

Anti-regime Uprisings and the Emergence of Electoral Authoritarianism

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of threats from below in the emergence of electoral authoritarianism. Mass uprisings for democratic regime change undermine closed authoritarian regimes by making it difficult for autocrats to maintain their regimes through repression and co-optation. Anti-regime uprisings also promote the establishment of electoral authoritarianism by toppling the existing closed regime or by compelling autocrats to offer political reform as a survival strategy. Looking at closed authoritarian regimes from 1961 to 2006, my analysis reveals that anti-regime mass uprisings are significantly associated with transitions to electoral authoritarianism. I also find that nonviolent uprisings are more likely than violent uprisings to result in the establishment of electoral authoritarianism and that the effect of anti-regime uprisings on transitions to electoral authoritarianism is greater when a country is surrounded by more democracies or is ethnically or religiously homogeneous.

Keywords

protest, nondemocratic regimes, political survival, transition

Przeworski (2009, 291) asks a puzzle fundamental to democratic political reform:

Why would people who monopolize political power ever decide to put their interests or values at risk by sharing it with others? Specifically, why would those who hold political rights in the form of suffrage decide to extend these rights to anyone else?

He argues that revolutionary threats compel elites to acquiesce to demands for the institutional reform. This article asks a similar question regarding the introduction of multiparty elections with universal suffrage for the national executive and legislature in authoritarian regimes. Why would autocrats embrace electoral competition that puts their own interests at risk?

Given the widespread adoption of authoritarian elections, a growing body of studies purports to explain the functional roles of multiparty elections in autocracies.¹ These studies tend to “view the establishment of elections as a means by which dictators hold onto power” (Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 404). Yet as Brancati (2014, 321) points out, they often “infer leaders’ motivation for adopting nominally democratic institutions from the outcomes they produce.” Inferring the reasons for the emergence of multiparty elections from the roles those elections play in regimes, however, misses the fact that the functions served

by authoritarian elections do not necessarily explain their causes (Brancati 2014, 321; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009, 407).

Consequently, the current literature is plagued by a lack of systematic cross-national studies on the establishment of electoral authoritarianism (EA), defined as autocracies that have multiparty elections, based on universal suffrage, for the executive and legislature (Schedler 2013, 29). This is in marked contrast to the accumulation of sophisticated empirical studies on the determinants of democratization (e.g., Acemoglu et al. 2008). Researchers have yet to develop a systemic understanding of what factors are significantly associated with regime change to EA as well as whether the determinants of democratization also promote such transitions.

In this article, I analyze the role of mass uprisings² in prompting transitions from closed regimes to EA regimes,³ drawing on mass-based perspectives about democratization (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Bunce and Wolchik 2010; Przeworski 1991;

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Schedler 2013; Wood 2000). Widespread and sustained mass uprisings demanding democratic reform produce significant social unrest and political instability, undermining the regime's legitimacy and thereby precipitating regime overthrow. Therefore, anti-regime mass uprisings pose a credible threat to leader tenure, making it difficult for autocrats to maintain their rule through repression and co-optation. I propose that mass uprisings promote the emergence of EA in two ways: (1) they can topple existing closed regimes, which may lead to the establishment of new EA regimes or (2) they can compel authoritarian elites to offer political reform as a survival strategy without producing leadership change.

In my analysis of closed authoritarian regimes from 1961 to 2006, I find strong evidence for a relationship between mass uprisings for regime change and transitions to electoral autocracies. Anti-regime uprisings prompt both EA transitions with and without leadership turnover. Furthermore, my additional analyses confirm that EA transitions follow anti-regime uprisings, not the other way around. Last, consistent with previous studies on nonviolent movements (Celestino and Gleditsch 2013; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Schock 2005; Sharp 1973), I find that nonviolent uprisings are more likely than violent uprisings to result in the establishment of EA and that the effect of nonviolent anti-regime uprisings on EA transitions strengthens when a country is surrounded by more democracies and is less ethnically fractionalized.

This article contributes to the burgeoning literature on EA by systematically exploring the role of popular protests and by evaluating such protests against the political and socioeconomic factors emphasized by competing explanations. My study also weighs in on the ongoing debate over the extent to which popular protests prompt the collapse of authoritarian regimes and promote political liberalization. These results contribute to a growing body of quantitative evidence demonstrating the importance of popular protests in prompting suffrage extensions (Aidt and Jensen 2014; Przeworski 2009) and democratizations (Celestino and Gleditsch 2013; Teorell 2010; Ulfelder 2005). Last, this study provides a rare cross-national examination of transitions to EA regimes, highlighting the importance of both mass protests and international factors.

EA

Scholars generally agree over two defining characteristics of EA: the existence of electoral contestation and the violation of democratic principles of freedom and fairness. The first attribute distinguishes electoral authoritarian regimes from "closed" authoritarian regimes (Howard and Roessler 2006; Schedler 2013). EA regimes regularly allow electoral contest for executive power, although

elections are often flawed and minimally competitive. Hence, EA regimes also differ from multiparty autocracies, which emphasizes party pluralism without subjecting the head of government to electoral competition (Schedler 2013, 82). Thus, authoritarian regimes, such as Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco, that allow for multiparty competition only in legislative or subnational elections do not qualify as electoral autocracies.

However, the formal properties of representative institutions do not distinguish between electoral autocracies and democracies. As Diamond (2002, 28) notes, "The distinction between electoral democracy and EA turns crucially on the freedom, fairness, inclusiveness, and meaningfulness of elections." When an electoral regime fully violates at least one of these minimum attributes of democratic elections, it qualifies as EA (Schedler 2013, 80). In EA regimes, violations of the democratic principles through electoral manipulation are both frequent and serious enough that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy (Levitsky and Way 2010; Schedler 2013).

Theoretical Discussion

I argue that mass uprisings demanding regime change promote institutional reform. In making this argument, I follow extant scholarship on political liberalization and democratization from below, focusing on the conflict between regime and opposition actors (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Bunce and Wolchik 2010; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Howard and Roessler 2006; Wood 2000). According to this perspective, multiparty politics are "extorted concessions" (Cox 2009, 4) in that autocrats are compelled to hold elections in response to popular revolutionary threats. Below, I describe how mass protests for regime change undermine closed authoritarian regimes and promote the introduction of multiparty politics. I also explain why nonviolent protests are more effective in doing so than violent protests.

Anti-regime Uprisings and Emergence of Multiparty Elections

Widespread and sustained mass protests seeking regime change pose a direct threat to incumbent authoritarian regimes simply because they can expel long-ruling autocrats and overthrow incumbent regimes (Teorell 2010; Ulfelder 2005). Such protests signal not only widespread discontent with the government but also the potential for regime change, demonstrating that many obstacles to mobilizing and organizing popular support, to a degree, have been overcome. Mass movements often serve as focal points for facilitating coordination against the

