marovic 2006; Cropsy 2005; Kuzio 2006a; Kuzio 2005; and Way 2005a.

[10] See Radnitz 2006; Radnitz 2009; Fuhrmann 2007; Borbieva 2007; Kniazev 2005. See also Ermakoff 2007.

political break with the past in each case, parliamentary or presidential contests in Armenia (2003, 2008),[11] Azerbaijan (2003, 2005),[12] and Belarus (2006)[13] failed to do so, with authoritarian leaders and their parliamentary allies maintaining their hold on political power.[14] These elections, moreover, had longer-term consequences for these regimes. While electoral turnover in Ukraine, Slovakia, and especially Croatia and Serbia shifted politics in a decidedly more democratic direction (though their impact was more mixed in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan), the elections in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus had the opposite effect.[15] As a result, our eleven elections translated into a growing regime gap among what had once been roughly similar competitive authoritarian states.[16]

Our comparison is informed by diverse types of evidence. We rely, first, on local and external analyses of each of these countries and elections and statistics provided by such organizations as the Center for Elections and Democracy in Belgrade, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Freedom House, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. We also draw upon more than one hundred and fifty interviews (lasting from one to two hours each) that we conducted from 2005 to 2009 in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Georgia, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine and in Washington, D.C., New York, Berlin, Oxford, Philadelphia, and Ithaca, New York. Our interviewees were journalists and academics who had analyzed the elections and, even more illuminating, domestic and international participants in the elections, including leaders of a wide range of opposition parties and civil society groups, American ambassadors, their staffs, and other members of the State Department, and American and European democracy promoters funded by individual governments, the European Union, and private foundations.[17]

[11] See Hyde 2007; OSCE/ODIHR 2003; Walker 2006; Khachatrian 2005b; Danielyan 2005; Khachatrian 2005a; Whitmore 2007; Whitmore 2005; and Tavernise 2008.

[12] Aliyeva 2006; Bunce and Wolchik 2007a; Corwin 2005; Fuller 2005; McFaul and Mammadov 2005; Fuller 2003; Peuche 2003; Valiyev 2005; Ismayilov 2005; Aliyeva 2005; Chivers 2005; and Walker 2006.

[13] Marples 1999; Silitski 2005c; Silitski 2005a; Silitski 2005b; Silitski 2009; and Ioffe 2007.

[14] The wave of electoral change in the postcommunist region also included Romania (1996) and Bulgaria (1997). We excluded these two elections from our analysis because these cases did not meet our standards for inclusion. Romania and especially Bulgaria were largely democratic regimes when communist presidential incumbents were defeated. See Petrova 2009.

[15] We provide evidence for this conclusion in Table 1, column 1. In addition, on the Georgian case and evidence even there of some democratic progress, see Nodia 2009.

[16] Evidence for this conclusion is provided in Table 1.

[17] A list of the interviews conducted will be provided on request. We have several reasons to be confident of the quality of the interview data. First, we were careful to interview subjects who

Our case selection combines differences and similarities that make for instructive comparison. On the one hand, by focusing on contrasting electoral outcomes, we avoid a common bias in comparative studies of political change, including analyses of the "color revolutions" in the postcommunist world.[18] As John Glenn has observed: "In hindsight successful challengers often misinterpret events so as to make their success inevitable, and history is not kind to failed challenges—so that often less is known about these attempts."[19] On the other hand, our cases also share a number of features that cross the divide separating successful and failed attempts to dislodge authoritarian leaders. Thus, all these elections were held in relatively similar regime contexts, with competition for political power under circumstances of authoritarian political practices. As is typical of mixed regimes, moreover, all nine countries at the time of their electoral challenges scored very high on corruption indices, ranging from 5.25 in the cases of Belarus and Croatia to 6.25 in the cases of Azerbaijan and Serbia.[20] In addition, these countries share a common history, given their communist pasts, recent statehood as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet, Yugoslav, and Czechoslovak states from 1991 to 1992, and in most of the cases conflicts between majorities and minorities during state formation (with such conflicts contained in Ukraine and Slovakia but escalating into violence in Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan).[21] Just as striking are several other similarities that will be explored in greater detail. These include growing authoritarianism in the years preceding the pivotal elections, the formation of a united opposition on the eve of the election or during the election, and popular protests ranging in size from ten thousand to several hundred thousand challenging the official election results.

were likely to have very different perspectives on these elections—for example, members of different (and often competing) political parties, civil society groups with different missions and funding, political activists from different generations who played different roles in these events, and democracy promoters from the United States, Western Europe, and the postcommunist region. In addition, we compared these data with other sources, including analyses by local academics and journalists. Finally, we tested our readings of these elections by presenting our conclusions to a wide range of academic and policy-related audiences (with very different viewpoints) in the U.S. and abroad, including a large group of academics, ambassadors, and policymakers in Moscow in 2006; participants in and academic analysts of the 2000 Yugoslav elections in Belgrade in 2005; and opposition party leaders, students, and members of the regime in Armenia in 2007.

[18] See, for example, McFaul 2005; and Vachudova 2005. But see also D'Anieri 2006.

[19] Glenn 2001.

[20] Freedom House 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004, 2003, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1998, 1997. The scores are based on the Freedom House metric of 1 to 7, with 1 being little corruption and 7 being significant corruption. The figures reported are for the year before the election; for Armenia and Azerbaijan, they are averages for the two elections.

We begin our comparison by laying out two sets of hypotheses: one of these focuses on structural influences by addressing regime and opposition strength on the eve of the elections, and the other is more sensitive to agency effects and targets characteristics of the elections. We then assess the ability of these two sets of hypotheses to account for electoral stability and change. We draw two conclusions. First, structural and institutional factors that capture aspects of regime and opposition capacity going into the elections have some explanatory power, but their impact is uneven. They also suffer from a "high altitude problem" that limits their ability to assess the more fine-grained issues that are posed by these electoral episodes. We ask, for example, why these elections in particular produced a major showdown between authoritarian leaders and oppositions and how oppositions were finally able, in most cases in contrast to the past, to devise ways to address the problem that is inherent to competitive authoritarian regimes—getting demobilized citizens not only to vote but to vote for the opposition.[22] Second, differences in the elections themselves draw a much sharper distinction between these two sets of elections, while shedding light on these questions. Thus, we conclude that the successful defeat of authoritarians depended heavily on the extent to which oppositions and their allies were able to use novel and sophisticated strategies to maximize their chances for winning power. In this sense, the key issue posed by the contrast between our two sets of elections was less a matter of whether regimes were ready to depart than of whether the opposition was ready to defeat them.

We conclude our discussion by using our results to contribute to three sets of debates in comparative politics. One centers on questions related to the vulnerability of competitive authoritarian regimes. Another focuses on the role of elections in promoting democratic development. Finally, we return to a much older issue that lies at the heart of studies of political change (whether the focus is on revolution, regime transitions, or electoral breakthroughs): the role of structure versus agency.

Regime Vulnerability and Electoral Dynamics

Our first set of hypotheses builds on the premise, common to structural and institutional understandings of the sources of political stability and change, that the key distinction underlying these electoral episodes is

[21] State formation in these countries, as in most, involved a dissolution of a larger unit. See Bunce 1999; and Roeder 2007.

[22] The phrase is taken from Jacoby 2006.

the strength of the regime at the beginning of the electoral season. According to this view, some regimes are ready to fall, whereas others are not, and elections merely serve as highly visible sites for registering differences in regime vulnerability. Jason Brownlee has articulated this perspective clearly: "Elections provide an arena for political contestation, but they are not an independent causal factor."[23]

What contributes to the strength of regimes, understood as a two-part proposition that includes, first, how open regimes are in terms of the rules of the political game to electoral challenges and, second, how capable they are of withstanding the electoral challenges that come their way. One important factor that highlights the first consideration is the weight of authoritarian and democratic elements in competitive authoritarian regimes. Here, one would expect polities that are more democratic to be more vulnerable, because they provide a more level playing field for political competition. Thus, just as more democratic contexts deny the incumbent regimes the tools they need to control citizens, civil society organizations, the media, and opposition groups, so do they also provide more opportunities for opposition parties to mount major and successful electoral challenges.[24] In addition, all else being equal, it can be argued that citizens are more predisposed to support the opposition in more democratic political settings. They are more confident that their votes will count, and the opposition is more likely to have accumulated a track record showing its ability to win elections and govern the country. Finally, we can add a temporal dimension to these arguments about democratic development and political competition. Regimes that have become more repressive over time should be more resistant to challenges—though the opposite argument has also been made.[25]

