Why Governments and Parties Manipulate Elections

Theory, Practice, and Implications

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Introduction and Overview

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT AND FINDINGS

More countries today call themselves democratic than ever before in history, but the elections they hold are often marred by electoral manipulation. Electoral manipulation – the set of practices that includes, among other things, stuffing ballot boxes, buying votes, and intimidating voters or candidates – violates basic political freedoms, undermines the function of elections as mechanisms of accountability, destroys confidence in electoral and democratic institutions, and can lead to social strife, to list only a few of its damaging effects. And electoral manipulation is widespread: according to my estimates, about one in four country-level executive elections in the past two decades were substantially manipulated. To place the issue in historical perspective, more elections were manipulated in 2000 than there were democracies in 1950. Despite the prevalence and the important consequences of electoral manipulation, our empirical and theoretical understanding of its causes is still limited and, crucially, cannot account for some of electoral manipulation's most common, and most pernicious, manifestations.

The central question animating this study is: why do parties, candidates, and governments utilize electoral manipulation? On an obvious level, politicians use manipulation to win, as a final push to bring their vote totals past the post. This perspective is widely held in the scholarly literature and in policy circles; but, as I show in this book, it leaves fundamental puzzles unaddressed. First, electoral manipulation is often utilized when it is patently unnecessary for victory. Second, even when electoral manipulation is needed to win, it is frequently perpetrated far beyond the victory threshold and in excess of any plausible safety margin. Third, electoral manipulation is often perpetrated blatantly, a practice that does not directly contribute to victory and goes against the intuition that, as with any cheating, the perpetrator stands only to lose if

his or her activities become known. These three observations constitute what I shall call the puzzle of excessive and blatant electoral manipulation.

One recent example of this puzzle is furnished by the Russian presidential election of 2004. With levels of popularity and job approval that would make almost any Western leader envious, incumbent president Vladimir Putin was by all accounts certain to win. Nevertheless, his government grossly manipulated the election – by some estimates adding close to 10 million votes, or more than one-fifth of Putin's total – and Putin won by an enormous margin of victory, with 49 million votes against 9 million for his strongest opponent. In this case, large-scale electoral manipulation was utilized where a clean vote would have sufficed not only to win, but to win overwhelmingly.[1] The 2009 election in Iran, arguably rigged by the government on a massive scale, also resulted in an impressive margin of victory in favor of the government's candidate, of more than one-fourth the size of the electorate, or about 11 million votes.[2] Many other examples of excessive and blatant manipulation are found in the electoral histories of a range of otherwise diverse countries, and in various time periods, including present-day Belarus, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Yemen, as well as in Mexico under the PRI, and Paraguay under Stroessner, to name a few.

The prevailing set of ideas about the goals and logic of electoral manipulation – to which I subsequently refer as the "prevailing wisdom" on electoral manipulation – holds that the aim of manipulation is to help win the election at hand, and that it is therefore likely to arise in tight races, where a few stolen votes can determine the difference between victory and defeat, and to yield small margins of victory. As one of Joseph Kennedy's sons said about his father, "he was willing to buy as many votes as necessary to win, but he was damned if he would buy a single extra one."[3] The prevailing wisdom also understands electoral manipulation as an activity that ought to be carried out secretly. A recent review piece, for example, concludes that "manifestly fraudulent behaviors . . . are things that only its victims want publicized" (Lehoucq 2003). The logic of frugality and secrecy rests on the notion that electoral manipulation is a costly and risky political strategy.[4]

The prevailing wisdom about electoral manipulation, while intuitive and widely espoused, nevertheless leaves in its wake a core puzzle: the practice of electoral manipulation in much of the world today is simply at odds with

[1] The estimate of the number of votes obtained via manipulation is from Myagkov, Ordeshook, and Shakin (2009). I discuss electoral manipulation in post-Soviet Russia in greater detail in Chapter 6.

[2] As in the Russian example, the Iranian incumbent would likely have won without manipulation (Ansari et al. 2009; Beber and Scacco 2009).

[3] Quoted in Argersinger 1985, 672.

[4] Electoral manipulation generally requires substantial resources, personnel, and planning, and entails the risk of eliciting punishment, inviting international criticism and reprisals, or sparking domestic unrest. I further discuss the costs and the risks of electoral manipulation in Chapter 5.

it. As the examples of Russia and Iran suggest, great effort, expense, and risk are routinely incurred to perpetrate electoral manipulation in situations when it does not – and cannot – contribute to victory, for example when victory could be secured with substantially less manipulation or with none at all. Moreover, electoral manipulation is often pursued in full view of the public – elections in Nigeria and Zimbabwe since independence, for example, have been characterized by blatant methods of electoral manipulation such as voter intimidation; and in Mexico before the 1990s, friends and neighbors could often observe those who were being visited by operatives of the ruling party to buy their votes.[5] In sum, there are many cases for which the prevailing wisdom has analytical purchase, but many others for which it does not. In other words, the literature has not explained, nor has it documented, the considerable heterogeneity in patterns of electoral manipulation.[6]

The Argument in Brief: Electoral Manipulation and Information

To understand such heterogeneity, it is necessary to expand our understanding of the causes of electoral manipulation beyond the confines of the prevailing wisdom. I develop a novel theory about the incentives of political parties and governments to engage in electoral manipulation. My theory calls into question the idea that the sole aim of electoral manipulation is immediate electoral victory; instead, my theory proposes the argument that *electoral manipulation can potentially yield substantially more than simply winning the election at hand*. Specifically, excessive and blatant manipulation has a series of intended effects that include, among other things: to discourage opposition supporters from turning out to vote or to protest; to convince bureaucrats to remain loyal to the government; to persuade potential financial backers of parties and candidates to avoid supporting the manipulator's opponents (and/or to support the incumbent candidate); to deter political elites from opposing the ruling party or from even entering the political fray; to increase the manipulator's post-electoral bargaining power vis-à-vis other political and social groups such as labor unions and other political parties; to reduce the need to share the rents and spoils of government with elites and organizations; and to enhance the career prospects of politicians at subnational levels of government. Overall, these and similar effects reduce the strength of opposition and expand the incumbent's freedom of action and bargaining power. In other words, I argue that electoral manipulation ought to be understood not merely as a marginal

[5] See Jason 2003 for the case of Nigeria. Elections in post-independence Zimbabwe are discussed in Chapter 6; Mexican elections in Chapter 7.

[6] A second "conventional wisdom" has developed around the study of single-party elections in highly authoritarian systems. I discuss this later in this chapter, as well as in Chapter 3. Simpser (2005) is an earlier effort to document and explain heterogeneity in patterns of electoral manipulation.

vote-getting technique, but also as an important tool for consolidating and monopolizing political power.

At its core, my theory casts elections not only as contests for office, but also as occasions for the *transmission or distortion of information*. Information about the *strength of incumbents and their rivals* is a key ingredient in political decision-making, and electoral manipulation can be strategically deployed to influence such information and, ultimately, the decisions and behaviors of a broad range of actors including politicians, activists, donors, bureaucrats, organizations, and voters, among others.[7] The informational consequences of electoral manipulation can be so strong as to motivate very substantial manipulation efforts even by parties whose victory is a foregone conclusion.

To elaborate, my theory proposes that electoral manipulation gives rise to two categories of effects. The *direct effects* of electoral manipulation refer, loosely speaking, to its contribution to *winning the election at hand*.[8] In addition, electoral manipulation can have *indirect effects*, which refer to the *influence of electoral manipulation on the subsequent choices and behavior of a wide range of political actors*.[9] The items enumerated in the previous paragraph constitute some of the main kinds of indirect effects of electoral manipulation.

As those items suggest, indirect effects can be quite beneficial to the manipulator. More generally, the potential for electoral manipulation to elicit indirect effects raises the stakes of choices by parties and governments about whether, how, and to what extent to manipulate. In addition to possibly influencing who wins the election at hand, electoral manipulation can, via its indirect effects, have consequences for the *value of office-holding*, and for the *future likelihood of holding office*.[10] Politicians presumably care not only about holding office,

[7] The *strength* of a political party depends on a variety of attributes of the party, including its ability to circumvent the law, its access to resources, and its willingness to utilize public resources for partisan ends. It also depends on the likely behavior of the public, including elites and citizens. Importantly, *popularity* may contribute to strength, but it is neither necessary nor sufficient for it: unpopular incumbent parties are sometimes perceived as strong (e.g., as being the "only game in town"). Therefore, my theory implies that electoral manipulation can be informative about the manipulator's strength *even if the public knows that the manipulation took place*. In such a scenario, the public would know that electoral results do not reflect the manipulator's popularity, but could still perceive the manipulator as strong – e.g., as able to circumvent the law and access resources for partisan goals. (I discuss these issues further later in this chapter and in Chapter 4).

[8] The text is accurate for the case of a winner-takes-all election under plurality rule. I provide a more general definition of direct effects, encompassing other electoral rules as well as legislative elections, in the Appendix to Chapter 4.

[9] In prior work (Simpser 2003, 2005, and 2008) I referred to these as the *informational effects* of electoral manipulation. I use the term "indirect effects" in the present work to emphasize the fact that the causal chain does not end with information itself, but instead with the effects of such information on behavior.

[10] Accordingly, indirect effects can be categorized as *electoral* and *non-electoral*, depending on whether they are relevant to the manipulating party's chances of holding office in the future, or to that party's scope for action while in office (the two categories overlap).

but also about how far they can advance their goals while they govern – by implementing the policies they prefer, appropriating rents for personal or partisan purposes, or otherwise making use of the machinery of government in the service of their objectives. To illustrate the potential effect of electoral manipulation on the value of office, consider the demands for policy concessions, or for sharing rents, that a business organization or a labor union might make on a ruling party. The use of electoral manipulation by the ruling party to obtain overwhelming electoral victories could effectively restrain such demands, by showing that no one actor is indispensable for the ruling party's hold on power. Overwhelming victories obtained via electoral manipulation can also influence a ruling party's grip on office – for example, by deterring bureaucrats from supporting rivals, or discouraging opposition supporters from turning out to vote.[11] On the flip side, the failure of a manipulating party to obtain an overwhelming electoral victory, for example, could convey weakness, potentially emboldening social and political actors to step up demands and political challenges, and in consequence reduce the party's scope for action while in office, as well as its ability to retain power in the future. In other words, the informational properties of electoral manipulation, which underlie manipulation's indirect effects, imply that the stakes of manipulating are often substantially higher than previously recognized.

