Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule

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To survive in office, dictators need to establish power-sharing arrangements with their ruling coalitions, which are often not credible. If dictators cannot commit to not abusing their "loyal friends"—those who choose to invest in the existing autocratic institutions rather than in forming subversive coalitions—they will be in permanent danger of being overthrown, both by members of the ruling elite and by outside rivals. This article explores the role of autocratic political parties and elections (both one-party and multiparty) in mitigating the commitment problem, making power-sharing between the dictator and his ruling coalition possible.

Keywords: *autocracy; political parties; autocratic elections; power-sharing; commitment problems; authoritarian longevity*

This article develops a theory of power-sharing under autocracy[1] and its impact for regime longevity. To survive in office, dictators need to establish power-sharing arrangements with their ruling coalitions, which are often not credible. If dictators cannot commit to not abusing their "loyal friends"—those who choose to invest in the existing autocratic institutions rather than in forming subversive coalitions—they will be in permanent danger of being overthrown, both by members of the ruling elite and by outside rivals.

The extant literature does not characterize these commitment problems. It argues that dictators possess two principal instruments to survive in office: They can either seek to repress their rivals or co-opt them with power positions

or private transfers on the spot (Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, & Morrow, 2003; Gandhi & Przeworski, 2006; Wintrobe, 1998). Through the use of a simple formal game, this article explains why power-sharing under autocracy is more problematic than what these theories presuppose. In Gandhi and Przeworski (2006), the dictator offers legislative seats to groups within society that threaten to rebel. Seats are presumed to be valuable because they translate into policy influence. However, once a rival gives up his intention to rebel by entering the legislature, what prevents the dictator from reneging by simply ignoring the rival's policy demands or by taking his seat away? Anticipating this behavior on the part of the dictator, a potential rival continues to possess incentives to conspire or rebel, regardless of whether or not he holds a political position. The dictator cannot simply solve this dilemma by co-opting powerful players with private transfers on the spot, as described in Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), because if potential rivals are powerful enough they will be better off seeking to overthrow the dictator, regardless of whether or not they receive a transfer, creating problems of commitment on the other end.

To solve these dilemmas, the dictator needs to commit to not abuse his "loyal friends." This commitment is hard to establish. Dictators cannot be easily restrained by formal institutions such as legislatures, courts, or senates, which will inevitably respond to the interests of those who appoint them. One solution to this problem is that the dictator delegates control to the access-to-power positions and the state privileges to a parallel political organization, such as a political party. By giving up his absolute powers to select members of the ruling clique into government positions, the dictator can more credibly guarantee a share of power and the spoils of office over the long run to those who invest in the existing institutions rather than in subversive coalitions. The credibility of the power-sharing deal crucially depends on the party's ability to effectively control access to political positions and on the fact that the party can be expected to last into the future. A dictator will possess an interest to uphold a system of credible power-sharing with his ruling clique to make his life less vulnerable to conspiracies, military coups, and violent rebellions.

Beyond providing a logic for dictatorial political parties, the article further explores the implications of permitting one party versus multiple parties to compete in elections. After the end of the Cold War, hegemonic-party autocracies (Magaloni, 2006), or what other scholars call "electoral dictatorships" or "competitive authoritarian regimes" (Diamond, 2002; Levitsky & Way, 2002; Schedler, 2002), have displaced single-party and military dictatorships as the most common form of autocracy in the world. This article shows that

the institution of regular multiparty elections can play a powerful role in increasing the bargaining power of the ruling party vis-à-vis the dictator.

My view of dictatorial political parties, elections, and legislatures builds on but also differs from existing accounts. I build on Geddes (2003), who underscores the role of political parties in increasing dictatorial longevity. In her view, party autocracies are more resilient than military and what she calls "personalist dictatorships" because of their relative immunity to elite splitting, which results from a behavioral equilibrium in which all factions are better off if they remain united than if they split. However, in this approach, it is not clear how the dictator manages to prevent powerful rivals within the ruling party from forming and the conditions that make some single-party regimes more vulnerable to elite divisions than others. After all, single-party regimes do fall victims of palace coups or violent rebellions. In contrast to Geddes, my approach derives ceteris paribus conditions that make party dictatorships more or less vulnerable to elite divisions and distinguishes between these in terms of whether or not they allow multiple parties.

My approach differs in another fundamental way: I provide a unified theory that can account for different rates of survival of the various types of autocratic regimes. In Geddes's (2003) view, dictatorial regimes are characterized by three radically different political games based on the assumption that "the goals of leaders in different kinds of authoritarian regimes typically differ from each other" (p. 53). Geddes argues that military dictatorships are shorter lived than single-party, because some generals perceive their political role as temporary and others want to usurp power forever, but beyond that difference, they want to protect the unity of the armed forces. In my account, all dictators are presumed to be motivated by the same goal—survive in office while maximizing rents. Party autocracies are more stable than military ones because of their superior ability to establish credible power-sharing deals.