Regimes are also more vulnerable when they have been less able to centralize and institutionalize their powers. Recognizing that the concept of regime capacity is very hard to measure, we offer a range of indicators. Thus, in stronger regimes we find the following: incumbents rule through a well-established party; leaders have been successful in preventing defections from the ruling circle; presidents have introduced reforms that expand their formal powers; the opposition is divided and has repeatedly failed to win power; citizens are demobilized; and political leaders have enjoyed long tenure. The assumption underlying the final distinction is that durable rule has important advantages

[23] Brownlee 2007. See also Way 2005a; Way 2009; and Levitsky and Way 2002.
[24] Brownlee 2009; Schedler 2009; and van de Walle 2007.
[25] On protest dynamics under conditions of repression, see Francisco 2004; and Lyall 2006.

for incumbents, including the ability to construct large patronage networks that fan out from the leader. Thus, long tenure generates strong disincentives for defection, whether by members of the ruling circle or by everyday citizens.[26]

Finally, economic performance affects regime survival—in two ways. One is that poor performance depletes public support for the regime. The other is that slower growth in the economic resources available to the regime, especially in countries where corruption is extensive (which is commonplace in mixed regimes), undercuts the ability of leaders to maintain their patronage networks.[27]

These predictions about regime durability, however, overlook a critical consideration. Although weak regimes are by definition more politically vulnerable than stronger regimes, even quite weak regimes have been able to endure, even in the face of protracted protests.[28] This is not surprising. Just as strong international support for weak regimes can prolong them (as was the case for most of the Central and Eastern European members of the Soviet bloc during the communist era), so the absence of a political alternative to the regime can have a similar effect.[29] Moreover, even in regimes that seem to be quite vulnerable, oppositions have a hard time predicting how citizens will respond to stolen elections. As Tea Tutberidze, a member of the Liberty Institute in Georgia and an activist in the demonstrations that broke out following the 2003 Georgian elections, confessed in an interview: "Georgian society took us by surprise."[30]

These considerations lead to a second set of hypotheses that focuses not on the structural and institutional backdrop to these elections but, rather, on characteristics of the elections themselves. Here, we build on three arguments in the literature that link elections to democratic development: (1) that elections have often served as key contributors to democratic progress, (2) that elections, rather than, say, civil liberties, are understood by citizens in countries outside the West as the defining feature of democracy, and (3) that elections feature conditions conducive to political protests.[31] The question then becomes: Why would

[26] See, for example, Grzymala-Busse 2007.

[27] See Hale 2006; and Hale 2005; see also Bratton and van de Walle 1992; and van de Walle 2007.

[28] See, for example, Kapucsinski 2006.

[29] See, especially, Przeworski 1982.

[30] Tutberidze 2005. Very similar observations were also made by Kostantinovic 2005. See also Ganz 2004.

[31] See, for example, Lindberg 2006; Schedler 2009; Teorell and Hadenius 2009; Dalton, Shin, and Jou 2007; Bunce 1994; Tucker 2007; Trejo 2004; McAdam and Tarrow 2009; and Kuntz and Thompson 2009.

some elections in competitive authoritarian regimes function as agents of political change? One distinction is between elections that place the incumbent or his anointed successor on the ballot and elections that do not (as in parliamentary elections held in presidential systems). In the former instance, it is much easier for the election to become a verdict on the regime and for oppositions to focus their efforts. Henry Hale identifies another distinction,[32] arguing that elections vary in the extent to which they can promise supporters continuity in patronage benefits. Thus, elections are more likely to encourage defections from the regime and thereby enhance the potential for an opposition victory when incumbents are exiting from power—for example, because of the constraints of term limits or because of illness or death.

The electoral factor that has received the most attention, however, is the unity of the opposition. As Nicolas van de Walle has observed: "Opposition cohesion is often described as a prerequisite for successful regime transitions. As long as the incumbent strongman is able to keep the opposition divided, it is argued, his hold on power is safe."[33] While there is strong support for this argument in quantitative studies of competitive authoritarian regimes, there are rival interpretations, given endogeneity problems, of what is actually driving the relationship. Thus, when regimes weaken, opportunities for defeating them improve, and oppositions, as a result, have a greater incentive to collaborate.[34]

We can now close our discussion of electoral factors by drawing three more distinctions. One is the contrast between fair and fraudulent elections, with the latter understood to be conducive to popular mobilization against the regime.[35] Second, the more engaged the international community is with the quality of democracy and the quality of elections, the greater the likelihood that the democratic opposition will win.[36] Finally, opposition strategies vary, and such strategies are especially important in competitive authoritarian regimes. As Larry Diamond reminds us: "While an opposition victory is not impossible

[32] Hale 2005; Hale 2006.

[33] Van de Walle 2006; and Howard and Roessler 2006.

[34] See, especially, van de Walle 2006; and van de Walle 2007. In addition, see Gelman 2005; and Dawisha and Deets 2006. In our interviews, however, this line of argument was in fact repeatedly challenged, as we will discuss later in the article—for example, by Gambar 2007; and Mustafayev 2007. Just as they believed that unity could reduce their ability to win power because it would encourage the regime to go to greater lengths to steal the election, so they argued that a more vulnerable regime can tempt oppositions to go it alone in order to monopolize the benefits from winning office.

[35] Thompson and Kuntz 2004; Thompson and Kuntz 2009; Thompson 1995; Tucker 2007. However, Schaffer 2008 has offered a new perspective on this question.

[36] See Bunce and Wolchik 2006a; and Finkel, Pérez-Liñán, and Seligson 2007.

in a hybrid regime, it requires a level of opposition mobilization, unity, skill, and heroism far beyond what would normally be required for victory in a democracy."[37] Strategies that would be the most likely to yield payoffs for the opposition would include, most obviously, the formation of an electoral bloc that would help concentrate voter choices and signal a strong commitment to winning and governing effectively. However, there are others that maximize opportunities for an opposition victory—for instance, close collaboration between oppositions and civil society groups; pressures on the regime to reform electoral procedures; ambitious campaigns to win support, register voters, and get out the vote; and the use of public opinion polls, election monitoring, exit polls, and parallel vote tabulation.[38] Whether these electoral tools are deployed by the opposition, moreover, is related to our earlier point about the impact of external actors. While oppositions and civil society groups are the ones that make an election either an ambitious exercise or one in which actors simply go through the motions of competing for power, their willingness and ability to fight hard to win office may be influenced by the signals and assistance provided by the international community.[39]

Structural and Institutional Opportunities for Change

In Table 1 we use Nations in Transit scores to compare democratic development in the two years preceding each election (with democratic performance after each election summarized in the first column). Several patterns in the table need to be highlighted. One is the fact that the regimes that served as sites for the successful removal of authoritarian leaders from office run the gamut from being relatively democratic (as in Slovakia under Mečiar) to being relatively authoritarian (as in Serbia under Milosevic and Kyrgyzstan under Akaev)—a range that is typical, we must remember, of competitive authoritarian regimes. This contrast in regime settings has been succinctly captured by one activist in the Serbian student movement, Otpor, who commented that "Mečiar was Mother Theresa in comparison with Milosevic."[40] Thus, at least insofar as these six electoral contests are concerned, the widely held assumption of an inverse relationship between regime repression and opposition strength is debatable. By contrast, the five elections in the

[37] Diamond 2002.
[38] Hyde 2007; Garber and Cowan 1994; and Bjornlund 2004.
[39] See Carothers 2004.
[40] Quoted in Demeš and Forbrig 2007, 189.

TABLE 1
NATIONS IN TRANSIT TRENDS[a]

	Election	*DS*[b]	*CS*	*IM*	*EP*	*Corruption*	*Postelection Trend*[c]
Croatia	2000	−4.36	3.50	4.88	4.25	5.25[d]	+1.18
Georgia	2003	−4.46	4.00	3.68	4.75	5.38	−0.44
Kyrgyzstan	2005	−5.67	4.50	6.00	6.00	6.00	−0.29
Serbia[e]	2000	−5.67	5.18	5.13	5.25	6.25	+1.14
Slovakia[f]	1998	−3.80	3.25	4.25	3.75	n/a	+1.09
Ukraine	2004	−4.82	3.68	5.50	4.25	5.88	+0.48
Armenia	2003	+4.83	3.50	4.75	5.50	5.75	−0.16
Armenia	2008	−5.68	3.50	5.68	5.75	5.75	n/a
Azerbaijan	2003	−5.59	4.50	5.68	5.75	6.25	−0.16
Azerbaijan	2005	−5.55	4.48	5.68	5.88	6.25	−0.45
Belarus[g]	2006	−6.59	6.75	6.75	6.88	5.89	−0.09

SOURCES: Freedom House 2007, 2006, 2005, 2004, 2003, 2002, 2001, 2000, 1998, 1997.