The prevailing wisdom and literature on electoral manipulation pays heed mostly to direct effects.[12] I propose and show, in contrast, that electoral manipulation can be, and often is, motivated by its potential for indirect effects. Putin's Kremlin, and Mexico's PRI in its heyday, utilized electoral manipulation not to reach a majority or a plurality of the vote, but to deter and preempt potential challenges to their rule – to nip opposition in the bud, so to speak – and to increase their freedom to act while in office. In sum, I argue that electoral manipulation has an entirely different purpose from (in addition to) its intuitive role as a short-term, marginal vote-getting tactic, a purpose that has been insufficiently appreciated: to shape the behavior of political and social actors in ways that benefit the perpetrator and enhance its political power, potentially over longer time frames than the election at hand. In terms of incentives to manipulate, these motivations have proved to be just as powerful, if not more so, than the drive to reach the victory threshold in the election of the moment.

How exactly does electoral manipulation lead to indirect effects? The core of the mechanism has to do with *information*, and it can be loosely described

[11] Of course, electoral manipulation could simultaneously have effects on the manipulator's (and the other parties') chances of holding office, and on the value of holding office for the ruling party.

[12] I discuss the important contributions of the literatures on electoral authoritarianism (e.g., Geddes 2006; Magaloni 2006; Greene 2007; Wedeen 2008) and on single-party regimes later in this chapter.

in two simple steps. First, under the right conditions (on which more is provided later in this chapter), the consequences to individual citizens, politicians, bureaucrats, and organizations of their political choices and actions today depend strongly on which party ends up holding power tomorrow, and on how powerful such a party turns out to be. Second, electoral manipulation conveys information to the aforementioned actors precisely on these points. In Putin's Russia, for example, the perception that Putin and his associates had an unassailable hold on the Kremlin was largely fostered through the systematic use of excessive electoral manipulation since 2000, and it disciplined the whole political class for at least a decade. In contrast, in Boris Yeltsin's Russia, the widespread perception that Yeltsin's hold on office was tenuous emboldened many bureaucrats, regional officials, and other politicians to either fail to work on his behalf, or to actively support his opponents. To take another example, in Mexico in the 1990s, a history of manipulated elections by the PRI convinced citizens who sympathized with the opposition that casting a vote would at best result in frustration, if not in reprisals, and opposition turnout suffered accordingly.[13]

As these two examples illustrate, electoral manipulation can convey information about two matters that are of central relevance to the choices of actors, such as bureaucrats and citizens, among others. Such actors care about *attributes and capacities of the manipulator*: an incumbent party, for instance, that shows itself able to manipulate an election excessively and blatantly is also likely to have the resources, capacities, and inclinations to overcome or punish opponents, reward supporters, and circumvent the law. In addition, actors care about *how fellow actors are likely to behave*. For example, a citizen who supports an opposition party, yet expects that his or her fellow opposition supporters will stay at home on election day or will sell their vote in exchange for a bribe, is likely to be discouraged from turning out to vote. Insofar as electoral manipulation provides information about attributes of the perpetrator, it functions as a *costly signal*. When it provides information about the likely behavior of other actors, it works as a *coordination device*.[14]

My theory suggests the following distinctions, which I shall utilize throughout the book. Concerning the goals motivating the use of electoral manipulation, it is possible to speak of *manipulation for winning* versus *manipulation for more than winning*. The former is associated with electoral manipulation's direct effects, and the latter with its indirect ones. Concerning the outcomes of electoral manipulation, I shall term electoral manipulation yielding small margins of victory *marginal*, and that which yields large margins *excessive*.[15]

[13] A seminal study of political behavior along these lines in Mexico is Domínguez and McCann 1996 (see also Almond and Verba 1963).

[14] These two informational roles of electoral manipulation can coexist and reinforce each other. In Chapter 4 I develop these ideas further with the aid of simple formal models.

[15] I discuss the operationalization of these concepts in Chapter 3.

Bearing in mind that goals and outcomes are conceptually distinct, for simplicity I shall nevertheless sometimes refer to electoral manipulation aimed at winning as marginal, and to that aimed at more than winning as excessive and/or blatant, hoping that it will be clear from the context whether goals or outcomes are meant.[16] Additionally, it is worth emphasizing that the marginal versus excessive dimension of electoral manipulation does not fully overlap with the question of scale or extent: while excessive electoral manipulation is generally associated with large-scale manipulation, the marginal kind can result either from a low amount of manipulation (e.g., in a tight race) or from a large amount (e.g., when the manipulating party initially lags its rival by a substantial amount, or when two parties' manipulation efforts partially neutralize each other).

The theory advanced in this book covers, in one same framework, a variety of empirical patterns or species of electoral manipulation, including the marginal kind, described by the prevailing wisdom, as well as others that have not been systematically theorized – most importantly the excessive and/or blatant kind. Under what conditions is electoral manipulation likely to be marginal versus excessive or blatant? My theory provides insight into the proximate causes of different patterns of electoral manipulation. Generally speaking, political systems where *power is initially disproportionately concentrated* in the hands of the party in government, and where constraints on the *discretion* of government action – whether domestic or external in origin – are relatively weak, constitute fertile ground for excessive and blatant electoral manipulation. As elections have spread to increasingly diverse institutional and socioeconomic settings in the past few decades, such conditions have come to characterize many electoral systems. Contemporary examples of countries where power and resources are substantially concentrated in the hands of the party in office, and where government discretion is at best moderately constrained by the rule of law, include Nigeria, Zambia, Russia, Georgia, Belarus, Armenia, Iran, and Yemen, among many others. In contrast, where these conditions do not hold – for example, where there exist multiple competing centers of political power and resources – electoral manipulation is likely to exhibit a marginal pattern: it will be associated with tight races and slim margins of victory. Examples of the marginal pattern of manipulation include many elections in the United States historically (Campbell 2005), in Costa Rica in the first half of the twentieth century (Lehoucq and Molina 2002), and in the Philippines in the 1950s (Teehankee 2002). The theory offered here, therefore, describes a relationship

[16] In practice, the goals and outcomes of manipulation should often correspond, although the possibility of miscalculation – stemming, for example, from unusually high levels of uncertainty (e.g., about how much manipulation effort is needed to attain a given goal) – implies that this will not always be the case. By and large, however, uncertainty high enough to drive a substantial wedge between goals and outcomes would appear to be rare (for further discussion of this issue and its empirical evidence, see Section 5.4 in Chapter 5).

of sequential causation, where the distribution of power and resources shapes *contemporaneous* incentives to, and possibilities for, electoral manipulation; in turn, electoral manipulation influences the *subsequent* distribution of power and resources.[17] For example, at independence in 1980, Zimbabwe's government inherited a powerful state from its former colonizers, which rendered excessive and blatant manipulation both feasible and attractive for the ruling party ZANU. In turn, excessive manipulation in early elections (e.g., in 1985) further consolidated and increased ZANU's power, bolstering its capacity and its motivation to manipulate excessively and blatantly in subsequent elections (e.g., in 1990).[18]

In sum, I provide an information-based theory of the incentives underlying electoral manipulation. My argument proposes that elections are, at root, not only occasions for deciding who is to hold office, but also processes through which parties might shape public information with the potential to influence the subsequent behavior of social and political actors. In this context, electoral manipulation emerges as an instrument of political control.

Empirical Findings

In addition to the theoretical contribution sketched in the previous paragraphs, this book accomplishes two empirical goals. First, it provides a *systematic, global picture of electoral manipulation*. To aid in constructing this picture, I have collected an original dataset of electoral manipulation and related variables covering more than 800 multiparty, country-level elections around the world from 1990 through 2007.[19] The data yield some remarkable findings. For example, of all executive elections that were substantially manipulated in roughly the past two decades, more than two in five were won by the manipulating party by a margin of victory exceeding 40 percent of the vote, suggesting that excessive electoral manipulation is quite common.[20]

Second, the book *assesses some of my theory's main empirical implications* in light of quantitative and qualitative evidence from a variety of sources. The major pieces of qualitative evidence are two in-depth case studies (or "cases"), of post-Soviet Russia (1991–2008) and of Zimbabwe (1980–2008), presented in Chapter 6. The cases accomplish a number of tasks: first, they

[17] In the language of dynamic programming, the distribution of power and resources is a state variable, and the extent and blatancy of electoral manipulation are control (i.e., choice) variables. The distribution of power in period t shapes choices about electoral manipulation in the same period t, and such choices, in turn, influence the distribution of power in period $t + 1$.

[18] This account of events in Zimbabwe is simplified for illustrative purposes; the case is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

[19] Countries with fewer than 1 million inhabitants are excluded.

[20] The margin of victory is the difference in the percentage of the vote obtained by the winner and the first runner-up according to official results. Further details provided in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

establish that electoral manipulation was used far in excess of what winning or retaining office would have warranted, and that it was perpetrated in a very public manner. Second, the cases show that excessive and blatant electoral manipulation was pursued for its indirect effects – that is, to influence the behavior of opposition politicians, party leaders, their financial backers, regional notables and bosses, voters, and organizations in ways that enhanced the perpetrator's political strength, discretion, and bargaining power. In the case of Zimbabwe, the rationale for excessive and blatant manipulation was explicitly articulated by the president. Third, the cases show how largely exogenous variation in background conditions – specifically, in the power and discretion of the ruling party – gave rise to variation in the patterns of manipulation as predicted by my theory, and that this relationship (between background conditions and patterns of manipulation) played out in similar ways in countries as different as Russia and Zimbabwe. Fourth, the cases indicate how different patterns of manipulation in turn contributed to eliciting different kinds of behavior from social and political actors – a link about which my theory, elaborated in Chapters 4 and 5, makes specific predictions. Fifth, the cases permit the assessment of some alternative explanations for excessive manipulation, supplementing the discussion of alternative explanations at the end of Chapter 5. In addition to these in-depth cases, I provide two briefer discussions of the indirect effects of electoral manipulation. The first mini-case focuses on the effect of electoral manipulation on the bargaining power of the government with respect to labor unions in Mexico, and the second mini-case on the relationship between electoral manipulation and the behavior of bureaucrats in Belarus. These are presented early in Chapter 4.

