

Elections, Information and Political Change in the Post-Cold War Era

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Abstract

A rapidly growing literature in comparative politics focuses on the role of elections as key moments of vulnerability for authoritarians and as a crucial mechanism through which liberalization can be achieved. However, in this paper we demonstrate that authoritarian elections can lead to deliberalization as well as liberalization. We argue that this is because elections work as an information revelation mechanism. To the extent that new or surprising information is revealed, the ruling coalition may be thrown into crisis, with either liberalization or authoritarian retrenchment resulting. Using a new global dataset of liberalizations, deliberalizations and elections in the post-Cold War era, we demonstrate the parallelism between liberalization and deliberalization and show the conditions under which regime openings or closing are more likely.

History did not end after all in 1991. Instead, while liberal democracy does seem to have become firmly established in many formerly authoritarian countries, non-democratic regimes remain in place around the world and much scholarly and political energy has continued to be devoted to understanding the ways in which authoritarian regimes might open up or liberalize politically. Recent literature has focused heavily on the role of elections in competitive authoritarian regimes in creating opportunities to oust incumbent authoritarians. Much of the debate in this literature has concerned the strategies that oppositionists should take to oust incumbents and whether elections themselves can have effects in the short-term or the long term. In this article we argue that while the existing literature is broadly correct in that liberalization can result from an authoritarian election, such elections can also result in a hardline clampdown and, hence, deliberalization.

The argument that progress both in a democratic direction and toward authoritarian regression can have similar origins differs from the existing literature on democratization which generally sees the causes of these two phenomena as being distinct. This is true of structural arguments that see democratization as the result of underlying economic or social variables (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, Boix and Stokes 2003), as well as of most of the growing literature on “democratization by elections” that stresses the effect of elections in aiding democratization (Lindberg 2009). While we do not deny the importance of either structural variables or elections, we argue that short-run political dynamics in one direction or the other can often be the result of quite similar processes. In our view, as the early work on transitions understood well (O’Donnell et al. 1986), political liberalization is a knife-edge process and elections can easily cut both ways.

The theoretical insight that liberalization and deliberalization can be parallel processes comes from seeing elections in non-democratic regimes as an opportunity for incumbents, opposition, key elites and mass publics to gather, communicate and learn new – and sometimes surprising – political information in otherwise information-poor environments. These actors use what they learn about the candidates, the electorate and each other to decide whether to continue bandwagoning with the incumbent leadership, or to break with it. If the incumbent coalition holds, neither liberalization nor deliberalization is likely. However, if the process of elections leads to changes in political coalitions, for example by inducing key politicians or other actors like the courts or security forces to change sides or by encouraging previously passive social groups to get involved, then change is likely. These dynamics unleashed by elections might lead to liberalization but they might also lead to deliberalization if hardliners assert themselves and win the resulting struggle.

While the role of information has been analyzed before in the literature on authoritarianism, information has generally not figured much in the literature on authoritarian elections and in particular has not been thought about in connection with both liberalization and deliberalization. Thinking of elections in this way leads us to make new arguments, in particular about the non-linear effects of election quality and about the potentially counterproductive nature of regime restrictions on freedom of information. In addition, by wrestling seriously with the major problem of endogeneity in statistical studies of elections and regime changes, we are able to present more convincing empirical evidence in support of these arguments.

The paper proceeds as follows. First we briefly discuss the literature on authoritarian elections and political change, and identify some of the limitations our article hopes to address. Second, we introduce our theory of why elections matter and why they may result in both

liberalizations and deliberalizations. Third, we present statistical evidence that these effects are systematic and hold even when we take into account election endogeneity and control for alternative explanations. Fourth, we present a short case study of the Moldovan elections of 2009 that illustrates some of the mechanisms we propose in greater detail. The final section discusses the implications of our findings for the understanding of the role of elections in driving political change in the post Cold War era.

Authoritarians and Elections

Almost all countries hold elections. Moreover, while elections without competition of any kind, typified by those held in single-party communist states, still take place, elections with some form of genuine competition are common in even authoritarian regimes, with more than 330 such elections taking place in non-democracies since 1992. While scholars focused on the Middle East and other long-standing authoritarian regimes tend to stress the usefulness of elections to authoritarians (Brownlee 2007, Lust-Okar 2005, Magaloni 2006), those looking at the former communist states or at sub-Saharan Africa tend to see elections with competition as having the potential to undermine authoritarianism. This may happen either through the long-term effects of repeated elections on democratic norms and political competition (Lindberg 2006, 2009) or through the electoral opportunities for opposition groups to challenge and overthrow incumbent authoritarians. In this paper, we focus on the short-run effects of elections, leaving aside the question of how durable these effects might be. We take political liberalization and deliberalization to mean a significant, rapid change in (1) the quality or extent of political rights exercised by citizens and (2) the institutional framework that shapes openness and fairness of political competition.

Scholars have proposed two different short term modes through which elections can have a liberalizing effect. Looking specifically at the experience of post-communist states, a number of scholars have analyzed the dynamics of “electoral revolutions” (or “electoral breakthroughs”) in which dramatic popular mobilizations after elections have overthrown incumbents accused of electoral fraud (Beissinger 2007, Bunce and Wolchik 2006 a, b). Alternatively, authoritarians may be defeated at the ballot box in “electoral turnovers” (or “liberalizing electoral outcomes”) brought about by the opposition uniting in a single coalition before the election (Bunce & Wolchik 2006 a, b, Gandhi 2008, Howard & Roessler 2006).

While we agree with many of these arguments, we think that elections do not just provide opportunities for liberalization but also for deliberalization, i.e. negative changes in the quality of political rights, institutions or the fairness of elections. For a combination of theoretical and methodological reasons, the existing literature has largely missed this possibility. Theoretically, the problem of regime dynamics has tended to be framed in terms of democratization specifically rather than of regime dynamics more broadly. This frame automatically tends to limit the scope of outcomes to two possibilities: progress toward democracy or no progress. For example, analyses of cases of electoral revolutions or non-revolutions have relied on careful discussion of the presence or absence of conditions that lead to democratization, an approach that makes de-democratization and its causes hard to see (Bunce and Wolchik 2009). Furthermore, the focus on a dichotomy between the regime on the one hand and the opposition on the other (Levitsky and Way 2010) tends to limit the analysis to two possibilities: the status quo in which the regime remains in place, or change in which the opposition wins and liberalizes.

Perhaps just as significantly, the methods used in these analyses have tended to obscure the possibility that liberalization and deliberalization can both have the same causes. The

inability to see liberalization and deliberalization resulting from the same processes is clear in quantitative studies that use a binary dependent variable of liberalization or not (Howard and Roessler 2006). However, the same problem exists in studies that use continuous measures, such as the Freedom House civil liberties score, as the dependent variable affected by elections (Lindberg 2006, 2009, Teorell and Hadenius 2009). Where the dependent variable is the change in some index, the statistical model assumes causal homogeneity – that is changes in an independent variable can only affect the dependent variable in one direction (unless nonlinearities or interaction effects are explicitly taken into account). As a result, studies that use linear changes in a democracy index obscure the possibility that elections may drive both liberalization and deliberalization and therefore arguably understate the effect of elections on political change.¹

Finally, most of the existing statistical analyses of the effects of elections (Brownlee 2009, Lindberg 2006, 2009, Teorell and Hadenius 2009) neglect the serious issue of endogeneity. While free speech and a strong opposition are likely to lead to liberalization, they are also likely to lead to more competitive and freer elections. Consequently, better elections are endogenous to the same factors that help to lead to liberalization. While some scholars recognize this (Teorell and Hadenius 2009:99) there has been no sustained effort to try to deal with this endogeneity. In this paper we do so in a number of ways described below.

¹ While Roessler and Howard (2009:122-3) consider the possibility of elections leading to deliberalization they identify only ten cases of backsliding and do not pursue a systematic analysis of the causes.

Authoritarian Elections and Information

In this section we explain how elections create opportunities for both liberalization and deliberalization. We argue that authoritarian regimes are generally low information environments with few reliable sources of information on the strength of current incumbents and their opponents. This means that periodic elections play an important role in providing the incumbent leadership, other key domestic elites, and members of the opposition with the opportunity to communicate information to each other and broader publics, to learn more about the nature, positions, strengths and weaknesses of incumbents and opposition figures and to create new coalitions based on this information that can radically change politics relative to the situation before the election. This focus on elections as a period of communication and learning leads to quite distinctive expectations about the relationship between elections and change in authoritarian regimes.

Our underlying model of authoritarian regimes is that they are governed by an incumbent leadership that constructs a political coalition involving a range of players with different resources, including well-known politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats, leaders of mass organizations like labor unions and political parties, and, of course, specialists in coercion like the military or the security forces. These elites are pivotal in deciding the fate of the regime. As long as pivotal elites continue to ally themselves with the incumbent leadership, the regime is likely to remain stable. By contrast, when these elites split and some defect from the ruling party or group and decide to throw in their lot with the opposition, then the regime is in danger. Where elections involve at least some degree of competition, the voters are also potentially important political actors. Precisely which actors constitute the “pivotal elites” will vary from regime to regime, but irrespective of their particular identity, these players need information to make decisions about their optimal political choices.

In authoritarian regimes, limits on media freedom and civil and political rights mean that there are few sources of reliable information and relatively few incentives for politicians to engage in sincere preference revelation. Consequently, the literature on authoritarianism has long stressed the role of information in regime dynamics: as Diamond (2010:69) puts it, “a crucial pillar of authoritarian rule is control of information.” Given the nature of the regimes in question, much of this literature has looked either at rumor or other hidden forms of communication in challenging regimes’ control of information, or at the role of overt political protest as a form of action that breaks the state’s control and conveys vital signals about regime strengths and weaknesses. For example, DeNardo (1985) focused on the role of information conveyed by the degree of repression that the regime employs, while Kuran (1991) and Lohmann (1994) both modeled how protests communicate information to heterogeneous groups of citizens that changes their perceptions of regime durability and consequently their calculations about whether or not to participate in protest. However, in the contemporary world the nature of authoritarian regimes has changed. As Roessler and Howard (2009) argue, authoritarianism with elections is now the modal form of non-democratic rule in the world and these authoritarian elections can also play a central role in the process of information diffusion and communication that shapes the fate of political regimes.