[a]DS= Democracy Score; CS=Civil Society; IM=Independent Media; VA=Voice and Accountability; EP=Electoral Process. Nations in Transit's Democracy, Civil Society, Independent Media, Electoral Process, and Corruption scores are an average of political rights and civil liberties scores; 7 indicates most repressive and 1 indicates most free. The assessments in this table are two-year averages of performance. For example, for Armenia in 2003, the scores are an average of 2001 and 2002.

[b]The + or – in this column refers to whether the average score for the two years preceding the election represented an improvement or a decline in democratic performance in comparison with the previous three years.

[c]The purpose of this column is to provide a brief summary of democratic developments after the election.

[d]Scores for 2000/1999. Scores for 1998 not available.

[e]Score for 1999/2000. Score for 1998 not available.

[f]Score for 1997. Scores for 1996 not available.

[g]The scores for the postelection period include only results from 2007, as the scores for 2008 are not yet available.

"failed" category took place in relatively similar and relatively authoritarian political settings. However, because the similarities among these regimes are shared as well with Serbia and Kyrgyzstan (with Georgia under Shevardnadze and Ukraine under Kuchma not that far behind), we would conclude that regime context does not in fact provide a very sharp contrast between our two categories of elections.

Finally, the first and last columns in Table 1 provide evidence for two observations made earlier in this article. One is that regime trajectories diverged increasingly after these electoral confrontations. Thus, leaders in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus became more authoritarian, while politics in the countries that experienced electoral turnovers

became more democratic, especially in Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. However, more relevant for the purpose of this study is column 1, which demonstrates the surprising finding that all eleven countries, despite different electoral trajectories, experienced the same trend of growing authoritarianism in the years leading up to the elections of interest. In fact, democratic deterioration was not simply a matter of increasingly opaque and irregular political procedures and legal changes that made it harder for the third sector to operate and the opposition to compete for power, while expanding the powers of the president (or the prime minister in the Slovak case), reducing the power of the parliament and courts, and harassing the media and the opposition. Regimes in both the "successful" and the "failed" categories also used violence against their opponents—for example, the murder of Elmar Huseynov, the editor of the opposition magazine *Monitor*, in Azerbaijan in 2005; the murder and beheading of Hrihoryi Gongadze, a journalist critical of the Kuchma regime in Ukraine in 2000, along with the poisoning of Viktor Yushchenko, the opposition's candidate for president in the 2004 election; the murder in 1999 of eight members of parliament in Armenia, including the prime minister and the speaker; the kidnapping of the adult son of President Kovac and the firebombing of the car of the investigator assigned to the case in Slovakia; and at least twenty political murders from 1998 to 2000 in Serbia that were linked to the Milosevic regime.[41]

The increasingly repressive character of all of these regimes calls into question several opposing, but equally compelling political scenarios that, in theory, should have differentiated between our two sets of regime contexts. On the one hand, it could be argued that democratic improvements would play a critical role in creating more room for opposition challenges and more incentives for the opposition to unite and run a strong campaign as a result of greater optimism about winning *and* being able to take office. By contrast, crackdowns should have narrowed the space for competition, generated pessimism about the prospects for change, and made defections from the regime too costly a strategy. However, there is another scenario that is also challenged by similar authoritarian trends in our two groups of countries. Regimes that rely on increasingly authoritarian practices can encourage allies of the regime and citizens to defect, not just out of anger, but also out of what many of the respondents we interviewed characterized as a "despotism dilemma." As Nenad Kostantinovic argued when referring to

[41] As reported by Partos 2000.

Milosevic's willingness to put even twelve-year members of Otpor (the Serbian youth movement) in jail: "Going too far makes a despotic regime look desperate."[42] Thus, growing repression can be interpreted as indicating regime weakness. While not predicting regime defeat, however, repression could explain a similarity between our two sets of cases that we will explore below: there were significant postelection protests in all of the failed cases and in most of the successful ones as well.

In Table 2 we focus on some other indicators that target political pluralism, competition, and protest. The picture that emerges in the first four columns of this table is similar to what we discovered in Table 1. Thus, we find not only more variation within our category of successful defeats of authoritarian leaders than among the failed cases (with the latter more consistently undemocratic) but also overlap between the two groups. Thus, Georgia, Ukraine, and especially Serbia and Kyrgyzstan feature scores similar to those registered by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus in the years leading up to the elections of interest. Second, it is in the last two columns in the table—that is, frequency of political protests and changes in governments over the course of the transition—where we find strikingly similar patterns within and across our two sets of countries. Put simply, each group demonstrates substantial variation in these two areas, thereby calling into question the ability of local protest traditions and precedents of governmental turnover to explain divergent electoral outcomes.

Moreover, as column 6 highlights, our two groups of countries are also similar with respect to whether there had been an established precedent for fraudulent elections leading to popular demonstrations against the regime. Such a precedent, for example, could provide a basis for subsequent efforts or, conversely, leave citizens too discouraged to return to the streets. In this connection, it is striking that, just as such demonstrations had occurred in Croatia and Serbia following local elections that took place in the mid-1990s, so popular protests also broke out following the 2001 presidential election in Belarus. In addition, both Armenia and Azerbaijan show a similar trend. There were large-scale protests after the 2003 and the 2008 elections in Armenia, and in Azerbaijan the same pattern of repeated election-related protests also materialized in 2003 and 2005. It is fair to conclude, therefore, that dress rehearsals involving mobilizations against the regime in earlier elections were far from necessary conditions for either opposition victories or opposition defeats.

[42] Kostantinovic 2005.

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TABLE 2
TRENDS IN POLITICAL PLURALISM[a]

	(1) *Election*	(2) *NGO Sustainability*	(3) *Media Sustainability*	(4) *Rule of Law*	(5) *Voice and Accountability*	(6) *Political Protests*[b]	(7) *Governmental Turnover*[c]
Croatia	2000	4.7	n/a	−0.16	−0.29	medium *	no
Georgia	2003	4.2	1.71	−1.25	−0.58	medium	yes
Kyrgyzstan	2005	4.2	1.74	−0.82	−0.96	low	no
Serbia	2000	5.4	n/a	−1.29	−1.11	high*	no
Slovakia	1998	n/a	n/a	+0.21	+0.28	low	yes
Ukraine	2004	3.9	1.96	−0.86	−0.66	medium	no
Armenia	2003	4.2	1.71	−0.46	−0.52	low	yes
Armenia	2008	4.0	1.6	−0.51	−0.59	high*	
Azerbaijan	2003	5.2	1.76	−0.88	−0.82	medium	yes
Azerbaijan	2005	4.9	1.81	−0.83	−0.85	high*	
Belarus	2006	5.8	0.66	−1.09	−1.66	low*	no

SOURCES: Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2008; World Bank 1996–2007; Freedom House 1997, 1998, 2000–2007; Freedom House 1973–2006; U.S. Agency for International Development 2007; and International Research and Exchange Board 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006–7.

[a] Voice and Accountability and Rule of Law scores are measured on a scale of +2.5 to −2.5. Higher scores correspond to better governance. Nations in Transit, Civil Society, Independent Media, and Corruption scores are an average of political rights and civil liberties scores; 7 indicates most repressive and 1 indicates most free. Freedom House scores comprise political rights/civil liberties based on a scale of 1–7, with 1 indicating most free and 7 indicating most unfree. NGOSustainability is rated on a scale of 1–7; 7 indicates a low or poor level of development and 1 indicates a very advanced NGO sector. Media Sustainability Index is based on a scale from 1 to 5, where scores of 0–1 indicate unsustainable, unfree press; 1–2 indicates unsustainable, mixed system; 2–3 indicates near sustainability; and 3–4 indicates sustainable press. The index was first compiled in 2001; data for Croatia, Serbia, and Slovakia were thus unavailable. All data are for the year prior to the contested election, except for Croatia (1998) and Slovakia (1996).

[b] In this column we provide a rough measure of the frequency and size of popular protests against the regime in the five years preceding the election of interest. The asterisks in the column represent the existence of a precedent of popular protests associated with fraudulent elections.

[c] By governmental turnover, we refer to a simple contrast between countries when oppositions have formed governments or occupied the presidency and countries where they have not.

We can now turn to the economic basis of regime capacity (see Table 3). Here, we find, first, that our cases exhibit significant variations in levels of economic development and that these levels in turn correlate poorly with our electoral contrasts. To take the extremes: the Croatian economy was ten times larger than the Kyrgyzstan economy and six times larger than the Georgian and Armenian economies at the time of their pivotal elections. Second, there are nonetheless differences between our two groups with respect to economic growth and unemployment. The group of successful challenges to authoritarian rule once again shows significant variation, and the other group demonstrates less variation and an overall record of stronger economic performance. While strong economic performance is associated with regime survival, therefore, poor economic performance is not consistently related to regime defeat.[43]

The relationship between economic performance and outcomes of electoral challenges to authoritarian rule is even more muddied once we focus on longer-term economic trends. For example, Ukraine, which was closely tied to the Russian economy, experienced, like Russia, an implosion of the economy throughout the 1990s as a result of the costs of partial reform.[44] However, the Communist Party kept winning elections. It was only during the Kuchma regime that any growth was registered, and the highest growth occurred in the year before the Orange Revolution.[45] A similar pattern, moreover, appears in both Georgia and Serbia, where leaders survived significant and prolonged economic downturns in the past only to be forced out of office when the economy experienced an upswing.

