Democratization by Elections

A New Mode of Transition

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Contents

of elections, and fairly democratic elections in particular, have positive democratic side effects. Instead of being just a token of some kind of democratic achievement, as "pessimists" such as Carothers have claimed, the holding of elections has a cumulative although not very substantial consequence for democracy's future. And there is even, according to our findings, evidence of a short-term effect. Current elections have a democratizing potential, but this potential applies only briefly in the wake of an election or, perhaps, in nonelectoral arenas such as civil liberties.

Joining the optimist party, we would maintain that supporting the holding of elections, and preferably truly pluralistic and democratic elections, is indeed a desirable activity on the part of both domestic and international actors. Elections appear to set the stage for a process of democratic learning, a finding also reported by Brownlee in this book. Therefore, it is advantageous to introduce elections as soon as possible, and to make them ongoing and eventually more pluralistic. The project may derail, but nevertheless it will pay off, both in the short and the long run. Having said this, the effects that we register are not very large in substantial terms. No democratizing miracles should thus be expected from the electoral experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

Post–Cold War Political Regimes

When Do Elections Matter?

Philip G. Roessler and Marc M. Howard

The third wave of democratization and the end of the cold war significantly altered the map of political regimes around the world. The collapse of the Soviet Union was the death knell for most Communist governments, which were forced to open their political systems and introduce economic reforms. Other non-Communist dictators lost foreign patronage and found themselves vulnerable to domestic protest and international pressure. Multiparty elections were held in many African countries for the first time since the decade after independence.

At first, political science scholarship treated the end of the cold war as initiating a political process in which these authoritarian regimes were in transition to democracies. Much research focused on explaining the sequence by which this democratization process would take place. But as many "transitions" stalled and the resulting regimes proved surprisingly durable, other scholars recognized the need to understand the regimes as they existed, rather than understanding the extent to which they fell short of a set of standards and criteria that were probably unrealistic in the first place. New studies began to focus on the emergence of these "hybrid regimes" (Karl 1995),

which defied simple classification as democratic or authoritarian because they contained elements of both regime types (Diamond 2002). The work of Levitsky and Way (2002b) and Schedler (2002a) made important advancements in this burgeoning field by introducing the concepts of competitive and electoral authoritarianism, respectively.

Building on these conceptualizations, a new and growing research program has emerged. Empirical studies have focused on the effect of external factors on changes in and the persistence of competitive authoritarian regimes (Levitsky and Way 2005), the determinants of liberalizing electoral outcomes within competitive authoritarian regimes (Howard and Roessler 2006), the conditions leading to mass political protest before and after elections in electoral authoritarian regimes (Schedler 2006b), and the democratizing power of elections (Lindberg 2006a).

While this research program has produced a variety of rich and valuable conceptualizations of nondemocratic regimes, there has been less progress on how to operationalize them by measuring and scoring a global set of political regimes consistent with the systematized concepts of competitive and electoral authoritarianism (Munck and Snyder 2004). Operationalization is important because it helps us to refine and check the validity of our systematized concepts (Adcock and Collier 2001). Moreover, it allows us to compare regime types systematically across a global sample, bridging artificial regional divisions that scholars tend to impose (Bunce 2003).

This chapter has two key objectives: to contribute a clear and precise operationalization of post–cold war political regimes and to analyze empirically which regimes are more susceptible to elections as a mode of democratic transition. The first objective should provide a useful basis for examining and comparing the relative impact of elections on democratic processes within different regime types. Based on the degree of contestation and participation for the selection of the executive, we distinguish between five different regime types—closed authoritarianism, hegemonic authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, electoral democracy, and liberal democracy—and develop a measurement scheme to score countries as belonging to one of these five regime types in any given year.

Applying these criteria to all countries (with populations greater than 500,000) between 1987 and 2006 reveals several important empirical trends. First, we find that as democratic regimes around the world have surged, backsliding into authoritarianism has been surprisingly rare, occurring only 24 times out of a possible 1,454 country-years during the time period of study. Second, hegemonic authoritarian regimes have more than doubled since 1987 and emerged as the modal authoritarian regime type in 2005 (representing 38% of the world's authoritarian regimes). This trend may reflect a calculation by some authoritarian incumbents that significant electoral competition is too risky; others may have allowed minimal contestation as a nod to external donors demanding some liberalization. Interestingly, incumbents in hegemonic regimes rarely abandon multicandidate elections once they adopt the procedure—though contestation is so circumscribed in these elections that these incumbents almost never lose. Competitive authoritarian regimes tend to be the most volatile regime type; more than half of the elections in these regimes either lead to a crackdown in contestation and opposition boycotts or, more frequently, a relatively free and fair election and opposition victory.

Looking at geographic trends, we find that immediately after the end of the cold war, democratic transitions occurred disproportionately in Eastern Europe, but since then they have been quite diffuse. With the exception of North America and Europe, each region of the world has experienced at least one democratic transition since 1995.[1] During this time period, the greatest number of democratic transitions (10) have occurred in Africa, though the region has also experienced the most incidences (16) of competitive authoritarian regimes backsliding to other types of authoritarian regimes or collapsing altogether.

Regarding the paper's second objective, our analysis suggests an important temporal distinction between the period at the end of the cold war (1987–94) and the last 12 years. For democratic transitions triggered by the end of the cold war, the type of authoritarian regime appears not to matter. In contrast, since 1995 democratic transitions have been significantly more likely to occur in competitive authoritarian regimes—usually as a result of elections—than in hegemonic or closed authoritarian regimes. This finding underscores the changing nature of democratization over the last 20 years and speaks to the central question of this volume: How, if at all, do elections matter for democratization?

We find that in the late 1980s and early 1990s many democratic transitions resulted from the sudden and severe weakening of authoritarian regimes and the rewriting of the rules of the game to allow for greater participation and competition in the selection of the executive, culminating in the holding of

a "founding election." In the past decade, in contrast, the dominant mode of transition has been via electoral processes in competitive authoritarian governments—that is, a subset of authoritarian regimes that allow a considerable degree of electoral contestation (as measured by the preceding election). Electoral processes provide an opportunity for opposition parties to coordinate their antigovernment activities and unify behind a single candidate or form a single coalition, which increase the costs for the incumbent to use force and fraud to stay in power. Our previous research has found opposition coalitions and incumbent turnover to be the key factors that drive liberalizing electoral outcomes in competitive authoritarian states (Howard and Roessler 2006). Bunce and Wolchik (Chapter 10, below) point to how opposition groups, often in conjunction with civil society groups, have skillfully applied a variety of techniques, including protest, voter-mobilization campaigns, dissemination of public opinion polls, and election monitoring—collectively referred to as the "electoral model"—to galvanize the public to resist incumbents' efforts to steal the election and help to usher in liberalizing change.

While the data indicate that elections in competitive authoritarianism provide an arena for possible post–cold war democratization, the data also suggest the limitations of elections as levers of liberalization. (See Teorell and Hadenius in Chapter 3 of this volume for a systematic treatment of this subject.) First, electoral processes in competitive authoritarian states can also lead to backsliding, as incumbents—perhaps learning from prior elections as well as from the fate of their less repressive colleagues (see Bunce and Wolchik in Chapter 10 below)—institute more restrictive rules and harsher practices against the opposition to avoid the risk of defeat. The effect is that contestation becomes severely circumscribed and the government tilts in a more hegemonic direction.