In fact, authoritarian elections can present rich opportunities for all the key actors involved: incumbents, pivotal elites, opposition and the populace. This is particularly clear if we think of elections as being more than just a day of voting, but as consisting of a series of challenges that take place sequentially. The first stage of the election process, the registration of candidates, is of central importance. Here a key task is to control the registration of parties and candidates and to structure the overall campaign environment (Lust-Okar 2005). While

structuring elections in this way is a common practice in “authoritarianism in an age of democratization” (Brownlee 2007), getting it right in a context of limited information may be difficult. Excluding known oppositionists may be easy (at least in some settings), but predicting which hitherto loyal candidates or parties might be tempted to run hard against the incumbents, or might attract a large following among the public, is much harder.

The next stage is the campaign itself, and the regime’s behavior sends crucial signals to elites, opponents and the public. For example, the way in which state repression is exercised is likely to be crucial. Repression conveys two very distinct messages: one about the coercive capacity of the incumbents and the other about the incumbents’ confidence in their popular support. For example, vigorous harassment and arrests of opposition candidates might indicate regime strength and determination, convincing pivotal elites to stay the course, intimidating the opposition and cowing the population. Depending on the context, however, repression can strengthen the opposition by making the incumbents look afraid of an electoral contest, or by facilitating contacts between opposition leaders and the security apparatus that actually help to counter regime efforts to paint the opposition as a threat to established forces (Bunce and Wolchik 2009:17). Repression can also make dangerous martyrs out of formerly distrusted regime insiders. A clear example of this came in the Orange Revolution in Ukraine where regime attempts to poison former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko helped to establish his credentials with the anti-Kuchma opposition in Ukraine, despite Yushchenko’s complicity in repressing previous opposition protests.

Similarly, for the opposition the campaign period represents an important opportunity both to learn and to send messages. Authoritarian elections often present both elites and mass publics with opposition candidates about whom little is known or whose reputations have only

been shaped by state-run media. Consequently, a key task for the opposition is to convince the voters at large that they are worth voting for. In part, this means demonstrating that they are able to mobilize enough supporters to mount a credible challenge to the regime. Voters are more likely to take a chance on supporting the opposition if they have evidence that the opposition has some possibility of winning. But this is not the only consideration. As Bunce and Wolchik (2009) point out, oppositions in authoritarian regimes can be at least as unpopular as incumbents, and often have a major task on their hands to convince voters that change is not only possible but worthwhile. The campaign can also help the opposition to coordinate on a single candidate or a joint slate, as it reveals to members of the opposition their relative strengths and political potential.

The election results themselves can also carry very important signals. The task for the incumbents is to get out the vote for regime-supported candidates and parties. How well the leadership is able to do this will in turn depend upon genuine popularity, and, at least as important, on having a political and patronage machine that can reliably encourage, cajole, coerce or intimidate people into turning out and voting for particular parties and candidates. The task of mobilizing support is likely to be more challenging for some authoritarians than others. While party based authoritarians are likely to have a network for mobilization, military rulers, for example, may have more experience with repression than mobilization. Authoritarian incumbents are also likely to try actively to depress turnout in areas known to favor the opposition: the incumbents' repertoires range from relatively benign administrative tactics (such as short polling hours or insufficient ballots) to systematic and large-scale violent campaigns against groups known to side with the opposition, as in the eviction and killing of Kikuyu voters in the Rift Valley prior to the 1992 Kenyan elections.

The leadership's relative success in mobilizing supporters and demobilizing opponents not only affects the electoral outcome but also reveals crucial information about regime strength to pivotal elites, the opposition, the populace, and even to core regime members themselves. In some cases, weakness will be revealed that can lead to post-electoral concessions to the opposition, as in Mexico in 1988. In other cases the prospects for liberalization might improve if incumbents do well and gain confidence in their ability to compete. An example of this was the voluntary liberalization in Ghana in the aftermath of the 1992 elections. Hence, even the results of seriously flawed elections can communicate information that may affect regime dynamics. Seriously flawed elections that end up nevertheless being close (Zimbabwe 2008) may contribute to the scale and impact of post-electoral opposition mobilizations and protest. By contrast, flawed polls that confirm incumbent dominance (Russia 2007) are less likely to be subject to serious challenge.

International actors also matter in the information game. Elections give both international critics and supporters of the incumbent regime an opportunity to signal the strength or weakness of their commitment. For example, former allies abandoning an incumbent can send a particularly powerful message. In the aftermath of the protests surrounding the Georgian parliamentary elections in December 2003, meetings between the incumbent Shevardnadze and his former ally, the Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, appear to have played a crucial role in Shevardnadze's decision to stand down.

Finally, the process of counting the votes and ratifying the results requires coordination between the incumbent leadership and other organs such as the Central Election Commission and the judiciary. The extent to which this cooperation will be forthcoming is contingent on players' assessment of the signals in the elections so far. The security forces often play a key role in this

process, as they are responsible for controlling potential opposition mobilization in the streets. Maintaining the loyalty of these forces is crucial, especially if the elections turn out to be unexpectedly close. The “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004 is one recent example of incumbents who “won” the campaign and the vote count, but lost the ratification because pivotal elites in the courts and in the security services changed their minds on whom to back in the light of dramatic post-electoral protests. Similarly, in Serbia in 2000, key elites only began to defect from the regime, after the opposition presented its parallel vote tabulation, exposing regime fraud to the public and international community.

Thus, elections provide information on key players, their strategies, and their support that would be hard to obtain outside of an election period. Authoritarian incumbents might learn that they can compete and win in elections and may liberalize to reap the benefits of being seen as more open. Or the opposite might happen, as authoritarians find relatively free elections too risky and clamp down to secure control. Security forces might learn of incumbent weakness and decide that the costs of repressing the opposition are just not worth it if the regime is unstable anyway, leading incumbents to be pushed out of office. Or they may be impressed with the strength and resolve of the incumbent rulers and decide it is worthwhile to take risks to defend the regime. Either way, these decisions are crucially shaped by what people learn during the electoral process. Consequently, we should expect the information revealed by authoritarian elections to trigger both liberalizations and deliberalizations.

The application of our argument to deliberalization as well as liberalization, represents a significant advance on existing theory that has tended to treat political change in different directions as having different causes. Looking at liberalization and deliberalization together helps us disentangle the independent effect of elections from that of other potential drivers of political

change. While it is plausible to think that the types of things that cause liberalization also affect the timing and quality of elections, it is implausible to think that these would affect the probability of deliberalization in the same way. Most structural factors like natural resource rents should have opposite effects on the probability of liberalization and deliberalization.

Consequently, if we can show that elections and their interaction with the prior information environment affect both deliberalization and liberalization in similar ways, we will have demonstrated an effect of elections that is independent of other factors.

Elections, Information and (De)Liberalization: Hypotheses

In this section, we develop specific testable hypotheses about the relationship between elections and (de)liberalization based on the theory outlined above. We develop two sets of hypotheses. First, we hypothesize how the quality and salience of different kinds of elections should affect the prospects of political liberalization or deliberalization in a non-democratic state. Second, we consider how the effects of elections vary as a function of the information environment in which they take place.

We have argued above that elections provide crucial tests of strength and popularity for incumbent authoritarian regimes. Consequently, we should expect that political change should be strongly associated with elections. However, not all elections should have the same effect. If elections do indeed work through the mechanism of information revelation, then it is reasonable to suppose that elections that reveal more information should be more likely to be associated with either liberalization or deliberalization than elections that are less informative. Since both the quantity and the quality of information revealed should be positively associated with the quality of elections, then we should expect cleaner elections to be trigger change more often than dirty elections.

However, in thinking about the relationship between different kinds of elections and liberalization, we also need to pay attention to the fact that the existence, timing and type of elections depend on some of the same factors that drive liberalization. In other words, elections are to a certain extent endogenous to factors that might themselves be causes of (de)liberalization, such as structural conditions and the prior level of political rights. In part, this is a statistical problem that we address below using instrumental variables. However, there is also a theoretical issue to consider. In developing our theory, we have argued that what matters is not just what elections communicate about the strength or weakness of the regime, but also the extent to which that information is surprising, or has not already been incorporated into political expectations. Thus, while fully free and fair elections should generate the most accurate political information, that information is less likely to be surprising since fully free and fair elections tend to occur in cases with greater press freedom and well-respected political and civil rights. Therefore, once we adjust for the endogeneity of electoral quality we predict that elections that lie somewhere between completely fake and completely fair are the most likely to produce surprises and hence liberalization. This contrasts sharply with the existing literature that has argued that the likelihood of liberalization increases linearly with the quality of elections (Teorell and Hadenius 2009).

The next set of theoretical implications focuses on the interaction between elections and the information environment in which they take place. If elections affect the likelihood of change specifically through information revelation, as we have argued, then we should expect elections to be more consequential when information on the relative strength of different political players was harder to find before the elections—that is, where the information environment is worse. If this is true, then, quite counter-intuitively, we should expect a negative interaction effect between

elections and measures of the quality of the pre-electoral information environment in driving political change: given a relatively competitive election, incumbents should be more vulnerable to crisis in places where information was more restricted before. Hence, in contrast to Schedler (2009) who argues that greater media freedom is bad for incumbents, our theory predicts that it is *limitations* on media freedom that can actually hurt incumbents.

It is important to note the parallelism of our expectations regarding these hypotheses. If the logic of our argument is correct, and elections can generate or reveal information that leads to a decision point for the regime and for pivotal actors in the country, the outcome could be liberalization, but it could also be retrenchment. Incumbents may accept defeat and stand aside (Romania 1996), or they may falsify the results and clamp down on opponents (Iran 2009) or perhaps cancel elections and impose authoritarian rule (Algeria 1992). Consequently, the logic of information revelation should be similar in the cases of liberalization and deliberalization. Elections that reveal more information are more likely to lead to a crisis or decision point and so will have a greater impact on the odds of deliberalization, just as they did for liberalization. Hence, different types of elections and elections in different information environments will affect the probability of deliberalization and liberalization in the same way.

Testing the Theory: The Dependent Variable

We define “political liberalization” to mean a significant improvement in the quality or quantity of political rights exercised by citizens, improvements in the institutional framework that shapes political competition to make it more open or fair, or improvements in political practice that have the effect of making the competition for the most important political posts in the state more transparent and impartial. In using this definition, our goal is to include a range of

ways in which polities can experience a process that might be more commonly called a “political opening.” By deliberalization we mean a significant deterioration on these same dimensions.