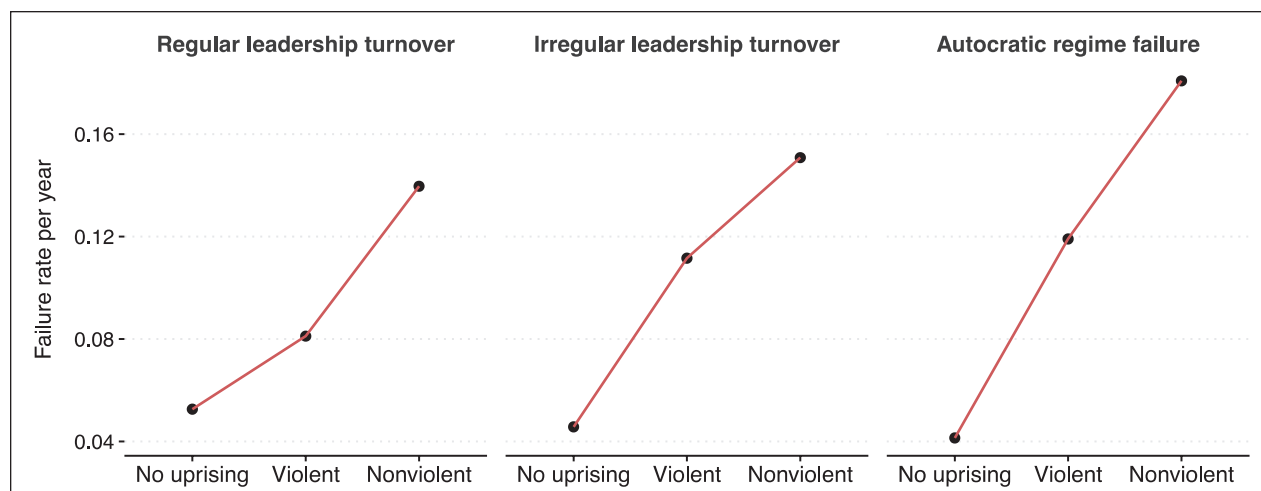


Figure 1. Autocratic leadership and regime failure rates by anti-regime uprisings in the previous year.

Source. Uprisings are measured from Chenoweth and Lewis (2013), leadership turnovers are measured from the Archigos data set (Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza 2009), and autocratic regime failures are measured from Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014).

government. When anti-regime movements mobilize a large number of people, they enjoy substantial resources, being more capable of producing significant social and political unrest and undermining the regime's legitimacy (Sharp 1973).

Autocratic leaders facing these mass uprisings face many political hazards. Repressive strategies targeting large numbers of people entail considerable costs, though high costs do not always deter autocratic elites (Bellin 2004). Repression risks undermining support for the incumbent regime by creating dissent among regime supporters and provoking international condemnation (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Levitsky and Way 2010; Teorell 2010). In addition, agents responsible for perpetrating repression may refuse to follow orders due to moral constraints, fears of international prosecution, or concerns about other forms of public retribution (Levitsky and Way 2010; Nepstad 2013). For example, military defections were critical to the outcome of several popular uprisings, in particular the "Color Revolutions" of the early 2000s and the "Arab Spring" of 2010–2012 (see Beissinger 2007; Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015; Nepstad 2013).

Supporting this claim, Figure 1 demonstrates that mass uprisings threaten not only autocratic leaders' tenure but also autocratic regime survival. Both the risks of leader removals and regime breakdowns are significantly higher when faced with popular uprisings seeking to overthrow the regime. Similarly, Geddes, Wright, and Frantz's (2014) data on autocratic regimes show that one in four autocratic collapses and one in three coerced autocratic breakdowns are due to violent or nonviolent popular uprisings.

Therefore, mass uprisings make it difficult for autocrats to maintain closed regimes through repression and co-optation. Accumulating costs of popular uprisings induces other elites to pressure the government into making democratic concessions to regime opponents (Wood 2000). When mobilization reaches a sufficient magnitude, widespread protests compel dictators to gamble on whether to resist popular uprisings or concede to demands for far-reaching institutional reforms (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). Either option is not attractive because embracing multiparty elections can create opportunities for periodic challenges. Indeed, even authoritarian multiparty elections sometimes produce close election results, electoral defeats, and leadership turnovers (Bunce and Wolchik 2010; Howard and Roessler 2006; Levitsky and Way 2010).

Nevertheless, political reforms establishing multiparty elections can give ruling elites the opportunity to retain or regain political power when faced with mass unrest. Elites may be confident that they can control the electoral process and survive multiparty elections. In addition, losing power through competitive elections results in better post-ousting fates than losing power through irregular means. As illustrated in Figure 2, only around 35 percent of autocrats who were ousted through elections suffered exile, jail, or death while more than 80 percent of autocrats who were irregularly removed suffered similar fates. Ruling elites may thus prefer conceding to multiparty elections to risking violent exits (see also Debs 2016). This is true particularly when popular protests increase the risk of irregular leader removal. Hence, mass protests can induce elites to calculate the costs of allowing multiparty elections as lower than the risks of maintaining the status quo.

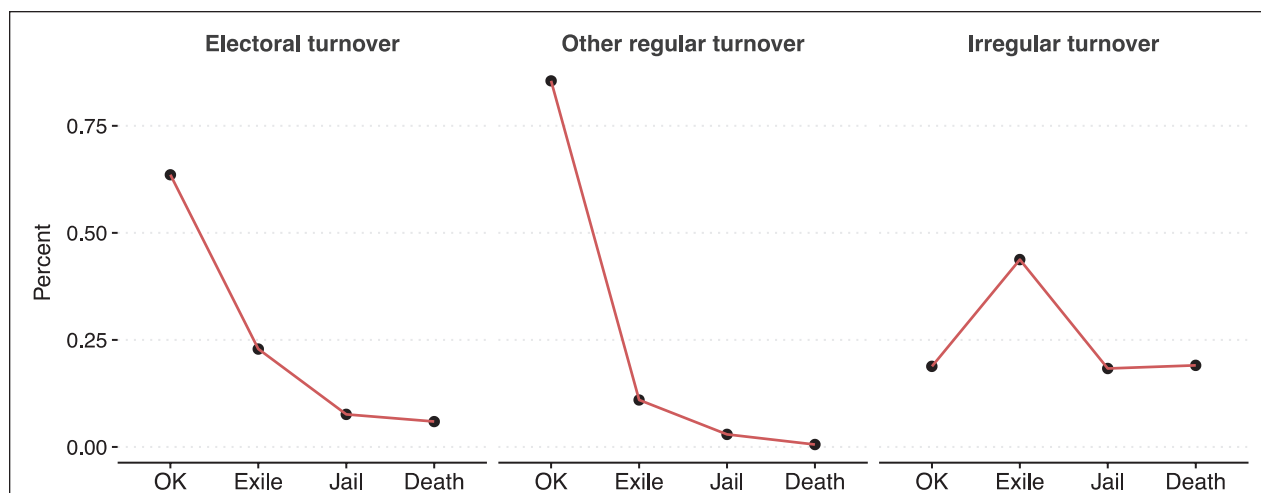


Figure 2. Dictators' turnover mode and their post-tenure fate.

Source. Electoral turnovers from Hyde and Marinov (2012) and other types of leader turnovers and post-tenure fates from the Archigos data set.

Table 1. EA Transitions and Popular Uprising in Closed Authoritarian Regimes (1946–2006).

| | No uprising | Violent others | Nonviolent others | Violent anti-regime | Nonviolent anti-regime | Total |
|---|--------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Uprising types | | | | | | |
| No transition | 2795 (98.3%) | 195 (96.1%) | 52 (100%) | 195 (96.1%) | 195 (86.0%) | 3451 (97.4) |
| EA transition | 49 (1.7%) | 8 (3.9%) | 0 (0%) | 19 (96.1%) | 15 (14.0%) | 91 (2.6) |
| Total | 2,844 | 203 | 52 | 336 | 107 | 3,542 |
| When EA transitions are differentiated | | | | | | |
| Transition without irregular leader change | 38 (1.3%) | 8 (3.9%) | 0 (0%) | 15 (4.5%) | 9 (8.4%) | 70 (2.0%) |
| Transition with irregular leader change | 11 (0.4%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 4 (1.2%) | 6 (5.6%) | 21 (0.6%) |

Conditional probabilities are in parentheses. p values of χ^2 test < .001. EA = electoral authoritarianism.