Second, the data suggest that elections in hegemonic authoritarian regimes and electoral democracies have little effect on greater liberalization. Though rulers in hegemonic authoritarian regimes commit to continuous elections, albeit with significantly longer interim periods, on average this does not lead to political liberalization. The mean Freedom House civil liberties score in these countries is slightly *worse* in the years after they have held more than one consecutive election than in the year they made the transition to hegemonic authoritarianism (usually from closed authoritarianism)

after the end of the cold war.[2] Moreover, these hegemonic regimes tend to be some of the most stable of all authoritarian regimes, underscoring the central point of Lust-Okar (Chapter 9), who argues that elections can reinforce authoritarianism if incumbents use them as an instrument to manage dissent and deepen their societal control. On the democratic side, consistent with Hartlyn and McCoy's analysis of Latin America (Chapter 2, above), in a global sample we see little evidence to suggest that holding successive elections in electoral democracies results in a change to liberal democracy.

In the sections that follow, we begin by conceptualizing post–third wave political regimes, disaggregating them, and developing a coding scheme to operationalize these types and score all countries between 1987 and 2006. We then document and analyze trends in regime type frequency, proportion, and change over this time period. We also examine regional variation in regime types by means of world maps created with geographic information systems (GIS) software. We then analyze various trends in democratic transitions and regime volatility, highlighting important differences between the regime types.

Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Political Regimes

The starting point of our measurement typology is the background concept of political regimes—the rules and procedures that determine how national, executive leaders are chosen. This concept covers all political systems, whether democratic or authoritarian. To disaggregate the broader concept of regimes into more systematized types, we distinguish them based on the degree to which the rules adopted to select authoritative national leaders allow for contestation and participation in selection of a government (Dahl 1971). These rules are (1) whether selection is through national elections or through lineage, party decree, or military orders; (2) whether there are national elections for an executive, whether the rules and procedures allow for contestation; (3) whether the elections are free and fair or fraudulent; and (4) whether the regime is based on the rule of law and "political and civic pluralism," or whether the rights and liberties of some individual and groups are still violated (Diamond 1999, 8–13).

Figure 4.1 presents a tree diagram that illustrates the key distinctions between the five different types of regimes in the world today. The four main

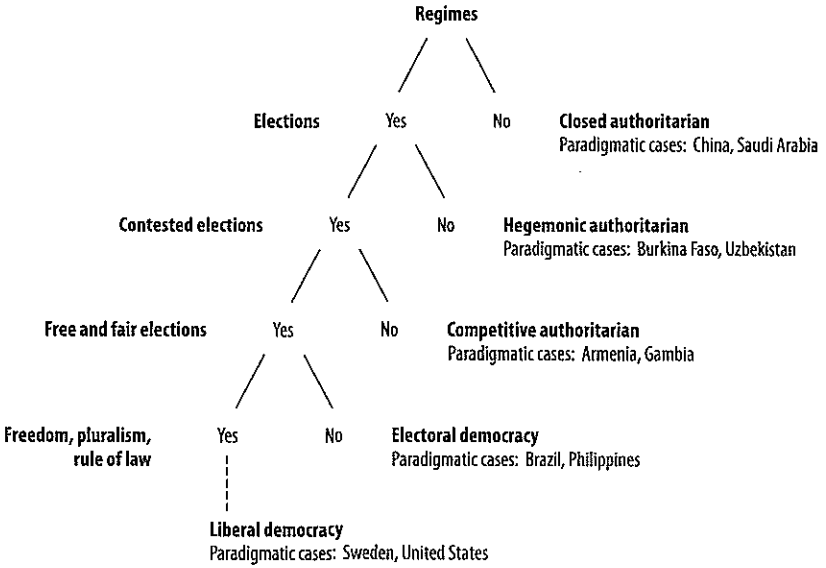

Figure 4.1. Disaggregation of political regimes by various dimensions of democracy

factors that distinguish regimes are listed on the left of the figure, and the regime types are listed on the right. Employing these rules, we identify five global regime types: closed authoritarianism, hegemonic authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, electoral democracy, and liberal democracy.

Two important caveats are necessary regarding this figure. First, it is intended to depict a typology, not a linear or teleological progression from one regime to the next. The last decade has shown that, contrary to the "democratizing bias" (Levitsky and Way 2002b, 51) of much of the earlier democratization literature, these regime types can be stable and enduring, or can even revert to a more consolidated form of authoritarianism. Second, our conceptualization scheme revolves around the institution of national elections because no better objective and parsimonious metric of contestation and participation exists. But we are also conscious of the "fallacy of electoralism" (Karl 1995) and the pitfalls of focusing on the significance of elections at the expense of other important attributes of democracy. Indeed, democracy involves much more than just elections. Robust civil society, effective and independent legislatures and judiciaries, and a civilianized military are just three of the many factors that are necessary for a consolidated democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996). At the same time, however, democracy cannot be less than free and fair elections. Until a country's selection of national leaders occurs consistently through a public, competitive, and free and fair process, the deepening of democracy will remain elusive.

Regime Types

Building on the work of Schumpeter (1942), Dahl (1971), Diamond (1999), and others, we distinguish regimes based on the degree of contestation and participation in the selection of national leaders. *Closed authoritarian* regimes are those in which the selection of a country's leaders is the responsibility of a small group of elites from the ruling family, the army, or a political party; the citizenry is constitutionally excluded from participating in the selection. Thus, there are no multicandidate national elections; there may be referendums or plebiscites, but no elections that allow for contestation between the incumbent and another candidate. To enforce their monopoly on executive recruitment, the elites ban opposition political parties, rely heavily on repression to maintain political control, and squash free media and civil society.

Distinct from closed systems are *electoral* authoritarian regimes (see Schedler 2002a; 2006a)—those in which the executive recruitment process does allow for regular national elections, where there is a choice in candidates (if rival candidates choose to participate rather than boycott), and in which a substantial segment of the citizenry is able to participate, but in which the integrity of the process is fundamentally violated by the incumbent administration's application of rules, procedures, and practices that tilt the playing field in its favor to try to guarantee political survival. Important variation exists among electoral authoritarian regimes, however, depending upon the degree to which the playing field favors the incumbent and infringes upon the opposition's opportunity to contest the election. The cases of Egypt in 2005 and Ethiopia in 2005 are illustrative. In Egypt electoral participation was restricted to a limited number of opposition parties licensed by the Political Parties Committee, which is controlled by the ruling party, while independent candidates were required to collect signatures from 5% of the country's elected officials (again, almost all of whom belonged to the ruling political party) (Freedom House 2006). These and other restrictions, such as a ban on religious parties and the barring of international monitors, ensured that most opposition parties were excluded and that the incumbent, Hosni

Mubarak, easily won reelection. In contrast, in Ethiopia the main opposition parties were allowed to participate in the electoral process, hold political rallies, and have access to the media. Despite a more open electoral process, the opposition's ability to compete fairly was hindered by irregularities, fraud, and lack of transparency in the counting of votes, all of which contributed to the ruling party's electoral victory (European Union 2005). To capture the differences in contestation highlighted by the Egyptian and Ethiopian cases, we distinguish between two types of electoral authoritarian regimes—hegemonic and competitive.