In Table 4 we complete our assessment of factors that were in place prior to our elections by focusing on a variety of measures of regime strength. First, it is striking how much variation is found among our nine countries with respect to regime durability, size of the public sector, and defection rates, with such variations corresponding poorly to the contrast between successful and failed electoral transitions. At the same time, we see little variation both across and within our categories with respect to another widely used explanation of regime change—precedents for opposition cohesion.[46] Second, even when we combine

[43] See Shepherd 2007.

[44] See Hellman 1998.

[45] Shephard 2007.

[46] At first glance, the Serbian case would appear to be miscoded. However, our interest here is in defections that took place prior to the election and that, as a result, signaled regime weakness and reshaped the strategies of key players. In Serbia the key defections took place only after the contrast between the regime's tabulation of the vote and that of the opposition and its allies was made public in September 2000. Defection, in short, was tied to electoral outcomes, rather than preceding the contest for the presidency.

TABLE 3
ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE ONE YEAR BEFORE EACH ELECTION[a]

	Election	*GDP Per Capita ($)*	*GDP Growth (%)*	*Inflation (%)*	*Unemployment (%)*
Croatia	2000	4371	−0.9	4	13.5
Georgia	2003	741	5.5	6	11.9
Kyrgyzstan	2005	434.5	7.0	5	9.3
Serbia	2000	2319	−1.8	n/a	25.5
Slovakia	1998	3935	4.6	5	11.8
Ukraine	2004	1053.3	9.6	8	3.6
Armenia	2003	740.3	13.2	2	10.8
Armenia	2008	1112.8	13.4	5	7.4
Azerbaijan	2003	760.5	10.6	3	1.4
Azerbaijan	2005	1050.9	10.2	8	1.4
Belarus	2006	3098.3	9.4	19	1.5

SOURCES: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1997–2009; World Bank Key Development Data and Statistics 2007.

[a]All the data are for the year prior to the contested election.

all of our measures of regime capacity, we are unable to differentiate very well between our two sets of cases. For example, Belarus, a failed transition, and Serbia, a successful challenge to authoritarian rule (and one that, by all accounts, but not included in the data used in Table 4, combined considerable centralization of power and a very large public sector), stand out in Table 4 as being relatively strong regimes. Nonetheless, it is important to note that both regimes featured certain brakes on the power of the leader, including some precedent for opposition cohesion in earlier elections and earlier rounds of election-related protests.

Third, while the regimes where challenges to authoritarian rule did not succeed tend to be stronger on the whole than the other regimes, their capacity is nonetheless relatively variable, once we look beyond Belarus to Armenia and Azerbaijan. For instance, both countries are locked in a territorial dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, which generated large-scale public protests early in the transition and led to the removal of incumbent leaders in both cases, and their public sectors are relatively small. Moreover, both countries have experienced repeated rounds of large-scale popular protests—not just early in the transitions from communism but also following the elections analyzed in this article, when regimes were far more institutionalized. Finally, Azerbaijan has had five leaders since it began its transition to statehood, with these leaders associated with the opposition or the Communist Party,

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TABLE 4
REGIME CAPACITY ON THE EVE OF ELECTIONS

	Election	*Presidential Power*[a]	*Divided Opposition Pattern*[b]	*Regime Durability*[c]	*Ruling Party Strength*[d]	*Defections*[e]	*Secession of Regions*[f]	*Size of Public Sector*[g]
Croatia	2000	9	usually	high	medium	low	no	40
Georgia	2003	13	usually	medium	medium	high	yes	35
Kyrgyzstan	2005	16	usually	high	medium	high	no	75
Serbia	2000	n/a	usually	high	high	low	yes	n/a
Slovakia	1998	4	usually	medium	medium	low	no	25
Ukraine	2004	13	usually	high	high	high	no	35
Armenia	2003	16	usually	medium	medium	low	yes	30
Armenia	2008							75
Azerbaijan	2003	18	usually	medium	high	high	yes	40
Azerbaijan	2005							75
Belarus	2006	21	usually	medium	high	high	no	75

SOURCES: Calculations by authors; for *Presidential Power*, see fn. a.

[a] The higher the number, the greater the presidential power for 1990 to 2002 . These data were provided to the authors by Timothy Frye, and they are drawn from Frye, Tucker, and Hellman 2001. Presidential powers increased from 1990 to the electoral period of interest in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia (Bunce and Wolchik estimation), and Ukraine.

[b] The issue is whether there was any precedent of opposition unity in earlier elections. In every case, there was—whether in local contests (as in Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, and Ukraine) or in national contests (as in Slovakia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus).

[c] This column highlights a contrast between a history of turnover in leaders and governing coalitions (as in Georgia, Slovakia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus, where there was the Communist Party in 1994) versus rule by a single leader and party during the entire postcommunist period (as in Croatia, Serbia, and Ukraine).

[d] The "medium" score in this column reflects cases where the ruling party was a loose-knit coalition that did not institutionalize the leader's power (as in Slovakia and Armenia) or where a once well institutionalized party disintegrated before the key election (as in Croatia and Georgia). A "high" score indicates strong institutionalization evident up to the election.

[e] A low defection rate means few defections from the ruling circle before the pivotal election and a high rate signifies many defections of key actors associated with the regime to the opposition.

[f] This column refers to the existence of ongoing conflicts between secessionist regions and the state.

[g] This is the percentage of the economy that is owned by the state; source is European Bank for Reconstruction and Development 1997–2009.

and one leader of the opposition, Lala Shovkat, who was a minister in Heydar Aliyev's government but who eventually defected and formed an opposition party in order to oppose Heydar's son and the current president, Ilham Aliyev. [47]

We also find the most variation along these diverse dimensions of regime capacity within the first group of regimes in Table 4. This pattern reinforces our earlier findings that successful electoral challenges to authoritarian rule in the postcommunist region have occurred in quite different political and economic contexts. This is the case whether we focus on long-term political trends or on the institutional and structural characteristics of the Croatian, Georgian, Kyrgyz, Serbian, Slovak, and Ukrainian regimes.

Electoral Politics

The pattern of scores reported in Tables 1–4 counsels a shift in focus from structural and institutional factors to the nature of the elections themselves. This makes particular sense, given the failure of many of these "preelection" factors to differentiate clearly between our two sets of cases and, at the same time, given the puzzling and repeated pattern of considerable economic and political variation among the regimes that served as sites for successful electoral challenges to authoritarian rule. However, there is another problem with these explanations that alerts us to the importance of electoral dynamics within competitive authoritarian regimes. On the one hand, such regimes are vulnerable for the simple reason that they hold regular and competitive elections. Thus, the problem is not just the opportunities for electoral change such regimes provide; it is also the tensions they generate between real and "fake"[48] democracy, with the result that, "if leaders use the forms of democracy, publics come to expect the substance."[49] In addition, competitive authoritarian regimes are unusually vulnerable in comparison with regimes that are either fully democratic or fully authoritarian, because these regimes typically feature a particular syndrome of weak state institutions, poor economic performance, high levels of corruption, and quite fluid mixtures of authoritarian and democratic politics.[50] This general profile, moreover, provides an apt summary of the political

[47] Shovkat 2007.
[48] Wilson 2005.
[49] Gelbard 2007.
[50] See, for example, Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen, and O'Halloran 2006; and Roessler and Howard 2009.

and economic trajectories since independence for seven of our nine cases: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, and Ukraine.