Two caveats are in order. First, liberalization and democratization are emphatically not, as Linz and Stepan (1996) remind us, the same thing, and it is possible, indeed common, to have liberalization without democratization (though the reverse is not possible). Closed authoritarian regimes can witness improvements in the extent of political competition in the system or in the permitted range of political action without coming close to democratization. The limited opening of a one-party state to real but constrained political competition, as in Tanzania in 2000, is an example. Second, liberalizing moments need not be durable, but may be followed by authoritarian reversion. In order to keep both of these points in mind, we refer to the political openings analyzed in this paper as “liberalizing moments”, a term that deliberately suspends judgment on whether these “moments” are consolidated into more permanent gains. The same applies to “deliberalizing moments”.

Operationalization and Patterns

In operationalizing the dependent variable, we follow Howard and Roessler (2006), who use a combination of an improvement in Freedom House political rights scores and a simultaneous improvement in the Polity IV regime score. We observe each country annually and define a (de)liberalizing moment as a simultaneous (or one-year-lagged) improvement/decline of 1 point on the Freedom House political rights scale and a 2 point improvement/decline in the 21-point Polity scale (see Appendix 1 for details).

This measure has a number of advantages. First, our dependent variable has three potential values: deliberalization, liberalization and neither. We do not treat these outcomes as ordered but instead as categorical in order to allow us to see whether the same variables can

cause both liberalization and deliberalization. Second, it offers a clear and transparent coding rule to decide the frequently contentious question of whether a particular moment is liberalizing or not. Third, basing our coding on a combination of the Freedom House political rights scale and the Polity IV regime score rather than one of the many sub-categories offered by these and other rating agencies means that our sample is both inclusive in the sense of being open to counting political change that arises from the broadest range of sources, and selective in that only changes that are significant are counted.

However, any measure of (de)liberalization raises the problem of how to measure political regimes and elections separately so that their relationship can be assessed. Specifically, one drawback of our broad measure is that both FH political rights and Polity regime scores include an assessment of the extent to which a country's government is chosen by free and fair elections. Consequently, holding free and fair elections (where there were none before) will trigger an improvement in both indices and lead to a classification of the case as a liberalizing moment, which introduces a potential bias in favor of finding that elections – and especially clean elections – matter. Similarly, we may risk introducing an opposite bias for deliberalizations.

There are a number of potential responses to this problem. The first is to note that since the potential biases are in opposite directions, if we find similar results for both liberalization and deliberalization we can be quite confident that the results are not simply driven by our coding decisions.

Another option is to drop the approach based on FH political rights and Polity regimes scores and instead identify liberalizing moments based only on non-electoral measures such as FH civil liberties scores and Polity executive constraints. However, adopting this alternative

operationalization is not an attractive option because it artificially narrows the scope of the cases we analyze, reducing their number and, worse, systematically missing cases in which the source of progress or decline is something other than changes in civil rights or executive constraints. Examples of cases missed using the civil rights and executive constraints measure include the liberalization in South Africa in 1993-94 and the royal coup in Nepal in 2002. Thus, though we show in Table A6 (electronic appendix) that our results hold when using this narrower measure, we use the broader measure for our analysis.

Moreover, we took a number of additional steps to insulate the results from electoral bias. As a first step, having used the quantitative rules to identify cases of liberalization and deliberalization, we conducted a qualitative analysis to determine on a case-by-case basis whether the relationship between elections and change was clearly an artifact of some fundamentally non-electoral process. For liberalizations this would be cases in which liberalization results in, rather than results from, elections. An example of such a “finishing touch” election is Mozambique in 1994 when elections resulted from a peace deal ending the civil war. For deliberalizations, these are cases in which a coup or some other deliberalizing event precedes new and less fair elections. The elections in Azerbaijan in 1993 are a good example. In this case, the elected President Elchibey was stripped of power and replaced by Heydar Aliyev, who then held new presidential elections and won 98 percent of the vote. We excluded such cases from our statistical analysis.² The next step, which we discuss in more detail below, is to endogenize election timing and quality using instrumental variables.

² In doing this we consulted a range of sources including the African Elections Database, Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profiles and newspaper reports from Lexis-Nexis.

Using this broad definition of a liberalizing moment, we identified 95 cases of rapid liberalization taking place in countries with a population greater than 500,000 in the period from 1992-2007. At least as a first cut, there seems to be considerable support for the view that liberalizing moments are associated with elections; 76 cases of rapid liberalization since 1992, or 80 percent, occurred in election years, and 45 of these, or 59 percent of the total, were non-finishing touch liberalizations, i.e. instances where elections played a significant causal role in driving liberalization. There were 67 cases of deliberalization, 28 of which (or 42 percent) took place after elections. Equally clear, however, is that, whatever the relationship between elections and (de)liberalization, most elections are not associated with either type of change. Even if all cases of simultaneous (de)liberalization and elections were causal, this leaves most elections (684 of 788, or 87 percent) without liberalizing or deliberalizing consequences.

Key Independent Variables: Election Timing and Quality

Two key variables in testing our explanation are the presence and quality of elections. However, since both of these could be affected by factors that also influence (de)liberalization, we base our empirical analysis on instrumental variable regressions, which rely on exogenous predictors of election timing and quality to obtain predicted values of the endogenous variables that were then used as predictors in the second stage regressions. For election timing, we used the fact that by the 1990s most countries – regardless of their degree of democracy – had constitutionally set election intervals, which makes it possible to identify years for which elections were scheduled.³ While countries sometimes either hold early elections or postpone elections, and such delays may be indicative of political crises, scheduled elections are

³ While a few of the world's worst authoritarian regimes (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Burma, Libya) bucked this global trend, our findings were not affected by the exclusion of such countries from the sample (see electronic appendix 4).

exogenous and turned out to be an extremely powerful instrument for actual elections (correlated at .79).

For election type we used four additional instruments besides scheduled elections. The first is a dummy indicator of whether the previous election in a given country was of a particular type, and is based on the idea that previous practice provides an input into the current election type, but is unlikely to affect the likelihood of political change through other channels in subsequent elections. To code previous election type we used election observer reports, newspaper reports, and for sub-Saharan Africa Lindberg (2006) to code all national level parliamentary and presidential elections for the 444 election years in our dataset. We coded elections according to a simple 4 point scale, where 1 is elections with no competition, 2 is elections with limited competition and/or heavily falsified results, 3 is elections with competition and significant irregularities but with results that were generally seen as acceptable, and 4 is elections that were essentially free, fair and clean.

Since governments may emulate regional election trends in their own political choices, the second instrument was the share of a given election type among all the elections held in the preceding two years in the country's region. The third instrument is the share of elections in the preceding two years in the region that were supervised by international monitors. This instrument is intended to reflect international norms for election procedures that are exogenous to any given election in a particular country (Hyde 2009). The fourth instrument was a dummy indicator reflecting whether or not international observers had been present during the preceding election in a given country, since such a precedent should affect the likelihood of international observer

presence in the current elections, and therefore should affect election type.⁴ We also included a set of interaction terms between the instruments, and between regional election characteristics and lagged FH democracy scores to account for the possibility that the impact of diffusion is mediated by domestic legacies. The first-stage regressions confirm the predictive strength of lagged election type, lagged election observation and scheduled elections, and to a somewhat lesser extent that of regional election characteristics.⁵

Alternative Explanations

In addition to the role of elections, there are a number of other elements that are likely to affect the probability of liberalization/deliberalization. Prior literature stresses the importance of economic development in driving both democratization and democratic survival (Boix and Stokes 2003), and the impact of economic crisis on the stability of authoritarianism (Haggard

⁴ We did not use current election observer presence as an instrument due to reverse causality concerns (since countries may invite observers only if they plan to hold reasonably clean elections).

⁵ A chi-squared test based on the first-stage regressions confirmed that the instrumental variables were jointly highly significant (even when excluding lagged election type.) While the use of lags of the endogenous variable as instruments can introduce bias, we are reassured by the fact that we obtained very similar second-stage results when dropping the lagged election type instruments (see model 7 in Table A5 in the electronic appendix). Moreover, since a Hausman test found no systematic difference in coefficients between the two models and, therefore, failed to reject the null hypothesis that lagged election type is exogenous, we decided to include lagged election type in the IV regression for models 2 and 3 in Table 1.

and Kaufman 1995). Therefore, our baseline statistical models include lagged measures of GDP/capita and urbanization, as well as economic growth.⁶

Our regressions also control for a number of other well-established correlates of democracy and democratization, which are also lagged to avoid reverse causality concerns. Thus, in line with a number of recent works about the impact of inequality on democratization (e.g. Boix 2003, Acemoglu and Robinson 2006), we included the Gini coefficient for income as an indicator of economic inequality. We use a measure of resource rents to test the potential impact of a “natural resource curse” on the likelihood of democratization. (Ross 1999). In addition, to test the effect of an extensive and well-resourced coercive apparatus on the stability of incumbent regimes, we controlled for the size of the military per capita. Finally, given that several studies have linked ethnic heterogeneity to political instability (Dahl 1991), we control for the degree of ethnic fragmentation.

Another set of competing explanations that need to be taken into account are neighborhood effects in which the political environment of neighboring states has an independent effect on the likelihood of (de)liberalization in a given state (Beissinger 2007, Bunce and Wolchik 2006a,b). Consequently, we control for the average regional Freedom House political rights score in the preceding year for a given country. Since larger countries are less sensitive to outside leverage (Levitsky and Way 2010), we also controlled for population size.

Finally, we control for several different regime type indicators in the preceding year. At the most basic level, the regressions include previous levels of democracy, to test whether the likelihood of political change is affected by prior political openness and to capture potential

⁶ While other economic performance aspects (such as unemployment) could also matter, the data coverage and comparability was significantly weaker, so we excluded them from the present analysis.

ceiling/floor effects. Moreover, given that earlier studies have found that the stability of non-democratic regimes depends to a significant extent on their institutional and political make-up (Geddes 1999, Hadenius and Teorell 2007, Ghandi 2008), we included indicators for military regimes, monarchies, and party-authoritarian regimes based on Hadenius and Teorell's classification scheme.