In *hegemonic* authoritarian regimes the restrictions on opposition parties and their political activities, bias in state-owned media coverage, and other forms of repression so severely circumscribe contestation that the incumbent candidate or party does not face the possibility of losing (Munck 2006, 33), often leading to a de facto one-party state.[3] Thus, hegemonic authoritarian regimes absolutely violate Bunce's maxim on the central elements of democracy (2001, 45): "freedom, uncertain results, and certain procedures." In hegemonic authoritarian regimes, the dominance of the political system by the incumbent and the ruling party ensures that there is never any uncertainty in the outcome of national elections; the incumbent nearly always prevails. Though elections are rendered meaningless in the selection of the executive as the outcome is a foregone conclusion, they are not irrelevant; elections, particularly legislative ones, often serve as a key instrument employed by rulers to manage society nonviolently and consolidate political control (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006; Lust-Okar, this volume).

Competitive authoritarian systems, on the other hand, permit a substantively higher degree of contestation, leading to greater uncertainty in the outcome of the elections between the ruling party and a legal and legitimate opposition, which usually chooses to participate, rather than to boycott the election. But the incumbent government still uses fraud, repression, and other illiberal means "to create an uneven playing field between government and opposition" (Levitsky and Way 2002b, 53) to try to ensure that it ultimately prevails in the electoral contest—even though it sometimes loses (Howard and Roessler 2006; see the appendix to this chapter).

Democracies can be distinguished from the broader set of electoral authoritarian regimes by "the freedom, fairness, inclusiveness, and meaningfulness of elections" (Diamond 2002, 28). At one end of the democratic spectrum are *electoral democracies*, which permit a competitive process for the selection of the executive that is held under genuinely free and fair conditions. Even if the outcomes of elections in electoral democracies are occasionally one-sided, and even if there are sporadic violations of civil liberties, there is a much more level playing field between the incumbent and the opposition. Finally, *liberal democracies* go a step beyond: they are strictly bound by the state's constitution and the rule of law, with horizontal accountability among officeholders, protection of pluralism and freedoms, and the lack of "reserved domains of power for the military or other actors not accountable to the electorate" (Diamond 1999, 10).

Having defined and explained our relatively abstract typology of regime types, we still need to show how they can best be measured empirically in the real world. There are two ways whereby one can identify how countries should be classified. One is to select cases on the basis of the "I know it when I see it" formula, namely, by analyzing countries independently and determining which ones fit the overall definition. The other is to establish criteria derived from the coding of other data sources and "let the chips fall where they may." Both are plausible and defensible strategies. We have chosen the latter, thereby avoiding the temptation to select cases based on our subjective judgments, and instead applying a common, precise, and systematic set of criteria based on existing indices. Any classification system is, of course, arbitrary, but by applying these criteria consistently, we aim to contribute a more objective measurement of these regime types—while recognizing that no such measurement is perfect and that there may still be some disagreement about the inclusion or exclusion of individual cases.[4]

Operationalization

To disaggregate political regimes into the five mutually exclusive types conceptualized in the previous section, we employ the criteria illustrated in Figure 4.1. Our primary sources for the coding distinctions are the two most commonly used indices of regimes, Freedom House (various years) and Polity (various years).[5] By using a combination of these two indices—both of which are imperfect, of course—we are able to have a firmer, more reliable basis on which to make our regime type determinations.

We code countries as closed authoritarian when there are no multicandidate national elections for the direct or indirect selection of the executive.[6] Also included in this classification are regimes with referenda for the president or unopposed "elections" in which rival candidates or parties are for-

mally banned, since the citizenry is given no choice in the selection of the executive and its participation is inconsequential.[7]

As long as a regime does not allow multicandidate national elections for the selection of the executive, it maintains a closed authoritarian score for each country-year. If there is a change in the rules and procedures by which the executive is selected between 1987 and 2006 (i.e., if direct multicandidate presidential elections are introduced), then the closed authoritarian regime is reclassified based on whether the new rules allow for contestation, a free and fair electoral process, and the protection of the rule of law and other freedoms.[8]

The other four regime types do hold national executive elections, of course, albeit in quite different ways. In our operationalization, we first distinguish between countries on either side of what we consider the "democratic threshold," or the minimal requirements to be considered an electoral democracy. Countries with either a Freedom House political rights score of 2 or better *or* a Polity score of 6 or higher are coded as minimally democratic.[9] Conversely, countries that have *both* Freedom House scores of 3 or worse *and* Polity scores of 5 or lower are considered electoral authoritarian.[10]

Within the category of electoral authoritarianism, we distinguish between hegemonic and competitive authoritarianism based on the degree of contestation—i.e., the degree to which rules and practices allow for the possibility of incumbent defeat (Munck 2006). Comparing and distinguishing between regimes on the basis of contestation is tricky, however. The rules and practices incumbents employ to manipulate elections, constrain the opposition, and try to guarantee reelection are rarely transparent and vary widely across countries (Schedler 2006a, 7–10). Thus, there exist few objective and analogous indicators that allow us to capture precisely the integrity of the electoral process or the degree to which the rules and practices allow each participant an equal possibility of electoral victory.

To differentiate between competitive and hegemonic regimes, we use the outcome of the previous election as the distinguishing criterion.[11] If the winning party or candidate received more than 70% of the popular vote or 70% of the seats in parliament in the previous election, we code the regime as hegemonic.[12] A country keeps its categorization as a hegemonic government until the next election unless there is a significant change in the rules and procedures for selecting the executive prior to the next election.[13] If the winning party or candidate received less than 70% of the popular vote or of the parliamentary seats, the regime is coded as competitive.[14]

While an electoral percentage threshold has been criticized for conflating contestation with competitiveness (Munck 2006, 34), we believe that it captures the degree of contestation fairly well, since many authoritarian incumbents who gain 70% or better benefit from a boycott by one or more of the major opposition parties.[15] A boycott by the opposition suggests that the regime's electoral rules were so restrictive, and its practices so repressive, that the opposition forces calculated that they had little or no chance at all of winning. By contrast, in elections in which the incumbent received less than 70%, there was often broader participation by the opposition party members, who calculated that though the playing field was tilted against them, they still had a chance of electoral victory.[16] In other words, this rule partially captures the opposition's own calculations about the integrity of the electoral process, and the opposition is probably the best judge of whether the electoral process offers the possibility of non-incumbent electoral victory.

We broadly distinguish democratic regimes from authoritarian ones on the basis of countries' passing the democratic threshold described above—i.e., a Freedom House political rights score ≤ 2 or a Polity score ≥ 6. And we differentiate between the two types of democracies by coding countries that receive a score of both 10 on Polity and 1 on Freedom House political rights as liberal democracies, with the others being classified as electoral democracies.

Table 4.1 summarizes the coding rules employed to operationalize political regimes. (See the appendix to this chapter for various tests to check the validity of the measurement scheme.)

Global Trends in Regime Types, 1987–2006

Our universe of cases includes all political regimes in countries with populations over 500,000. It begins in the year 1987 (or the year of the country's independence) and extends until 2006. Our unit of analysis is the type of political regime in any given country-year. Applying the coding rules from Table 4.1, Figure 4.2 maps out the frequency and pattern of regime types over this 20-year span. As the figure shows, there has been a striking increase in democracies as a proportion of total regimes (a nearly 25% gain from 1987

Table 4.1 Operationalizing political regimes

Regime type	Measurement criteria
Closed authoritarianism	No multicandidate national elections for selection of executive
Hegemonic authoritarianism	FH ≥ 3 *and* Polity ≤ 5 *and* winner received ≥ 70% of the vote or seats in previous election
Competitive authoritarianism	FH ≥ 3 *and* Polity ≤ 5 *and* winner received < 70% of the vote or seats in previous election
Electoral democracy	FH ≤ 2 *or* Polity ≥ 6
Liberal democracy	FH = 1 *and* Polity = 10

to 2006). This shift (in which the proportion of democratic regimes in the world reached 50% for the first time in history in 2000) is a consequence not only of the third wave of democratization and the end of the cold war, but also of a steady increase in democratic regimes between 1999 and 2006. Most of the increase in democratic regimes, however, has been due to a rise in electoral democracies, which have increased in frequency by almost 150% (from 25 to 62) between 1987 and 2006 and represent the modal regime type in the world from 1992 onward. In contrast, liberal democracies have not kept pace; the increase in these regimes since the end of the cold war has been less than 15%.