This discussion suggests two pathways from closed to EA. First, popular uprisings can topple a long-standing dictator and lead to the establishment of a new electoral regime by building representative institutions, including multiparty elections. However, the emergence of the new electoral regime does not necessarily lead to democratization because newly elected elites could manipulate election results and continue to restrict political and civil liberties. Post-communist countries Armenia, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine followed this path (Levitsky and Way 2010). Data show that ten of the ninety-one EA transitions during the period of 1946–2006 are preceded by a large-scale anti-regime uprising and an irregular leader turnover (Table 1).

Second, popular threats can compel rulers to adopt multiparty competition as a partial concession. However, autocrats may continue to hold power through electoral manipulation. Many dictators in sub-Saharan African countries, such as Gambia, Niger, and Sudan, faced

increased popular discontent accompanying the economic decline of the 1990s (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Herbst 2001). Recognizing the need to renew their political legitimacy, they opted to adopt multiparty elections while remaining in power and controlling the transition process. According to Bratton and Van de Walle (1997, 117), twenty-eight of forty-two sub-Saharan African countries experienced mass protests between 1988 and 1992, and all of them underwent political liberalization by the end of that period. In this pathway to EA, the introduction of multiparty politics is a response by ruling elites to popular threats. My calculation shows that twenty-four EA transitions are preceded by a large-scale anti-regime uprising without having an irregular leader turnover. Accordingly, my first hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Closed authoritarian regimes are more likely to introduce multiparty politics when faced with anti-regime uprisings.

It is worth noting that widespread and sustained popular protests also trigger democratization, thereby precipitating the introduction of multiparty politics. As Schedler (2013, 60) argues, democratization is “a two-stage fight, first over the introduction of representative institutions and then over their effectiveness.” Moving to multiparty politics can be characterized by “transitions from certain authoritarian regimes toward an uncertain ‘something else’” (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 3). Thus, when regime actors successfully manipulate elections to thwart opposition challenges, and opposition actors cannot prevent such electoral and institutional manipulations, transitions will fall short of democratization (Levitsky and Way 2010). Even where mass protests force incumbent autocrats out of power, transitions may give rise to new authoritarian regimes with nominally democratic institutions.⁴

Violent versus Nonviolent Uprisings

Several scholars have argued that nonviolent uprisings are more effective at promoting regime transition (Celestino and Gleditsch 2013; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Schock 2005; Sharp 1973). For instance, examining all known 323 cases of violent and nonviolent uprisings from 1900 to 2006, Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) demonstrate that nonviolent campaigns are more likely to oust incumbent governments and result in transitions to democracy than violent campaigns. Teorell (2010) and Celestino and Gleditsch (2013) similarly find that nonviolent mobilization is more likely to promote democratic transitions than violent mobilization.

Previous studies have also identified a number of explanations for the efficacy of nonviolent uprisings at toppling closed authoritarian regimes and prompting transitions to EA. First, nonviolent movements mobilize more participants both because they tend to occur in urban areas and because they make a greater effort to attract participants. Second, repressing nonviolent uprisings is riskier than repressing violent uprisings, as the repression of nonviolent uprisings can prompt defections by members of coercive agencies and initiate even more mobilization against the regime. These two characteristics enable nonviolent uprisings to pose a greater threat to regimes. Last, nonviolent uprisings are more likely to result in bargaining with the regime, creating a greater schism between elite hard-liners and soft-liners. Authoritarian elites are thus more likely to make political concessions in the face of nonviolent protests. Overall, this discussion leads to my second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Nonviolent anti-regime uprisings are more effective than violent anti-regime uprisings in promoting the establishment of EA.

Conditional Effects of Anti-regime Uprisings

The effect of anti-regime uprisings may vary across different contexts. Building on previous research on regime changes, I explore three contextual factors that may condition the effect of mass protests on EA transitions.⁵

First, elite-based theories emphasize the importance of divisions within the ruling elites in precipitating political liberalization (e.g., O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Elite splits increase the likelihood of negotiation between soft-liners of the ruling group and moderate elements of the opposition. In addition, Svobik (2012) shows that more than two-thirds of dictators who lost power in an irregular fashion from 1945 to 2008 were removed by coups executed by regimes insiders. However, these arguments do not necessarily mean that popular uprisings are not important in precipitating transitions to EA as threats from below interact with threats from within Schedler (2013, 36), Przeworski (1991, 57), and Wood (2000). Popular protests often cause splits within regimes and coups by signaling dissatisfaction with the incumbent ruling elites or by facilitating coordination among elites (Beissinger 2007; Casper and Tyson 2014). In addition, Miller (2012, 1006) claims that “[v]iolent turnover removes the regime’s aura of invincibility, providing a clear signal to citizens that the regime can be changed by concerted action” and “can serve as a coordination signal, or triggering event, for regime opponents.” Accordingly, where mass movements for regime change coincide with important divisions within the regime, they may be more effective in bringing about EA transitions.

Next, social cleavages based on ascriptive identities such as ethnicity or religion may affect the effectiveness of anti-regime uprisings.⁶ In more ethnically or religiously fractionalized societies, ethnic or religious groups ruling an autocratic regime are more likely to be smaller in number. Furthermore, ethnic or religious tensions and antagonisms might make conflict between ruling groups and excluded groups intractable (Horowitz 1985). Thus, authoritarian elites in more heterogeneous societies may find multiparty elections less attractive, which makes them more likely to resist popular protests and refuse to offer political concessions. Meanwhile, social diversity may pose coordination problems for opposition groups, impeding the emergence of unified opposition against the regime (Weingast 1997).⁷ Accordingly, in ethnically or religiously diverse countries, anti-regime protests may be less successful in undermining the incumbent regime or pressuring the ruling elites to adopt political reform.

Finally, international context also may shape the power of domestic actors and their preferences for institutions (Celestino and Gleditsch 2013; Gleditsch and Ward 2006). When a country has a higher proportion of democratic neighbors, mass movements may be more

effective in achieving domestic institutional changes. Regime opponents are more likely to mobilize to demand political reform when they seek to emulate the political liberalization and democratization of neighboring, structurally equivalent countries. At the same time, they will be better equipped to engage in anti-regime struggles because they will have greater access to resources from neighboring countries. Last, repression costs to dictators are likely to increase when democracy becomes relatively more common among neighbors. Therefore, the proportion of neighboring democracies will increase the likelihood that popular uprisings lead to institutional changes.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The effect of anti-regime uprisings on EA transitions increases when a country experiences elite unrest (**H3a**), is less ethnically or religiously fractionalized (**H3b**), and is surrounded by more democracies (**H3c**).

Data

To examine the relationship between mass uprisings for regime change and transitions from closed to EA regimes, I examine all closed authoritarian regimes from 1961 to 2006.⁸ A country leaves the risk set in year t when the closed authoritarian regime at year $t - 1$ is replaced by an EA regime or by a democracy at year t .

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is a measure of whether or not a transition from closed authoritarianism to EA occurred. For the definition of EA, I follow Schedler (2013). Fundamental attributes underpinning EA include the following: (1) elections should be regular, (2) elections should be inclusive in the sense that they are held under universal suffrage, (3) opposition candidates are allowed to participate in national elections, (4) opposition parties are allowed to win votes and seats, and (5) the head of government is subject to electoral competition (Schedler 2013, 82). These institutional requirements exclude de jure or de facto single party regimes that prohibit multiparty competition as well as multiparty autocracies that establish only legislative or subnational elections (e.g., monarchies allowing for only legislative elections).