Results

In Table 1 we analyze the relationship between elections and political liberalization in an instrumental variables regression framework. The dependent variable in these regressions is an indicator of whether a certain country experienced a liberalizing or a deliberalizing moment in a given year. Since our dependent variable is trichotomous (liberalization, deliberalization or no change), we use multinomial logistic regressions with robust standard errors clustered by country.⁷

Table 1 here

Liberalization and different kinds of election

As Model 1 in Table 1 shows, the very fact of holding any kind of election leads to statistically significant increases in the likelihood of both deliberalization and liberalization in any given year, even once we address potential endogeneity and control for alternative explanations. While liberalizations and deliberalizations are fairly rare occurrences even in elections years, liberalizations are four times more likely and deliberalizations are more than twice as likely in election years. The effects are even greater once we distinguish between

⁷ While we considered using fixed-effects models to deal with potentially omitted variables, we were persuaded by Beck et al's (1998) argument that fixed effects are almost never justified in a BTSCS framework. However, the role of elections is strongly confirmed when using fixed effects (see electronic appendix 4).

different types of elections. Thus, model 2 shows that different kinds of elections have different effects: elections that reveal genuine and new information have a much larger effect than those that do not, and these effects are similar for liberalization and deliberalization. Thus, Type 1 sham elections, which provide virtually no information, make no difference, while Type 4 free and fair elections, which provide accurate but largely unsurprising information, are also statistically inconclusive once we correct for endogeneity. Meanwhile, the two intermediate election categories – somewhat flawed elections and seriously flawed elections - were substantively and statistically significant predictors of both liberalizations and deliberalizations. These similar patterns of variation across different types of political change are consistent with our theory about the role of election-related informational surprises in driving short-run regime dynamics.

Elections and information environments

As discussed in the theoretical section, we also expect other aspects of the information environment to shape the capacity of pivotal elites to gather accurate information about the relative strength of different political actors, and so to influence the degree to which the status quo may be challenged at election time. In countries with significant restrictions on press freedom and civil liberties, incumbents are more vulnerable to informational surprises during elections, which can lead to serious regime challenges and thereby trigger either liberalization or deliberalization. To test this empirically, we created a press freedom index, which combines data from Freedom House Freedom of the Press ratings and the CIRI Freedom of Speech and Press

indicator.⁸ In line with our theoretical argument, we tested the effects of the interaction between this information environment indicator and the type of election in a given country-year. To simplify the interpretation of results, in model 3 we combined Type 3 and 4 elections into a single category, broadly clean elections. Finally, since multiple interaction effects in multinomial logistic regressions are hard to read from regression coefficients, Panels A and B in Figure 1 offer graphical illustrations of the main results in model 3.⁹

Figure 1 here

The negative and significant interaction effects between broadly clean elections and press freedom in model 3 strongly confirms our theoretical predictions about the information role of elections. Broadly clean elections had a much greater liberalizing potential in restrictive information environments, which confirms that incumbents are more vulnerable when media restrictions undermine their ability to assess accurately their own political strength and that of their opponents. Figure 1 illustrates the large substantive effect of this interaction, as the probability that broadly clean election results in liberalization is roughly fourteen times higher in countries with serious prior restrictions on press freedom (5th percentile) than in countries with relatively few restrictions (95th percentile). Similarly, the risk of deliberalization is also twelve times higher in countries with high media restrictions, which confirms that poor information environments tend to trigger political instability that can result in both progress and

⁸ The standardized index had an alpha reliability coefficient of .69. The results also hold using Freedom House civil liberties as an alternative measure of the information environment. (see electronic appendix 4 Table A6).

⁹ We used Clarify to compute predicted probabilities of liberalizations and deliberalizations for the different election types for values of the press freedom ranging from the 5th to the 95th percentile while holding the other variables at their mean.

retrenchment.¹⁰ These findings are consistent with our theory about the role of elections in revealing surprising information but are at odds with the intuitive notion that greater civil liberties would strengthen the opposition.

Elections, Surprises and Regime Crises: The Case of Moldova

While the analysis so far has identified broad cross-country patterns consistent with the role of informational surprises in electoral contexts as drivers of regime crises, such tests are limited in their ability to identify the nature and the temporal sequence of such information revelation and its concrete political repercussions. To address this limitation, we illustrate the informational dynamics using a brief case study of Moldova. While space limitations prevent us from fully developing our qualitative analysis, Moldova is helpful in illustrating how the mechanisms of information creation, communication and learning can work in a competitive authoritarian regime that combines genuinely competitive elections with significant restrictions on civil liberties and media freedom.¹¹

The Moldovan case illustrates two key dynamics we have discussed in the paper – the changing strategies of political actors in response to new facts on the ground created by elections, and the shifting attitudes of the electorate influenced not only by the behavior of incumbents and opposition, but also by how that behavior is reported in the press. In 2009 Moldova experienced in close succession a failed electoral revolution followed by significant repression in April 2009 and then a surprisingly peaceful electoral turnover in July/August 2009.

¹⁰ Meanwhile, the positive interaction effects between dirty elections and greater press freedom supports earlier arguments that a free press can help expose deeply flawed elections and can therefore provide a focal point for regime opponents. Notice, however, that such challenges are a double-edged sword, since they increase the likelihood of both liberalizations and deliberalizations.

¹¹ According to Freedom House Moldova was rated “Not Free” in terms of press freedom in 2009.

The key dynamics of this political rollercoaster turn on the changing strategies of pivotal players in the ruling coalition as they revise their approach in response to events related to elections. In addition, in analyzing the political dynamics of this crisis we take advantage of an original three-wave panel public opinion survey, which gives us a unique opportunity to see the dynamics of what are usually unpredictable and hard-to-study political events. The surveys illustrate at the individual level how citizens and voters change their evaluation of incumbents and opposition as a function of how these groups behave.

The broad outlines of the Moldovan story can be told briefly. In April 2009, Moldova held parliamentary elections. While the electoral campaign and the April 5th election were relatively uneventful, the situation changed dramatically after the announcement on April 6th of preliminary results, which credited the PCRM with winning almost 49.5% of the vote. Since this result was significantly higher than the exit poll estimates of 44.7% and put the Communists within reach of the crucial 61 seats parliamentary super-majority, the announcement triggered a protest in the Moldovan capital Chisinau. The events of April came to be known as the Twitter Revolution for the role played by social media in coordinating them. However, the protests, which included occupation and burning of the Parliament and Presidency buildings, were quite quickly repressed and the incumbent Communist Party held on to power. Nevertheless, though firmly in power, the Communists were one crucial vote short in parliament (61 of 101 deputies are required) to elect a new president. Having failed to do so twice, the parliament was dissolved, and new elections held in July 2009 resulted in an opposition victory. Thus, in the space of a few short months, Moldova had experienced both a repressed challenge to the incumbent regime and a peaceful electoral turnover.

Pivotal elites and changes in strategy are central to the ups and downs of the Moldovan regime in 2009. After the initial election, the incumbent coalition presented a united front to the protesters: both President Vladimir Voronin and the Speaker of Parliament, Marian Lupu, accused the opposition of attempting a coup d'état, the Central Electoral Commission refused to initiate the vote recount demanded by the opposition, and security forces followed the government's orders to use force against the protesters. However, the decisive stumbling block for the Communists emerged within the new parliament, in which the PCRM needed to secure 61 of the 101 parliamentary votes to elect its candidate, the former Prime Minister Zinaida Greceanii, as Voronin's successor to the Presidency. Despite having secured 60 MPs in the April elections, the PCRM was unable to persuade a single opposition MP to vote for Greceanii in the first round of the election. This somewhat unexpected show of unity by the opposition parties led to an impasse that prompted other key politicians to revise their strategies. In this case, it was the Speaker of the Parliament, Marian Lupu, who played the key role.

Lupu was a high-ranking Communist who was thought a leading candidate to accede to the Prime Minister's job. Nevertheless, Lupu had a reputation as being more Western-leaning than his comrades and had been excluded by President Voronin from appointment to the important Supreme Security Council the previous December. Taking advantage of the impasse, Lupu declared the PCRM unreformable and left the party to join the Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM). Lupu's decision paved the way for new elections, which resulted in a victory for the anti-communist opposition and a peaceful handover of power. Lupu's defection was important not only because his popularity helped the PDM cross the 5% electoral threshold and thereby strengthened the opposition's seat share in Parliament, but also because his insider's

critique of the PCRM arguably provided more credible information to Moldovan voters than similar charges of extremism levied by the hard-line anti-communist opposition.

While it was the (mostly behind closed-doors) machinations of pivotal elites that decided the fate of the Moldovan government, we are nevertheless able to take advantage of a three wave nationally representative panel survey conducted in March (before the first election), in May (after the protests but before Lupu's defection) and in August (after the second election) of 2009 to show how mass public opinion correlated with the changing elite dynamics during the key events of the process and to illustrate the role of press coverage in this process. The unity of the regime following the April Twitter protest was in part related to the fact that the opposition largely lost the information war against the government. According to our second wave survey, only 27% of Moldovan respondents agreed with the opposition's claims that the April elections had been seriously flawed. Moreover, while a third of respondents considered the government's response to have been too harsh, almost as many (28%) considered it to have been too soft and may have been interpreted the April events as a sign of regime weakness.

In addition, it is clear from the surveys that how people interpret political events is in part a function of the media environment in which they find themselves. During the April crisis, most of the mass media stuck to the government's official version of the events. By contrast, the Romanian-owned *ProTV* station, which reaches about half of Moldova's population, presented the opposition's version, and the proportion of respondents who doubted the fairness of the election was much higher among viewers who had access to the more-opposition friendly *ProTV* station than for those who did not (37.6% vs. 20.4%).¹²

¹² Note that we are not looking at whether a respondent reported watching ProTV (which is likely to be endogenous to political preferences) but only whether they had access to the station (which is simply a function of where they live).

Nonetheless, the Communist government did not escape the April events unscathed: only two months after the March baseline survey, the proportion of Moldovans who regarded the PCRM as extreme left rose from 14.7% to 31.4%, while the proportion who viewed the PCRM government as focused on good relations with Western Europe declined from 39.1% to 32.6%. Not surprisingly, between the second wave survey in May and the third, which took place after Lupu's defection and the new elections, Moldovans continued to update their views about both the PCRM's ideology (which shifted further left by .4 points on the 10 point ideological scale) and its support for closer ties to the West (which further declined to 20%). We cannot know, of course, what role these shifts in underlying public opinion played in Lupu's decision to abandon the PCRM and back the pro-European opposition, but, as both our survey and the July parliamentary elections show, he was moving in the same direction as the Moldovan public.