The article unfolds as follows: The first section presents my theory of the dictator's dilemma regarding how to establish credible power-sharing deals with his ruling coalition. The second section discusses the role of political parties in solving this dilemma. The third section elaborates on the implications for power-sharing of having one-party versus multiple-party elections. The fourth section is an empirical mapping of the autocracies in the world between 1950 and 2000. The fifth section presents a survival analysis of these autocracies, which confirms the higher stability of party autocracies relative to military ones on the one hand and the higher longevity of single-party autocracies relative to hegemonic-party autocracies on the other hand. The sixth section studies patterns of regime transformation,

including the frequency with which different types of autocracies collapse and how many of these terminations resulted in the emergence of another type of dictatorship or of democracy.

The Dictator's Dilemma

Institutions are essential for understanding authoritarian politics, because they shape bargaining between the dictator and his ruling coalition. Institutions are also the instruments through which dictators spy, co-opt, or repress opponents. In this article, I have chosen to focus on a specific set of institutions—namely, political parties and elections. These institutions play a central role in authoritarian politics, I argue, making power-sharing deals possible.

Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) propose a novel theory of why dictators create the political institution of a legislature. They argue that dictators create legislatures to entice the cooperation of potential opponents or "groups within society"—they offer to them seats in the legislature and limited policy influence in exchange for their acquiescence to the existing dictatorial institutions. In their theory, legislatures only emerge as a best response strategy when the opposition is strong and ideologically polarized. When the opposition is weak, dictators are expected to govern without legislatures:

> Policy compromises require an institutional forum access to which can be controlled, where demands can be revealed without appearing as acts of resistance, where compromises can be hammered out without undue public scrutiny, and where the resulting agreements can be dressed in a legalistic form [. . .] and legislatures are ideally suited for these purposes. (p. 14)

Although this approach to autocratic institutions as reflecting a bargain between the dictator and potential opponents is compelling, the theory remains underdeveloped, because it fails to take into account problems of commitment. Suppose that the dictator offers a legislative seat to a rival in exchange for his refraining to rebel against him. After the rival accedes to the deal, what prevents the dictator from simply ignoring his policy demands or eliminating him? This contract is not credible, because dictatorial legislative seats confer very little individual power to their holders. If legislators belong to the ruling party, they are normally compelled to vote according to the central leadership's line or otherwise risk being expelled from the party. And when legislators belong to minority opposition parties, dictators can simply ignore their policy demands unless, they control enough

seats to veto constitutional change or legislation, which is seldom the case under dictatorship, or unless they can credibly threaten to organize a riot, a demonstration, or a rebellion, in which case their power to influence the dictator comes from threats to use noninstitutional forms of contestations rather than their control of legislative seats. Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) recognize at some point that dictatorial legislatures are weak. However, the heart of their theory requires that legislative seats confer effective policy-making power—if not, why would a strong opposition accept the deal? The theory below discusses how power-sharing under dictatorship entails a strong commitment problem and why policy-making power cannot be credibly granted through legislative seats per se.

Power-Sharing and Problems of Commitment

My approach conceives autocratic parties, elections, and legislatures as power-sharing devices with the dictator's ruling coalition rather than groups within society. In Gandhi and Przeworski (2006), these institutions play no fundamental role in solving potentially more dangerous power-sharing problems between the dictator and his ruling clique. They propose the following:

> Consultative councils, juntas, and political bureaus are the first institutional trench for dictators. These smaller institutions neutralize threats from within the ruling elite while legislatures and parties constitute the second institutional trench and are designed to counteract threats by groups within society. (p. 17)

Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) and Haber (2006) also highlight power-sharing with the dictator's ruling clique. According to Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), dictators need to rule by co-opting with private transfers a "minimal winning coalition" that is drawn from a larger pool called the "selectorate." The smaller the winning coalition, the more the dictator will be able to keep its members loyal through credible threats of exclusion as well as positive inducements. However, my approach elucidates why the strategy of co-optation with private transfers on the spot is not a stable power-sharing contract: Both the dictator and potential opponents within his ruling coalition will possess incentives to defect.

Haber (2006), for his part, claims that there are three distinct political equilibria, depending on the power struggles between the dictator and what he calls the "launching organization." In the first scenario, the dictator eliminates the power of the launching organization through terror, torture, and purges. The second strategy is one of collusion, where the dictator ensures

a stream of rents to leaders of the launching organization. A third political equilibrium is characterized by organizational proliferation, whereby the dictator encourages the creation of competing organizations to increase the costs of collective action by the launching organization. This theory offers a persuasive characterization of various ways in which dictators can transact with their ruling coalitions. However, it is not clear what conditions determine the choice among these equilibria and how collusion can be self-enforcing.
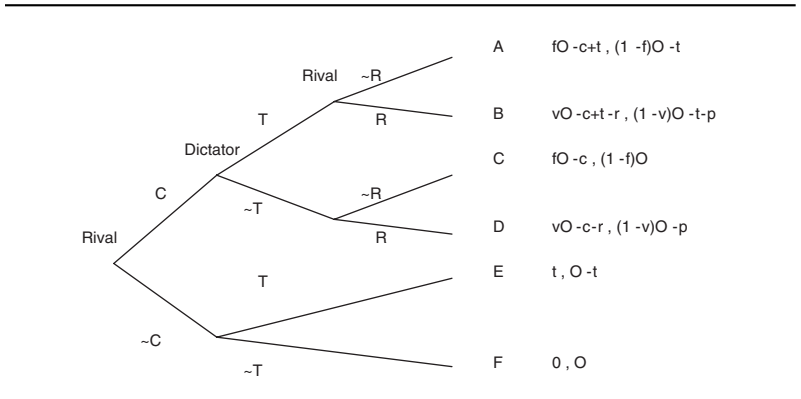
What is missing in these theories is a better understanding of the interaction between dictators and their ruling coalitions. The key insight that emerges from Tullock's (1987) theory of autocracy is that dictators are in permanent risk of being deposed through conspiracy that most of the time will come from officials of high rank. He suggests various ways in which dictators can deal with these risks, including preventing others from getting positions of firm power by shifting people around, ousting people who are rising to power, and interrupting communications among potential conspirators. However, none of these reduces the incentives officials of high rank possess to plot against the dictator. The dictator's dilemma can only be solved if the ruler generates incentives for members of the ruling coalition to vest their interests in the survival of the dictatorship, and this requires establishing some credible limits to dictatorial abuses.