To measure EA, I rely on the data set recently developed by Skaaning, Gerring, and Bartusevičius (2015), which covers all independent countries from 1800 to 2013. Skaaning et al. propose a lexical index of electoral democracy that is “a series of necessary-and-sufficient conditions arrayed in an ordinal scale” (p. 1492). A regime that establishes and maintains “minimally competitive, multiparty elections with universal suffrage for legislature and executive” qualifies as an electoral

democracy (Skaaning, Gerring, and Bartusevičius 2015, 1497).

This data set provides information on six binary variables to identify electoral democracy: (1) elections for the legislature, (2) elections for the national executive, (3) multiparty competition, (4) male suffrage, (5) female suffrage, and (6) the quality of elections. The first five variables capture all the institutional requirements of EA proposed by Schedler. The quality of elections measures whether “the elections are, in principle, sufficiently free to enable the opposition to gain power if they were to attract sufficient support from the electorate” (Skaaning, Gerring, and Bartusevičius 2015, 1501). This variable is crucial for differentiating democracy, minimally defined, from EA. Accordingly, a regime is coded as EA when the Components 1 through 5 equal one and the quality of elections equals zero. A closed autocracy is the regime where one of the Components 1 through 5 equal equals zero, and the quality of elections equals zero.

As a robustness check, I use two alternative measures to define the universe of autocracies. I use democracy measures from two other data sets on political regimes: Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2013) and Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014). In their coding of democracy, these data sets explicitly consider electoral quality using multiple sources of information on elections rather than focusing only on election outcomes while holding a procedural definition of democracy.

Independent Variable

To measure large-scale anti-regime uprisings, I draw on the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) data set developed by Chenoweth and Lewis (2013). The data set provides detailed information on 250 campaigns defined as “a series of observable, continuous, purposive mass tactics or events in pursuit of a political objective” (Chenoweth and Lewis 2013, 416) from 1945 to 2006 and on each campaign’s onset year and end year. To qualify as a campaign, an uprising must have had at least thousand observed participants and discernible leadership. In addition, the NAVCO data set includes only major campaigns that at one time claimed “maximalist” goals of removing the existing regime, expelling foreign occupations, or achieving self-determination.

I create *Anti-regime uprising* that includes only campaigns whose goals are related to either “regime change” or “significant institutional reform.” *Anti-regime uprising* is a sum of anti-regime campaigns in the previous three years. I also use a different time window, five-year period, as well as a dichotomous measure of whether an anti-regime campaign has occurred using three different time frames: one-year, three-year, and five-year periods. The main results remain similar (reported in Section 6 of the

supporting appendix⁹). I also construct *Other uprising* to include all remaining campaigns that pursue the goals of “territorial secession,” “greater autonomy,” “anti-occupation,” or “policy change.” Last, using the information from the NAVCO data set, I differentiate between primarily nonviolent and violent campaigns.

Table 1 presents a cross-tabulation of anti-regime uprisings (in the previous three years) and EA transitions.¹⁰ Nearly 40 percent of all EA transitions from 1947 to 2006 (thirty-six cases) are preceded by an anti-regime uprising.¹¹ The table shows that the likelihood of EA transitions significantly varies across different types of popular uprisings, demonstrating the importance of uprisings’ strategies and goals. To illustrate, the probability of EA transition given no anti-regime uprising is only 2 percent. It jumps to 6 percent in the occurrence of a violent anti-regime uprising and 14 percent following a nonviolent anti-regime uprising. The bottom panel of Table 1 distinguishes EA transition with and without irregular leader turnover in the two-year period before EA transition. The half of EA transitions accompanied by irregular leader turnovers occurred following anti-regime uprisings. Both types of EA transitions are more likely to occur following anti-regime uprisings, particularly nonviolent ones.

Control Variables

To control for potential confounding variables and alternative explanations, I include a number of control variables based on the existing literature on political liberalization and democratization.

First, I control for domestic political conditions that might affect both popular uprisings and the likelihood of transitions to EA. A more liberalized and open autocracy might allow more mobilization against the regime and be more likely to establish multiparty elections. If so, the estimate of anti-regime uprisings could simply pick up the effect of the prior level of political liberalization. To ensure against this possibility, I include the liberal democracy index taken from the Varieties of Democracy data (Coppedge et al. 2016). In addition, the incumbent regime’s strength will be negatively associated with both anti-regime mobilization and political reform. Greater coercive capacity discourages the opposition from mobilizing and organizing, enhancing the regime’s survival and dampening prospects for political liberalization (Albertus and Menaldo 2012; Levitsky and Way 2010). To proxy *Coercive capacity*, I follow Albertus and Menaldo (2012) in using the size of military personnel per capita taken from the Correlates of War Project. I log-transform this variable after adding one to each value because it is right-skewed.

Similarly, political instability can open windows of opportunity during which mass protests are more likely to

occur. To control for intra-elite conflicts, I create a binary indicator *Elite unrest* that flags whether failed coup attempts, coup plots, and alleged coup plots occurred in the last three years. These coup attempts may signal fissure within the ruling elite. In addition, I include a dichotomous variable *Irregular leader turnover* for whether irregular leadership change has occurred in the previous three years.

Economic factors are among the most studied determinants of democratization. As the modernization theory suggests, economic development may generate greater domestic pressure for multiparty elections as well as increase the likelihood of popular uprisings. However, short-term economic growth may have the opposite effect on regime changes. I include gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and an annual percentage change in per capita GDP taken from Maddison (2010).

International factors may also affect EA transitions. Many scholars argue that autocrats establish multiparty elections to obtain international economic and political benefits (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Joseph 1997; Levitsky and Way 2010). Thus, I include the degree of aid dependence, operationalized as a natural log of net official development assistance per capita in the previous year (obtained from World Bank 2014), an indicator of the post–Cold War era, and an interaction term between foreign aid and the post–Cold War period. I also include the proportion of neighboring democracies and electoral autocracies to control for the diffusion effects of democratic institutions (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). I define a country’s neighbors to be countries with a minimum distance of 501 km, as reported in the *cshapes* R library.

Last, I include a natural log of the duration of nonelectoral authoritarian regimes to control for negative duration dependence, which indicates that the rate at which a closed authoritarian regime transitions to EA or democracy decreases over time.

Results

Main Results

I estimate several regression models to examine the effect of anti-regime uprisings on the probability of transitions to EA regime. Table 2 reports the results of logit models of EA transitions. Model 1 includes only *Anti-regime uprising*, *Other uprising*, a linear time trend, and $\ln(\text{Regime age})$. Model 2 adds economic and international variables that may influence both anti-regime uprisings and transitions to EA regime. To ensure that the estimate of *Anti-regime uprising* is not a proxy for the regime’s instability or weakness, Models 3 through 5 control for political variables measuring prior political liberalization, coercive capacity, irregular leadership

Table 2. Logit Estimates of EA Transitions.