As with democratic regimes, there have been important changes in the trajectories of different types of authoritarian regimes. As illustrated in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, the number of closed authoritarian regimes declined precipitously between 1987 and 2006. Most of the drop in closed authoritarian regimes was due to the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the downtrend continued between 1998 and 2005, with a slight uptick in 2006. In contrast to closed authoritarian regimes, hegemonic authoritarian regimes rebounded after the end of the cold war, more than doubling since 1992, and actually becoming the modal authoritarian regime type by 2005. Competitive authoritarian regimes have experienced greater volatility. This type surged after the end of the cold war as incumbents of closed or hegemonic authoritarian regimes, facing tremendous international and domestic pressures, were forced to open their political systems. Multiparty elections were held to appease international donors and domestic opposition, but the autocratic incumbents frequently employed force and fraud to try to guarantee their political survival (Joseph 1997; Levitsky and Way

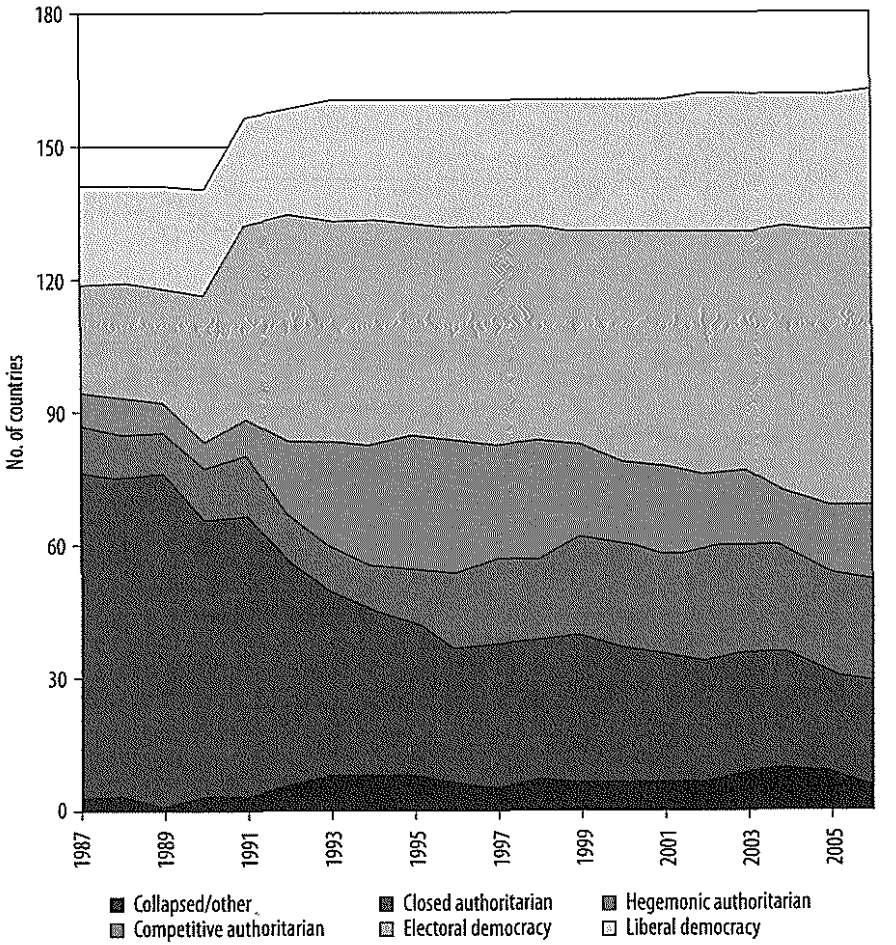

Figure 4.2. Frequency of regime types, 1987–2006

2002b). Thus, by 1995 there were more competitive authoritarian regimes than liberal democracies. But over the next 10 years the number of competitive authoritarian regimes declined sharply, from 19% of all regimes in 1995 to less than 10% in 2004 though slightly rebounding in 2005 and 2006.

The data presented in Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show the overall numbers and proportions of each regime type, but not their geographical location. The next three figures are world maps that illustrate the regime types of each country in the world with a population greater than 500,000 at three different time periods: 1987, 1996, and 2006.