The quantitative evidence, contained in Chapter 7, continues the exploration of the indirect effects of electoral manipulation. The first two pieces of quantitative analysis focus on a specific actor: the citizen as voter. A major reason for this is data availability. I was able to locate "large N" datasets with information of relevance to my hypotheses for citizens (i.e., information about voting behavior and perceptions of electoral manipulation), but not for other categories of actors such as party elites, bureaucrats, organizations, and donors (these and other categories of actors are covered in the case studies). The first two analyses in Chapter 7 explore the indirect effects of electoral manipulation on voter behavior. The first analysis utilizes survey data for sixty-two elections in fifty-six countries to study the relationship between perceptions about electoral manipulation and the propensity of an individual citizen to cast a vote. The analysis supports an empirical implication of the theory that illustrates the central role of information: citizens – especially opposition supporters – who perceive elections to be manipulated are less likely to turn out to vote.

The second piece of quantitative analysis uses a different source of evidence to study the indirect effects of electoral manipulation on voting behavior. It makes use of the fact that Mexico undertook deep electoral reforms at the national level in the 1990s to construct a quasi-experimental estimate of the

indirect effects of excessive electoral manipulation on voter participation. The analysis compares over-time changes in electoral manipulation and voter participation across the different states of Mexico. The main finding is that excessive and blatant electoral manipulation in Mexico before the 1990s substantially depressed voter participation rates, consistent with the survey findings and with the proposition that such manipulation was pursued by the PRI for its indirect effects.[21]

The final piece of analysis focuses on one of the most general empirical implications of the theory: ultimately, if excessive electoral manipulation yields tangible benefits – as I have argued – it should be associated with a longer duration in office.[22] I test this "reduced-form" idea through a duration analysis based on my original dataset. The analysis shows that excessive electoral manipulation is strongly associated with duration in office, measured either as party duration or leader duration, after controlling for a number of potential confounders.

Overall, the evidence provides strong support for the theory's central ideas. Taken together, the case studies and the quantitative analyses cover a substantial range of the observable implications of the theory. In addition, and throughout this book, I provide evidence, based on my data, about other observable implications of the theory as the discussion calls for it. Nevertheless, the theory is rich enough that future research should be able to identify and to test additional observable implications.

Sometimes, however, a single piece of evidence can be as suggestive as extensive testing of observable implications. One such piece comes from Ukraine, from a set of clandestine recordings in the 1990s of the conversations of then-president Leonid Kuchma. These recordings, known as the Melnychenko tapes, became available in 2000. The tapes contain hundreds of hours of conversations between Kuchma and other prominent figures. They were obtained via a recording device secretly installed in the president's office.[23] The tapes became most famous for linking the president to the murder of a journalist, but they cover a wide range of topics, including the 1999 presidential election.[24] In the

[21] The analysis in that chapter draws a distinction between voter participation elicited by electoral manipulation – e.g., through vote buying or intimidation – and participation choices not directly induced by such tactics.

[22] The empirical implication tested in this analysis, therefore, concerns the *electoral* subcategory of indirect effects – i.e., those with the potential to influence the manipulating party's future chances of retaining office.

[23] The authorities disputed the authenticity of the tapes, claiming that they were a cut-and-paste job of the president's voice. Forensic experts have concluded that it is not possible, on the basis of the available evidence, to prove or disprove the authorities' claim (because only a digital rendering of the original analogue recording is available). There are, however, at least two reasons that make the authorities' claim highly unlikely. First, the tapes contain hundreds of hours of conversations, so any falsification job would have been a monumental task. Second, the conversations in the tape – for example, on the topics of Chechnya and on the conduct of elections – correspond closely to the facts and events of the time (see Arel 2001).

[24] The murder is covered in detail in Koshiw 2003.

following excerpt, Kuchma provides directives to the interior minister Yuri Kravchenko regarding the conduct of that election. Specifically, Kuchma asks Kravchenko to convey the following message:

> . . . tell them: guys, if you don't f-ing give as much as necessary, then tomorrow you will be where you should be – yes . . . those f-ing central oblasts they should be clear, we are not gonna play f-ing games with them anymore . . . we must win with a formidable margin . . . when they say two or three per cent, it is not a victory . . . not a f-ing place can say that it's protesting [that is, voting against the authorities].[25]

In other words, Kuchma plainly asks his lieutenants to utilize electoral manipulation not to win, but to obtain "a formidable margin," so as to preclude any semblance of a challenge to the government's rule.[26] This conversation is remarkable in that it provides a rare and candid glimpse into a manipulator's motives. It suggests, first, that the patterns of manipulation that we observe, whether marginal, excessive, or otherwise, are the result of purposeful choice by the manipulating party or parties (as well as of their capacities and limitations, of course). Second, it provides a rare unmediated glimpse into the rationale for manipulating excessively as articulated by a head of government. Third, the zeal of the president's urging suggests the importance of the underlying goal – to project, maintain, and enhance the ruling party's power. Later in the book, I document a similar episode in which Zimbabwe's Mugabe, in a public speech, expressed his desire for an overwhelming victory to "frighten away" an already weak opposition (Chapter 6).[27]

1.2 RAMIFICATIONS OF THE ARGUMENT AND RELATION TO OTHER BODIES OF WORK

Electoral manipulation is a recurrent theme at the center of a number of literatures in political science. Having described the book's core theoretical and empirical contributions, in the rest of this chapter I situate these within the scholarly literature, and briefly explore their connections to a number of areas of inquiry and practice. In the process, I take the opportunity to further elaborate various aspects of my argument. Specifically, I pursue the following six tasks. First, I highlight the main similarities and differences between my

[25] This translation is from Wilson 2005, 81; italics added.

[26] Overall, Kuchma was unable to fully consolidate his authoritarian rule, and his capacity to enact his intentions, even in the realm of manipulation, was limited (he won the 1999 presidential election with a margin of victory of 12% in the first round, not 2 or 3% but still shy of the overwhelming margins observed in many other manipulated elections; moreover various "north-central" oblasts voted in majority for Kuchma's rival Symonenko). This was the consequence of a variety of factors, among them the existence of important alternative centers of power, wealth, and institutional autonomy that he was not able to tame (Arel 2001; Way 2005a, 2005b, 2006; see also Birch 2000; Barrington and Herron 2004).

[27] As in much social science research, of course, direct evidence on motive is exceedingly difficult to obtain beyond a handful of serendipitous instances.

arguments about electoral manipulation and those that are found in the literature on elections in authoritarian regimes. Second, I explore the relationship between regime type and patterns of manipulation, drawing out the major theoretical and empirical links between the concepts of electoral authoritarianism, competitive authoritarianism, party dominance, and single-party regimes, on the one hand, and this book's analysis and findings about the practice and patterns of electoral manipulation, on the other. Third, I briefly consider the relationship between electoral manipulation and post-electoral protests. Fourth, I discuss the choice of rulers as to whether to hold elections, and the relationship of that choice to the analysis presented here. Fifth, I discuss the question of tactics or "tools" of electoral manipulation and the choice among these. Finally, I briefly consider the connections of this book's arguments with the literatures on election forensics and electoral-system reform.

Electoral manipulation encompasses a variety of tactics with the capacity to influence elections, and different literatures and individual works of scholarship engage with different subsets of such tactics. I defer a detailed discussion of the concept of electoral manipulation to the next chapter. Nevertheless, for present purposes it is helpful to highlight some relevant distinctions. Although usage varies, "electoral fraud" often refers to the subset of tactics of electoral manipulation that are utilized in temporal proximity to the election itself, such as stuffing ballot boxes or tampering with the vote count. "Vote buying" is often deemed to be different from electoral fraud, even though it is often pursued on election day (it can also be pursued in anticipation of the election).[28] Usage of the term "patronage" also varies: in some cases, it refers to the exchange of public employment for electoral support, while in others it refers more broadly to the utilization of public resources for electoral purposes in ways that may, but need not, involve government jobs as well as vote buying and other pre-electoral exchanges of goods.[29] For purposes of this book, on a conceptual level I use the term "electoral manipulation" broadly, to refer to the gamut of normatively unacceptable tactics that can be utilized for potentially influencing elections. For empirical purposes, I use a more restrictive operationalization of electoral manipulation, which nevertheless still encompasses electoral fraud and vote buying – on or before the election (and which therefore overlaps with the notion of patronage, in its broader sense).[30]

The Logic of Electoral Manipulation in Authoritarian Systems

By casting electoral manipulation as a tool to enhance, concentrate, and monopolize power over time – effectively, to shrink the space for the contestation of

[28] Some authors, however, implicitly include vote buying within the broader category of election fraud (e.g., Cox and Kousser 1981, 656–657).

[29] For an example of the broader usage see Greene (2007). The narrower usage is often associated with discussions of machine politics (see Stokes 2007).

[30] For further details see Chapter 2.

political rule – and not just to marginally flip electoral outcomes in tight races, I am highlighting its role as a tool of authoritarianism. This subsection considers how my arguments about electoral manipulation connect to the burgeoning literature on authoritarianism, and in particular on authoritarian regimes that hold elections.

I begin by noting that in terms of scope, this book's central ideas are simultaneously more focused and more general than the literature on authoritarian elections. They are more focused in that they center squarely on electoral manipulation, and therefore do not attempt to fully explain authoritarian regime dynamics. This book demonstrates that electoral manipulation can be harnessed as an important and effective tool of authoritarian control, but electoral manipulation is not the only such tool. At the same time, the book is broader in scope than the literature on authoritarianism because it considers electoral manipulation as it happens in electoral systems in general, not only in authoritarian ones.