To explore the dictator's commitment dilemma, consider the following simple game: A potential rival must decide whether to conspire against the dictator by investing in the creation of a subversive organization, C, or to invest in the existing autocratic institutions, ~C. The dictator must then decide to offer concessions to his potential rival, T, or not to offer concessions, ~T (sharing spoils or policy favors). The rival must finally choose to rebel or not rebel, R and ~R.

Controlling executive office is valuable for both players today and in the future. Office can provide spoils and the possibility of implementing policy at an ideal point.[2] The value of office is time discounted at a rate $\delta \in (0,1)$ so that $O = \dfrac{1}{1-\delta} O_t$ is the present value of the stream of benefits from controlling the office into the future.

The decision to conspire against the dictator presupposes investments in creating some form of subversive coalition: building an underground organization, establishing links with factions of the armed forces, recruiting and arming rebels, and so forth. These investments impose a cost of c to the potential rival but translate into an independent source of power for him, which gives a de facto (although not the jure) fraction of the office, fO. One can think, for example, of a powerful subversive coalition able to control

Figure 1
The Dictator's Dilemma

A	$fO - c + t$, $(1 - f)O - t$
B	$vO - c + t - r$, $(1 - v)O - t - p$
C	$fO - c$, $(1 - f)O$
D	$vO - c - r$, $(1 - v)O - p$
E	t , $O - t$
F	0 , O

areas of the country that manages to grab a fraction of the tax base. If the potential rival conspires against the dictator, he also increases the probability of overthrowing him violently, $v \in (0, 1)$. To simplify, when the potential rival does not conspire against the dictator, he has no probability of overthrowing him ($v = 0$). The potential rival who conspires against the dictator must pay an additional cost of r for actually rebelling.

Concessions to co-opt the potential opposition cost t to the dictator. If the rival rebels, the dictator has a probability $1 - v$ of remaining in office. The costs to the dictator of subversive coalitions, even with no rebellion, are subtracted from the value of office, $(1 - f)O$. Figure 1 presents the extensive form representation of the game.

The lower subgame illustrates why dictators have a hard time credibly committing to share power with their loyal friends—those who choose to invest in the existing institutions rather than in subversive organizations. A power-sharing contract with the dictator implies that the potential rival refrains from conspiring and the dictator offers a concession (outcome E). However, this is not an equilibrium of the game. If the potential rival remains weak by refraining to invest in forming a subversive organization, the dictator possesses unilateral incentives to not offer concessions and the rival is compelled not to rebel (outcome F).

If dictators possess no incentives to offer concessions to their loyal friends, power-sharing with their ruling coalitions are characterized by commitment problems. Dictators can get away with abusing their loyal friends when these are weak (i.e., when they do not invest in a subversive organization). The outcome E where the dictator abuses his loyal friends generates perverse

incentives. Potential rivals will need to compare the payoff of this outcome with what they would obtain from conspiring against the dictator or rebelling. These payoffs are a function of the repressive capacity of the dictator and the relative strength of the opposition such that stronger rivals posses more incentives to conspire and/or rebel than to invest in the existing institutions.

The upper subgame illustrates the dilemma dictators confront when trying to co-opt stronger rivals with transfers on the spot. Suppose that the dictator could find a price t* that will make the potential rival indifferent between rebelling and acquiescing. If the rival can actually depose the dictator, the value of t* would need to be exceedingly high. However, in the game, the dictator will not offer t*, because a strong rival will rebel, regardless of whether or not he receives the transfer as long as the cost of rebelling is smaller than the expected benefits of grabbing power by force. This means that the strategy of co-optation with transfers on the spot inevitably creates problems of commitment on the other end: Rivals who are strong enough to overthrow the dictator are better off grabbing power by force, regardless of the concession.

The structure of incentives is perverse, because loyal friends who respect autocratic institutions do not extract concessions. The institutional equilibrium is sustained solely because of the dictator's credible threat to sanction conspiracies and to repress rebellions; and in this sense, it is not self-enforcing. Furthermore, this dictatorial equilibrium is not self-reinforcing, because it generates incentives for loyal friends to become powerful enemies. Last, the dictatorial equilibrium can become self-destructive, because the dictator will not be able to co-opt powerful rivals with transfers on the spot. This structure of incentives makes life hard for the dictator, who will be in permanent danger of being overthrown.