This brief look at the Moldovan events of 2009 illustrates how two key parts of our general story, the strategies of pivotal elites and mass public opinion are shaped by the possibilities for information creation, communication and learning that elections present in countries with limited mass media freedom. In the Moldovan case, the possibility of an electoral path out of a political impasse led a key figure in the ruling coalition to jump ship and pursue his ambitions under a different banner. These leadership dynamics interacted with an unexpectedly strong electoral performance by the incumbents that led them first to succeed and then to overplay their hand and end up appearing to be extremist in the eyes of key parts of the electorate.

Conclusion

In this paper we have developed a theoretical framework to explain why elections often play a key role in both political liberalizations and authoritarian retrenchment. To explain this

puzzle, we have focused on the crucial role of elections in revealing – and at times producing – new information about the relative political strength of incumbents and opposition groups. This information in turn leads pivotal elites to revise their political strategies, generating a crisis that can lead either to liberalization or to backlash and stricter limits on political freedoms. In bringing together both liberalizations and deliberalizations, we have advanced the debate on the role of elections in political change by showing that elections in authoritarian regimes do not only promote democratization, but can have a knife-edge quality. Usually elections do not upset the political apple-cart. But when they do, the results can be positive from the perspective of liberalization, as in Ukraine in 2004, or negative, as in Iran in 2009.

We find strong support for the predictions of our information-based theory along several different dimensions. First, we find that for elections to play a causal role in promoting liberalization they have to provide information that is both genuine – hence the lack of relevance of sham elections without any competition – and either new or surprising at least to some key players, as reflected by the weak impact of completely free and fair elections once we account for endogeneity.

Second, we argue that the impact of different types of elections is crucially mediated by the information environment in which these contests take place. In particular, we show that broadly clean elections (but not significantly flawed elections) are more likely to trigger political change in situations where the prior information was limited by restrictions on press freedom and civil liberties. While this finding is at odds with the intuitive expectation about the role of civil liberties in strengthening opposition movements, it is consistent with our claim about the importance of authoritarian incumbents miscalculating their actual strength in information-poor environments, and therefore being caught by surprise by the results of electoral contests.

Finally, the findings of our paper confirm the usefulness of looking at deliberalizations and liberalizations in a common framework. Doing so allows us to identify those factors that make both liberalization and deliberalization more or less likely and those that promote one and not the other. This common framework approach has been used successfully by others in the context of the development/democracy link (Boix and Stokes 2003, Przeworski et al. 2000), but it is not the approach generally used in the literature, which still tends to discuss the causes of deliberalizing events like coups and liberalization events such as Colored Revolutions separately. Our study suggests that a common framework is a useful way to look at the effects of a range of variables, including but not limited to the informational mechanisms we focus on here. After all, it is valuable for both theoretical and policy reasons to know whether a factor driving political liberalization may also promote authoritarian retrenchment.

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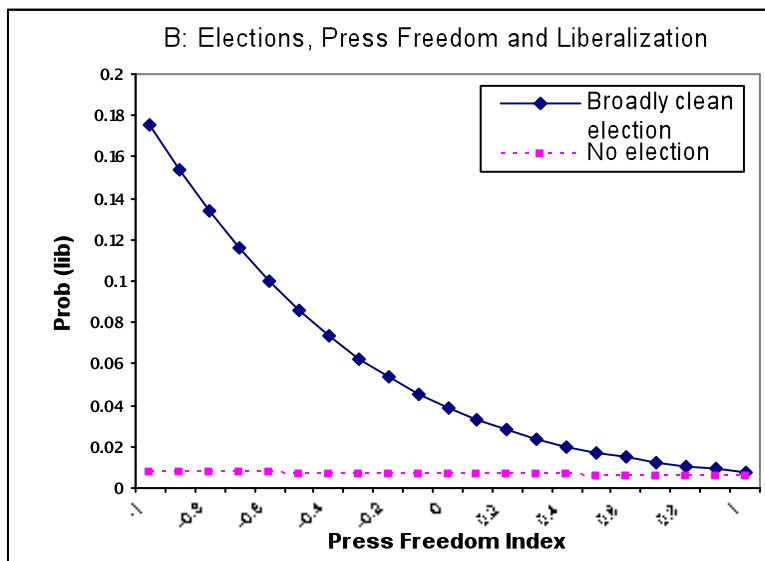
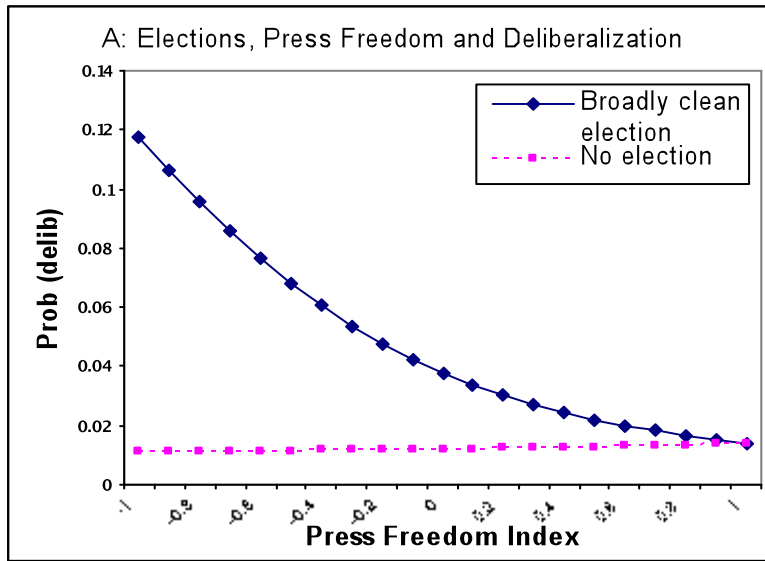
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Table 1: Elections, liberalization and deliberalization

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Deliberalization	Liberalization	Deliberalization	Liberalization	Deliberalization	Liberalization
Election year	.920*	1.878**				
	(.373)	(.339)				
Sham election			-2.414	.112		
			(1.654)	(1.255)		
Seriously flawed election			1.204#	1.400*	2.367**	2.505**
			(.615)	(.691)	(.915)	(.848)
Somewhat flawed election			1.067#	3.821**		
			(.617)	(.627)		
Free & fair election			.761	.763		
			(.580)	(1.040)		
Broadly clean election					1.096*	2.714**
					(.431)	(.513)
Free press* Seriously flawed election					4.236**	2.545*
					(1.579)	(1.226)
Free press* Broadly clean election					-1.342	-1.874*
					(.825)	(.730)
Free press index					-.251	.380
					(.272)	(.317)
Inflation (t-1)	.119	-.074	.107	-.099	.101	-.099
	(.195)	(.192)	(.199)	(.178)	(.214)	(.172)
GDP chg (t-1)	-.036#	-.029	-.037#	-.032	-.038	-.031
	(.020)	(.020)	(.022)	(.023)	(.023)	(.023)
GDP/capita (t-1)	-.944**	-.291	-.929**	-.230	-.908**	-.277
	(.267)	(.311)	(.266)	(.345)	(.270)	(.335)
Population	-.057	.033	-.062	.072	-.070	.033
	(.112)	(.146)	(.112)	(.150)	(.115)	(.145)
Urbanization	.006	.013	.005	.013	.006	.013
	(.011)	(.013)	(.011)	(.013)	(.011)	(.012)
Ethnic fractionalization	-.734	.061	-.801	-.354	-.736	-.162
	(.587)	(.778)	(.592)	(.798)	(.593)	(.727)
Income inequality	.012	.008	.011	.000	.012	.003
	(.016)	(.021)	(.017)	(.022)	(.016)	(.022)
Armed forces p.c.	.129	-.034	.130#	-.075	.139#	-.069
	(.081)	(.091)	(.077)	(.104)	(.080)	(.105)
Natural resource rents	.199*	-.044	.197*	-.037	.185*	-.031
	(.083)	(.094)	(.083)	(.095)	(.085)	(.096)
Regional democracy	-.021	.077	-.008	.083	.022	.058
	(.102)	(.114)	(.103)	(.117)	(.105)	(.120)
Military regime	-.498	.014	-.453	-.067	-.520	-.242
	(.764)	(.463)	(.746)	(.454)	(.773)	(.468)
Monarchy	-.283	1.056	-.288	1.353#	-.576	1.051
	(.926)	(.741)	(.928)	(.768)	(.865)	(.714)
Party regime	.493	-.682	.585	-.728	.420	-.795#
	(.666)	(.485)	(.675)	(.502)	(.686)	(.479)
FH dem (t-1)	.103#	-.207**	.076	-.269**	.124#	-.328**
	(.060)	(.067)	(.062)	(.075)	(.074)	(.077)
Regime duration (t-1)	-.112	-.545**	-.078	-.480**	-.015	-.506**
	(.122)	(.137)	(.122)	(.138)	(.118)	(.136)
Pseudo R-squared	.162		.189		.198	
N	2303		2303		2287	

Standard errors in parentheses - # 10%; * 5%; ** 1% (one-tailed where appropriate)

Figure 1: Interactions between elections and contextual factors



Electronic appendix 1 - Operationalizing Liberalizing and Deliberating Moments

Howard and Roessler's (2006) definition of liberalization as a simultaneous three-point improvement on the 21-point Polity scale and a one-point improvement in Freedom House political rights represents a useful starting point for a systematic analysis of liberalizing moments. Nonetheless, a closer look at the results produced by these coding criteria, suggests two types of limitations of this approach to identifying liberalizing/deliberating moments. For the sake of simplicity we discuss the relevant issues here in terms of liberalization, but since we use symmetrical measures all the same arguments apply to deliberalizations as well.