In what follows, I consider two issue areas discussed both in the literature and in this book: the logic of electoral fraud and the role of electoral supermajorities.[31] With respect to the first issue, I show that much of the literature on authoritarian elections reflects the view that the main purpose of electoral fraud is to win the election at hand. I argue that this view, while correct in a subset of the cases, is conceptually incomplete and unable to account for the fact that election fraud is often utilized extensively in situations where it cannot reasonably hope to further enhance the cheater's winning chances. Regarding the second issue, I consider the idea, advanced in a handful of important studies of dominant-party authoritarian regimes, that by obtaining electoral supermajorities, parties can deter challenges from political elites and from militaries. Although that deterrence logic resembles my notion of indirect effects, it differs on a crucial point: the literature explicitly precludes the possibility that electoral manipulation might contribute to such deterrence. Instead, the literature argues, to be effective, the supermajorities must be honestly obtained, not fabricated through electoral manipulation. I argue, in contrast, that electoral supermajorities produced via electoral manipulation can effectively deter elite challenges (as well as other kinds of challenges not addressed in that literature), even if it is publicly known that the supermajoritarian result is dishonest – that is, the product of cheating.

My arguments can be understood as contributing to the growing body of scholarship that shows that seemingly democratic institutions and practices, when adopted in authoritarian regimes (also called "dictatorial" or "dominant-party" by different authors), often play roles that differ markedly from their traditional democratic purposes. As Jennifer Gandhi writes: "nominally democratic institutions under dictatorship do matter but in ways that differ from

[31] Electoral fraud is a subset of the broader concept of electoral manipulation, as discussed earlier in this section (on this matter see also Chapter 2).

their counterparts in democracies" (2008, xxiv).[32] Such a reexamination and updating of assumptions about the role of nominally democratic institutions and practices has produced important insights on questions such as why elections are held and what function legislatures and political parties fulfill.[33] The present book entails a similar reexamination of the practice of electoral manipulation. I show that, under authoritarianism, electoral manipulation often (but, importantly, not always) plays a role quite different from its function in more competitive or democratic systems.

Consider, for example, the practice of election fraud (a subcategory of the broader concept of electoral manipulation). Contemporary scholarship on

[32] With the so-called third wave of democratization since the 1970s, a large literature on democratic transitions has emerged. Initial optimism about the end point of such transitions eventually gave way to the sobering realizations that regime trajectories would vary, and that elections – even regular, multiparty elections – do not make a democracy (see Sartori 1993; Carothers 1997; Joseph 1997; Bunce 2000; Linz 2000; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002; Schedler 2002; Lindberg 2006a, 2006b, among many others). This led to the reexamination of assumptions about the function of democratic forms in nondemocratic settings described in the text.

[33] Gandhi (2008) argues that legislatures and political parties are utilized by authoritarian rulers to "organize concessions" to their opponents; along similar lines, Przeworski and Gandhi (2001, 2007) suggest that dictators create legislative institutions as a way to credibly commit to giving up some control over policy to opponents. Lust-Okar (2006) suggests that the function of legislatures in authoritarian regimes is to distribute patronage to constituents. Blaydes (2008, 2010) also considers the function of elections and legislatures under authoritarianism, arguing that they play key roles in the distribution of rents and promotions among the elite, among other important functions. Boix and Svolik (2007, 2009) emphasize the role of parties and legislatures in mitigating informational asymmetries between the ruler and his allies. Specifically, they argue that such institutions render transparent the size of available rents to the ruler's allies, and thereby allay suspicions that the ruler might be stealing from them. Cox (2009) emphasizes a different kind of informational asymmetry. He argues that authoritarian rulers hold elections to learn about the military strength of their rivals and thereby avoid violent overthrow. Magaloni (2006) argues that authoritarian regimes hold elections to deter challenges from regime insiders. Geddes (2006) argues that authoritarian regimes create political parties and hold elections to deter challenges from the military. Brownlee (2007) argues that robust political parties increase regime durability. In his account, however, strong parties do not stem from acts of choice by rulers; instead, party strength depends on the success with which elite struggles are resolved at the moment that the regime is founded. Gandhi and Lust-Okar (2009) is an excellent review of this literature. Levitsky and Way (2010) focus on a slightly different question – they ask why some competitive authoritarian regimes in the post-Cold War period democratized, others remained stable, and yet others experienced turnovers without democratizing. They argue that competitive authoritarian regimes remained stable when their links to the West were relatively weak (to be precise, they speak of low "linkage," which they define in chapter 2 of their manuscript), and state and party organizations were strong. Strong parties contribute to stability in various ways, of which three are of particular relevance in the context of this discussion: they help to steal elections, they help to mobilize support for the regime, and they make it unlikely that potential defections by insiders will succeed (thereby decreasing incentives to defect). For empirical evidence on the role of co-optation in an authoritarian legislature see Malesky and Schuler (2006). For a discussion of the distinction between institutions of decision-making and institutions of implementation (and, analogously, between despotic and infrastructural power) see Slater (2003).

authoritarianism has rightly noted that electoral fraud is common in authoritarian electoral systems.[34] By and large, however, that scholarship has continued to reflect the view – consistent with that which emerges from the study of competitive or democratic political systems – that the aim of electoral fraud is to help to win the election at hand.[35] Competitive political systems are those characterized by approximate parity among two (or more) main parties in terms of resources, political power, and institutional advantages. Many such systems arose from early intra-elite divisions that eventually translated into vigorous party competition for office.[36] Examples of competitive political systems whose elections have historically exhibited electoral fraud (among other forms of electoral manipulation) include the United States, Chile in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and nineteenth-century Colombia. In cases of this sort, electoral fraud is generally aimed at winning – it seeks to tilt the balance of votes to just over the victory threshold – and it is marginal in terms of its outcome (i.e., it yields a small margin of victory). The overall scale of electoral manipulation varies from the small (e.g., contemporary United States) to the very large (e.g., the Philippines in the 1950s); but, in general, the two main contending parties are comparably equipped to campaign, to appeal to the electorate, and to manipulate elections in a variety of ways that range from buying votes to stuffing ballot boxes to intimidating opponents.[37] Under these conditions, races are often tight and efforts at election fraud are competitive, similar to arms races, with both parties seeking to tip the vote balance in their favor and neither party wanting to fall behind the other's fraud efforts. In other words, the clear purpose of election fraud in settings of this sort is victory in the election at hand. The logic of election fraud in competitive systems is intuitive and it is implicitly or explicitly echoed in many studies of elections in such systems.[38]

Scholarship on authoritarianism has generally continued to assume that the only effects of electoral fraud are its direct effects (to use my terminology). To

[34] See for instance Levitsky and Way (2002; 2010), Schedler (2002; 2006), and Diamond (2002).

[35] Some scholars of authoritarianism have noted that certain other tactics of electoral manipulation, such as "clientelism," have effects resembling what I call indirect effects; I discuss that work later in this section

[36] Bunce 2000 is an excellent critical review of the literature on democratization and the role of elites.

[37] Even tactics such as patronage (including the exchange of government jobs for electoral support) and redistricting can and have been pursued competitively where competing parties control different subnational regions and different parts of government (for example, historically in the United States; see Campbell 2005).

[38] On United States elections, see Cox and Kousser 1981; Argersinger 1985; Bensel 2004; Campbell 2005; specifically on political machines see Erie 1988; on Costa Rica see Lehoucq and Molina 2002; on Britain see Scott 1972, O'Gorman 1989; on various Latin American countries in the nineteenth century see Posada-Carbó 2000; on the Philippines see Wurfel 1963. For a review of the literature see Lehoucq 2003. For an excellent discussion of competitiveness, and of the relationship between competitive elections and a competitive regime or system, see Sartori 2005, especially chapter 7.

illustrate this point, consider the treatment of electoral fraud in recent work on dominant-party authoritarian regimes. Work on dominant-party regimes takes the view that the value of election fraud lies in its contribution to winning the election at hand. In his excellent study of dominant party success and decline, Greene expects that a dominant party will use election fraud only when "elections are predicted to be close" or, put differently, "in elections it might actually lose" (2007, 14 and 43). My argument differs from this perspective: I argue – and show empirically – that *election fraud contributes to authoritarian survival even when it does not make a difference between losing and winning* (for instance, when victory is assured). Similarly, in her important study of Mexico, Magaloni argues that "electoral fraud is . . . a relevant factor for authoritarian survival only inasmuch as it can make a difference between the hegemonic party's losing or winning" (2006, 21). Levitsky and Way, in their formidable analysis of the trajectories of "competitive authoritarian" regimes (i.e., authoritarian regimes that hold regular elections) around the world, note that elections in such regimes "are often hard fought contests" and winning them can require fraud (2009, chapter 2, 42). When discussing the contributions of political parties to regime survival, they emphasize that parties "help to *steal* votes" (ibid., emphasis original). In other words, the role that they implicitly accord to electoral fraud is very much along the lines of the prevailing wisdom: it contributes to victory in tight races. Birch's (2012) analysis of the causes of electoral malpractice (a concept that encompasses electoral fraud) asserts that "leaders popular enough to be relatively sure of getting re-elected on the basis of their track record alone will in most cases seek to do so," that is, they will only manipulate elections when they are not popular enough to win without doing so (57).[39] The insightful pieces by Geddes (2006) and Cox (2009) implicitly espouse similar perspectives. In recent work by Chacón (2009) and Magaloni (2010), electoral fraud in authoritarian elections is similarly assumed to function solely as a means to winning the election being contested.