Parties and Intertemporal Power-Sharing

One solution to the dictator's dilemma, I suggest, is to allow for the existence of a parallel political organization that can guarantee to its members that their investment in the existing autocratic institutions will pay off over the long run. Autocratic political parties can play this fundamental role by making possible intertemporal power-sharing deals. To see how parties can work at increasing the incentives for members of the ruling coalition to invest in the autocratic institutions rather than in subverting them, suppose that if the potential rival chooses to invest in the existing institutions, he has a probability *n* (for nomination to various political offices, ranging from legislatures, to courts, important cabinet positions, governorships, etc.) that

he will be rewarded by the party with privileges in the future, in the form of access to smaller offices, $o_{t+1} < O_{t+1}$. This payoff is discounted at a rate $\delta \in (0, 1)$.[3]

These smaller offices are less valuable than the national executive office controlled by the dictator for three reasons. First, the dictator decides how the spoils get to be distributed among the members of the ruling coalition. Second, they provide access to fewer spoils and privileges than the national executive office. Third, these smaller offices do not confer the ability to set the policy agenda, defined by the central leadership in accord with the dictator and his inner circle. This means that, in contrast to Przeworski and Gandhi (2006), the potential rival who chooses to join the ruling party will need to compromise his own policy agenda and vote in favor of the central leaderships'—this form of perfect party discipline was known as "democratic centralism" in the communist regimes.

The party offers some form of progressive ambition so that the next office is more valuable than the previous one. To simplify, assume that the value of the share of office increases through time according to a constant parameter π such that: $o_{t+1} = o_t(1 + \pi)$. Suppose that the potential rival who invests in the existing institutions gets nothing in this period and must then decide either to conspire against the dictator and not to rebel or to conspire and rebel. Getting nothing in this period might reflect the dismembering of the rival's subversive organization to join the ruling party for the first time or an unlucky moment in the potential rival's political career. It can be shown that a potential rival will invest in the existing autocratic institutions as long as the continuation value (the value from now onwards) of joining or remaining loyal to the ruling party is larger than the expected payoffs of plotting a conspiracy or executing a rebellion.

This suggests that dictators will be able entice potential rivals to invest in the existing institutions only if they are able to credibly promise to them a sizable share of power over the long run. If the promise is not credible, potential rivals who are moderately strong or strong are always better off investing in forming subversive coalitions and/or rebelling. The dictator's promise to share power over the long run is only credible, however, when he gives up absolute power to select members of the ruling coalition into positions of power by delegating this authority to the ruling party. In doing so, the dictator credibly ties his hands to reward those who invest in the existing autocratic institutions by sharing power with them over the long run.

This means that dictators will be able to solve the commitment problem when they sustain political parties that are expected to last into the future and that effectively perform the following functions: (a) control access to power positions, spoils, and privileges; and (b) deliver on the promise to promote

those who join the organization to these positions. The dictator will still be able to renege by, for example, purging ruling party members who become too powerful. However, if the dictator resorts to too much purging, this will undermine the credibility of the power-sharing deal, increasing incentives for members of the ruling elite to conspire and/or rebel. Thus, a dictator will possess an interest to uphold the power-sharing arrangement with his ruling clique to make his life less vulnerable.

My approach underscores a key reason why autocracies hold regular elections even when only the dictator's party can compete in these elections: to make effective the power-sharing deal obliging the ruler to promote the rank-and-file to power positions with certain regularity. Autocratic political parties are particularly effective at co-opting a large number of weaker players—the rank-and-file and mid-level party officials—who expect to be able to progressively gain more powerful political positions. The party leadership can make the distribution of these political positions and privileges conditional on some desired services (e.g., mobilizing electoral support, spying on the citizenry, preventing violent demonstrations and riots in their districts, etc.). As long as the autocratic party holds the monopoly of power positions and remains the "only game in town," there will be strong incentives for the rank-and-file to join the ruling party, perform their services, and remain loyal over the long run.

However, autocratic political parties can also play a powerful role at enticing officials of high rank into investing in the existing institutions provided that they expect to obtain high rents over the long run. This means that institutionalized leadership succession can be central for enticing officials of high rank to remain loyal to the autocratic institutions. Institutionalized leadership succession increases the continuation value of investments in the existing autocratic intuitions by all of the members of the ruling clique, including officials of very high rank who can reasonably expect to become the ruler's successor.[4] Monarchies handle leadership succession through the passing of the throne to a family heir. The impressive stability of these dictatorial regimes can to some extent be attributed to mechanisms similar to those identified above: the fact that members of the royal family can expect to benefit in the long run from sustaining the existing institutions.

Party autocracies can also handle leadership succession. The extreme case makes the point: The long-lasting Partido Revolucionario Institucional in Mexico (Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI) replaced presidents every 6 years during close to 70 years of uninterrupted rule.[5] Although not as often as in Mexico, most party dictatorships have been able to handle leadership succession. This is not only true for communist dictatorships in

China, the USSR, and most of Eastern Europe, but also for a large number of cases in Africa and Asia, where dictatorial political parties have been able to pass power, at least once but sometimes more times, to a successor following the deaths or retirements of their founding dictators. My account suggests why institutionalized leadership succession works to reinforce the power-sharing contract between the dictator and his ruling coalition.