The first limitation is of a primarily technical nature, and can be illustrated by discussing a few of the more prominent cases, which would arguably be misclassified by the Howard-Roessler coding scheme. One such case is the Georgian Rose Revolution of 2004, which would not qualify as a liberalizing moment under the "Polity3&FH1" rule because its two-point Polity score improvement fell short of the three-point threshold. Howard and Roessler (2006:369) argue that a 1-point change on the 7-point FH scale is mathematically equivalent to a 3-point change on the 21-point Polity scale. However, these changes are not necessarily theoretical equivalents, both because of the extensive disagreements between the two sources and because 1-point FH improvements are almost three times more frequent than 3-point Polity improvements for the countries in our sample. Since there is no particular theoretical reason for using a three rather than a two-point cutoff, we have decided to use a "Polity2&FH1" version of the variable, which slightly expands the universe of "liberalizing moments."

However, even with this lower threshold we would miss several prominent liberalization episodes, including the end of Apartheid in South Africa in 1993-4 and the political opening in Slovakia following the electoral defeat of Vladimir Meciar's HZDS in the September 1998 elections. In both cases the problem stems from the fact that the 2-point Polity score improvement occurs in the year preceding the FH-improvement. Since

this discrepancy is due to different approaches to coding changes not to disagreements about the nature of the liberalizing event, our variable version also captures such episodes with artificial coding lags. Thus, for example, Polity indicates a specific date for a regime score change (10/30/1998 for Slovakia) while Freedom House updates scores once a year and attempts to capture civil and political freedoms in a given year, which means that political changes occurring late in the year (as in Slovakia) are only reflected in the scores for the following year. We decided to assign such lagged liberalizing moments to the first year in which one of the two sources (usually Polity) recorded a change. Moreover, we made sure that this approach did not result in the artificial proliferation of consecutive liberalizing moments (e.g. in situations with two consecutive one-year FH improvements and a Polity improvement in only one of those years).

In a few cases where both sources noted a one-point change or where one of the sources noted a large change (at least 2 points on FH or 3 points on Polity) while the other source did not, we used changes in two additional sources (Coppedge and Alvarez 2008 and Cingranelli and Richards 2009) to decide whether the case constitutes a (de)liberalizing moment.

Electronic Appendix 2: Deliberizations and Liberalizations

Table A1: List of Deliberizations For Main Regressions

Albania 1996	Cambodia 1997	Georgia 2007	Russia 2004
Algeria 1992	Central African Republic 2003	Guinea-Bissau 2003	Russia 2007
Angola 1992	Colombia 1995	Haiti 1999	Sierra Leone 1997
Argentina 2001	Comoros 1995	Haiti 2004	Solomon Islands 2000
Armenia 1995	Comoros 1997	Iran 2004	Tajikistan 1992
Armenia 1996	Comoros 1999	Ivory Coast 2002	Tajikistan 2003
Azerbaijan 1995	Congo Brazzaville 1997	Jordan 2001	Thailand 2006
Bangladesh 2007	Croatia 1995	Kenya 2007	Togo 1993
Belarus 1995	Dominican Rep 1994	Malawi 2001	Turkey 1993
Belarus 1996	Dominican Rep 2003	Mali 1997	Turkmenistan 1992
Benin 2001	Ecuador 1997	Mauritania 2003	Uganda 2000
Bolivia 2003	Ecuador 2000	Nepal 2002	Uzbekistan 1993
Bosnia 1992	Fiji 2000	Niger 1996	Venezuela 1992
Burundi 1993	Fiji 2006	Nigeria 1993	Venezuela 1999
Burundi 1996	Gambia 1994	Pakistan 1996	Zambia 1996
Cambodia 1995	Gambia 2005	Pakistan 1999	Zimbabwe 2004

Peru 1992, Azerbaijan 1993 and Guinea-Bissau 1999 also met the formal rules for deliberalization, but these have been excluded from the statistical tests since deliberalization clearly occurred before elections were held.

Table A2: List of Liberalizations for Main Regressions

Albania 1992	Djibouti 1999	Liberia 1997	South Africa 1993
Albania 2001	Gambia 2001	Liberia 2003	South Africa 1994
Algeria 1995	Georgia 1995	Macedonia 2002	Taiwan 1992
Algeria 2004	Georgia 2004	Mauritania 2006	Tajikistan 1997
Bahrain 2001	Ghana 1992	Moldova 1993	Tanzania 2000
Bahrain 2002	Ghana 1996	Nepal 2006	Thailand 1992
Burundi 1998	Ghana 2000	Nicaragua 1995	Uganda 1993
Burundi 2001	Haiti 1994	Niger 1992	Ukraine 1994
Burundi 2005	Haiti 2006	Niger 1993	Ukraine 2005
Cameroon 1992	Indonesia 1998	Nigeria 1998	Yugoslavia 2000
Central African Republic 1993	Indonesia 1999	Nigeria 1999	
Cambodia 1993	Indonesia 2004	Paraguay 1992	
Cambodia 1998	Ivory Coast 2000	Peru 1993	
Comoros 2002	Jordan 1992	Peru 2000	
Comoros 2004	Kenya 1997	Romania 1996	
Comoros 2006	Kenya 2002	Senegal 2000	
Congo Brazzaville 2001	Kyrgyzstan 2005	Sierra Leone 1998	
Croatia 2000	Lesotho 2002	Slovakia 1998	

In order to reduce the risk of endogeneity the complete set of cases in which significant liberalization took place according to the coding rules (95 cases) was examined to see if elections either only took place after significant liberalization or if the elections were clearly simply a (non-causal) finishing touch. While there is some disagreement among country specialists on particular cases, the results are not sensitive to the particular set of cases included, and hold using either more restricted or broader sets of cases (see Electronic Appendix 4). The main regressions are run on a fairly restricted set that is conservative from the perspective of our argument. The following 31 cases of liberalizations that occurred in election years were not included in the main regressions because the elections were primarily the result rather than the cause of liberalization: Armenia 1998, Azerbaijan 1992, Congo Brazzaville 1992, , Dominican Rep 1996, Ecuador 1998, Egypt 2005, Ethiopia 1995, Ghana 2004, Guatemala 1996, Guinea-Bissau 1994, Guinea-Bissau 2005, Guyana 1992, Kuwait 1992, Lesotho 1993, Liberia 2005, Madagascar 1992, Malawi 1994, Mali 1992, Mauritania 2007, Mexico 1997, Mexico 2000, Mongolia 1992, Mozambique 1994, Niger 1999, Peru 2001, Sierra Leone 1996, Sierra Leone 2002, Sierra Leone 2007, Tanzania 1995, Thailand 2007, Zambia 2001.

Electronic Appendix 3:

Table A3: Statistical Measures and Sources

	Measure	Source
Liberalizing/ Deliberating Moment	Change of 2 points on Polity 2 and 1 point on Freedom House Political Rights associated with the same political process. Where both sources noted a one-point improvement or where one of the sources noted a large improvement (at least 2 points on FH or 3 points on Polity) while the other source did not, we used changes in two additional sources (Coppedge 2008 and Cingranelli and Richards 2009) to decide whether the case constitutes a liberalizing moment.	Polity IV Project, Freedom House, Coppedge (2008), Cingranelli and Richards (2009)
Election year and Election Schedule	Dummy for National Executive and Legislative Election	Lindberg (2006) Interparliamentary Union www.ipu.org ; www.electionguide.org ; Binghamton Election Results Archive http://www.binghamton.edu/cdp/era/index.html ; OSCE www.osce.org ; African Elections Database www.africanelections.tripod.com Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profiles www.eiu.org Lexis-Nexis Academic
Election Quality	Sham election: Elections without any competition, including single party or uncontested elections. Seriously flawed elections: Limited or highly unfair competition rendering results meaningless. Somewhat flawed elections: Elections with significant violations of international electoral norms but that nevertheless produce a competitive result. Free and fair elections: Elections that conform to international democratic standards	Using the four category scheme, codings were created consulting Executive Summaries of Election monitoring reports of the OSCE, European Union, Council of Europe, Carter Center, National Democratic Institute, Organization of American States and African Union. For African elections, we adopted all codings from Lindberg (2006) Where none of these sources were available codings were made on the basis of searching: Interparliamentary Union www.ipu.org ; www.electionguide.org ; African Elections Database www.africanelections.tripod.com Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profiles www.eiu.org Lexis-Nexis Academic
Finishing Touch Elections	Case excluded if elections complete (de)liberalization but play no causal role or elections follow rather precede (de)liberalization.	Lexis-Nexis Academic Economist Intelligence Unit Country Profiles www.eiu.org
Inflation	Log of Consumer Price Inflation	World Development Indicators
GDP Change	Change in GDP (%)	World Development Indicators
GDP/capita	Gross Domestic Product in constant (1995) US dollars per capita	World Development Indicators
Population	Log of population	World Development Indicators
Urbanization	Urban population as % of total population	World Development Indicators
Natural resource rents	Log of combined dependence on energy, metals and minerals per capita	World Development Indicators
Income inequality	Gini coefficient of income inequality	Babones (2008)

Ethnic fractionalization	Index of ethno-linguistic fractionalization	Fearon 2003
Regional democracy	Regional Average of Freedom House Democracy Scores.	Freedom House
Urbanization	Percentage of Population living in urban areas	World Development Indicators
Armed forces p.c.	Size of armed forces as a percentage of the population.	SIPRI
Regime Type	Military regimes, monarchies, party authoritarian and democratic regimes.	Hadenius and Teorell (2007)
Regime Duration	Log of duration of current regime	Hadenius and Teorell (2007)
Election Observation	Presence of International Monitors	Hyde (2009)
Press Freedom	Index of Freedom House <i>Freedom of the Press</i> ratings and the CIRI <i>Freedom of Speech and Press</i> indicator.	Freedom House, Cingranelli and Richards (2009)

Electronic Appendix 4: Robustness tests

To test the robustness of our main findings, in Tables A4 and A5, we re-ran the regressions in models 1 and 2 of Table 1, which are reproduced for reference in model 1, in a number of different ways. In model 2, to make sure that our findings were not driven by the inclusion of advanced industrial democracies, which have no further liberalization opportunities (due to ceiling effects) and which are much less prone to deliberalizations (Svolik 2008), we excluded such countries from the analysis. This resulted in the loss of about 350 observations but barely affected the results. Similarly, in model 3 of the two tables, we excluded countries (such as Saudi Arabia or Libya) which during the time period of our analysis did not have provisions for elections, in order to test whether the election-liberalization link is due to the fact that the world's worst regimes do not even bother to hold elections. The results were unchanged. In model 4 we included the previously excluded finishing touch liberalizations and deliberalizations, and once again the coefficients for the election variables are only minimally affected, which confirms that our findings are not sensitive to coding changes in our dependent variable. Similarly, in model 5 of the two tables, the exclusion of an additional ten liberalizing moments leads to a small reduction in the size of the election coefficient, which however remains substantively large and statistically significant. In model 6 we used country-fixed effects to deal with the possibility that our findings could be driven by unobservable factors at the country level, but doing so actually increases the size of the coefficients for both liberalization and deliberalizations. Finally, model 7 in Table A5 uses the full sample but in the first-stage regressions we dropped lagged election type from the list of instruments (even though Hausman tests suggested that lagged election type was not endogenous). We get results that are broadly similar to the main specification, though they are somewhat less precisely estimated because of the exclusion of one of the stronger instruments. Thus, the size of the coefficient for seriously flawed elections is slightly smaller than in model 1 (and barely misses statistical significance), while the coefficients for partially flawed elections is actually somewhat larger and

remain highly significant, while the effects of sham elections and free and fair elections continue to be statistically insignificant.