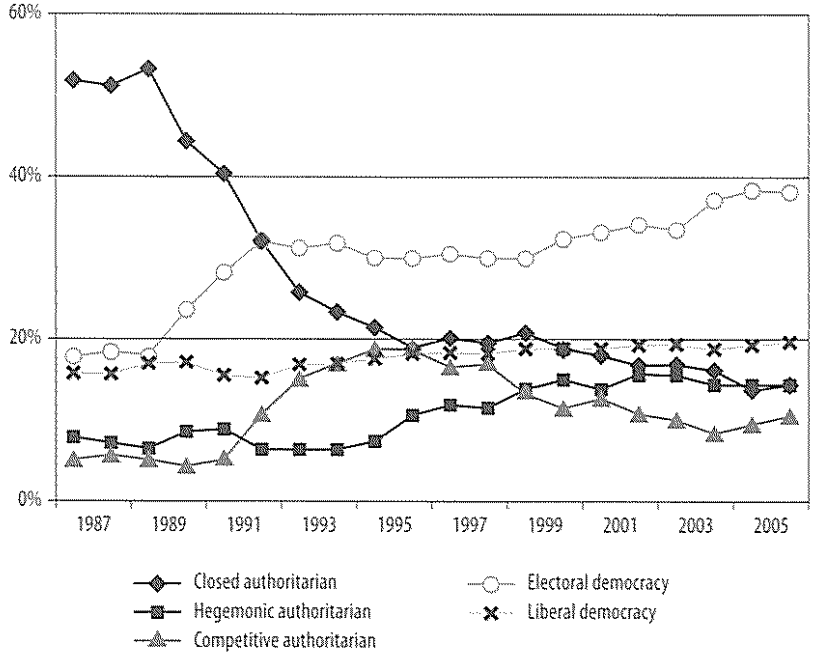

Figure 4.3. Proportion of regime types, 1987–2006

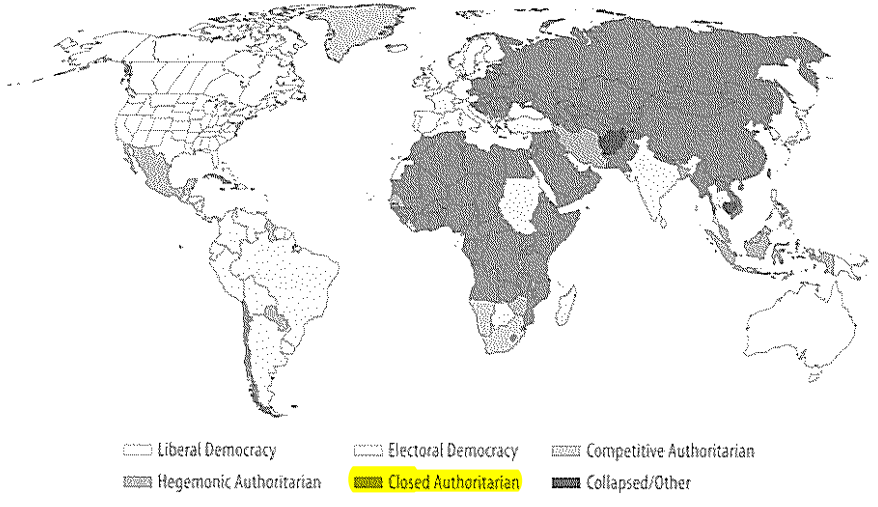

Figure 4.4. Global distribution of political regime types, 1987

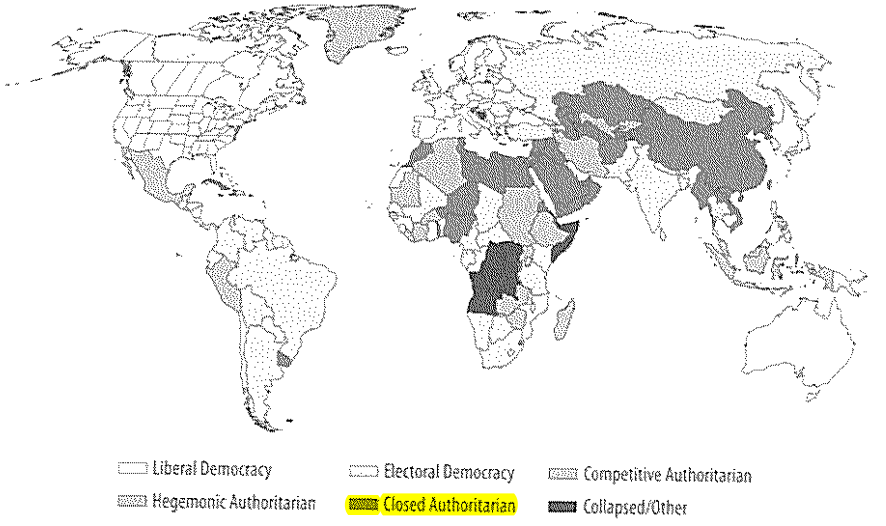

Figure 4.5. Global distribution of political regime types, 1996

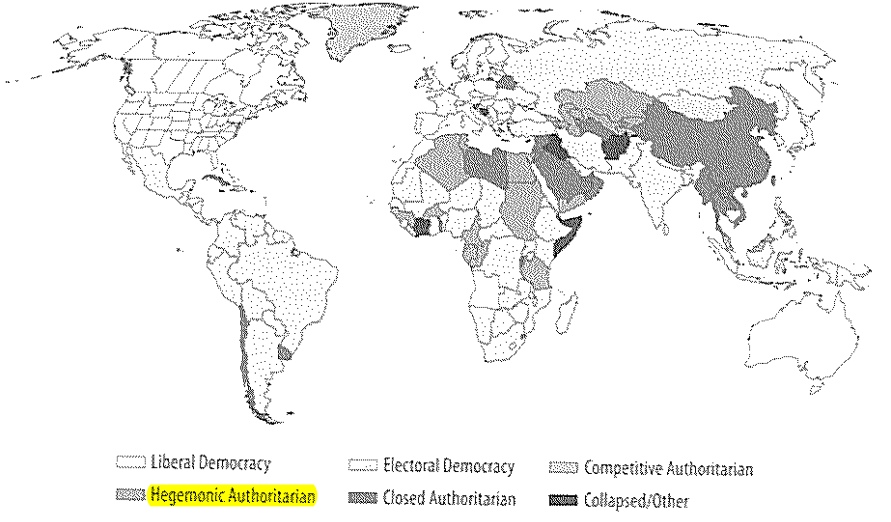

Figure 4.6. Global distribution of political regime types, 2006

Our starting point, 1987, reflects regime types at the very end of the cold war. Figure 4.4 shows that North America, much of Western Europe, Japan, and Australia could be considered liberal democracies in 1987. Most of the countries in Latin America were electoral democracies, along with South Asia and East Asia, and the rest of Western Europe (along with Turkey). The Soviet bloc was still closed authoritarian, and most countries in Africa were either closed or hegemonic authoritarian as well.

After the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, along with the concomitant end of the cold war and the ideological divisions throughout many other parts of the world, many closed regimes begin to open up. By the early 1990s, many of the countries in Eastern Europe had become electoral democracies, Russia was competitive authoritarian, and other parts of the former Soviet Union had become primarily competitive or hegemonic authoritarian. In sub-Saharan Africa, after early founding elections in Benin and Zambia and independence for Namibia, these countries joined Botswana as electoral democracies, while most of the continent remained closed or hegemonic authoritarian.

By 1996, as shown on Figure 4.5, there was a clear drop in the number of closed systems. Because of additional founding elections, many countries in Africa began to open up. Some in which the incumbents were voted out of power (e.g., Malawi, Mali, Niger, and Madagascar) became electoral democracies. In others (e.g., Kenya, Cameroon, Gabon, and Senegal), the incumbents used force and fraud to win highly contested elections. At the same time, the former Soviet Union opened up further, but a group of former Soviet republics (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan) became hegemonic authoritarian. Within the Western hemisphere, Peru and Mexico still stood out as competitive authoritarian regimes, while Castro's government in Cuba remained the lone closed authoritarian regime.

The trends and patterns solidified in the 2000s. Central Asia remained an authoritarian bloc. Africa began to distinguish itself as the region with the most diversity: roughly one-fourth of the states were closed or collapsed regimes; one-fourth were hegemonic; one-fourth competitive; and one-fourth electoral democracies. With the transition in Mexico, mainland North America became all democratic for the first time in its history.

By 2006, as displayed on Figure 4.6, all of the Americas with the exception of Cuba, Haiti, and Venezuela were either electoral or liberal democracies. But only Chile and Uruguay moved from electoral to liberal, indicating that

there is very little movement between those two types of democracy. The democratizing trend in Africa continued as electoral democracies increased by 70% between 2000 and 2006 (from 11 to 18), though more than 60% of the countries remained authoritarian or collapsed. Of the 23 countries in the world that remained closed systems, 70% of them were concentrated in either Asia (Bhutan, Burma, China, Laos, Nepal, North Korea, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam) or the Middle East and North Africa (Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates).

This whirlwind tour across time and space shows us that the post–cold war process of democratization around the world was certainly not uniform or straightforward. And while there are clear regional patterns, one can also find considerable diversity within many regions.

Analysis

Variation in Democratic Transitions

As has been well-documented, the most striking change in regime types between 1987 and 2006 is the complete reversal in the number of authoritarian and democratic regimes. In 1987 there were 91 authoritarian regimes; by 2006, 94 democracies can be counted. Figures 4.4 through 4.6 suggest that, while in the immediate years after the end of the cold war, democratic transitions occurred disproportionately in Eastern Europe, since then they have been quite geographically diffuse.

Temporally, we find two clusters of democratic transitions. The first occurred around the end of the cold war. Interestingly, as shown in Figure 4.7, between 1987 and 1994 the type of authoritarian regime (closed, hegemonic, or competitive) does not seem to have made a significant difference in the likelihood of democratic transitions. In other words, the shock of the end of the cold war appears to have affected all authoritarian regimes similarly. In contrast, as shown on Figure 4.8, we find that between 1995 and 2006 competitive authoritarian regimes were more likely to experience democratic transitions than were other authoritarian regime types.