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | Multiply imputed | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | | | | (4) | (5) |
| Anti-regime uprising | 0.468*** (0.090) | 0.367*** (0.112) | 0.362*** (0.118) | 0.472*** (0.113) | 0.451*** (0.110) |
| Other uprising | 0.050 (0.129) | 0.100 (0.119) | 0.104 (0.118) | 0.098 (0.125) | 0.099 (0.123) |
| ln(Regime age) | -0.300*** (0.106) | -0.376*** (0.118) | -0.275** (0.114) | -0.291** (0.118) | -0.135 (0.110) |
| Linear trend | 0.023** (0.011) | 0.030 (0.022) | 0.036 (0.022) | 0.033 (0.021) | 0.041* (0.021) |
| GDP per capita | | -0.062 (0.155) | 0.477** (0.192) | -0.040 (0.152) | 0.454** (0.185) |
| Economic growth | | -0.011 (0.014) | -0.015 (0.016) | -0.028* (0.015) | -0.030* (0.016) |
| Neighboring democracies | | 1.391*** (0.395) | 1.350*** (0.434) | 1.160*** (0.430) | 1.245*** (0.422) |
| Neighboring EAs | | 0.762* (0.415) | 0.783* (0.403) | 0.928** (0.395) | 1.323*** (0.370) |
| Post-Cold War | | -5.718*** (1.857) | -6.722*** (2.780) | -5.195*** (1.763) | -7.120*** (2.260) |
| ln(Aid per capita) | | -0.240 (0.242) | -0.357 (0.343) | -0.047 (0.233) | -0.265 (0.278) |
| Post-Cold × Aid | | 1.355*** (0.396) | 1.550*** (0.598) | 1.193*** (0.372) | 1.535*** (0.471) |
| Prior liberalization | | | 4.254** (1.723) | | 5.355*** (1.732) |
| Coercive capacity | | | -1.778** (0.758) | | -1.917*** (0.679) |
| Elite unrest | | | 0.456 (0.281) | | 0.718*** (0.277) |
| Irregular leader change | | | 0.008 (0.359) | | 0.200 (0.333) |
| Constant | -3.410*** (0.361) | -2.345 (1.703) | -1.918 (2.403) | -3.865** (1.717) | -2.771 (2.169) |
| Anti-regime = Others (<i>p-val.</i>) | .01 | .06 | .07 | .02 | .02 |
| <i>n</i> | 3,542 | 2,363 | 2,094 | 3,030 | 3,030 |
| Countries | 128 | 97 | 92 | 124 | 124 |
| Years | 1947–2006 | 1961–2006 | 1961–2006 | 1961–2006 | 1961–2006 |
| Transitions | 91 | 71 | 67 | 77 | 77 |
| Log likelihood | -397.20 | -278.17 | -249.31 | | |

Robust standard errors clustered at the country level are in parentheses. Models 4 and 5 use ten multiply imputed data sets. EA = electoral authoritarianism; GDP = gross domestic product.

p* < .1. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01.

changes, and intra-elite conflict. Last, Models 4 and 5 re-estimate Models 3 and 4 on ten multiply imputed data sets as there are many observations with missing data among control variables and listwise deletion of these observations may result in biased inference.¹²

Across all specifications, anti-regime protests are significantly associated with the probability of transitions to EA regime. Regarding the substantive impact, a change from zero to one anti-regime uprising in the past three years is associated with a 40 percent increase in the probability of EA transitions (2.5% per year–3.5% per year), and a change from zero to three is associated with a 2.6-fold increase in the probability of EA transitions (from 2.5% per year to 6.6% per year).¹³ In contrast, little evidence suggests a significant relationship between *Other uprising* and EA transitions. This finding demonstrates that it is not social and political unrest in general but a popular push for democratic reform that drives political opening.

Moreover, the magnitude of the estimate of *Anti-regime uprising* remains quite consistent, regardless of whether I include full control variables or not. This demonstrates two important findings about the effect of

Anti-regime uprising. First, *Anti-regime uprising* does not simply reflect the political and social environment that has produced anti-regime mobilization in the first place. Second, the stability of the coefficient of *Anti-regime uprising* indicates that the observed result is less likely to be driven by selection bias. According to Altonji, Elder, and Taber (2005), the degree of similarity between the coefficient estimated in a restricted model with no or few controls and the one estimated in a full model provides a good heuristic for evaluating the robustness of the result to potential bias from unobservables. Below I assess the likelihood that the main estimates are driven by selection bias.

Among other political variables included in the models, coercive capacity and liberal democracy index have a systemic relationship with the likelihood of transition to EA. When a closed authoritarian regime is more politically liberalized or when it has weaker coercive capacity, it is more likely to transition to EA. Elite unrest and irregular leader turnover are, as expected, positive although irregular leader turnover is not statistically significant.

The importance of external factors, stressed by the current literature (Levitsky and Way 2010), is also

Table 3. Differentiating between Nonviolent and Violent Uprisings.

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | Multiply imputed | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | | | (4) | (5) |
| Nonviolent anti-regime uprising | 1.136*** (0.185) | 1.096*** (0.175) | 0.951*** (0.179) | 1.275*** (0.180) | 1.164*** (0.196) |
| Violent anti-regime uprising | 0.302*** (0.097) | 0.186 (0.123) | 0.200 (0.135) | 0.240* (0.124) | 0.252** (0.123) |
| Nonviolent other uprising | -0.652 (0.711) | -0.672 (0.771) | -0.962 (0.859) | -0.819 (0.795) | -1.203 (0.966) |
| Violent other uprising | 0.067 (0.139) | 0.095 (0.143) | 0.168 (0.118) | 0.120 (0.147) | 0.181 (0.120) |
| Controls | no | short | full | short | full |
| Nonviolent = Violent (<i>p</i> -val.) | <.01 | <.01 | <.01 | <.01 | <.01 |
| <i>n</i> | 3,542 | 2,363 | 2,094 | 3,030 | 3,030 |
| Log likelihood | -388.30 | -270.80 | -243.81 | | |

Robust standard errors clustered at the country level are in parentheses. Models 4 and 5 use ten multiply imputed data sets. Short controls: controls in Model 2 of Table 2, and full controls: controls in Model 3 of Table 2.

p* < .1. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01.

borne out by the results in Table 2. Regional environments favorable to democracy makes closed authoritarian regimes more likely to transition to EA regime. In addition, more foreign aid inflows increase the prospects for the adoption of multiparty elections but only during the post-Cold War period. During the Cold War, however, the same change in aid dependence does not improve the probability of transitions to electoral autocracies. The end of the Cold War period also significantly increases the likelihood of transition to EA to the extent that a country is dependent on foreign aid. The results indicate that internal and external pressure for democracy promote the emergence of EA regimes.

Table 3 distinguishes between nonviolent and violent anti-regime campaigns and estimates the same set of models from Table 2.¹⁴ Supportive of H2, the coefficient estimates of *Nonviolent anti-regime uprising* are consistently positive, statistically significant at the 1 percent level, and remarkably stable across different models. They are also greater in magnitude than those of violent campaigns. The one-tailed test for the equality of the two coefficients rejects the null hypothesis at the 1 percent level. Substantively, an increase from zero to one in *Nonviolent anti-regime uprising* more than doubles the probability of transition to EA, and an increase from zero to three is associated with a nine-fold increase in that probability. However, the same change in *Violent anti-regime uprising* produces a 65 percent increase in that probability. Consistent with existing studies on nonviolent resistance (e.g., Celestino and Gleditsch 2013; Chenoweth and Lewis 2013), these results suggest that nonviolent mass mobilization against the government is more effective than violent insurrection in undermining closed autocracies and inducing political concessions from incumbent governments.