Table A 4: Robustness tests (1)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib
Election year	.920*	1.88**	.908*	1.86**	.923*	1.85**	.873*	1.81**	.917*	1.39**	1.133**	2.928**
	(.373)	(.339)	(.372)	(.336)	(.374)	(.338)	(.368)	(.311)	(.372)	(.366)	(.421)	(.520)
Inflation (t-1)	.119	-.074	.122	-.077	.124	-.073	.134	-.031	.120	-.005	.230	.689**
	(.195)	(.192)	(.198)	(.193)	(.193)	(.193)	(.192)	(.147)	(.194)	(.187)	(.320)	(.160)
GDP chg (t-1)	-.036#	-.029	-.037#	-.031	-.038#	-.031	-.040#	-.014	-.035#	-.027	-.063*	.001
	(.020)	(.020)	(.021)	(.021)	(.020)	(.021)	(.021)	(.014)	(.020)	(.021)	(.028)	(.023)
GDP/capita (t-1)	-.944**	-.291	-.848**	-.226	-.950**	-.278	-.964**	-.459#	-.944**	-.388	.162	-1.183
	(.267)	(.311)	(.264)	(.319)	(.261)	(.314)	(.260)	(.273)	(.268)	(.290)	(1.318)	(1.909)
Population	-.057	.033	-.048	.046	-.060	.025	-.048	-.017	-.057	-.028	-2.677	-3.004
	(.112)	(.146)	(.111)	(.147)	(.113)	(.145)	(.110)	(.116)	(.112)	(.160)	(2.714)	(4.110)
Urbanization	.006	.013	.005	.012	.005	.011	.008	.011	.006	.020	-.011	.027
	(.011)	(.013)	(.011)	(.013)	(.011)	(.013)	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.012)	(.113)	(.137)
Ethnic fractionalization	-.734	.061	-.742	.066	-.671	.128	-.649	.219	-.730	-.178		
	(.587)	(.778)	(.583)	(.774)	(.584)	(.769)	(.576)	(.593)	(.586)	(.766)		
Income inequality	.012	.008	.011	.007	.012	.008	.017	.026#	.012	-.001	-.002	.180**
	(.016)	(.021)	(.016)	(.020)	(.016)	(.021)	(.016)	(.016)	(.016)	(.021)	(.040)	(.069)
Armed forces p.c.	.129	-.034	.123	-.038	.179*	-.003	.137#	-.039	.131	-.063	1.015*	1.03**
	(.081)	(.091)	(.083)	(.093)	(.084)	(.101)	(.080)	(.083)	(.081)	(.099)	(.473)	(.332)
Natural resource rents	.199*	-.044	.181*	-.059	.194*	-.040	.195*	.024	.198*	-.020	.355	1.193#
	(.083)	(.094)	(.084)	(.096)	(.083)	(.091)	(.081)	(.078)	(.083)	(.094)	(.386)	(.655)
Regional democracy	-.021	.077	-.018	.085	-.020	.076	.002	.099	-.021	-.005	.364	1.382#
	(.102)	(.114)	(.100)	(.113)	(.101)	(.114)	(.100)	(.094)	(.102)	(.109)	(.471)	(.752)
Military regime	-.498	.014	-.460	.027	-.426	.027	-.562	-.200	-.503	.293	-.749	-1.764
	(.764)	(.463)	(.757)	(.465)	(.702)	(.461)	(.778)	(.426)	(.764)	(.489)	(1.143)	(1.128)
Monarchy	-.283	1.056	-.405	.977	-.434	1.055	-.289	.596	-.292	1.149#	-22.196*	2.127
	(.926)	(.741)	(.967)	(.757)	(.858)	(.714)	(.905)	(.780)	(.915)	(.694)	(1.023)	(14.913)
Party regime	.493	-.682	.435	-.718	.256	-.734	.521	-.806*	.503	-.918#	.381	-2.177*
	(.666)	(.485)	(.674)	(.488)	(.621)	(.476)	(.645)	(.386)	(.664)	(.492)	(1.052)	(1.104)
FH dem (t-1)	.103#	-.207**	.108#	-.200**	.111#	-.205**	.095	-.162**	.104#	-.142*	.454**	-.864**
	(.060)	(.067)	(.059)	(.066)	(.061)	(.068)	(.058)	(.056)	(.060)	(.063)	(.155)	(.176)
Regime duration (t-1)	-.112	-.545**	-.081	-.522**	-.087	-.512**	-.104	-.511**	-.113	-.533**	.462#	-.463#
	(.122)	(.137)	(.124)	(.138)	(.122)	(.140)	(.118)	(.129)	(.123)	(.135)	(.239)	(.255)
Excl. advanced incl. dems	No		Yes		No		No		No		No	
Exclude ctres w/o elections	No		No		Yes		No		No		No	
Include FT libs & delibs	No		No		No		Yes		No		No	
More stringent FT threshold	No		No		No		No		Yes		No	
Country fixed effects	No		No		No		No		No		Yes	
Pseudo R-squared	.162		.135		.161		.166		.155		.448	
N	2303		1954		2239		2334		2293		2303	

Logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses # significant at 10% * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.(one-tailed where appropriate)

Table A5: Robustness tests (2)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib
Sham election	-2.414 (1.654)	.112 (1.255)	-2.444 (1.655)	.107 (1.260)	-2.319 (1.608)	.027 (1.245)	-2.635 (1.764)	.697 (.950)	-2.505 (1.680)	-2.368 (2.377)	-2.245 (2.315)	2.555 (2.396)	-1.971 (1.420)	1.358 (.913)
Seriously flawed election	1.204* (.615)	1.400* (.691)	1.262* (.608)	1.433* (.691)	1.150* (.605)	1.280* (.683)	1.217* (.613)	1.714** (.627)	1.191* (.620)	1.343* (.739)	1.372# (.904)	2.621* (1.089)	.917 (.705)	.925 (.800)
Somewhat flawed election	1.067* (.617)	3.821** (.627)	1.014# (.617)	3.746** (.636)	1.077* (.613)	3.894** (.630)	997# (.639)	3.642** (.500)	1.078* (.627)	3.064** (.660)	1.126 (.953)	4.708** (.981)	1.542* (.746)	4.007** (.708)
Free & fair election	.761 (.580)	.763 (1.040)	.746 (.585)	.755 (1.072)	.756 (.581)	.729 (1.059)	.670 (.582)	1.698* (.791)	.759 (.579)	.816 (1.102)	.822 (.843)	1.538 (1.527)	231 (.617)	1.226 (.984)
Inflation	.107 (.199)	-.099 (.178)	.110 (.201)	-.100 (.179)	.110 (.197)	-.106 (.181)	.120 (.198)	-.040 (.140)	.106 (.197)	-.047 (.185)	1.012* (.463)	1.112** (.365)	.104 (.202)	-.099 (.180)
GDP chg (t-1)	-.037# (.022)	-.032 (.023)	-.038# (.022)	-.033 (.023)	-.039# (.021)	-.034 (.023)	-.042# (.023)	-.019 (.018)	-.037# (.022)	-.031 (.025)	.220 (.313)	.650** (.167)	-.035 (.022)	-.028 (.022)
GDP/capita (t-1)	-.929** (.266)	-.230 (.345)	-.833** (.262)	-.187 (.353)	-.933** (.260)	-.202 (.349)	-.943** (.259)	-.401 (.306)	-.933** (.267)	-.354 (.308)	-.060* (.029)	-.012 (.024)	-.899** (.271)	-.229 (.332)
Population	-.062 (.112)	.072 (.150)	-.052 (.111)	.078 (.151)	-.064 (.113)	.067 (.147)	-.052 (.111)	.018 (.122)	-.061 (.112)	.000 (.164)	.254 (1.381)	-.709 (1.999)	-.057 (.112)	.060 (.147)
Urbanization	.005 (.011)	.013 (.013)	.004 (.011)	.012 (.013)	.004 (.011)	.012 (.013)	.006 (.011)	.009 (.012)	.005 (.011)	.018 (.013)	-2.472 (2.649)	-4.489 (4.365)	.005 (.011)	.015 (.014)
Ethnic fractionalization	-.801 (.592)	-.354 (.798)	-.812 (.587)	-.345 (.796)	-.746 (.589)	-.287 (.805)	-.703 (.578)	-.061 (.640)	-.814 (.592)	-.636 (.779)			-.865 (.583)	-.241 (.821)
Income inequality	.011 (.017)	.000 (.022)	.010 (.016)	-.000 (.022)	.011 (.016)	-.001 (.022)	.015 (.016)	.021 (.017)	.010 (.017)	-.006 (.022)	-.018 (.112)	.015 (.137)	.009 (.017)	.001 (.022)
Armed forces p.c.	.130# (.077)	-.075 (.104)	.125 (.079)	-.077 (.105)	.173* (.080)	-.064 (.111)	.137# (.076)	-.072 (.090)	.132# (.077)	-.093 (.115)	-.005 (.041)	213** (.075)	129# (.078)	-.056 (.098)
Natural resource rents	.197* (.083)	-.037 (.095)	.178* (.083)	-.046 (.096)	.192* (.082)	-.032 (.092)	.192* (.080)	.037 (.079)	.196* (.083)	-.022 (.093)	.331 (.392)	1.238# (.677)	200* (.083)	-.049 (.094)
Regional democracy	-.008 (.103)	.083 (.117)	-.004 (.102)	.089 (.118)	-.009 (.102)	.076 (.118)	.016 (.101)	.106 (.104)	-.006 (.103)	.011 (.112)	.337 (.476)	1.399# (.801)	-.001 (.100)	.064 (.118)
Military regime	-.453 (.746)	-.067 (.454)	-.412 (.740)	-.054 (.455)	-.391 (.689)	-.083 (.456)	-.481 (.759)	-.198 (.406)	-.460 (.745)	.198 (.481)	-.779 (1.197)	-1.525 (1.100)	-.452 (.746)	-.010 (.447)
Monarchy	-.288 (.928)	1.353# (.768)	-.416 (.967)	1.289# (.780)	-.392 (.854)	1.466* (.731)	-.277 (.913)	1.023 (.772)	-.287 (.920)	1.437* (.696)	-22.061 (13.945)	2.901 (13.733)	-.250 (.960)	1.357# (.749)
Party regime	.585 (.675)	-.728 (.502)	.530 (.683)	-.747 (.502)	.366 (.633)	-.790 (.493)	.638 (.648)	-.752* (.379)	.586 (.672)	-.867# (.524)	.387 (1.063)	-1.685 (1.054)	.555 (.676)	-.762 (.485)
FH dem (t-1)	.076 (.062)	-.269** (.075)	.082 (.061)	-.260** (.074)	.082 (.063)	-.279** (.077)	.069 (.060)	-.236** (.059)	.075 (.062)	-.215** (.075)	.431** (.147)	-.968** (.184)	.084 (.060)	-.268** (.078)
Regime duration (t-1)	-.078 (.122)	-.480** (.138)	-.048 (.124)	-.467** (.138)	-.052 (.122)	-.440** (.145)	-.066 (.118)	-.457** (.134)	-.080 (.122)	-.487** (.136)	.466# (.246)	-.501* (.239)	-.083 (.120)	-.520** (.136)
Excl. advanced incl. dems	No		Yes		No		No		No		No		No	
Exclude cties w/o elections	No		No		Yes		No		No		No		No	
Include FT libs & delibs	No		No		No		Yes		No		No		No	
More stringent FT threshold	No		No		No		No		Yes		No		No	
Country fixed effects	No		No		No		No		No		Yes		No	
Exclude lagged elect type instrum	No		No		No		No		No		No		Yes	
Pseudo R-squared	.189		.162		.188		.206		.177		.468		.186	
N	2303		1954		2239		2334		2293		2303		2303	

