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Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After The Cold War (Problems Of International Politics)



Synopsis

Competitive authoritarian regimes - in which autocrats submit to meaningful multiparty elections but engage in serious democratic abuse - proliferated in the post-Cold War era. Based on a detailed study of 35 cases in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and post-communist Eurasia, this book explores the fate of competitive authoritarian regimes between 1990 and 2008. It finds that where social, economic, and technocratic ties to the West were extensive, as in Eastern Europe and the Americas, the external cost of abuse led incumbents to cede power rather than crack down, which led to democratization. Where ties to the West were limited, external democratizing pressure was weaker and countries rarely democratized. In these cases, regime outcomes hinged on the character of state and ruling party organizations. Where incumbents possessed developed and cohesive coercive party structures, they could thwart opposition challenges, and competitive authoritarian regimes survived; where incumbents lacked such organizational tools, regimes were unstable but rarely democratized.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This landmark contribution to the comparative study of political regimes will be widely read and cited. In an epic act of theoretical synthesis, Levitsky and Way weave careful empirical research on three-dozen countries across five world regions into a convincing account of patterns of regime change. In distinguishing democratic transitions from a range of authoritarian outcomes, they reach

nuanced conclusions about the relative explanatory influence of international factors (linkage and leverage) and domestic power politics (rulers versus oppositions). Above all, they help us understand how autocrats learn to live with elections. Strongly recommended." Michael Bratton, University Distinguished Professor of Political Science and African Studies, Michigan State University

"This is a brilliant and truly pathbreaking book that should be closely studied by any serious student of democracy or comparative politics. Its precise conceptualization, striking theory, rigorous comparative methodology, and breathtaking range of case study evidence distinguish it as the most important study of political regimes and regime transitions in a generation." Larry Diamond, Stanford University

"Competitive Authoritarianism establishes Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way as the Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan of their generation. In the tradition of Linz and Stepan, Levitsky and Way offer an abundance of theoretical and conceptual innovation as well as a trove of empirical material drawn from broad swaths of the globe. The book is as elegantly written as it is theoretically creative. It is written by and for professional social scientists; yet undergraduates and the attentive public will be able to digest the book's central argument and findings with ease. This is what social science should look like." M. Steven Fish, University of California, Berkeley

"This is the most anticipated book in comparative politics in more than a decade. Written in a single authorial voice, Levitsky and Way's arguments about the distinct trajectories of competitive authoritarian regimes are theoretically grounded, conceptually nuanced, geographically wide ranging, and empirically well supported. I expect this book to have a major impact on the field for many years to come." Marc Morjé Howard, Georgetown University

"Levitsky and Way's book makes two major contributions to research on political regime change. First, by developing the notion of competitive authoritarianism, it engages in a sustained effort to provide a clear and theoretically fertile conception of a particular subset of political regimes belonging to the vague class of 'hybrid' regimes. Second, it offers the as yet most sophisticated and subtle effort to interweave domestic and international explanations of political regime change with provocative implications for run-of-the-mill theories, whether based on economic development, inequality, or institutions."

Herbert Kitschelt, Duke University

"Regimes that blend meaningful elections and illicit incumbent advantage are not merely resting points on the road to democracy; Levitsky and Way guide us along the multiple paths these regimes can take and provide powerful reasoning to explain why nations follow these distinct paths. This deeply insightful analysis of an important subset of post-Cold War regimes is conceptually innovative and precise, empirically ambitious, and theoretical agile, moving fluidly between international and domestic causes of regime dynamics. Read it to understand the dynamics of contemporary hybrid regimes; then read it again to appreciate its many

lessons for our general understanding of regime change." David Waldner, University of Virginia "The authors deserve a place among the major innovators of comparative politics just for coining and elaborating the concept of competitive authoritarianism ... The bulk of the book is devoted to careful description and analysis of the thirty-five cases. The authors' mastery of the massive literature is awe-inspiring. Thanks to this exhaustive literature review, the book can easily serve as a reference work on competitive authoritarianisms." Jan Kubik, Slavic Review "Levitsky and Way provide one of the most ambitious attempts at synthesis and large-scale case comparisons in recent years. Their volume encompasses thirty-five case studies, spanning the globe from Latin America to Africa, and then brings them all together into a parsimonious theoretical structure that emphasizes structural-institutional variables over rational choice explanations ... Levitsky and Way have been trailblazers, opening an impressive path for deeper studies of electoral authoritarianism." Yonatan L. Morse, World Politics "Competitive Authoritarianism is one of those rare books that no student of comparative politics or international relations can afford to ignore. It is written so that, with a little guidance, it can be used in both introductory and upper-level courses in comparative politics at the undergraduate level. It is worth reading for the case studies alone, which serve as thumbnail sketches of the political histories of thirty-five countries between 1990 and 2008." David Art, Comparative Politics "[Levitsky and Way] have made a rich contribution to [a] growing body of literature. Among the many merits of their book is [their] effort to bring greater clarity to the concept they investigate." Ergun Zbudun, Turkish Review

Competitive authoritarian regimes - in which autocrats submit to meaningful multiparty elections but engage in serious democratic abuse - proliferated in the post-Cold War era. Based on a qualitative study of 35 cases in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and post-communist Eurasia, this book explores the fate of competitive authoritarian regimes between 1990 and 2008.

The title of this book is a bit misleading. It isn't necessarily a general book about competitive authoritarian regimes (for that, check out *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*). This book is more of an exploration of the intersection between international events and regime development. The authors propose that the end of the Cold War had a particular effect on a broad class of authoritarian regimes and pushed many of them towards electoral authoritarianism as a strategy for preserving power. They take an intensive case study approach, but with 35 cases approach a medium-n study. It's a quite convincing argument and a useful reminder for students of comparative politics to not ignore the potentially systematic effects of

international shocks.

Professor Levitsky identifies and explains accurately one of the most important and serious problem in governance at the beginning of the XXI century: competitive authoritarianism around the globe

Terrific book!

This book provides an innovative framework to understand the evolution of one of the most confusing and frustrating regime types of the last two decades: regimes which hold competitive elections but remain undemocratic in significant ways. They have been called transitional democracies, partial democracies, illiberal democracies, but no category has satisfactorily captured their unique attributes. Levitsky and Way provide several key theoretical contributions to this area of study. They make a convincing case for a new category of competitive authoritarian regimes, which is much more clearly defined than previous categories. They then explain the origins and evolution of these regimes and the conditions which lead to both democratization and authoritarian stability. They explain the impact of both international and domestic factors in regime transitions. Their elegant theoretical argument is paired with detailed case studies of the 35 competitive authoritarian regimes which emerged in the 1990s. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in democracy or regime transitions and particularly those hoping to influence processes of democratization. It is written in a clear and engaging style which is accessible to anyone interested in the topic, and it has implications which reach far beyond academia.

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