In sum, the literature on authoritarian elections, similar to that on democratic elections, consistently views the goal of winning the election at hand as the main motivation behind electoral fraud. In practice, however, electoral fraud is quite often utilized *excessively*, that is, far beyond the point where it might reasonably contribute to the manipulator's winning chances. My data, for example, indicate that in almost 50 percent of the 132 countries covered by my data, electoral fraud was used excessively at some point in the 1990–2007

[39] Birch's argument explicitly applies to electoral authoritarian regimes. To elaborate, she argues that the central tradeoff with respect to electoral malpractice for a political leader is one between the need to cheat to win and the potential loss of legitimacy associated with cheating (e.g., p. 56). Legitimacy is implicitly defined by Birch as an umbrella concept encompassing "procedural legitimacy," reflecting the degree to which the public approves of the conduct of elections, and "performance legitimacy," which pertains to the economic track record of the leader.

period.[40] Existing arguments about election fraud cannot account for this fact, nor can they account for the related observation that fraud is often perpetrated blatantly. My work complements the scholarship on authoritarian regime practices by showing that there exist additional motives driving election fraud (and electoral manipulation more generally) and that such motives are especially likely to operate in authoritarian settings.[41]

I now turn to the issue of electoral supermajorities. Various authors writing on authoritarian elections have independently articulated the idea that electoral supermajorities can indicate high levels of popular support, which in turn deters certain kinds of challenges to the ruler – challenges from regional notables (Boix and Svolik 2007), regime insiders (Magaloni 2006), or the military (Geddes 2006).[42] This idea is similar in spirit to this book's notion of indirect effects, but critically different upon closer scrutiny. To establish this difference I first characterize the ideas in the existing literature and then show how they differ from this book's arguments. The crux of the matter is the claim, in the existing literature, that supermajorities obtained via electoral manipulation cannot deter challenges because they do not signal popular support. The issue is best captured by Geddes' phrase: "honest super majorities" (2006, 21). Geddes argues that unless supermajorities are "honest" – that is, obtained without electoral manipulation – they cannot effectively deter military challenges.[43] For the case of Mexico, Magaloni writes that "electoral victories obtained simply by stuffing the ballots were insufficient to convince powerful politicians within the ruling party of the regime's might" (2006, 9). What is needed instead is "cheering crowds at rallies, TV coverage of adoring supporters, and massive numbers of real voters," writes Geddes (2006, 21). Similarly, Cox argues that electoral manipulation cannot be used by a government to signal power; but attendance at rallies is informative about government power (2009, 12–13) – an idea that echoes Geddes' notion of the honest supermajority. In a study of the role of legislatures and elections in authoritarian regimes, Boix and Svolik (2007) argue that a spoils-sharing bargain between a dictator and his local notables is key to a regime's stability and longevity. In order for the dictator to be willing to share spoils with a specific notable, however, he must be able to

[40] On the basis of my country-level data described in Chapter 2. An election counts as excessively fraudulent if it is highly fraudulent and it is won by a margin of victory of at least 20 percent. The figure in the text excludes vote buying before the day of the election as well as any other pre-electoral tactics of manipulation covered by my data. In this calculation, I do not distinguish by regime type; for a breakdown of the incidence of excessive electoral manipulation by regime type see Table 5.2 in Chapter 5.

[41] My argument is sketched earlier in this chapter, and further elaborated in Chapters 4 and 5.

[42] A supermajority in this literature is understood as electoral support in excess of the victory threshold. I discuss the work on the slightly different concept of supermajorities in legislatures (e.g., Groseclose and Snyder 1996) in the Appendix to Chapter 4.

[43] The logic is that the military cares about levels of popular support, and that it is able to tell a genuine supermajoritarian victory from one manufactured via electoral manipulation.

verify the notable's capacity to mobilize people and resources (14, 27).[44] Enter elections: "modern autocracies have solved [the dictator's] monitoring problem via the institution of elections," because electoral results are "an imperfect but public signal of [a notable's] influence" (5). The logic is similar to that in Cox, Geddes, and Magaloni's analyses, in the sense that elections signal popular support. Consistent with this logic, Boix and Svolik argue that if elections are to be a valuable signal, they cannot be more than "partially fraudulent" (4), as wholly fraudulent results would bear no relationship to that which the notable is supposed to signal – that is, his ability to influence those over whom he rules. Honest electoral results, in contrast, would reflect peoples' true allegiances as well as the degree to which their livelihoods are linked to the notable via state jobs and other long-term patronage (10, 25). In sum, these analyses argue that electoral manipulation undermines the potential for elections to signal popular support and, therefore, to deter challengers.

This book's arguments depart from the literature just reviewed on two counts. First, I propose that *supermajorities, even when obtained via electoral manipulation, can signal power*. For one thing, power does not solely rest on popular support, as the histories of many electoral systems attest. Access to wealth and resources, control over financial, electoral, legal, and judicial institutions, and the allegiance of intelligence and security bureaucracies, among other things, are decisive pillars of power, and supermajorities manufactured via electoral manipulation can certainly signal power resting on such pillars.[45] In other words, even "dishonest" supermajorities can be informative.

Second, I have suggested, for this very reason, that supermajorities manufactured via electoral manipulation can, and do, *influence the behavior of a wide range of political actors to the benefit of the perpetrator*, including those actors considered in the literature just reviewed (regime insiders, the military, and, from the point of view of local politicians, the dictator), as well as others – including bureaucrats, voters, political parties, their financial supporters, labor unions, and other organizations. It is worth noting that the literature's perspective on electoral supermajorities, and the ideas I have proposed here, have at least one sharply divergent observable implication: according to the logic of the works just reviewed, highly popular rulers should not manipulate elections because, without manipulation, they stand to obtain honest supermajoritarian victories – a highly advantageous outcome. For such rulers, manipulating could be counterproductive: it could mask their true supermajoritarian popularity by making it difficult for onlookers to discern, on the basis of the electoral results, where the popularity ends and the manipulation begins. In contrast, this book's notion of indirect effects implies that even rulers who can count on an honest supermajoritarian victory might have much to gain from manipulating the

[44] The dictator simultaneously cares about the notable's capacity to help to defend him from rival attacks, and about the notable's capacity to challenge the dictator's rule.

[45] For a discussion of the sources of political power in Zimbabwe and in Russia, see Chapter 6.

election to expand the size of their victory. In the following chapters, I discuss various examples of rulers who substantially manipulated elections that they could have easily won cleanly, including Robert Mugabe in the 1980s and early 1990s, Vladimir Putin, and Belarus' Lukashenko. Many other examples exist. On the basis of my data, I estimate that *popular rulers were at least as likely to manipulate elections as unpopular ones* in the past two decades or so, and they were more likely to manipulate them excessively.[46] In sum, I argue, in contrast with the literature, that both "honest" and "dishonest" supermajorities can be effectively utilized to enhance power. The key point is that popularity is only one among a variety of facets of the manipulator's strength that supermajoritarian results might signal.

Finally, I briefly discuss a handful of works on dominant-party or fully authoritarian regimes containing ideas about the role of electoral manipulation that are closer to the present book's arguments than the rest of the literature. Greene (2007), in his study of how dominant parties sustain themselves in power, argues that the use of patronage by the dominant party influences party elite recruitment and defections, opposition party coordination, and political donations. In other words, Greene attributes to dominant-party patronage effects akin to what I term here indirect effects, in relation to these outcomes. There are, however, important differences with the arguments presented in this book. First, when it comes to electoral manipulation more generally, our approaches diverge. Greene's treatment of election fraud, for example, is consistent with the prevailing wisdom (i.e., the view that the purpose of election fraud is to win the election at hand), as mentioned earlier. Second, information plays a central role in my arguments, but not in Greene's.[47] Third, the arguments presented here apply to a broader range of actors than those considered in Greene (2007), as well as to regimes that are not dominant-party authoritarian.

An important exception to the literature's view about the role of supermajoritarian victories is Lisa Wedeen's analysis of the 1999 presidential election in Yemen (Wedeen 2008). Wedeen argues that the Yemeni government could easily have won the 1999 presidential election cleanly (73–74), but the government nevertheless engaged in substantial manipulation. Wedeen argues

[46] For this calculation, popularity is based on the latest opinion poll prior to an election that I could locate, considering an incumbent party popular if the poll gives it a plurality of electoral support, and unpopular otherwise. The next two chapters provide further details on the data and on the measurement of electoral manipulation; Chapter 5, Section 5.3, discusses the relationship between incumbent popularity and patterns of manipulation.

[47] Consider, for example, our respective accounts of the mechanism linking electoral manipulation (specifically patronage, in Greene's study) to opposition party coordination. Greene's mechanism emphasizes ideological (i.e., programmatic) differences among opposition parties (2007, 63 and 308–309). In contrast, in the theory advanced here, coordination success or failure depends on beliefs about how other parties and actors are likely to behave, an issue on which electoral manipulation can provide information.

that it did so to signal its power: "the 'elections' conveyed to politicians in the opposition and to disaffected ordinary citizens that the regime could actively intervene to foreclose certain democratic possibilities" (75). In contrast with Magaloni, Geddes, and Cox, Wedeen rightly notes that the regime's actions signaled (and generated) power even though it was plain to everyone that the election was a sham and did not accurately reflect the preferences of the people – in other words, even though the large margin of victory was not an "honest supermajority." In fact, Wedeen argues, the very fact that the election was a sham could have helped to convey the authoritarian message: "the excessive bogusness operated both as a signaling device and a mechanism for reproducing the quasi-autocratic political power it signaled" (74). Her account of the Yemeni election is in line with the relevant part of my argument: excessive and blatant electoral manipulation can be used by the regime to communicate its power to the public at large. Because electoral manipulation is not Wedeen's primary focus – the chapter where this analysis is found focuses on the relationship between state power and the experience of citizenship – she does not theorize about the role of electoral manipulation more generally, nor does she investigate how her perspective on electoral manipulation might generalize beyond the Yemeni case. Nevertheless, she does theorize about the power of charade-like spectacles more generally, of which elections can be an instance.[48] Also close in spirit to some of the arguments presented here is Przeworski and Gandhi's suggestion, in their seminal article on the role of democratic institutions in authoritarian regimes, that the reason that dictators hold elections is to intimidate potential opposition (2006, 21). In contrast with the theory advanced here, which focuses on incentives to manipulate, their insight focuses on the decision of dictators about whether or not to hold elections in the first place.[49]

Regime Type and Electoral Manipulation

What is the relationship between the type of regime in place and electoral manipulation? And, in particular, is excessive and blatant manipulation associated with a specific kind of regime? When thinking about regime type, it is helpful to follow the literature on the topic and move beyond the authoritarian-democratic dichotomy. A few years after the number of electoral regimes around the world exploded in the early 1990s, scholars and analysts remarked on the fact that many of these regimes fell short of democratic standards (Carothers 1997; Joseph 1997). Moreover, scholars noted that these regimes

[48] Another exception to the literature is Simpser (2003), which argued that "electoral fraud is not only about creating, obtaining or eliminating ballots, but also about transmitting messages to potential voters – messages, for example, that discourage those who favor opposition forces from voting," and that electoral manipulation could have effects that transcend those on the election in which it is perpetrated, for example by reinforcing "beliefs about the invincibility of the incumbent" (3, 24–25; see also Simpser 2005 for further elaboration).