Despite these problems, however, competitive authoritarian regimes are in fact relatively durable because the very ways in which they operate undermine the ability of oppositions to mount effective electoral challenges. We are referring in part to the obvious point that such regimes are often in a position to defend themselves through control of the media, parliaments, the courts, and elections; harassment of the opposition and civil society groups; and interventions that keep the opposition divided and civil society and opposition groups separated from one another. However, there are two other aspects of competitive authoritarian regimes that undermine opposition effectiveness. One is the fact that opposition parties in the postcommunist world—as a result of the absence of a democratic past in most cases, the deeply penetrative character of the communist experiment and its classless legacies, and the costs of partial economic reforms—tend to be very new, fluid formations that are independent of social cleavages and are dominated by leaders who have little understanding of bargaining and compromise, campaigning for votes, or even using public opinion polls as both indicators of popular preferences and guidelines for party policies. As a result, opposition politics in the competitive authoritarian regimes in this region in particular tends to be long on "posturing" and short on policy,[51] and opposition parties are often "self-destructive," because their "leaders are much more interested in keeping people out, rather than bringing people in."[52]

In the rush by both analysts and local and international democracy activists to blame the opposition for its electoral failings, however, they have overlooked a more fundamental constraint on opposition development built into the very nature of competitive authoritarian regimes. Because of their fluid political characteristics, given weak institutions, ever-changing rules of the political game, and the extraordinary difficulties such regimes pose with respect to reading both popular sentiments and regime capacity, competitive authoritarian regimes present oppositions with unusually diverse, difficult, and, therefore, inherently divisive strategic choices. For example, should the opposition collaborate

[51] This was a common theme in the interviews we conducted with party leaders and international democracy promoters in Slovakia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Serbia. See, for example, interviews with Surotchak 2006; Calingaert 2006; Shovkat 2007; Blessington 2007; Frohrib 2007; Schultz 2007; Hovhannisyan 2005; Bennett 2005; Iskandaryan 2005; Flego 2005; Grubjesic 2005; Licht 2005; Usupashvili 2005; and Arakelian 2005.

[52] The first phrase is from Helf 2007, and the second is from Pesic 2005.

with the regime or challenge it; should it boycott elections or participate; should it focus on local, parliamentary, and/or national contests; and, if it wins seats, should it boycott parliament or participate in it? The opposition in all nine of our countries confronted these choices in every election and responded, not surprisingly, in different ways at different times. As a result, in any given election it was very hard for members of the opposition to agree on how to position themselves in response to the regime.

At the same time there was an additional complication common to most of the countries of interest in this article. Because of territorial disputes and costly mobilizations in the past associated with state formation, leaders of these regimes based their rule on appeals to nationalism and political order.[53] This was especially the case in Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Such appeals crowd out other concerns that might serve as a basis for challenging the regime; they delegitimate calls for change, since such arguments can easily be characterized as unpatriotic; and they divide and demobilize oppositions and citizens who would normally embrace economic and political reform. Thus, oppositions have little room for political maneuver, since they must always parade their nationalist credentials, especially when, as in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Slovakia, and Croatia, earlier governments lost power because of their inability to handle crises rooted in national disputes.

These understandable constraints on the development of effective oppositions, coupled with repeated failures by the opposition to win power and long histories of fraudulent elections (as in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, and Ukraine), have had powerful effects, not surprisingly, on how citizens in competitive authoritarian regimes view the regime, the opposition, and elections. From their vantage point, voting—both in general and for the opposition in particular—is a waste of time, because the regime can and will manipulate the results in its favor and, just as importantly, because the opposition is not only very unlikely to win but also, because of its record of squabbling, collaboration with the regime, boycotting elections, and the like, it is often considered unworthy of support.[54] These ef-

[53] The logic here is drawn from two sources. One is a forthcoming book on American politics: Hetherington and Weiler 2009; the other is Gagnon 2004.

[54] For example, surveys in Azerbaijan show that while citizens have a number of grievances against the regime, they are even more dissatisfied with the opposition (Schultz 2007; and Frohrib 2007). For detailed evidence on public concerns about the opposition in Serbia, see Milosevic-Djordjevic 2005; Pavlovic 2005; Mihailovic 2001; Ili 2001. These arguments were also made in interviews conducted in Belgrade in 2005 with three specialists on public opinion: Srdjan Bogosavljevic, April 13, Milan Nikolic, April 14, and Marko Blegojevic, April 15, 2005.

fects make it very hard for oppositions to mount successful challenges in competitive authoritarian regimes, even when the regime is widely disliked and perceived to be vulnerable. In fact, popular sentiments are unusually hard to decipher, because public opinion polls are rare, often unreliable, and/or limited in their circulation and because publics respond to stolen elections by participating less and less over time in the electoral process, with the result that electoral outcomes, already manipulated in many cases by the regime, overrepresent regime supporters and "acquiescers." What all this means is that opposition groups in competitive authoritarian regimes cannot win power unless they are able to convince publics to vote, vote for them, and, if necessary, defend their choices in the streets—a very tall order.

This discussion carries an important implication that directs attention to variations in electoral dynamics. Structural accounts of political struggles between regimes and oppositions in authoritarian contexts tend to presume a zero-sum relationship between the two sets of players, wherein declining support for the regime is transferred in nearly automatic fashion to growing support for the opposition.[55] However, if oppositions are unpopular as well, this transfer does not have to take place. Moreover, citizens do not have to vote. Finally, it is telling that the departure of authoritarian regimes, as one recent study has documented, usually leads to the formation of new authoritarian regimes—rather than to victory by the democratic opposition.[56]

Microanalytical accounts of these struggles also share the same zero-sum perspective, although they add the collective action problem to the equation and argue, at least in the case of the so-called color revolutions, that fraudulent elections facilitate such a transfer of popular support.[57] However, once again these analyses do not explain why publics are willing and able to transfer their support to the opposition and to some opposition groups in particular. The latter consideration is relevant, because every effort to forge opposition unity, even in the elections analyzed in this article, fell short of including all opposition parties and candidates. Moreover, there are two other problems. One is that only some fraudulent elections prompt popular protests. Consider, for example, the contrasts between the elections in Azerbaijan in 2003 and 2005 compared with the aftermath of the 2007 presidential election, which saw no protests, and the contrast between the Georgian parliamentary elections in 2003 and the presidential election that took

[55] Way 2005a; and Way 2009.
[56] Hadenius and Teorell 2007.
[57] Tucker 2007; and Thompson and Kuntz 2004.

place three years earlier. The other consideration is more obvious: only some protests, as we have seen in this article, succeed in producing a transfer of power.

Variations among the Elections

We have hypothesized that elections would be more likely to produce opposition victories when incumbents were less able, because of term limits and other considerations that prevented them from being on the ballot, to make the credible commitments to supplying their followers with the benefits that had been so essential for winning support for their rule in the past. However, these considerations, once again, apply to both groups of elections. For example, incumbent presidents were not on the ballot in the parliamentary contests that took place in Armenia and Georgia in 2003 and in Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan in 2005. At the same time, similarities in the impact of term limits or the illness or death of long-serving authoritarian incumbents led to quite different electoral results in Croatia and Ukraine versus Armenia (2008) and Azerbaijan (2003).

Another distinction we drew earlier—and one that figures prominently in studies of elections in mixed regimes—was between united and divided oppositions. Here, we discover once again little difference between our two sets of electoral results. Thus, in all eleven elections, oppositions, in contrast to their usual behavior, succeeded in forming political blocs to contest power. Finally, we note that in all three countries where elections failed to empower the opposition, there were in fact several rounds of elections where oppositions formed blocs—not only in the two sets of elections in Armenia and Azerbaijan that we have included in this study but also in Belarus in 2001 (along with 2006).

At the same time, our cases support the argument that fraudulent elections generate protests but add the important wrinkle—in view of what transpired in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus—that such protests do not necessarily result in regime change. Moreover, we need to qualify even the first generalization, because the linkage between electoral irregularities and public protests did not materialize during earlier and also rigged national-level contests in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Serbia, and Ukraine (with the 2001 election in Belarus an exception). In addition, despite the precedents set in 2003 and 2005 and, thus, clear evidence that publics fully recognized regime manipulation of electoral results, the 2007 presidential election in Azerbaijan failed to generate antiregime demonstrations. What all this suggests

is that there are no guarantees that stolen elections prompt popular demonstrations or that, when they do, oppositions succeed in their quest to take office.

This leaves two final hypotheses to be explored. One is whether electoral success or failure can be explained by the willingness of Western-based democracy promoters to signal declining support for the regime and provide substantial assistance for the development of civil society, open media, and free and fair elections. In Table 5 we focus on trends in USAID democracy and governance assistance.[58] The picture that emerges is mixed. First, on a per capita basis from 1990 to 2004, the United States has favored Georgia and Armenia in particular, the former a case of electoral success and the latter a case of electoral failure. At the same time, the lowest average assistance on a per capita basis was given to Belarus, Slovakia, and Ukraine—three cases that straddle our two categories. Moreover, USAID support of elections (as opposed to initiatives focusing on civil society or rule of law and governance) shows, not surprisingly, an electoral cycle in most of the countries of interest in this article.[59] That recognized, Serbia stands out with respect to the sheer size of the jump in electoral and overall assistance in the two years leading up to the 2000 presidential election. Moreover, our interviews with both local and international participants in the defeat of Milosevic uniformly recognized the importance of American support: funding was critical, but even more critical was what it signaled about a dramatic change in U.S. policy.