A key question that emerges from this discussion is why not all dictators create political parties if these play such powerful roles at minimizing their risk of being overthrown by members of the ruling coalition. My account does not address the question of origins—how successful and credible political parties get established in the first place. The dictator will no doubt possess stronger incentives to offer a power-sharing deal to potential rivals who are strong and ideologically polarized, as in Gandhi and Przeworski (2006), but these rivals will also possess more incentives to conspire if they do not obtain the concessions that they want, including policy favors. The dictator might subsequently respond by purging them. One can thus imagine conditions in which successful political parties are first launched, going through a period of high purging, as with Stalin in the USSR or Mao in China.

My approach to dictatorial parties is functional; parties play critical roles, which might or might not be the reason why they emerge in the first place. In a large number of autocracies, parties emerge prior to the dictator's ascension to power. In other cases, parties are created ex post by coup leaders seeking major alliances with civilians (Geddes, 2007). In yet other cases, parties are the forum in which military warlords collude to share power rather than continue to kill each other (Magaloni, 2006). Notwithstanding the reasons why parties emerge in the first place, they play a key function for the dictator by making power-sharing deals credible, and this function explains why dictators invest in their recreation (i.e., why dictators choose to maintain them and govern with their support).

My account offers some ceteris paribus conditions regarding the stability of party dictatorships.[6] It suggests that dictators facing strong and highly polarized opponents will have a harder time consolidating stable party dictatorships. To co-opt this type of opposition, the dictator will need to offer power positions that can effectively translate into policy-making power over the long run. This promise is hardly credible. For example, the dictator would need to give up to his rivals the power to appoint members of the high court or a majority of the assembly, and these are seldom observed under dictatorship. Most of the time, structural conditions of high ideological polarization will be conducive for the emergence of military rule, which I regard as a failed attempt to consolidate autocratic power-sharing.

Consider Burundi as an example. Minority Tutsi rulers failed to consolidate their rule because they refused to share power with the Hutu population, and a series of short-lived military dictatorships came as a result. In other cases, order is hard to establish because of the underlying political polarization among social classes—military regimes in the Southern Cone are clear examples (O'Donnell, 1973). These regimes came about to repel pressures of redistribution from the popular sector and were characterized by high levels of repression against leaders of left-wing parties, unions, students, and social organizations suspected of having strong ties to these groups. Military regimes were significantly more prevalent during the Cold War, as I show below, because the prevailing geopolitical situation created sharper ideological polarization between left and right while empowering certain groups within society, including revolutionary rebels and their enemies within the armed forces. This geopolitical environment interacted with poverty and economic instability to generate propitious structural conditions for the armed forces to intervene (Londregan & Poole, 1990).[7]

Dictators facing nonideologically polarized opponents, I suggest, will have an easier time consolidating stable party dictatorships. If the potential opposition is strong (i.e., able to mount a successful conspiracy and to rebel) yet ideologically proximate, dictators will be able to co-opt it by offering a large fraction of the value of office to their rivals. This collusive arrangement might not be stable, because if potential rivals remain strong, they could be better off attempting to overthrow the dictator through a palace coup. One way out of this dilemma is for the dictator to credibly limit his powers such as to reduce the value to his potential rivals of capturing the larger office. The founder of the Mexican PRI in 1929, President Plutarco Elias Calles, managed to make the power-sharing deal with the other powerful revolutionary warlords only because he credibly ruled out presidential reelection by offering not to get re-elected himself. Presidential elections in Mexico thus took place every 6 years throughout the PRI's history, making effective the power-sharing deal. Regular succession gave potential rivals within the ruling coalition an incentive to wait for their turn instead of scheming assassinations against the sitting president and each other.

Dictators facing weaker opponents will find it easier to consolidate stable party dictatorships in cases where the ruler and a small group of cronies can control disproportionate power. This was the modal party dictatorship in Africa. When independence leaders and their mass movements overwhelmingly won the first multiparty elections against weak or fragmented opponents, they took advantage of their hegemonic power to modify the constitution to outlaw rival political organizations and to strengthen the

powers of the presidency. Leaders thus elected soon established single-party dictatorships, in which the loyalty of a small group of cronies was bought by sharing privileges, state resources, and government positions.

Why Multiparty Elections?

Schedler (2002) calculates that the most common form of autocracy today is hidden behind elections: "The dream [of these regimes] is to reap the fruits of electoral legitimacy without running the risks of democratic uncertainty" (p. 37). Diamond (2002) and Levitsky and Way (2002) also highlight the prevalence of electoral dictatorships. All of the communist regimes and most of the African autocratic regimes prior to 1990 held single-party elections. By contrast, the Mexican PRI, the Senegalese Parti Socialiste, Zimbabwe's African National Union Patriotic Front, the Mahathir's United Malays National Organization, the People's Action Party in Singapore, among many others, permit multiparty elections.