This finding is important in two respects. First, it suggests that longitudinal analyses, which cover both the cold war era and its aftermath without controlling for the great rupture caused by the end of the cold war, may overlook how the mechanisms and processes driving democratization over time have changed—from authoritarian collapse and bargaining to strategic inter-

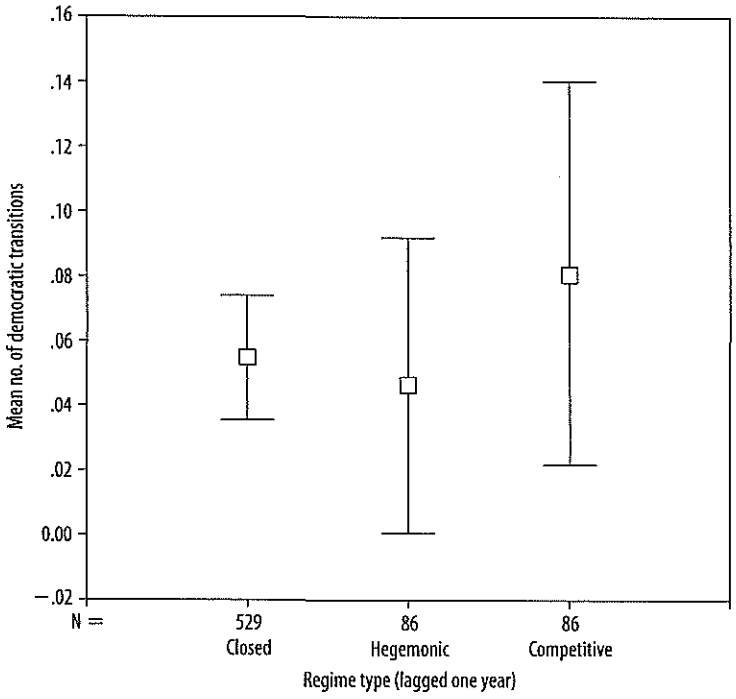

Figure 4.7. Democratic transitions across different types of authoritarian regimes, 1987–1994

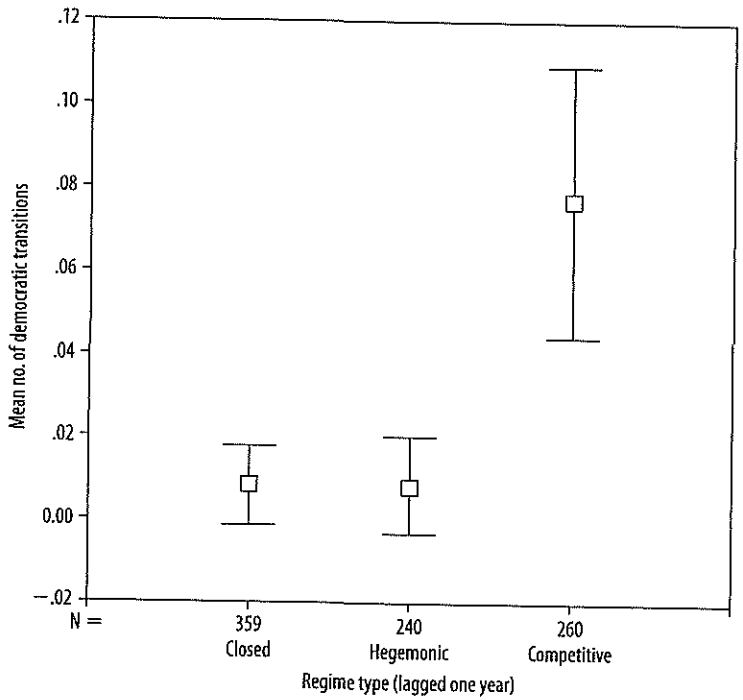

Figure 4.8. Democratic transitions across different types of authoritarian regimes, 1995–2006

actions in an electoral arena. Second, the finding justifies the disaggregation of the larger category of "electoral authoritarianism" based on the degree of prior contestation in their electoral processes (see also Brownlee, Chapter 5 in this volume). To maintain that these regimes are essentially the same—given that they are authoritarian and hold elections—runs the risk of conflating two subtypes that should remain conceptually, methodologically, and causally distinct.

The Relative Stability and Volatility of Regime Types

While the evidence from Figures 4.7 and 4.8 suggests that in the last decade competitive authoritarian regimes have been more susceptible to democratic transitions than other types of authoritarian regimes, in this section, we examine the relative stability or volatility of all regime types. Figure 4.9 depicts the stability of regimes based on *regime continuity* (whether a regime is the same type from one year to the next). The figure reports data only from 1995 to 2006, in order to avoid the uncertainty surrounding the years immediately after the end of the cold war.

Figure 4.9 reveals the extraordinary stability of democratic regimes in the post–cold war period. Once a regime becomes a liberal democracy, it is almost guaranteed to remain one (with a 99% chance of staying the same the following year). Electoral democracies have proved similarly durable (with a 97% chance of staying the same). Between 1995 and 2006, there were only 14 incidences out of 630 country-years in which these regimes backslid into authoritarianism. But there have been even fewer incidences (7 out of 630) of electoral democracies becoming liberal democracies. In other words, once a country has reached the level of an electoral democracy, it rarely slides backwards—but it even more rarely improves to the level of liberal democracy. Although it may be too early to suggest that electoral democracies are

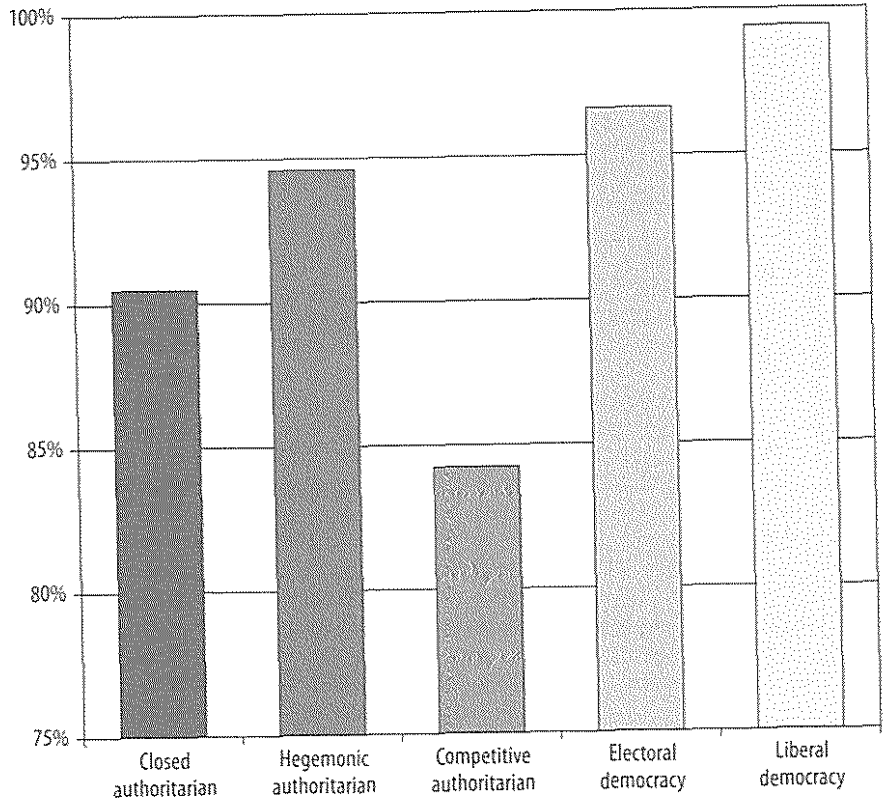

Figure 4.9. Regime continuity, 1995–2006

not consolidating into liberal democracies, the process is certainly not happening rapidly or regularly, if at all.