[49] Also, Gandhi and Przeworski devote only a few sentences to this idea.

were neither fully democratic nor fully authoritarian, but they appeared to be stable, and therefore to constitute regime types of their own. Collectively, such regimes have been called hybrid or electoral authoritarian.[50] Within this general category, scholars have identified "competitive" and "hegemonic" subcategories. Levitsky and Way (2002) coined the term "competitive authoritarianism," and identified it as a subcategory of electoral authoritarian regimes, one that displays real electoral competition albeit in a substantially biased playing field. They and Schedler draw a distinction between competitive and hegemonic authoritarian regimes – in the latter, elections are regularly held but are of limited significance in the contestation of power, "little more than a theatrical setting" (Schedler 2002, 47).[51] Howard and Roessler (2006), drawing on this and other work, provide the following classification of regimes, in decreasing order according to the degree of their democratic quality: liberal democracy, electoral democracy, competitive authoritarianism, hegemonic authoritarianism, and closed authoritarianism. All but closed authoritarian regimes hold regular, multiparty elections.[52] There is also a literature on dominant-party regimes. Greene (2007) defines a dominant-party authoritarian regime (DPAR) as a competitive authoritarian regime (in the sense of Levitsky and Way 2002) in which the ruling party has held office for either four consecutive elections or twenty years. For Magaloni (2006), an electoral regime is one-party dominant if the incumbent has been in power for at least twenty years. In her study, a regime is a "hegemonic-party autocracy" – a category roughly equivalent to Greene's DPAR – if it is one-party dominant and authoritarian.[53]

Having mapped out the different regime types, I now return to the questions at the beginning of this subsection. Consider first the general relationship of regime type and electoral manipulation. Empirically, electoral manipulation is found in all regime types, whether democratic or authoritarian; but its excessive or blatant incarnation should be more frequent in authoritarian regimes than in democratic regimes (and even more frequent in the most authoritarian among electoral authoritarian regimes). The reason for this, drawing from the theory advanced in this book, is that the enabling conditions for excessive or blatant manipulation are more common in some regime types than in others – in particular the power and discretion of incumbents are generally greater in authoritarian regimes.

[50] Different authors used different terminology. See Carothers 2000; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2002; Schedler 2002, 2006; and Ottaway 2003, among others.

[51] See also Sartori 1976 for an earlier conceptualization of a hegemonic party system.

[52] It is not entirely clear whether Howard and Roessler consider single-party regimes that hold national elections to be hegemonic authoritarian or closed authoritarian (but it is clear that, in their scheme, many if not all hegemonic authoritarian regimes hold regular, multiparty elections). Hyde and Marinov (2011) provide necessary and sufficient criteria for an election to be "competitive," independent of regime type: opposition must be allowed, multiple parties must be legal, and more than one candidate must be allowed to compete.

[53] For a more precise enumeration of conditions, and for Magaloni's subtle approach to distinguishing between democracy and autocracy, see Magaloni 2006, 36–38.

This leads to the second question – about the relationship between authoritarianism and excessive or blatant manipulation. Both conceptually and empirically, the main point is that excessive or blatant manipulation straddles regime types, and regime types straddle patterns of manipulation. On a conceptual level, the conditions that render excessive/blatant manipulation likely – strong and relatively unconstrained incumbents – can be found in all types of authoritarian regimes. At the same time, nothing in the definition of these regimes requires that manipulation, when present, should necessarily be excessive: rulers in competitive authoritarian and in dominant-party authoritarian regimes, even if strong, may not be strong enough to pull off excessive manipulation. Therefore, while excessive electoral manipulation is more likely to arise where the level of authoritarianism is higher, there is no reason to expect that the type of authoritarian regime will fully predict either the incidence or the pattern of electoral manipulation.

These expectations are borne out in the data: all authoritarian regime types – competitive, hegemonic, closed, or dominant-party – exhibit elections that are manipulated marginally and elections that are manipulated excessively or blatantly. Within competitive authoritarian regimes, as classified by Levitsky and Way (2010), examples of marginally manipulated elections include the presidential elections in Ukraine in 1994 and in Zimbabwe in 2002; an example of an excessively manipulated election is the 2004 Russian contest. The 2006 election in Belarus is an instance of excessive electoral manipulation in a hegemonic authoritarian regime.[54] More generally, among competitive authoritarian regimes, only about half of all elections are excessively or blatantly manipulated. Nevertheless, the majority of authoritarian regimes – whether competitive, hegemonic, or dominant-party – have at some point experienced excessive manipulation. These findings are based on the analysis of my original data presented in Chapter 5.

In a sense, then, excessive or blatant electoral manipulation is a more widespread phenomenon than either competitive authoritarianism or party dominance: the set of countries that have exhibited one or more excessively manipulated election is appreciably larger than the set of competitive authoritarian regimes (Levitsky and Way 2010), or the set of dominant-party authoritarian regimes (Magaloni 2006; Greene 2007). Of the 132 countries for which I have information, 82 (or 62 percent) witnessed at least one excessively manipulated election in the 1990–2007 period.[55] As a point of comparison, Levitsky

[54] Regime type classifications taken from Levitsky and Way (2009, chapter 1, 31). They consider Ukraine in the 1992–2004 period, Zimbabwe since 1980, Russia in the 1992–2007 period, and Belarus in the 1992–1996 period to be competitive authoritarian. They find that by 2000, Belarus' regime had become hegemonic authoritarian (Levitsky and Way 2009, chapter 5, 31). For details on the operationalization of excessive manipulation see my Chapter 3.

[55] In this count, an election is considered excessively manipulated if it was substantially manipulated and the margin was at least 20%. Restricting to cases with margins of at least 30% yields a total of seventy-one countries. Restricting the data to the 1990–1995 period (the time period in which Levitsky and Way (2010) count the number of competitive authoritarian regimes)

and Way (2010) count thirty-four countries with competitive authoritarian regimes between 1990 and 1995. Magaloni enumerates twenty hegemonic-party autocracies (2006, 40), and Greene (2010) counts seven dominant-party authoritarian regimes.[56]

Finally, a few additional notes are in order regarding the conceptual relationship between party dominance and excessive/blatant electoral manipulation. First, party dominance need not be related to electoral manipulation, whether marginal or excessive. Sartori (2005, Ch. 5), for example, distinguishes a "predominant system" from a "hegemonic" one – in both cases one party dominates politics, but only in the latter is power obtained through extra-democratic means.[57] Along similar lines, Greene (2007) contrasts dominant-party authoritarian systems with dominant-party democratic systems (e.g., Sweden under the Social Democrats).[58] Second, even when dominance relies on electoral manipulation, existing definitions of dominance do not require that such manipulation be excessive: most authors define dominance as the consistent attainment of absolute majorities, not supermajorities. Sartori, for example, defines dominance as the attainment of an absolute majority of seats across three consecutive elections (2005, 176); Greene (2007, 2010) requires holding executive office and, in parliamentary systems, an absolute majority in the legislature, across four consecutive elections or twenty years.[59] In sum, party dominance is, on the conceptual level, compatible with no electoral manipulation, with marginal manipulation, and with excessive manipulation.

Nevertheless, in light of this book's arguments, there is good reason to expect that the authoritarian variety of party dominance will often be found in association with excessive/blatant manipulation. There are two reasons for this. First, as suggested earlier, authoritarian dominance entails a kind of power imbalance that is an enabling condition for excessive/blatant manipulation. Second, excessive/blatant manipulation enhances the power of the perpetrator, and therefore can help a party to establish, or increase, dominance.[60]

Single-Party Elections and Excessive/Blatant Manipulation

I have contrasted this book's arguments with the view of electoral manipulation that emerges from the study of competitive systems – what I call the prevailing wisdom. But there is another perspective in the literature, associated with

yields fifty-three countries. I describe my original data in Chapter 2 and provide further details on this analysis in Chapter 5.

[56] For the list of countries see Table 5.3 in Chapter 5.

[57] Sartori also distinguishes between a dominant party and a dominant-party system (2005, 173).

[58] Thus, party dominance is found in different regime types: a dominant party can exist in a democracy, a competitive authoritarian regime, or a hegemonic authoritarian one.

[59] The dominance threshold for Pempel (1990) is a plurality of votes and seats, for Ware (1996) it is 40–50% of the vote. For critical takes on approaches to dominance see Bogaards 2004; Magaloni 2006; Greene 2007.

[60] I discuss the dynamic aspects of my argument in Chapter 5, Section 5.3.

single-party, or almost-single-party elections, such as those in Syria in the past few decades, Iraq before 2003, the Soviet Union, the former East Germany, or Cambodia between 1946 and 1981. These are distinct from all types of electoral authoritarian or dominant-party regimes previously discussed in that only one party is legally permitted to win elections. In practice, this can mean that only one party can run (as in Soviet local elections) or that multiple parties can run but must be part of a government-run "meta-party" or "front," as in the former East Germany or in Syria.[61] In general, such elections are viewed as shams by scholars and observers, because it is virtually impossible, by construction, for the ruling party to lose office.[62] In the Soviet Union, for example, voting meant either approving or disapproving the single Communist Party candidate on the ballot. Cases such as Suharto's Indonesia are similar, if not as clear-cut: multiple parties were on the ballot and obtained votes, but the ruling party had such formal (not to mention informal) control over the process that it was, again, for structural reasons extremely difficult for it to lose an election.[63]

It would seem, then, that the only thing these exercises have in common with the multiparty elections that constitute the focus of this book is that they are both called – perhaps somewhat misleadingly in the single-party case – elections. Although this is true on one level, on another level I would submit that the dynamics at work in single-party elections bear a family resemblance to the logic of excessive and blatant manipulation that this book puts forth: even though single-party elections are hardly arenas for the contestation of power, their outcomes can be, and have been, informative and discouraging to potential regime opponents – citizens, organizations, bureaucrats, and regime insiders, for example – much like excessive and blatant manipulation can be in a multiparty electoral system. Observing 99 percent of one's fellow citizens cowed into "approving" the single Communist Party candidate on the ballot, as was normal in the Soviet Union, in all likelihood resulted in indirect effects similar to the ones that I enumerated earlier.[64]

Electoral Manipulation and Popular Rebellion

I have argued that excessive and blatant electoral manipulation can influence the behavior of the political class and the public in ways that serve the manipulator's interests. Isn't it equally plausible, however, that electoral manipulation could backfire? The manipulator's popularity or "legitimacy" could

[61] Moreover, in Syria and in the Soviet Union, the ruling party was constitutionally enshrined as the "leader" of the state.