The conventional argument regarding why autocratic regimes allow multiparty elections is that these elections create a democratic façade for the regime and thus enhance its legitimacy. Reflecting on the Mexican PRI, Crespo (2004), for example, puts forth this argument:

> A hegemonic party like the PRI, insofar as it tried to avoid becoming a one-party system in order to preserve a certain democratic legitimacy, had to honor democratic rituals. It was obliged to adopt institutions and procedures typical of a democracy, even though in reality these institutions and procedures lost their original function. (p. 7)

No doubt autocratic regimes often need to adopt the façade of elections so as to deceive others, especially international donors. This argument might, to a large extent, account for why politicians in some of the poorest single-party autocracies in Africa chose to institute multiparty elections for the first time in the 1990s. Indeed, as it will be shown below, the end of the Cold War can to a large extent account for the explosion of competitive autocratic elections around the world. After the fall of communism, the language of democracy promotion became dominant among international donors, and this led numerous autocrats in the developing world to adopt elections so as to get access to international funds.

However, not all autocratic regimes have adopted elections to please international donors. Malaysia, Mexico, Senegal, Taiwan, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Gambia, and Paraguay, to name some cases, adopted multiparty

elections well before the Cold War ended and when elections were not necessary to get funds from foreign donors. These autocracies were able to sustain their rule for prolonged periods despite holding regular multiparty elections in which opposition parties could field candidates and campaign under more or less free political environments, albeit characterized by huge incumbency advantages. Ruling parties won massive margins of victory in most of these elections. But even if geopolitical changes played a powerful role in enticing single-party dictatorships in the 1990s to legalize multiparty elections, this argument cannot fully account for why these institutions remain binding.

My approach conceives multiparty elections under autocracy as a contract signed between the dictator and his party. The legalization of multiparty elections increases the bargaining power of the various ruling party factions vis-à-vis the dictator, because officials of high rank can always create or join a rival electoral organization with which to challenge the ruler through elections. This course of action is not available in single-party regimes, where potential rivals can only attempt to challenge the dictator through violent means (e.g., by seizing power through a military coup, mounting a costly rebellion, or risking repression by organizing a subversive coalition or mobilizing one's followers into the streets).

Thus, where multiparty competition is allowed, potential rivals possess two alternative courses of action: engage in violence or compete for power through elections (this second option is less costly).[8] A clear implication of this approach is that autocratic political parties will be in a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis the dictator, because they can use nonviolent instruments to damage the ruler as well as violent ones. Multiparty elections thus work to constrain the dictator not so much because legislatures confer policy influence to members of the ruling party but because they empower them with a credible exit option—a peaceful avenue to challenge the dictator. If he wants to keep his party united, the dictator will need to offer more concessions and policy favors to the ruling party factions that can threaten a damaging electoral split than if only one-party elections are permitted.

Because the potential for electoral mobilization constitutes a key bargaining chip in these dictatorships, ruling party officials at the top will possess incentives to invest in the creation of electoral organizations (e.g., unions, farmers, employees, women, etc.) that can be used as bargaining chips against the dictator. Thus, in my approach, the strategy of organizational proliferation is not driven by the dictator's desire to increase the costs of collective action by the ruling clique, as in Haber (2006), but rather because potential opponents at the top find it in their interests to create these organizations to extract concessions.

For this argument to work, it is imperative that the dictator be unable to silence its potential ruling party rivals by simply suspending the elections. However, if the dictator attempts to silence opponents by eliminating elections, members of the ruling party whose interests are collectively damaged will most likely oppose. Thus, multiparty autocratic elections are not mass rituals devoid of significance even when these might not be competitive at all. Multiparty elections play the crucial role of limiting personal dictatorship and spreading the spoils of office more broadly among the members of the ruling party.[9]

Another key implication of this theory is that in electoral dictatorships, elite unity requires mass support, whereas the absence of mass support boosts potential opponents' chances to attain power by forming a rival political organization and mobilizing citizens against the dictator. Thus, electoral dictatorships can only survive for prolonged periods if they are able to mobilize citizens in their favor (Magaloni, 2006).

A reason why dictators aspire to win supermajorities is that this allows them to project an image of invincibility and strength. The message is intended to discourage potential elite opponents from defecting to the ruling party. This image of strength is in part created by mobilizing voters in great numbers to the polls, painting the streets and walls in the party's colors, and winning elections with huge margins. Low voter turnout signals the presence of strong latent voter dissatisfaction, which can boost subversive coalitions emerging at the top (Magaloni, 2006).

Citizens are likely to despise the autocrat who is not a benevolent dictator that can promote economic growth, invest in public goods, and make everyone prosper. This is one reason why economic growth boosts electoral dictatorships—as citizen rally in support of the dictator, there are fewer incentives for elites to defect from the ruling party. However, only a few countries have succeeded in establishing growth-enhancing autocratic regimes (e.g., Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, Chile, and more recently China).

An alternative way to construct citizen support is through a punishment regime (Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, & Weingast, 2001; Magaloni, 2006). By making the distribution of benefits—subsidies, cash transfers, public goods, irrigation projects, housing, health services, and the like—contingent on citizen support, the dictator can induce their loyalty even in the absence of prosperity. Citizens will remain loyal to the dictator in part because of the benefits they receive and in part because of the fear of being expelled from the party's spoils system. The system is one of perverse accountability, using Stokes's (2005) terminology, where voters can be led to support the dictator often despite corruption and lack of economic growth. This perverse

system of incentives can work only as long as voters can be deterred from making ideological investments in democratization. The higher the median income of voters, the harder it will be for the dictator to deter voters to voice their discontent, unless he becomes a benevolent ruler and shifts strategies by producing economic growth (Magaloni, 2006). Thus, electoral autocracies can survive in countries such as Zimbabwe despite staggering economic mismanagement, and in countries such as Singapore or Taiwan, where economic performance was remarkable.