There is, however, a more nuanced set of distinctions that we can draw about the actions of the international democracy-promotion community. Our interviews, coupled with the public record, suggest that our eleven elections can be divided into three groups with respect to the American emphasis on the importance of free and fair elections. In Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, and Belarus, the United States invested heavily in free and fair elections and made its interest in regime change very well known to the opposition. Moreover, the United States was very quick in Serbia in 2000 and in Belarus in 2006—that is, the two cases in this group where elections were fraudulent and protests broke out—to side publicly with those challenging the official results.

[58] We focus on the United States for two reasons. First, there are no reliable, comparable data on assistance provided by private foundations and the European Union. Second, our interviews with both European and American democracy promoters and local participants in these elections in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine converged on the argument that the key international player was the United States, though the Europeans were also critical in Slovakia and Ukraine.

[59] On the case of Kyrgyzstan in 2005, see, especially, Borbieva 2007.

TABLE 5
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE

	Total Democracy and Governance (DG) Assistance per Capita ($) [a]	*Average DG Assistance per Capita ($) for Five Years Prior to Election*	*Average DG Assistance per Capita ($) for Two Years Prior to Election*	*% Change in DG Assistance* [b]	*% Growth in Electoral Assistance* [c]
Croatia	1.29	1.69	1.82	−54.5	+1.3
Georgia	1.24	2.52	2.23	+41.5	+172
Serbia	3.15	0.77	1.28	+340	+111
Slovakia	0.44	0.86	1.13	−20.5	+12.8
Ukraine	0.30	0.44	0.47	+40.7	+145%
Armenia	2.03	3.69	3.58	(2003) +19.0	(2003) −35.4
Azerbaijan	0.51	1.09	0.87	(2003) +2.9	(2003) +54.3
Belarus	0.22	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

SOURCE: Finkel, Pérez-Liñán, Seligson, and Tate 2007.

[a] These data are calculated from the data set. The years are 1990–2004.

[b] This is percentage change in overall DG assistance during the two years prior to the pivotal election. For Armenia and Azerbaijan the two electoral episodes are averaged.

[c] This is percentage change in solely electoral assistance during the two years prior to the pivotal election. For Armenia and Azerbaijan the two electoral episodes are averaged.

In Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine, the United States also went to considerable lengths to support improvements in electoral procedures, including, ironically, a visit with Shevardnadze in Georgia in the summer of 2003 by James Baker, the former secretary of state (and organizer on the Republican side of the 2000 battle over the electoral results in Florida following the 2000 American presidential election). However, the American campaign for free and fair elections was less ambitious in these cases than in Slovakia, Croatia, and Serbia. For example, just as there were widespread doubts about whether the opposition was a credible political force in Armenia and Kyrgyzstan in particular, so, especially in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan (and in Armenia in 2007), American engagement was guided by the assumption that improved electoral procedures in these parliamentary contests mattered primarily because they could invest in the quality of the presidential elections that were scheduled to follow them. At the same time, in contrast to its actions in Belarus, Croatia, and Serbia, the United States did not signal strong support for regime

change.[60] Finally, the standards for free and fair elections were relatively flexible in these cases. For instance, in Armenia, as we discovered in our interviews in March 2007, the United States had decided to link infrastructure support through the Millenium Challenge Account to "improved" electoral procedures in Armenia, rather than to free and fair elections, as the former was understood to be a much easier standard to meet for a country that had a long history of particularly corrupt electoral practices.[61] In contrast to Armenia, with Kyrgyzstan and to some extent with Georgia (where American policymakers had some concerns about the opposition leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, even before the election in 2003 and especially after his decision to use the parliamentary contest to force Shevardnadze out of power), the United States was quick (along with the presidents of both Lithuania and Poland, but not the EU) to register its dissatisfaction with the official results of the 2004 presidential election in Ukraine and to signal strong support for Viktor Yushchenko, the leader of the opposition, and his allies camping on the Maidan.

Finally, Azerbaijan is in a category by itself. Here, the United States provided more overall assistance on a per capita basis than it did to Slovakia and Ukraine, and it provided reasonable financial support as well for free and fair elections. Moreover, the United States and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (which is part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) publicly urged the regime to reform the Central Electoral Commission. Madeleine Albright, on a visit to Baku, and the U.S. ambassador, Reno Harnish, also called for improved electoral practices. Indeed, these actions, along with the precedents established in the region of removing authoritarians from office, led opposition leaders and their followers to assume that the United States would stand with them.[62] However, because of energy concerns and the important geopolitical location of Azerbaijan, the United States also placed a premium on political stability in Azerbaijan—a priority that compromised its message about electoral reform. As one American embassy official in Baku argued: "Why should we support regime change in Azerbaijan? The regime here has been a good friend of the United States."[63]

[60] See, especially, Mitchell 2009; Bennett 2007; and Flego 2007. In addition, a similar interpretation of Kyrgyzstan was offered by two other interviewees who had worked in civil society organizations in Kyrgyzstan during the 2005 election: Sainazaria 2007; and Schultz 2007.

[61] Roundtable discussion at the American embassy in Yerevan, Armenia, March 9, 2007. See also Sahakyan and Atanesyan 2006; International Republican Institute 2007; and Borbieva 2007.

[62] Bunce and Wolchik 2007a.

[63] American Embassy Official 2007.

Electoral Innovations

The variable impact of external democracy assistance, however, cannot be understood in isolation from what happened on the ground in these electoral confrontations between the regime and opposition parties. We therefore need to distinguish between two types of elections. The first is typical of elections in competitive authoritarian regimes and certainly in the postcommunist experience more generally, and the second is atypical but very familiar to American audiences, especially in the wake of the 2008 presidential contest. The first approach is a relatively passive one, where oppositions merely run for office, either as separate contenders or organized into blocs. The second is more ambitious and is based upon the argument, summarized well by Giorgi Meladze, that "[t]here are two keys to making challenges to dictators work: belief and planning."[64]

Belief refers to moving from a well-established norm—that is, pessimism about the chances of defeating the incumbent—to a more optimistic scenario for the future among opposition groups, civil society organizations, and everyday citizens. Such optimism is linked in turn with a series of interrelated, difficult, and sometimes tedious tasks that maximize the chances for electoral success. These strategies include, in particular, forging a unified opposition that puts forward a single candidate; the mounting of ambitious, nationwide campaigns by the opposition; collecting and distributing public opinion data that candidates can then use to frame their appeals; orchestrating energetic voter registration and turnout drives; maintaining pressures on the regime to reform election commissions; forming youth movements that support political change through elections; and creating organizations that have the resources in terms of money, people, and training sessions to carry out internal election monitoring, last-minute voter turnout campaigns, exit polls, and where necessary, because of electoral fraud, parallel vote tabulation.

In Table 6 we apply this list of activities to our two sets of elections and find the emergence of a clear pattern. While *all* of the failed attempts to defeat dictators share the commonality of deploying at best a few of these strategies (with the one similarity opposition cohesion), all of the successful attempts (though less so in Kyrgyzstan)[65] involved

[64] Meladze 2005. Meladze echoes the sentiments expressed by Pavol Demeš 2006, Slovak NGO leader currently European director of the German Marshall Fund of the U.S., who highlighted the ability to create optimism and a sense of efficacy as key determinants of the opposition's victory in Slovakia in 1998.

[65] The removal of Akaev from office in 2005 was less a result of the opposition's struggle and its implementation of the electoral tool kit than of three other factors: the strong signals the United States sent about the importance of free and fair elections, the power of demonstration effects (which,

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TABLE 6
ELECTORAL STRATEGIES: OPPOSITIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

	Unity of Opposition	*Ambitious Campaigns* [a]	*Voter Registration Drives* [b]	*Voter Turnout Drives* [b]	*Pressures on Election Commissions* [c]	*Collaboration between Civil Society, Youth Movements, and Opposition*	*Public Opinion Polls* [d]	*Exit Polls* [b]	*Parallel Voter Tabulation* [b]
Croatia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Georgia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–
Kyrgyzstan	+	–	–	–	+	+	+	+	–
Serbia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–[e]	+
Slovakia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–
Ukraine	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Armenia	+	–	–	–	+	–	–	+[e]	–
Azerbaijan	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–[e]	–
Belarus	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–[e]	–

[a] This includes nationwide campaigns and extensive use of the media and distribution of campaign literature.

[b] These were typically carried out by local (but often internationally funded) civil society organizations such as the Liberty Institute and Kmara in Georgia, or Otpor, CeSID, and Izlaz in Serbia.

[c] This was largely done by the U.S. government and the OSCE.

[d] Such polls were typically collaborative efforts by local experts and organizations such as IRI.