Additional Analyses

I further examine whether the temporal pattern of events conforms to the temporal sequence postulated in the theoretical discussion introduced above. Figure 3 plots the evolution of the annual number of *Anti-regime uprising* and *Other uprising* around electoral transition, with Year 0 corresponding to the year of transition. The top panel of the figure shows that the average number of *Anti-regime uprising* sharply jumps in the years leading up to the transition and sharply declines immediately after. This temporal pattern in anti-regime uprisings is consistent with what we would observe if mass-based theories are correct. Contrarily, the number of *Other uprising* does not change systemically before the transition year. This again confirms the importance of uprisings' goals in prompting political reform.

I also conduct a placebo test to examine whether political reform follows mass protests. I regress transitions to EA on anti-regime uprisings in year $t + 1$, controlling for the same set of variables in Model 3 of Table 2. If this argument is correct, protests in year $t + 1$ should not predict EA transition in year t . Otherwise, my results may be simply picking up the correlation between political instability and regime transitions. I also test for different lags of anti-regime uprisings. The results of the placebo test are reported in Figure 4. Political uprisings in year $t + 1$ are uncorrelated with regime changes in year t . In contrast, the estimates on contemporaneous and lagged uprisings are consistently positive and statistically significant. This mitigates a concern that the estimates of popular uprisings I have documented above could be driven by political turmoil in the regime transition period and confirms the temporal sequence from protests to EA transition illustrated in Figure 3. Importantly, anti-regime uprisings in year $t - 2$ have the strongest impact on the probability of transitions to EA in the current year. This indicates that it may take

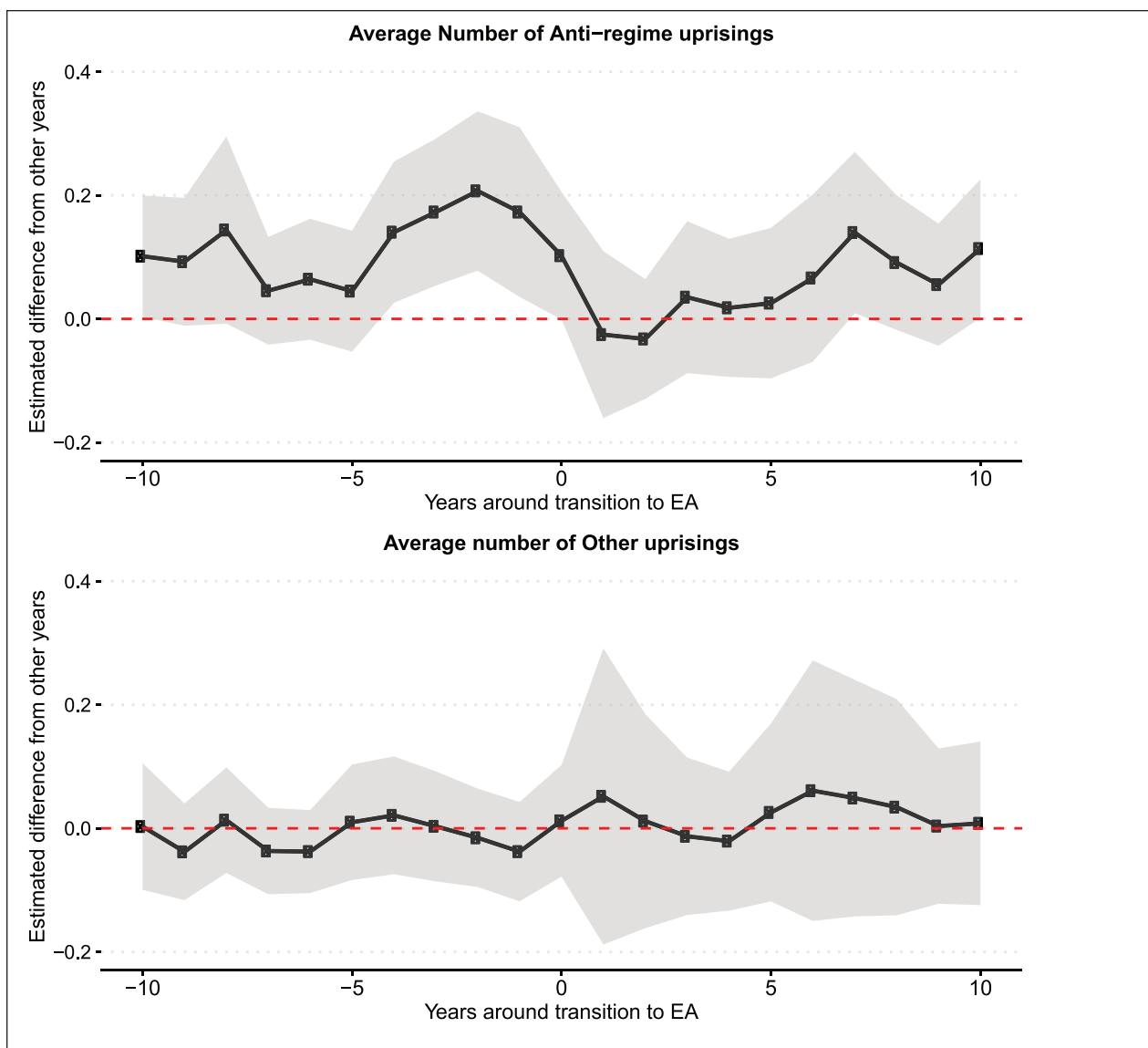


Figure 3. Uprisings around political reform.

Year 0 corresponds to the year of transition. I regress the number of each type of uprisings on twenty-one binary indicators of years around a transition to electoral authoritarianism, ($t - 10, t - 9, \dots, t + 9, t + 10$). All other autocratic country-years are set to zero. I plot estimated coefficients on these twenty-one dummy variables (line) and 95% confidence intervals (shaded area). EA = electoral authoritarianism.

some time, possibly years, for the incumbent or new regime to establish multiparty elections. In sum, Figures 3 and 4 provide additional support for a causal relationship between popular threats and transitions.

Next, I differentiate between EA transitions with and without leadership turnover. My theoretical discussion suggests that anti-regime protests can topple existing closed regimes, which may lead to the establishment of new EA regimes, or they can compel authoritarian elites to offer political reform as a survival strategy without producing leadership change. If this argument is correct, anti-regime protests should make both types of EA

transitions more likely to occur. Table 4 presents the results of multinomial logit models in which the dependent variable can take three possible values: a survival of closed regime, a transition to EA without leader turnover, and a transition to democracy with leader turnover. This allows me to compare the effect of anti-regime uprisings on two different types of EA transitions. As expected, only *Anti-regime uprising* are significantly associated with both types of EA transitions. When I compare between nonviolent and violent anti-regime uprisings, nonviolent uprisings are more strongly correlated with both types of EA transitions than violent uprisings are.