Types of Dictatorships in the World, 1950-2000

This section attempts to map the theory into categories, which can then be used for systematic comparative analysis. The creation of meaningful categories that would allow for systematic comparisons among autocratic regimes has proven difficult. Arendt's (1968) classic study highlighted the uniqueness of totalitarianism. O'Donnell's (1973) analysis of the Argentine military regimes led him to propose another type of autocracy, "bureaucratic authoritarianism," which he believed was established to promote the deepening of industrialization in middle-income societies. Building on some of these works, Linz (2000) provided a longer list of types of autocracies. The main distinction was between totalitarian (fascist and communist) and autocratic regimes, although he also added a third category of sultanistic or personalist regimes.[10] He further proposed a rather confusing form to distinguish autocratic regimes: bureaucratic-military, organic statism, mobilizational authoritarian, and racial and ethnic democracies. Linz later added to the list of posttotalitarian authoritarian regimes. The criteria for this classification are ambiguous.

Part of the problem with these categorizations, as Haber (2006) points out, is that they are not derived deductively from first principles. Geddes (2003) constitutes a useful analytic starting point derived deductively. She categorizes autocracies into single-party, military, and personalist. However, her approach generates numerous hybrid regimes, often making the distinctions between the types unclear. Furthermore, as suggested by Hadenius and Teorell (2007), every dictatorship exhibits some degree of personalism, which needs to qualify the types rather than constitute a category of its own. These authors propose to divide autocracies into military, monarchy, single-party, and multiparty. Gandhi (in press) classifies autocracies into civilian, military, and monarchies.

My approach to regime classification builds on these works. It distinguishes autocratic regimes according to two basic criteria: the dictators' "launching organization" (Haber, 2006) and the number of political parties. The launching organization is the dictator's ruling coalition, which I define as the political organization that controls access to political office and the main power positions. I distinguish three types of launching organizations: political parties, the military, and a royal family. In "party autocracies," the ruling party controls access to political office (legislative seats, senates, governorships) and to the political bureau, which together with the dictator, selects the party leadership and often the ruler's successor. My theoretical approach distinguishes between single-party regimes such as China, the USSR, or the African single-party regimes in the postindependence era, and hegemonic-party regimes such as Malaysia's United Malays National Organization, Senegal's Parti Socialiste, Mexico's PRI, or contemporary Tanzania and Gabon, to name a few.

Military dictatorships seize power through coup d'états or are imposed by military juntas. However, the key distinctive trait of military regimes is that the armed forces control access to the principal positions of power, including the junta (Gandhi, in press; Geddes, 2003). Thus, although military dictatorships might create political parties, I do not classify these as party autocracies, because the locus of power remains within the military, which means that the dictator and his critical ruling coalition share power through the institution of the armed forces rather than the party. In the overwhelming majority of the military regimes, the dictator as head of the armed forces retains immense powers to select members of the armed forces into positions of power.[11]

In monarchies, the dictator is selected among the members of a royal or dynastical family in charge of making the principal decisions, including choosing the king's successor. Some contemporary monarchies rule with multiple political parties and parliaments. However, the locus of power remains within the royal or dynastic family and, unlike competitive party dictatorships, the dictator's seat is not opened to political contestation.[12] I thus classify these electoral monarchies as monarchies rather than party autocracies.

Table 1 displays the classification of political regimes in the world between 1950 and 2000. To determine whether a country is democratic or autocratic, I use the update to 2000 of the Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi's (2000) classification of political regimes from Matt Golder (2005). The rules for classifying the autocracies are relatively simple:[13]

Table 1
## Classification of Political Regimes, 1950-2000

Regime Type		Regime Years	Dictatorships (% Total)	Regimes (% Total)
Party autocracies	Single party	1,430	32.6	20.4
	Hegemonic party	1,002	22.8	14.3
Monarchies	Absolutist monarchy	427	9.7	6.1
	Monarchy, multiple parties	63	1.4	0.9
	Monarchy, one party	0	0.0	0
Military	Military dictatorship	630	14.3	9
	Military dictatorship, one party	91	2.1	1.3
	Military dictatorship, multiple parties	120	2.7	1.7
Total Autocracies		4,393	100	61.9
Democracies		2,701		38.5
Total		7,094		100

1. An autocratic regime is a monarchy when the effective executive type is a monarch or emir.
2. An autocratic dictatorship is military when the head of the executive is an active member of the military.
3. An autocratic regime is a single party when political parties exist and exactly 100% of the legislature is composed of members of one ruling party.
4. A dictatorship has multiple parties when parties other than the ruling one have representation in the Parliament.

Between 1950 and 2000, 62% of the world's regime-years were autocratic. Single-party autocracies constitute the most common dictatorship. These account for 32% of the dictatorship-years, followed by hegemonic-party autocracies (23%), military dictatorships with no political parties (14.3%), and absolutist monarchies (9.7%). Military dictatorships with political parties and electoral monarchies are not that common.