[62] See, for instance, Hyden and Leys (1972), Sakwa and Crouch (1978), Lewis (1990), Anderson (1996), and Taylor (1996b).

[63] On Indonesia see Anderson 1983; Slater 2008.

[64] I further discuss electoral manipulation in single-party elections in Chapter 3.

suffer (Taylor 1996; Birch 2012), or the ruling party could face popular unrest (Tucker 2007; Fearon 2011). I have discussed the question of popularity earlier in this chapter and I revisit the issues of popularity and legitimacy in Chapter 4. Here, I focus on the possibility of manipulation-related post-electoral unrest.

My argument suggests that whether or not electoral manipulation sparks a popular rebellion *depends on the information conveyed by the manipulation*. Excessive and blatant manipulation can convey the message that the manipulator is strong, while failure to manipulate excessively/blatantly can make the manipulator be publicly perceived as weak.[65] Accordingly, my argument implies that, all else equal, popular protests are less likely to arise following excessive electoral manipulation than following marginal manipulation. Even when a ruling party manipulates elections blatantly, this need not spark a popular rebellion so long as the public perceives the ruling party to be powerful enough.

The empirical record suggests that large-scale popular rebellion after excessive electoral manipulation is comparatively rare, and for the most part it is marginal electoral manipulation that has sparked such rebellion. All four Colored Revolutions, for example, followed on instances of marginal manipulation. Ukraine's ruling party's efforts at manipulation in 2004 were substantial, but they attained merely a slim margin of victory (less than 3 percent of the vote in the first runoff). In Georgia's 2003 legislative election, electoral manipulations reported by European observers as "widespread," "systematic," and "egregious" only garnered the incumbent party slightly more than 3 percent of the vote in excess of the main challenger Saakashvili's party's (OSCE/ODIHR 2003b, 1). In the 2000 election in Serbia, the incumbent barely managed to reach the vote threshold needed to avert a runoff despite considerable vote rigging. And, while vote totals for Kyrgyzstan's 2005 election were only partly announced before the election was annulled, European election observers writing before the vote perceived the 2005 contest as "more competitive than previous elections" (OSCE/ODIHR 2005, 1).[66] In all four Colored Revolutions, thus, the pattern of electoral manipulation conveyed relative weakness. By way of contrast, Putin's Russia has displayed variation both in terms of the information that electoral manipulation has conveyed, as well as in the public's reactions to such electoral manipulation. All Russian national elections since at least 2003 (including the presidential elections of 2004 and 2008 and the legislative elections of 2003, 2007, and 2011) were highly manipulated (Myagkov et al. 2009; White and Barry 2011). So long as the manipulation was

[65] For a fuller discussion of these propositions see Chapter 4.

[66] Mexico's PRI experienced the largest election-related protests after the 1988 election, a fraudulent affair where the PRI's performance was its lowest in decades. In contrast, traditionally widespread electoral manipulation had failed to elicit such protests for decades. And allegations of election fraud in Mexico's 2006 election, also an incredibly close race, gave rise to large post-election protests.

excessive, however, no popular rebellion occurred. It is only in 2011, when the ruling party obtained its worst ever result despite the very substantial electoral manipulation, that the public chose to take to the streets.[67] More generally, my data analysis suggests that marginal electoral manipulation is statistically and substantively associated with post-election protest, while excessive electoral manipulation is not.[68]

Electoral Manipulation and the Choice to Hold Elections

Unlike some of the literature on authoritarian institutions, this book does not seek to explain why authoritarian regimes choose to hold elections. The reasons why such regimes begin to hold elections are many and varied – in some instances, rulers operate under constraints or threats (domestic or external) that virtually force them to hold elections. In other cases, the holding of elections is

[67] The sources of the weakening of the incumbent party in 2011 have been argued to include an increasingly prosperous middle class, Putin's very unpopular decision to "castle" yet again – that is, to run for office once more in 2012 (Whitmore, December 8, 2011; January 25, 2012) – and the associated capital flight and elite divisions (Galeotti 2012). Gazetta.ru, for instance, wrote that "... the decline in United Russia's approval rating following the announcement of the shuffle at part one of the congress on September 24 and the drain of capital from the country, which accelerated after this, and the business of the booing at the Olympic Stadium are vivid confirmation of the citizenry's weariness with the new old regime" (cited by Whitmore, November 29, 2011).

[68] On the basis of 115 country-level elections for which I collected information on the incidence and approximate size of post-election protests. Although this statistical finding is consistent with the discussion of cases and the argument offered in the body of the text, I consider the statistical finding tentative because of the relatively small proportion of cases in my dataset for which I have data on this matter. On election-related protests see also Arriola and Johnson 2012; Hafner-Burton, Hyde, and Jablonski 2012. In a related argument, Tucker (2007) has argued that election fraud is especially likely to elicit post-election protests when it is perceived to have changed the identity of the winner (536). Our respective arguments throw similar predictions about the relationship between electoral manipulation and popular protests in many instances. Nevertheless, in contrast with Tucker's, my argument predicts an increased likelihood of post-election protests even in cases where the public believes that the manipulator was the rightful winner, so long as the outcome makes the manipulator look weak. A possible example of such a situation is the 2011–2012 set of Russian elections. Although it was widely acknowledged that Putin would have won the 2012 presidential election cleanly, the fact that both the 2011 legislative and the 2012 presidential elections were perceived to be substantially manipulated and yet failed to yield victories as large as earlier elections presumably contributed to making Putin appear somewhat weakened in the eyes of the public (the legislative election yielded the lowest proportion of the vote for Putin's team in recent history, and the presidential election yielded a margin somewhat smaller than Putin's in 2004 and Medvedev's in 2008, although Putin's 2012 margin of victory was still formidable). My argument implies that post-election protests should have been likelier after those elections than after any other Russian national election since Putin rose to power, while Tucker's argument predicts no protests after the presidential election, because there was no dispute that Putin was the rightful winner. Protests did materialize, but they were relatively modest in size.

a choice that brings with it certain advantages, even for authoritarian rulers.[69] The analysis in this book begins at the moment when elections are held and investigates the causes of their manipulation. It is conceivable that, at least in some instances, the decision to hold elections in the first place – or to abolish elections altogether – could be informed by the ruling party's perceptions about the likelihood that it might be able to subsequently manipulate them. Therefore, the present study speaks to the question of the holding of elections – in other words, of the choice to begin to hold elections – by furthering existing understandings of what it is that parties, politicians, governments, and other political actors might hope to gain or lose down the line in the decision tree that begins with choices about whether to hold elections, to participate in them, and to permit opposition parties to contest them. Still, on a practical level, the institution of elections appears to be quite often a resilient fact, not one subject to constant and short-term reevaluation.[70] This makes it possible to separate, at least in such cases, the study of why elections are held in the first place from the study of strategic choice *given* that elections are held.[71]

The Variety of Tools of Electoral Manipulation

The present analysis does not set out to explain the choice of *means* or *tools* of electoral manipulation – that is, of why a party might choose to stuff ballot boxes versus tamper with the vote count versus buy votes versus intimidate voters, to take a few examples. It also does not seek to explain how specific tools of manipulation ought to be implemented, and in particular whether vote buying or vote suppression target, or ought to target, swing versus core voters. These are interesting questions in their own right and they are the subject

[69] Carothers, for example, writes that many governments hold elections because they "crave the attention, approval, and money that they know democracy attracts from the Western international community," and therefore pursue a "balancing act" in which "they impose enough repression to keep their opponents weak . . . while adhering to enough democratic formalities that they might just pass themselves off as democrats" (1997, 90–91; on why elections are held see also Przeworski 1991, Anderson 1996, Ross 2004, and Levitsky and Way 2010, among many others).

[70] Chacón (2009), for example, argues that democratization is associated with irreversible investments (e.g., in organizational capacity) that help to lock in an electoral system once it is adopted. Another factor behind the resilience of the practice of elections is the fact that international pressures to hold them are much greater than the pressures to uphold high democratic standards (see Karl 1995, Carothers 1997, and Joseph 1997, among many others). The resilience of elections is perhaps most remarkable in the most authoritarian of electoral regimes (which have been termed "hegemonic" by various authors) in which ruling parties are extremely advantaged with respect to their opponents (Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010; Schedler 2002; Howard and Roessler 2006). The timing of elections is often the subject of strategic machinations, especially in parliamentary systems.

[71] This is not to say that there do not exist instances in which both choices ought to be analyzed simultaneously, but merely that in many, and probably most scenarios, such separation is analytically possible.

of excellent recent work.[72] In the present study, I largely abstract from these issues: for purposes of the analysis in this book, different tools or techniques of electoral manipulation function largely as substitutes – as different means to the same end. The focus here is on understanding choices about the extent and the visibility of electoral manipulation, irrespective of the specific choice or mix of tools.