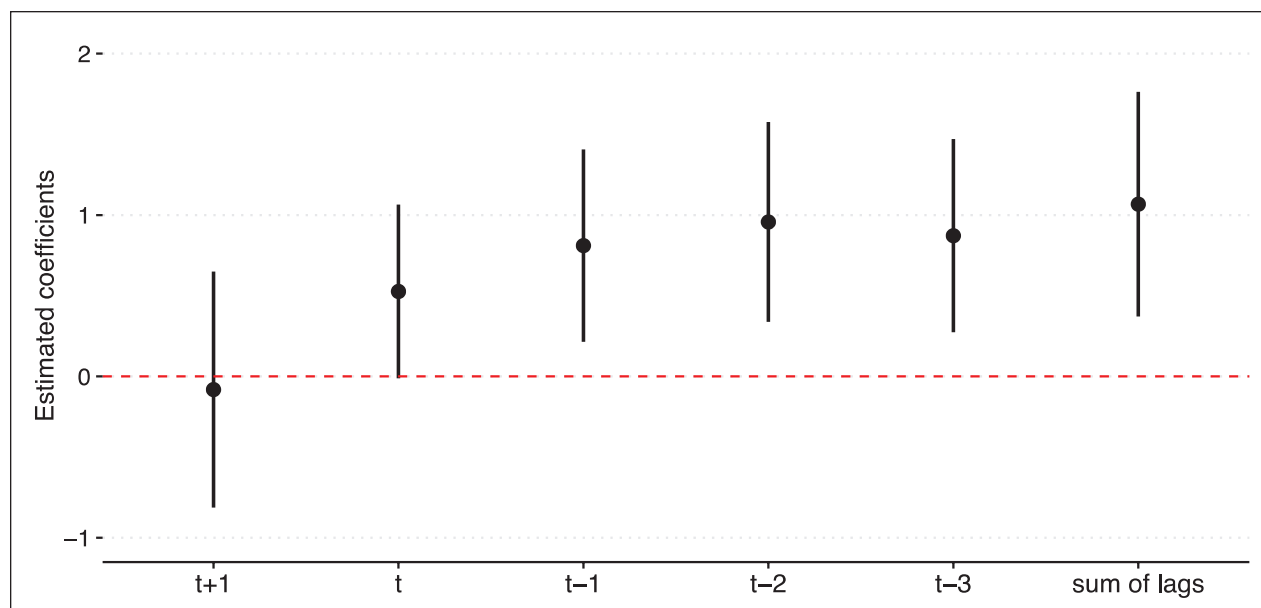


Figure 4. Falsification tests.

Dots show the coefficient estimates on each variable, and vertical lines display the 95% confidence intervals. The “sum of lags” reports the sum of three lags’ coefficients.

Last, I explore how popular uprisings interact with transnational contexts to shape a country’s prospects of transitions to EA. For space reasons, I therefore report results tables in the appendix and discuss only the substantive impact of anti-regime uprisings. Supporting H3c, the leftmost panel of Figure 5 shows that anti-regime uprisings are more likely to prompt EA transitions as the proportion of neighboring democracies is higher. Contrarily, I fail to find evidence that anti-regime uprisings are more effective when the incumbent regime has experienced intra-elite conflicts (the second panel of Figure 5). Last, the third panel includes an interaction between ethno-linguistic fractionalization index (Fearon and Laitin 2003) and anti-regime uprisings. Ethnic fractionalization significantly decreases the effect of anti-regime uprisings on EA transitions, supporting H3b.¹⁵ In a similar vein, anti-regime uprisings are less likely to promote EA transition when the country has previously experienced ethnic wars. Taken together, the results suggest that domestic and international contexts significantly condition the effect of anti-regime mobilization on political reform to establish multiparty elections.

Assessing Potential Selection Bias

The biggest challenge to the empirical analysis is the endogenous nature of popular uprisings: protesters choose their targets and goals strategically. *Anti-regime uprisings* will be more likely to erupt in regimes that are

weaker or more politically liberalized, and these regimes may be more likely to transition to EA. Similarly, protesters may be more likely to challenge the regime nonviolently rather than violently when they believe that their target regime is weaker. I thus include the measures of coercive capacity, political liberalization, and regime instability and show that the results are strongly robust to controlling these factors. Nevertheless, these controls will not perfectly capture regime strength and liberalization. Unobserved factors correlated with anti-regime uprisings and EA transitions may bias my findings. In addition, I cannot exclude the possibility that country-years with anti-regime protests are fundamentally different from those without anti-regime protests.

To mitigate these concerns, I adopt two strategies. First, I use a matching technique to facilitate comparison of treated and control units that are similar in terms of their observable characteristics. Using the method of coarsened exact matching (Iacus, King, and Porro 2012), I pre-process the data to minimize any potential differences between cases with and without *Anti-regime uprising* (or *Nonviolent anti-regime uprising*) before conducting the parametric analysis. I match on *urban population*, *GDP per capita*, *economic growth*, *prior liberalization*, *coercive capacity*, *elite unrest*, and *neighboring democracies*. Table A19 of the supporting appendix shows that the use of the matching technique does not alter the central findings.

Second, I rely on the strategy proposed by Altonji, Elder, and Taber (2005) to evaluate the likelihood that

Table 4. Distinguishing between EA Transitions with and without Leadership Turnover (Multinomial Logit Estimates).

| | (1) | | (2) | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| | Without | With | Without | With |
| | Irregular leader change | | | |
| Anti-regime uprising | 0.374*** (0.118) | 0.782*** (0.267) | | |
| Other uprising | 0.160 (0.112) | -13.081*** (0.843) | | |
| Nonviolent anti-regime uprising | | | 1.055*** (0.207) | 1.632*** (0.353) |
| Violent anti-regime uprising | | | 0.197 (0.132) | 0.481* (0.248) |
| Nonviolent other uprising | | | -1.035 (0.921) | -15.155*** (1.150) |
| Violent other uprising | | | 0.229* (0.118) | -11.445*** (0.635) |
| Controls | Full | | Full | |
| Anti-regime = Others (<i>p</i>) | .10 | | <.01 | |
| Nonviolent = Violent (<i>p</i>) | <.01 | | <.01 | |
| N | 3,030 | | 3,030 | |

Robust standard errors clustered at the country level are in parentheses. Results are from ten multiply imputed data sets. EA = electoral authoritarianism.

p* < .1. *p* < .05. ****p* < .01.

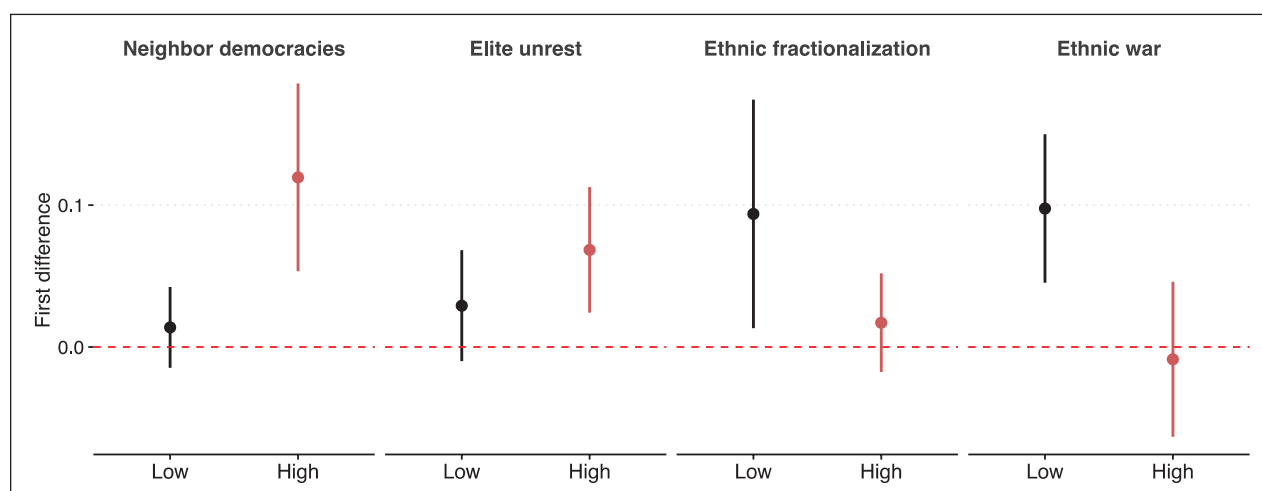


Figure 5. Substantive impact of anti-regime uprisings on the probability of EA transitions at different values of each variable. High: the ninetieth percentile of a continuous variable or the value one of a discrete variable; Low: the tenth percentile of a continuous variable or the value zero of a discrete variable. Dots display the first differences, and vertical lines present the 95% confidence intervals. First difference is defined as $\Pr(\text{Transition} = 1 | \text{Uprising} = 3) - \Pr(\text{Transition} = 1 | \text{Uprising} = 0)$. I set all the other covariates to the values observed for each observation and obtain average effects. EA = electoral authoritarianism.