Logistic regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses # significant at 10% * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.(one-tailed where appropriate)

In Table A6 we re-run a few of the statistical models in Table 1 using alternative measures of key variables. In model 1 we use the same model specification as model 1 in Table 1 but we use a different version of the dependent variable. As discussed in the paper, rather than using FH political rights and Polity regime scores to code liberalizing and deliberalizing moments, we used FH civil liberties and Polity executive constraints as the basis for coding regime change. While this approach has the advantage of using indicators, which are not affected by the nature of elections, it results in a much smaller set of liberalizations (45 vs. 95) and deliberalizations (29 vs. 67), and misses some fairly obvious instances of liberalizations (e.g. South Africa 1994) and deliberalizations (e.g. Albania 1996). Nonetheless, the results in model 1 confirm that even for this significantly modified version of our DV, elections are a powerful predictor of both liberalizing and deliberalizing moments.

Model 2 re-runs the analysis from model 3 in Table 1 but uses FH civil liberties (inverted so that higher scores indicate greater respect for civil liberties) as an indicator of the quality of the information environment. Once again, the large negative interaction effect between broadly clean elections and civil liberties confirms the predictions of our informational theory, in the sense that elections are much more likely to trigger both liberalizations and deliberalizations in poor information environments, where the lack of civil liberties undermines the flow of political information and therefore leaves the government much more vulnerable to destabilizing informational surprises in the context of broadly clean elections.

The last two models in Table A6 are alternative specifications of model 5 in Table 1. Thus, model 3 reveals a powerful positive interaction effect between monarchies and elections for deliberalizations, which suggests that elections are much more likely to trigger deliberalizations in monarchies than in other political regimes. This finding closely parallels the finding for military regimes, and arguably reflects the fact that key political actors in both military regimes and monarchies have much worse political prospects in more democratic settings, and are therefore more likely to respond to political challenges arising in an electoral context by reversing liberalization. Model 4 illustrates the flip side of this logic: thus, the signs of the interaction effects (negative for

deliberalization and positive for liberalization) suggest that regimes that have previously allowed for party competition are more likely to liberalize than to deliberalize in response to electoral challenges, arguably because key actors within these regimes expect to be able to compete successfully even in a more even political field.

Table A6: Robustness tests (3)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib	delib	lib
Election year	1.047*	2.239**			.846*	1.916**	2.684#	1.211#
	(.553)	(.475)			(.376)	(.359)	(1.397)	(.630)
Seriously flawed election			-4.875#	-.251				
			(2.538)	(1.395)				
Broadly clean election			2.919*	5.024**				
			(1.324)	(1.038)				
Seriously flawed election* FH civil liberties			2.335*	1.085*				
			(.990)	(.636)				
Broadly clean election* FH civil liberties			-.559#	-.785*				
			(.351)	(.308)				
FH civil liberties			.024	-.344#				
			(.142)	(.185)				
Monarchy* Election year					6.441**	-.513		
					(1.362)	(1.401)		
Party regime* Election year							-1.880	.916
							(1.440)	(.837)
Inflation (t-1)	.397*	-.067	.116	-.074	.119	-.073	.128	-.089
	(.187)	(.246)	(.192)	(.162)	(.195)	(.192)	(.192)	(.201)
GDP chg (t-1)	-.049*	-.026	-.038#	-.027	-.036#	-.029	-.035#	-.031
	(.020)	(.024)	(.021)	(.021)	(.020)	(.020)	(.020)	(.021)
GDP/capita (t-1)	-.575*	-.737#	-.910**	-.151	-.937**	-.296	-.953**	-.279
	(.281)	(.445)	(.254)	(.330)	(.267)	(.312)	(.268)	(.308)
Population	-.051	.227	-.061	.045	-.059	.035	-.064	.044
	(.168)	(.173)	(.107)	(.130)	(.111)	(.147)	(.112)	(.145)
Urbanization	-.017	.036#	.008	.006	.006	.013	.006	.013
	(.015)	(.022)	(.011)	(.013)	(.011)	(.013)	(.011)	(.013)
Ethnic fractionalization	-.687	.014	-.626	.023	-.740	.057	-.758	.088
	(.926)	(.993)	(.533)	(.758)	(.585)	(.779)	(.583)	(.766)
Income inequality	.045	.012	.013	.004	.012	.009	.012	.008
	(.028)	(.029)	(.016)	(.020)	(.016)	(.021)	(.016)	(.021)
Armed forces p.c.	.215*	-.079	.124#	-.096	.124	-.033	.128	-.032
	(.104)	(.159)	(.075)	(.098)	(.082)	(.091)	(.083)	(.091)
Natural resource rents	.288**	-.234	.187*	.006	.199*	-.044	.202*	-.043
	(.111)	(.183)	(.075)	(.082)	(.083)	(.094)	(.082)	(.094)
Regional democracy	-.228#	.539**	.069	.066	-.022	.077	-.021	.079
	(.127)	(.161)	(.102)	(.109)	(.102)	(.114)	(.101)	(.114)
Military regime	.220	.547	-.678	.019	-.516	.024	-.551	.000
	(.830)	(.649)	(.745)	(.405)	(.763)	(.466)	(.771)	(.465)
Monarchy	-32.483**	1.951#	-.512	1.019	-4.85**	1.245	-.239	.965
	(.784)	(1.127)	(.843)	(.660)	(1.047)	(.802)	(.915)	(.768)
Party regime	.502	-.378	.511	-.866*	.459	-.675	1.281	-1.084*
	(.696)	(.567)	(.615)	(.441)	(.661)	(.490)	(1.047)	(.541)
FH dem (t-1)	.204*	-.421**			.100#	-.205**	.104#	-.209**
	(.092)	(.105)			(.060)	(.067)	(.058)	(.068)
Regime duration	-.193	-.461**	-.065	-.512**	-.102	-.549**	-.108	-.558**
	(.210)	(.164)	(.116)	(.154)	(.122)	(.139)	(.120)	(.139)
Pseudo R-squared		.238		.186		.164		.165
N		2303		2312		2303		2303

Electronic Appendix 5: Details about Moldovan Survey

The survey was administered through face-to-face interviews to a randomly selected sample of Moldovan residents aged 18 and older by Q-Sens/IMAS Inc, a leading Moldovan survey research firm. The first survey wave was a nationally representative sample of 1028 respondents, and took place from March 7 to April 3, 2009. In the second wave, which took place from May 7-30, 2009, we re-interviewed 501 of the original 1028 respondents and added a fresh cross-section of 436 respondents. In the third survey wave, which took place from August 12 to September 8, 2009 we re-interviewed 554 respondents from the first two waves, and added a fresh cross-section of 564 respondents. Interviews were conducted in both Moldovan/Romanian and Russian. The figures discussed in the text are based on the opinion changes of the respondents from the panel portion of the survey and are therefore not an artifact of different sample compositions across survey waves. Additional details are available from the authors upon request.

Below is the survey wording for the main questions referenced in the discussion of the survey results.

In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place the Communist Party on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means the left and 10 means the right?

LEFT						RIGHT				
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

G1. Which of the following statements in your opinion best describe the goals of the Communist government over the last four years?

The government is focused on closer relations to Western Europe to the exclusion of close ties to Russia and the CIS.	1
The government wants good relations with Russia and the CIS, but is mostly interested in close ties to Western Europe.	2
The government wants good relations with Western Europe, but is mostly interested in close ties to Russia and the CIS	3
The government is focused on closer relations to Russia and the CIS to the exclusion of close ties to Western Europe	4

How honest do you think the most recent elections were?

Honest	1
Mostly honest	2
Not very honest	3
Not honest at all	4
DK/NA	9

How do you judge the response of the authorities to the protests after the April elections?

Too harsh	1
About right	2
Too soft	3
DK/NA	9