Figure 4.9 also shows that authoritarian regimes are more volatile from year to year. Hegemonic authoritarian regimes have the least instability (with a 94.5% likelihood of surviving the next year). While hegemonic regimes are susceptible to becoming competitive authoritarian regimes, they almost never become closed authoritarian regimes.[17] This suggests perhaps a surprising commitment to regular multicandidate elections in these regimes (though the average length of time in between elections in hegemonic authoritarian regimes is considerably longer than in other regimes with elections).[18] Closed authoritarian regimes have a somewhat lower level of stability (90.5%), and competitive authoritarian regimes are the most unstable (84%).[19]

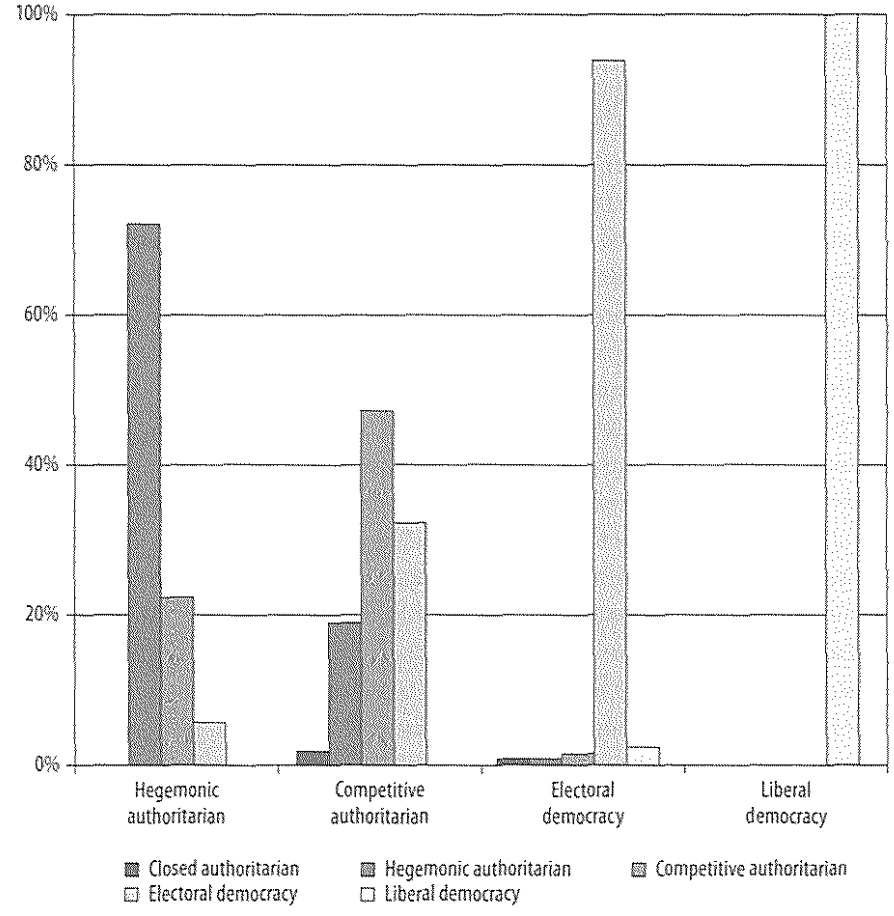

Figure 4.10. Change in regime type in the year after an election, 1995–2006

Figure 4.10 provides a more detailed perspective on the question of regime type continuity and change by showing not only the likelihood of change but also the actual direction and outcome of the changes that have taken place following elections between 1995 and 2006.[20] The figure confirms that competitive authoritarian regimes are particularly susceptible to political change from elections. One in two elections in competitive authoritarian regimes leads to a new regime type, with 10 elections (or 19%) leading to hegemonic authoritarianism, and 17 (32%) became electoral democracies. In contrast, 72% of the hegemonic authoritarian regimes stayed the same, whereas 22.2%

of them became competitive authoritarian, and 6% became electoral democracies. Finally, once again, liberal and electoral democracies rarely changed.

The Inherent Volatility of Competitive Authoritarianism

The analysis of the variation in the frequency and stability of regime types between 1987 and 2006 highlights several important trends, including the remarkable stability and distinctiveness of both liberal democracies and electoral democracies, as well as the decline in closed systems and the corresponding rise of hegemonic authoritarian regimes. Relative to the other regime types, however, competitive authoritarianism has shown to be particularly volatile. What accounts for this?

In some sense, it should perhaps not be surprising that competitive authoritarian regimes have proven to be the most volatile of the regime types, since these regimes are inherently contradictory: legitimate procedures (i.e., regular, competitive elections) clash with illegitimate practices (vote rigging, violent disenfranchisement, and media bias). Although the electoral process is certainly unfair, since the ruling party relies on fraud, coercion, and patronage to try to win the election, the opposition still has an opportunity to defeat the incumbent. Thus, elections generate a real struggle between the incumbent and the opposition that can sometimes lead to unpredictable or uncertain outcomes (Levitsky and Way 2002b; Bunce and Wolchik, this volume; Schedler, this volume).

Figure 4.10 illustrates the destabilizing effect elections can have on competitive authoritarian regimes relative to other regime types. Our previous research showed that elections in competitive authoritarian regimes are likely to lead to liberalizing outcomes under two conditions: when the opposition forms a coalition, thus increasing its probability of winning the election and raising the costs for the ruling party's use of force and fraud to rig the outcome, or if there is incumbent turnover, which can undermine extant patronage networks and lead businessmen and other elites to defect to the opposition (Howard and Roessler 2006). Of the 17 post–cold war elections in competitive authoritarian regimes that led to electoral democracies, almost two-thirds were due to opposition coalitions or incumbent turnover (based on data from Howard and Roessler 2006).

As Figure 4.10 also shows, elections in competitive authoritarian regimes can lead to backsliding into hegemonic authoritarianism. This can occur when the incumbent ruler or party decides that the competition is getting too close for comfort and increases its repressive measures to reduce the risk of defeat. For example, in Guinea prior to the 2003 presidential election the government, led by Lansana Conte, refused to allow the opposition to broadcast advertisements on state-run media, to participate on the electoral commission, or to campaign freely throughout the country. As a consequence, the opposition boycotted the presidential election, and Conte won more than 95% of the vote. In Gabon in 2005, Omar Bongo, the incumbent, made concessions to the opposition on the electoral commission (granting them a third of the seats) but instituted a new rule allowing members of the security services to vote two days before the rest of the country, which the opposition saw as an opportunity for vote rigging and double-voting.