[e] In Serbia exit polls were not allowed, and in Azerbaijan in 2005 they were severely flawed, in part because of regime involvement. See Ismayilova 2005. In Armenia exit polls (conducted by a British firm) were used in 2008. See Danielyan 2008

full deployment of this highly sophisticated ensemble of electoral techniques. This was even the case, we must emphasize, when regime contexts were relatively repressive, as in Serbia in particular but also in Ukraine in the last years of Kuchma and in Kyrgyzstan in the waning days of the Akaev regime. To provide one example: what is common to Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine (but to a lesser extent Kyrgyzstan) is the formation of youth groups and campaigns, such as Kmara in Georgia, Pora in Ukraine, and Otpor in Serbia. These groups used these elections in particular to make their concerns known, and they played a key role, as did the Rock the Vote campaign in Slovakia, in getting out the vote, assisting campaigns, voting, and, where necessary, participating in protests.[66] However, youth movements were nonexistent in Armenia and much smaller in size and far less ambitious in their actions in our other failed cases, as with Meqam in Azerbaijan and Zubr in Belarus. The engagement of young people in politics, along with the other kinds of activities noted in Table 6, translated not surprisingly into turnout rates in Slovakia, Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, and Ukraine that were all higher than in the recent past, in contrast to the much lower energy contests that took place in Belarus, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. For example, turnout in Croatia moved from 68.8 percent in 1995 to 76.5 percent in 2000 and in Yugoslavia (Serbia) from 65 percent to 71 percent, whereas turnout in Azerbaijan from 2003 to 2005 fell from 68 percent to 40.5 percent. In Slovakia turnout among first-time voters exceeded 80 percent in 1998.

What makes this contrast between hard-fought and elaborately planned electoral challenges to authoritarian rule versus politics as usual even more compelling are several other considerations. One is that in both failed and successful cases incumbents or their designated successors—though this was less the case in both Slovakia and Ukraine—failed to deploy the electoral tools listed in Table 6. This failure reflected, for example, overconfidence; ingrained habits from past elections (which dated back for many of these leaders to the communist era); and the calculation, particularly understandable for parliamentary contests in presidential systems, that the opposition would not coalesce or run significant campaigns. However, there were two other

among other things, led Akaev to panic in the face of protests), and anger in the south of the country about Akaev's failure to maintain regional equality in patronage benefits. Also influential, however, was his unwillingness, unlike Milosevic throughout the 1980s and Aliyev in the elections in Azerbaijan, to use violence against protesters (Lifan 2009). See also Borbieva 2007; Radnitz 2006; Radnitz 2009; and Fuhrmann 2007.

[66] See Bunce and Wolchik 2009b; Bunce and Wolchik 2010; and Forbrig and Demeš 2007.

key reasons: ignorance about sophisticated electoral strategies and their belief, reinforced by previous elections, that victory rested on demobilizing the electorate, stealing the election, and using such short-term payoffs as stocking stores on the eve of the vote, increasing pensions and social welfare benefits, or raising the salaries of members of the police force. It is precisely these calculations, for example, that seemed to have been paramount in influencing the behavior of authoritarian incumbents in the elections that took place in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan.

The other reason to be confident about the importance of the strategic contrasts reported in Table 6 is that the defining characteristics of the successful breakthrough elections were in fact distinctive to them in comparison with earlier contests in the same countries. While bits and pieces of this ensemble of electoral strategies had appeared earlier—including some use of vote monitoring, public opinion polls, and, in a few cases, exit polls—most of the ensemble that came together in the successful elections constituted new and fully coordinated additions to the previous electoral activities of oppositions and civil society groups. Consider, for example, Serbia prior to 2000. The opposition had never run a nationwide campaign, and it usually ignored opinion polls and had virtually no contact with civil society organizations. Civil society organizations in turn had been alienated from the opposition and felt that their role should be an apolitical one, which meant separation from opposition parties. And finally electoral contests had never engaged young people or featured street theater, marches, rallies, posters, platform statements, parallel vote tabulation, internal election monitoring, voter registration drives, or voter turnout campaigns, not to mention another key feature—attempts by young people to win over the security forces by holding conversations between the opposition and the police in anticipation of popular protests. Such wide-ranging types of activities were thus unprecedented in Serbia, largely because of how much coordination they required and how demanding they were in general and especially in the context of a highly repressive regime, which, among other things, did not allow external vote monitoring. Central to many of these activities, moreover, were two civil society groups that had formed in the last years of the Milosevic regime, precisely when the political climate was becoming particularly harsh: Otpor (Resistance) and CeSID (the Center for Elections and Democracy). The opposition and NGO communities launched similarly coordinated, far-reaching, and well-planned activities in our other successful cases.

The question then becomes: what prompted and enabled oppositions and civil society groups to identify and carry out these electoral strategies? Here, we have a two-part answer, based on our interviews.[67] First, this approach to winning elections took its initial full form in Slovakia in the contest against Mečiar in 1998; the same tool kit was then deployed in the election in Croatia. With the Serbian addition of popular protests as a result of the authoritarian politics of the Milosevic regime, this approach to winning elections then moved to Georgia and Ukraine. However, just as these strategies were not purely homegrown, so the model did not make its cross-national journey by itself. In part, this cross-national dynamic reflected positive precedents combined with electoral opportunities. It also reflected learning from oppositions and civil society groups that had been successful in defeating dictators and electoral assistance provided by Western democracy promoters (including help in establishing cross-national ties among oppositions and civil society groups). What we saw, in short, was a combination of local effort, cross-national learning, and transnational network-based assistance.[68]

However, this characterization of what happened should not obscure a key point. In each of the successful cases, oppositions and civil society groups worked closely together and used sophisticated methods in order to accomplish an interrelated set of objectives. One was generating optimism about the potential for political change on the part of oppositions, civil society organizations, and everyday citizens. Another was connecting various elements of the opposition with each other, civil society organizations and voters. Another was helping opposition candidates become more effective vote getters. And yet another was convincing voters that their vote would count and that they should support the opposition, especially the united group. In addition, it was necessary to get the vote out on election day—which was particularly important in Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine, where the elections were in fact extremely close. Finally, publicizing fraudulent elections was a key part of the package in more authoritarian political settings, as were preparations for popular protests in response to regime attempts to steal the election. These preparations included, for example, training members of civil society groups and the opposition in nonviolent

[67] We have provided a detailed analysis elsewhere of how this model developed and how it diffused within the postcommunist region. See Bunce and Wolchik 2007b; Bunce and Wolchik 2006b; and Bunce and Wolchik 2010. See also Tarrow 2005.

[68] The invention of this electoral tool kit in the Philippines and Chile in the second half of the 1980s and its transfer to the postcommunist region were outlined for us in interviews we conducted, for example, with Merloe 2009; Barnes 2007; Carpenter 2009. See also Bunce and Wolchik 2010.

protest techniques and, in the case of the opposition and some leaders of civil society organizations, conducting conversations during and immediately after the election with the police and the military. However, the protests also grew out of electoral mobilization itself—what Suzana Grubjesic, a member of the Serbian Parliament, characterized as a "natural continuation of the celebration that broke out once we realized that we had finally defeated Milosevic."[69]

This collection of electoral strategies, in short, was calibrated to surmount the very obstacles competitive authoritarian regimes had erected in order to prevent the opposition from winning power. What is striking is that they are the very same strategies (aside from parallel vote tabulation) that political parties use in established democracies to win office. However, in our successful cases, only one side put them into play, which had the effect of tilting for once the political playing field more in their favor.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article has been to address the puzzle of why elections in competitive authoritarian regimes have the divergent outcomes of either leading to the victory of the opposition or, more commonly, producing continuity in authoritarian rule. To answer this question, we carried out a highly controlled comparison of eleven elections that took place between 1998 and 2008 in competitive authoritarian regimes in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia. Six of them shared the common outcome of removing authoritarian leaders from office or defeating their anointed successors, and five of them maintained the political status quo. We first assessed the impact of a series of factors measuring various aspects of regime and opposition strength on the eve of the elections. Here, we discovered that some of these factors failed to differentiate between the two groups of countries—for example, regarding the level of economic development and patterns over time in the unity of the opposition, defections from the ruling circle, turnover in governments and governing coalitions, election-related mass demonstrations, and democratic versus authoritarian development. Moreover, some of our explanatory factors, while indicating similarities among the failed cases, exhibited considerable variation among the countries where elections led to a decisive break with the authoritarian past—for

[69] Grubjesic 2005. Indeed, elections and protests often go together for the simple reason that the latter builds on mobilizations connected with the former. McAdam and Tarrow 2009; and see also Trejo 2004.

instance, regime type, the degree of presidential powers, and economic performance. Finally, these hypotheses had the additional limitations of being unable to explain, first, why earlier elections in Croatia, Slovakia, Georgia, Serbia, and Ukraine, which often took place in political and economic contexts similar to those at the time of the breakthrough elections, failed to produce an opposition victory and, second, how oppositions finally succeeded in these countries in achieving four necessary, but very difficult tasks: forming an electoral bloc, convincing publics that the regime could lose the election, increasing turnout to include new voters and opponents of the regime, and convincing citizens to support the opposition bloc. Put simply, the problem here is that regime vulnerability in the context of competitive authoritarian regimes does not by any means translate easily or usually into electoral victories of the opposition.