As a first approach to the question of the choice of tactics of manipulation, one can think of a "supply curve" of electoral manipulation, according to which those means of manipulation that yield the greatest benefits at the lowest cost will be chosen first (implying that electoral manipulation is likely to have increasing marginal costs).[73] For instance, for a party with easy access to social networks, vote buying may be a cost-effective means of obtaining votes corruptly, as in Argentina (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Levitsky 2007; Szwarcberg 2009) or in British colonial Africa (Golder and Wantchekon 2004, 9). For a party with control over the electoral bureaucracy, tampering with voter lists may be a readily accessible means of rigging an election – examples include Paraguay 1989 (NDI 1989; Molinas et al. 2006), and Mexico under the PRI, among many others. And a party with connections to specialists in violence may have ample possibilities to engage in voter intimidation, as in Nigerian elections (Adejumobi 2000, 70); or in Ghana, where Rawlings used preexisting militia-like organizations for electoral purposes after he began holding elections, as did Zimbabwe's Mugabe.

To the extent that my theory makes distinctions between different tactics of electoral manipulation, it is mostly along the dimension of *visibility* or blatancy. Choices about visibility may have implications for the choice of tactics of manipulation. To be sure, some tools of electoral manipulation tend, by their nature, to be more visible than others – for example, vote buying and vote intimidation tend to be more visible than tampering with voter registration lists or falsifying vote tallies. The choice about visibility, however, does not fully pin down the choice of tools of electoral manipulation. It is possible to intimidate voters or stuff ballot boxes, for example, with different degrees of blatancy.[74]

[72] See for example Scott 1969; Cox and Kousser 1981; Dixit and Londregan 1996; Dahlberg and Johansson 2002; Calvo and Murillo 2004; Stokes 2005; Díaz-Cayeros et al. 2007; Nichter 2008; Rosas and Hawkins 2008; Dekel et al. 2008; Gans-Morse et al. 2009; Szwarcberg 2009; Weitz-Shapiro 2012. Some of these pieces focus exclusively on vote buying, others study redistributive spending more broadly understood. Schaffer (2007) is a book-length treatment of vote buying.

[73] As Schedler put it, electoral transgressions should work "like the tubes of a pipe organ. If some go down, others must go up" (2002, 46). According to my data for the 1990–2007 period, among elections with manipulation, 81% exhibit more than one form of electoral manipulation (the average number of forms of electoral manipulation, given that some manipulation is present, is 3.9). The empirical relationship between the amount and the cost of electoral manipulation remains a question in need of additional research.

[74] I discuss the issue of blatancy further in Chapters 3 and 4. The extent of electoral manipulation may have implications for its visibility.

Ultimately, the question of why some tactics of electoral manipulation are chosen over others in particular circumstances remains an open one.

A growing body of work has recently focused on vote buying. Although vote buying is certainly an important category of electoral manipulation, it is rarely the only one utilized, as I document at various points in this book (through the case studies and through the quantitative analysis in Chapter 2). Moreover, it is almost always utilized in combination with other forms of manipulation. On the basis of my data, I estimate that among elections in which vote buying is used, in 91 percent of the cases it is used in combination with other forms of electoral manipulation. This discovery points to a potential gap in the literature on the targeting of vote buying: if choices about vote buying are inscribed within larger strategic choices about electoral manipulation, then it may be difficult to understand vote buying in isolation from the strategically simultaneous choices about utilizing other forms of electoral manipulation.[75]

Additional Related Literatures

There exist additional important literatures that center on other aspects of electoral manipulation. The literature on *election forensics* utilizes statistical techniques to identify anomalies in electoral figures that might indicate electoral manipulation. Forensic techniques are acquiring increasing prominence, both in scholarship and in broader publics.[76] While forensic techniques focus on detection and this book focuses on strategic choice, it is not possible to separate the two. As the forensics literature points out, election forensics indicators must be informed by a theory about the process that generated the electoral data. I discuss some implications of my arguments for forensics indicators based on turnout patterns in the context of my analysis of Mexican elections in Chapters 7 and 8. I also utilize findings of the forensics literature at various points in the book, especially in my discussion of Russian elections in Chapter 6. A related body of work studies institutional and legal reforms aimed at decreasing possibilities for electoral manipulation.[77] A central question in that literature is whether such reforms have salutary or harmful effects on levels of

[75] Could this speak to the debates in the vote-buying literature, e.g., about whether core or swing voters are targeted by vote buying strategies? This remains an open question awaiting additional research. Suppose, for example, that in a particular setting it is easier to buy votes (or turnout) in areas with lots of core supporters, and cheaper to tamper with vote counts in areas with lots of swing voters; then we might observe that vote buying or turnout buying targets areas with core voters for this reason alone.

[76] See Hausmann and Rigobon (2004) and Taylor (2005) on the 2004 referendum in Venezuela; Mebane (2007) on the 2006 presidential election in Mexico; Beber and Scacco (2009) and Ansari (2009) on the 2009 election in Iran. See also Wand et al. 2001; Mebane, Sekhon and Wand 2003; Myagkov and Ordeshook 2005; Mebane 2006, 2008; Mebane and Kalinin 2009; Myagkov et al. 2009; Cantú and Saiegh 2011. For an experimental approach see Hyde (2007).

[77] See Alvarez et al. 2008; Ansolabehere and Persily 2008; Ansolabehere 2009; Erikson and Minnite 2009; *Purcell v. Gonzalez*, 549 US 2006, Per Curiam; Schaffer 2002, 2008.

political participation, and specifically on voter turnout. I touch on this issue in Chapters 7 and 8.[78]

1.3 ORGANIZATION AND CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The book is structured in three sections. The first section, consisting of the first three chapters, motivates the study and presents some basic empirical facts. Chapter 2 discusses issues of definition and measurement, introduces the cross-national dataset, and uses the dataset to provide a descriptive "snapshot" of manipulation's institutional, socioeconomic, and geographical correlates. One of the findings of the descriptive analysis is that, although electoral manipulation in any given election generally involves a mix of different tactics of manipulation (e.g., vote buying, stuffing ballot boxes, and intimidating voters), some tactics have been more prominently used in some regions than in others in recent decades. On average, there has been more election-day fraud, for example, in the former Soviet region than elsewhere, vote buying has been most common in Asia, and obstacles to candidate entry have been greatest in the Middle East and North Africa.[79] In addition, the descriptive analysis explores the correlation between overall levels of electoral manipulation, on the one hand, and various governance, economic, institutional, demographic, and regional indicators.

[78] Bearing a certain resemblance to this book's concept of indirect effects, is the idea, developed in the study of American politics, that incumbent "war chests" – sums of money that candidates can use for electoral campaigning – can deter high-quality challengers and political donors (e.g. Hersch and McDougall 1994; Goodliffe 2001). Some versions of that argument consider signaling mechanisms that are formally similar to those I propose in this book (and to signaling arguments in general), but the literature on incumbent war chests is silent about electoral manipulation (see Box-Steffensmeier 1996; Milyo and Groseclose 1999; Goodliffe 2001; Ansolabehere and Snyder 2002; Goodliffe 2005; Gordon and Landa 2009, among others). An additional difference is that, in that literature, margins of victory are generally seen as a consequence, not a cause, of incumbency advantage. In my account, in contrast, incumbency advantage can be obtained by inflating margins of victory through electoral manipulation. More generally, while this book focuses on electoral manipulation, the logic of the argument advanced here could have further reach. Electoral manipulation is not the only possible means to elicit information-based effects of the kind I have described. Tactics other than electoral manipulation, such as electoral mobilization, campaign fundraising, and media efforts, for example, can potentially convey information and therefore be used for more than winning. The excessive use of such tactics (that is, their use substantially beyond the point at which they can reasonably contribute to victory in the election at hand), or the attainment of needlessly-large electoral victories through these (or through a combination of electoral manipulation and non-manipulative tactics), can function much like excessive and blatant manipulation do in this book's account: by conveying or distorting information about the strength of the different parties, they could potentially influence the behavior of a wide range of actors in ways akin to the indirect effects of electoral manipulation. For the general notion of electoral overinvestment, of which excessive and blatant electoral manipulation is an instance, see Simpser (2011).

[79] These newly-identified patterns call for an explanation (a task that lies beyond the scope and goals of this book).

Chapter 3 further discusses what I have termed the prevailing or conventional wisdom about the incentives that motivate electoral manipulation. It then utilizes the dataset mentioned earlier to document patterns of electoral manipulation that do not conform to the prevailing wisdom. In particular, the chapter documents the prevalence of excessive and of blatant electoral manipulation in country-level elections around the world in the 1990–2007 period.

The second section of the book develops my theory of electoral manipulation. The main goal of Chapter 4 is to explain the role of information in causally linking electoral manipulation, on the one hand, with the behavior of social and political actors, on the other. In other words, the focus of the chapter is primarily on the consequences of electoral manipulation. The chapter develops the concept of the indirect effects of electoral manipulation and provides extended examples of such effects, as mentioned earlier. It then elaborates, with the aid of simple formal models, the two information-based mechanisms underpinning the indirect effects of electoral manipulation discussed earlier: costly signaling and coordination.

The first half of Chapter 5 focuses on the prior step in the causal chain: it discusses the logic of strategic choices about electoral manipulation. A key theoretical result is that the prospect of indirect effects can provide incentives to manipulate excessively and blatantly. Additionally, the chapter considers the relationship between the vigor of electoral competition and patterns of electoral manipulation. Chapter 5 also discusses how variation in the background conditions – specifically those relating to the distribution of power and resources, and the discretion of the government to use its power in arbitrary ways – maps onto variation in equilibrium incentives and possibilities to manipulate and, therefore, onto observed patterns of manipulation (Section 5.3). The last section of Chapter 5 (Section 5.4) considers alternative explanations for excessive electoral manipulation, including the ideas that uncertainty, a low cost of manipulation, a high stakes of office, or the need to keep the manipulation machinery "well oiled," might motivate excessive manipulation. The respective opening sections of Chapters 4 and 5 verbally convey each of the chapter's main ideas and results.

The final section of the book, consisting of Chapters 6 and 7, explores a range of empirical implications of the theory in light of qualitative and quantitative data, as described in detail earlier in this chapter. As mentioned previously, Chapter 6 contains the qualitative evidence, while Chapter 7 presents quantitative analyses based on various kinds of information. The concluding chapter, Chapter 8, briefly discusses some further implications of the book's ideas.