One pattern evident in the data is that of the 10 competitive authoritarian regimes that regressed to hegemonic authoritarianism as a result of elections, 7 experienced this turnaround in the election immediately after the founding election (the 7 were Belarus, 2001; Cameroon, 1997; Mauritania, 1997; Tajikistan, 1999; Djibouti, 1999; Algeria, 2000; and Tanzania, 2000). After the cold war, incumbents in these countries were forced to bow to international pressure, open their political systems, and hold multiparty elections. But this opening would prove short-lived, for by the next election the incumbents had rigged the system, forced boycotts, and paved the way for complete electoral dominance.[21]

What these cases also suggest is that a state's income level and its access to economic resources may play a key role in determining whether the incumbent has the leverage to effectively control the electoral process and curtail contestation or remains vulnerable to an active opposition (see also Bunce and Wolchik, Chapter 10, for a discussion of the effect economic growth may have on regime vulnerability).[22] The mean levels of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the competitive authoritarian governments that became hegemonic authoritarian were nearly twice as high as in all other competitive authoritarian states ($2,553 versus $1,354).[23] Overall, competitive authoritarian states have a significantly lower mean level of GDP per capita than all other types of regimes.

Competitive authoritarianism can therefore be viewed as a residual category—neither liberal or electoral democracy nor closed or hegemonic authoritarianism—in which autocratic rulers of low-income countries find themselves in the post–cold war era. Desperate to stay in power in an era of multiparty elections, the rulers in these countries lack the material resources

to effectively quash political contestation and find that each election represents a high-stakes game with their political survival on the line. These inherently unstable governments can "tip" in one direction or another depending upon the strategic interactions between the incumbent and the opposition. Where the opposition is able to coordinate a coalition or skillfully apply the "electoral model" described by Bunce and Wolchik in this volume, democratization is possible. But if the incumbent government is savvy and resourceful enough to divide its opponents, maintains the support of the military and security, and remains internally cohesive, the tenuous status quo will prevail until the next election. While it is not surprising that competitive authoritarian governments are susceptible to instability, and that the number of these regimes fluctuates extensively over time, there is little risk of the category becoming obsolete.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have disaggregated the umbrella concept of political regimes into five specific types—closed authoritarianism, hegemonic authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, electoral democracy, and liberal democracy—each of which we have defined conceptually and operationalized empirically with clear and systematic criteria, which we submitted to various validity checks (see the appendix to this chapter). This alone is a contribution to a literature that for decades tended to be global and undifferentiated in scope, and in recent years has tended to focus more narrowly on specific types of systems. Moreover, by using GIS technology to present global maps of regime types at different points in time, the chapter provides an innovative means to identify and highlight trends across time and space.

The results introduce several intriguing findings that go beyond the well-documented observation that the third wave of democratization has seen the replacement of many formerly authoritarian countries with recent democracies. First, while the number of electoral democracies has more than doubled from 1987 to 2006, the increase in liberal democracies has been modest, suggesting the existence of a "glass ceiling" for countries that have passed the democratic threshold. Second, although the number of closed authoritarian systems has decreased tremendously over this time period, the growing and now modal authoritarian regime type is hegemonic authoritarianism, where

the incumbent leader seeks to take advantage of the existence of elections without risking actually losing.

Third, by breaking down the longitudinal analysis into two time periods, we see that two distinct processes of democratization have occurred. From 1987 to 1994, democratic transitions occurred at relatively similar rates across all three types of authoritarian regimes. In other words, for the countries that quickly became electoral democracies in the early 1990s, it essentially did not matter whether their starting point was competitive, hegemonic, or closed authoritarian. The crucial factor was the end of the cold war and the sudden loss of external patronage and support, which led to authoritarian collapse. Since 1995, however, institutional arrangements have proven crucial. Democratization has occurred through the process of contested, but flawed, elections, and very few countries that were either closed or hegemonic authoritarian were able to make the leap to become electoral democracies. This finding reinforces the importance of disaggregating "electoral authoritarianism" based on the level of contestation, since this institutional variation has decisive consequences for democratization and other political phenomena.

Finally, on the issue of regime stability or volatility, the results show clear differences across the regime types. Electoral and liberal democracies are remarkably stable, with little backsliding. Hegemonic authoritarian regimes are also very stable, with almost no incidences of moving back to closed authoritarianism but also relatively few incidences of significant opening. Competitive authoritarianism is the most volatile regime type because it remains vulnerable to the destabilizing impact of elections that can either result in an opposition victory that will lead to an electoral democracy or cause the incumbent to fear defeat to the extent that he imposes even harsher measures that lead to a hegemonic authoritarian regime.

There are, of course, limitations to this study. Our coding is only as good as the data used in the sources we rely upon. And there will certainly be disagreements on the classification of some individual countries. Nonetheless, this analysis helps to provide a clear and systematic classification of the countries of the world from 1987 to 2006, to compare them across time and space, and to identify and account for important trends and developments in political regimes.

Appendix: Validity Checks of Measurement Scheme

The purpose of this appendix is to test the validity of our measurement criteria for distinguishing between regime types. As Adcock and Collier explain, "Measurement is valid when the scores . . . derived from a given indicator . . . can meaningfully be interpreted in terms of the systemized concept . . . that the indicator seeks to operationalize" (2001, 531). In our measurement scheme, therefore, we need to verify that the five categories of cases that our indicators define actually represent different types of political regimes.

The first check focuses on the cases our indicators define as subtypes of authoritarianism. We use the presence or absence of elections and the degree to which the elections allow for contestation to delimit closed, hegemonic, and competitive authoritarian regimes. If our indicators validly distinguish different categories of authoritarian regimes on these variables, we would expect this to be reflected in the average Freedom House political rights score and Polity scores across the types,[24] since a key component of each index is the degree to which the selection of the executive takes place by means of a competitive and open process. Table 4A.1 shows that our authoritarian subtypes reflect quite well different levels of authoritarianism according to these indices. It also suggests that our categories of competitive and hegemonic authoritarianism capture substantive and significant differences in types of authoritarian regimes.

A second validity check tests the assumption that our different regime types capture varying levels of contestation—that is, the degree to which the opposition has the possibility of winning. If our indicators validly distinguish contestation between different regimes, we should see varying rates of nonincumbent electoral victories across them. In hegemonic authoritarian regimes, the incumbent should win nearly all of the time; in competitive authoritarian regimes, the number of opposition victories should be significantly higher, though not as high in electoral democracies, where, given an even playing field, the opposition should win just as frequently as the incumbent. As Table 4A.2 illustrates, our different categories reflect contestation quite well. In hegemonic authoritarian regimes, nonincumbent electoral victory is extremely rare and is not distinguishable from zero.[25] In competitive authoritarianism, incumbent electoral victory is not guaranteed (in more than one-third of the elections the incumbent is not reelected), though the process is still rigged in the incumbent's favor. Finally, in electoral democracies opposition parties have a greater than 50% chance of winning.

Table 4A.1 Mean level of authoritarianism across different authoritarian regime types

Regime type	Ave. Freedom House political rights score	Ave. Polity score
Closed	6.22	−6.79
Hegemonic	5.40	−2.74
Competitive	4.74	0.27

Table 4A.2 Nonincumbent electoral victory across different regime types

Regime type	Mean nonincumbent electoral victory
Hegemonic authoritarian	.06
Competitive authoritarian	.34
Electoral democracy	.56

In sum, these checks provide support for the internal and external validity of our measurement scheme. Using the selection of the executive to distinguish authoritarian regimes appears to capture clear differences in the level of authoritarianism as measured by Polity and Freedom House. Moreover, our assumption that the categories reflect different degrees of contestation is supported empirically, as there is a clear linear relationship between our measure of regime types and nonincumbent electoral victory.