selection bias due to unobservables may be driving the results. This strategy assesses how many times stronger selection on unobservables would have to be relative to selection on observables, included in my empirical model, to explain away the estimated effect of *Anti-regime uprising*. If unobserved factors left out of the model have only weak effect, I can be more confident that selection bias does not drive the main result. Table A20 of the supporting appendix shows that to attribute the estimated effect of *Anti-regime uprising*, reported in Model 3 of Table 2, to

selection bias, unobserved factors would have to explain a variation in the outcome between 3.6 and nineteen times larger than what the observed covariates explain.¹⁶ Given that I already control for several factors determining the onset of anti-regime uprising, the large ratios suggest that it is unlikely that unobserved confounders are driving the central results. I also repeat this sensitivity test for the estimates of *nonviolent uprising*. Supporting Appendix Table A20 shows that selection on unobservables would have to be at least eight times, and at most twelve times, greater

than selection on observables. Thus, it is unlikely that selection bias explains away the entire effect.

Robustness Checks

To ensure the robustness of my results, I perform several additional analyses (the results are available in the supporting appendix). The main finding is robust to the following analyses:

- Using alternative measures of EA by using different regime type data: Boix, Miller, and Rosato (2013) and Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (2014; Supporting Appendix Table A7).
- Using alternative codings of *Anti-regime uprising* (Supporting Appendix Tables A8–A11).
- Using anti-government demonstration from Banks and Wilson (2013) to measure *Anti-regime uprising* (Supporting Appendix Tables A12 and A13).
- Including year-fixed effects, regional fixed effects, and/or country random effects to control for common time shocks and unobserved country effects (Supporting Appendix Table A14).
- Including additional variables, including oil income per capita, inequality, trade openness, or different autocratic regime type (taken from Geddes, Wright, and Frantz 2014; Supporting Appendix Tables A15 and A16).
- Examining the results' sensitivity to adding or deleting control variables. Using the Stata program developed by Young and Holsteen (2015), I estimate 4,096 models, which are all possible combinations of control variables in Model 3 of Table 1. In every model, the estimated coefficient on *Anti-regime uprising* is positive and statistically significant at the 5 percent level (Supporting Appendix Figure A2).

Conclusion

This article explores the political dynamics that lead to the emergence of EA, with a focus on the role of mass movements demanding regime change. The findings provide several insights on the relationship between mass protests and transitions to multiparty politics. While anti-regime mass protests promote the establishment of multiparty elections, socioeconomic factors, potential long-term determinants of democracy, do not seem to promote the establishment of EA. This suggests that immediate popular threats, not a broader societal demand for democracy, drive the emergence of EA regimes. This is consistent with previous findings that extensions of suffrage constitute a response by political elites to

revolutionary threats from the excluded (Aidt and Jensen 2014; Przeworski 2009).

These findings have further implications about the effect of certain types of mass protests on regime change. First, only popular protests with a clear goal of regime change affect the establishment of EA. Second, strategies used by uprisings also seem to matter: nonviolent anti-regime uprisings are associated with a greater likelihood of multiparty transitions in authoritarian regimes than violent uprisings. This study also provides compelling evidence for the strong influence of international factors on EA's emergence. The end of the Cold War and the regional diffusion of multiparty elections improve prospects for transitions to EA. Greater aid dependence also prompts such transitions but only following the Cold War period. The results indicate that authoritarian elites adopt multiparty elections in response to pressures both from below and from outside.

One interesting question for future research is whether the mode of transition to EA affects electoral outcomes, electoral conduct and quality, duration of EA regime, and prospects for democratization. Although this study focuses on pressure from below, multiple pathways and multiple combinations of actors and strategies can lead to the establishment of EA. Considering that opposition actors have overcome obstacles to mobilizing and coordinating popular support, competitive elections adopted in response to popular threats would have, on average, a greater electoral competitiveness and a higher rate of leadership turnover than competitive elections voluntarily introduced by authoritarian elites.

As discussed above, widespread and sustained popular protests also trigger democratization. Another important remaining question is thus when popular protests produce democratization rather than EA transition. Levitsky and Way (2010) emphasize that the international linkage and leverage provide conditions favorable for democratization. If this argument is correct, anti-regime protests will be more likely to prompt democratization than transition to EA in countries that are highly integrated with the West. Where such favorable international conditions are absent, regime actors are better adept at manipulating elections to thwart opposition challenges, and protest-driven transitions will fall short of democratization. Future studies could test this expectation.

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Notes

1. According to the recent studies, authoritarian elections (1) provide information about the underlying support for a regime (Magaloni 2006) and the strength of the opposition (Cox 2009); (2) efficiently distribute patronage to regime insiders, citizens, and the opposition (Blaydes 2010; Magaloni 2006); and (3) co-opt the opposition (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007).
2. I use the terms “mass uprisings,” “mass mobilization,” and “mass protests” interchangeably throughout the article.
3. Transitions from closed authoritarianism account for 82 percent of transitions to electoral authoritarianism (EA). See Supporting Appendix Table A2.
4. An important question is under what condition anti-regime uprisings lead to democratization over a transition to electoral autocracies. Investigating this question is beyond the scope of this paper, and I leave it for future research.
5. However, space constraints do not allow me to elaborate on these mechanisms, but they deserve more investigation.
6. I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this point.
7. This does not necessarily mean that anti-regime uprisings are less likely to emerge in more heterogeneous societies since shared identities may decrease collective action costs, and ethnic or religious grievances may motivate anti-regime movements.
8. I remove periods of foreign occupation, as defined in the Polity IV data. The inclusion of these periods does not change the result.
9. All supporting appendices are available as Supplemental Materials here at <http://prq.sagepub.com>.
10. In the case of multiple campaigns in a country–year, I prioritize nonviolent uprisings and anti-regime uprisings.
11. When I include anti-government demonstrations from Banks and Wilson (2013) in the measure of anti-regime uprisings, the percentage of EA transitions following popular protests is 70 percent.
12. The comparison between Models 3 and 5 shows that missing data reduce the sample size by about 30 percent. Missing data on control variables are imputed using Amelia II (Honaker, King, and Blackwell 2011), and Models 4 and 5 show averages of ten estimation results using Stata’s mi estimate command. See the supporting appendix for details of multiple imputation.
13. I use Model 3 of Table 2 to calculate these predicted probabilities. I set all the other covariates to the values observed for each observation and obtain average effects.
14. The full estimation results are available in the supporting appendix.
15. I find similar results when I use an ethno-linguistic fragmentation measure of Alesina et al. (2003) or a religious fractionalization measure.
16. The calculation is based on the ratio $\beta^F / (\beta^R - \beta^F)$, where β^F is the coefficient of Anti-regime uprising in Model 3 with

full controls, and β^R is the coefficient of Anti-regime uprising in models with a set of restricted controls. Following Nunn and Wantchekon (2011), I use linear probability models.

Supplemental Material

Data replication files for this article are available at <https://sites.google.com/site/namkyu77>.

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