These findings led us to compare electoral episodes. We found that some distinctions among elections were indeed unhelpful, but one factor provided a clear line of demarcation between our two sets of elections, that is, whether the opposition in collaboration with civil society groups and regional and Western-based democracy activists used an ensemble of sophisticated, intricately planned, and historically unprecedented electoral strategies to maximize their votes and, if necessary, to support public protests demanding a change in leadership, or whether they worked largely alone and settled for a more passive approach to contesting the election. Thus, the key was not simply unifying the opposition but also running ambitious political campaigns, orchestrating elaborate voter registration and voter turnout drives, and putting in place electoral monitoring procedures that in combination made oppositions more effective and more politically attractive to voters, created a widespread sense that victory was possible, and made it much harder for the regime, as a result, to win the election and remain in office after it had lost. The successful defeat of dictators, therefore, while exploiting regime vulnerability in certain ways (such as the most general one of the regime's toleration of competition), rested in both more or less vulnerable and more or less democratic regimes on the deployment of a set of innovative, well-planned, detailed, and sometimes dangerous strategies for winning political power.

We now close our discussion by addressing briefly several implications of this study for the analysis of competitive authoritarian regimes, the role of elections in political change, and the explanatory power of structure versus agency. First, what is striking in this analysis of competitive authoritarian regimes is not only how vulnerable these regimes

are as a result of tolerating some aspects of democracy, including electoral competition, but also how well protected they are. They are protected not simply because of their authoritarian political practices but also because of the ways in which the very functioning of the regime (1) divides oppositions, civil society organizations, and everyday citizens; (2) makes it hard for connections to be forged among these three sets of players; and (3) demobilizes publics, while making it difficult for them to believe that their votes will count and that they should, for both pragmatic and personal reasons, support the opposition. For citizens in these regimes, for example, the common perception is that the opposition is both incompetent and compromised.

It is thus a mistake to argue that what stops citizens from voting for the opposition and protesting when elections are stolen is simply fear of the consequences, uncertainty about their fellow citizens, or a sense of hopelessness.[70] This line of argument makes sense, for example, in the case of Poland in 1987, but it is not accurate for Serbia in 2000. Instead, the collective action problem in the latter context includes considerable ambivalence among citizens about the opposition as well. And it is precisely that ambivalence, together with repression, hopelessness, and the like, that makes the ensemble of electoral strategies so important.

Second, because the unity of the opposition was evident in both the successful and the failed cases, we would counsel caution in attributing too much explanatory power to this factor.[71] On the one hand, it is clear that factors aside from the unity of the opposition must be included in any argument seeking to explain why electoral challenges to authoritarian rule succeed. On the other hand, there is limited evidence to support the claim that it is chances for victory that lead oppositions to coalesce. It is not just that the opposite occurs, as our interviews with opposition leaders suggested;[72] it is also that pressures on oppositions from civil society organizations and from the donor community played an extremely important role in determining whether they would decide to cooperate and whether they would continue collaboration for the duration of the electoral campaign. In addition, unity is costly for the opposition, because, if they win, they have to share the spoils of office and work with each other, despite long-term tensions. Finally, the

[70] See Tucker 2007.

[71] See, for example, Howard and Roessler 2006; and van de Walle 2006.

[72] As Gambar 2007 argued: just as they believed that unity could reduce their ability to win power because it would encourage more extreme actions on the part of the regime to undermine the opposition and go to greater lengths to steal the election, so they argued that a more vulnerable regime can tempt oppositions to go it alone in order to monopolize the benefits from winning office.

relationship between unity and perceptions of likely electoral success is not that clear, given, for example, the considerable uncertainty about public sentiments and citizens' willingness to vote and vote for the opposition. Such uncertainty seems to be well placed, moreover, considering how close the elections were in Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine—despite the enormous electoral efforts made by the opposition and their allies.

Two other findings are also unexpected. The first is the fact that growing authoritarianism does not distinguish well between our two sets of elections, though it does seem to relate, as does a united opposition, to popular protests. The second is that defections from the ruling circle do not have the predictive power many analysts assume. For example, while such defections were very important in Ukraine and Georgia, in part because they indicated regime vulnerability and in part because they produced a new and dynamic leader of the opposition, these dynamics were not so much in play in Serbia, Croatia, or Slovakia. In the latter three countries the ruling party either stayed intact or, if it was dissolving, did not join the opposition, and the victors were in fact longtime opponents of the regime and far from charismatic politicians. Moreover, in Serbia significant defections took place only after the opposition publicized its own election results, which were very different from those eventually presented by the regime. Also telling is the fact that in Serbia the constitutional court stood by Milosevic whereas in Ukraine it defected from the Kuchma regime.

We would also argue that the very instability of electoral authoritarian regimes and the sheer diversity of regime types where electoral breakthroughs both succeeded and failed would together suggest that less attention be devoted to fine-grained distinctions between regimes where elections are competitive but results are rigged. Indeed, one implication of our study is that just as regime type structures the behavior of both elites and publics (which is why political scientists spend so much time on regime typologies), so the opposite can also be the case. This is especially so where regimes are fluid (as is the case with most competitive authoritarian systems) and where elections, as a result, have the potential of redistributing political power between the regime, on the one hand, and oppositions, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens, on the other. Competitive authoritarian regimes therefore feature flexible constraints that have the capacity to redefine what is politically possible and, thus, the nature of the regime itself.

Our comparison also addresses the role of elections in democratic change. Some scholars see elections as sites that give expression to

longer-term political forces at work and that as a result are unable to exercise independent influence. Other scholars, by contrast, argue that elections can be considered a mode of transition. This is so, they say, because of their association with patterns of democratic improvements, their role as a school for democracy, their ability to surmount collective action problems in processes of political change, and their ability at times to remove a key impediment to democratic change—that is, rule by authoritarian leaders.[73] We would agree with the second characterization, while recognizing, along with Andreas Schedler, that elections have contingent effects.[74] For example, it is striking not just that the elections of interest in this article had very different outcomes but also that political developments after these elections widened the regime gap between these two sets of countries. In all of the successful cases, except Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, democratic performance improved after the election. For example, both Croatia and Serbia made a leap from authoritarianism to democracy, and Slovakia returned to a democratic path after a dangerous episode of dedemocratization. By contrast, in all of the unsuccessful cases, the weight of authoritarianism in these mixed systems increased substantially after these elections.

Finally, this study is well positioned to speak to a core debate in studies of the origins of political change. Is the key issue opportunity (which suggests the importance of structural conditions, institutional contexts, and long-term trends) or is it action (which highlights the role of agency and shorter-term influences on political outcomes)? What we have discovered in this study is that while the vulnerability of regimes matters, so do variations in the willingness and capacity of oppositions to exploit that vulnerability—in particular, whether they coalesce with one another and whether they deploy other electoral strategies that make them more competitive at the polls and, if necessary, in the streets. It would be wrong, of course, to reduce our findings to the efforts of oppositions and their allies and, thus, to agency effects. This is especially so in view of three incontrovertible facts highlighted, for example, by the cases of Russia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan—that the wave of electoral change seems to have come to an end in this region, at least for the moment, that authoritarians as well as democrats learn from events that take place in their neighborhood, and that competitive authoritarian regimes vary both in their popularity and in how far their leaders are prepared to go to

[73] Lindberg 2009; Teorell and Hadenius 2009; Tucker 2007.
[74] Schedler 2009.

protect their powers. However, it would also be a mistake to underestimate the power of agency in electoral transitions from competitive authoritarianism.

We now close our discussion with three points. One repeats an earlier observation—that vulnerable regimes can be in fact quite durable. Another is that many of our electoral turnovers took place in relatively repressive states with purportedly very little room for political maneuver. Finally, agency in our case, unlike in some accounts that also privilege its role, refers not to idiosyncratic and very short term actions taken by a handful of people who were able to take advantage of a sudden expansion in opportunities for change but, rather, to an ensemble of deliberate, detailed, coordinated, and indeed planned actions taken by a wide range of international and especially domestic political players. In this sense, oppositions and their allies did not simply take advantage of electoral opportunities; they also constructed them by virtue of the strategies they adopted to win power.

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