The autocracies are primordially concentrated in Africa (24.7%), followed by South America (17.5%), then Asia (14%), Middle East and North Africa (14%), and the USSR and the former Soviet bloc (8.57%). Figure 2 shows the distribution of political regimes in the regions of the world, excluding Europe. Latin America shows the highest incidence of democracy between 1950 and 2000. Most of the autocracies in Latin America are military or hegemonic. Africa, for its party, shows the highest incidence of single-party regimes, followed by hegemonic and military. Asia shows a more even distribution where democracies are almost as prevalent as hegemonic and single-party dictatorships, with much fewer military dictatorships and monarchies. Monarchies are disproportionately concentrated in

Figure 2
**Autocracies in the World's Regions**
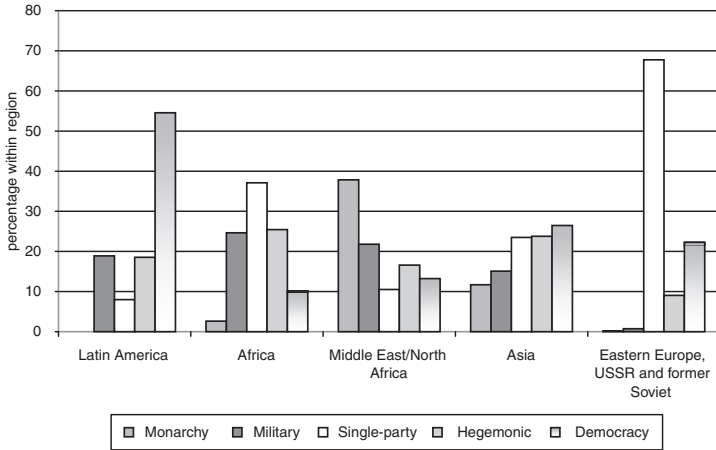
North Africa and the Middle East. The former Soviet bloc is primordially single-party. After the collapse of communism, the overwhelming majority of the autocracies in the postcommunist world are hegemonic-party.

The appearance of hegemonic-party autocracy as the most common form of dictatorship in the post–Cold War era can be appreciated in Figure 3, which displays the yearly evolution of political regimes from 1950 until 2000. In 1950, 46% of the country-year observations were democracies and 54% were autocracies, of which 35% were single-party dictatorships, 23% were hegemonic-parties autocracies, 9% were monarchies, and 7% were military dictatorships. As more countries gained independence, the percentage of autocracies dramatically increased, reaching a peak of more than 70% in the 1970s. Single-party autocracies remained the most common form of dictatorship until the 1990s. Military regimes are fairly common from the late 1960s until 1980, representing in this period around 20% of the dictatorships. Monarchies remain quite constant over the 50 years, and military regimes have a marked tendency to disappear at the end.

Perhaps the most important tendency, also noted by Hadenius and Teorell (2007), is the recent surge of hegemonic-party autocracies as the most prevalent form of dictatorship. In 2000, these dictatorships represent 62% of the autocratic observations, followed by single-party regimes (9%), monarchies (7%), and military dictatorships. The hegemonic-party autocracies in 2000

Figure 3
**Distribution of Political Regimes, 1950-2000**
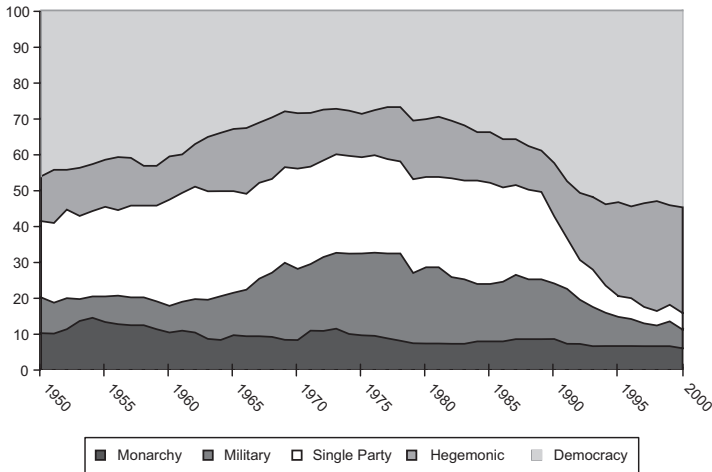
are predominantly concentrated in Africa (48%), followed by Middle East and North Africa (21%), the former Soviet Bloc (10%), and Asia (8.33%). It should be noted that during the decade of the 1990s, the world was almost evenly distributed between democracy and autocracy, democracy becoming slightly more frequent at the end.

The Survival of Authoritarian Rule

My approach yields implications about the longevity of authoritarian rule. Party autocracies should be longer lasting than military dictatorships. This empirical prediction is congenial to Geddes (2003) but contrasts to Gandhi (in press) and Gandhi and Przeworski (2006), who do not expect dictators who govern with political parties to last longer, because they presume that parties emerge as a best response only where there is a strong and polarizing opposition, which in itself is less conducive for dictatorial survival. My theoretical approach also highlights a higher vulnerability for hegemonic-party dictatorships relative to single-party ones.

In the last two sections of this article, I present preliminary empirical approximation at the survival and demise of the various dictatorships. I use

Figure 4
Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimates
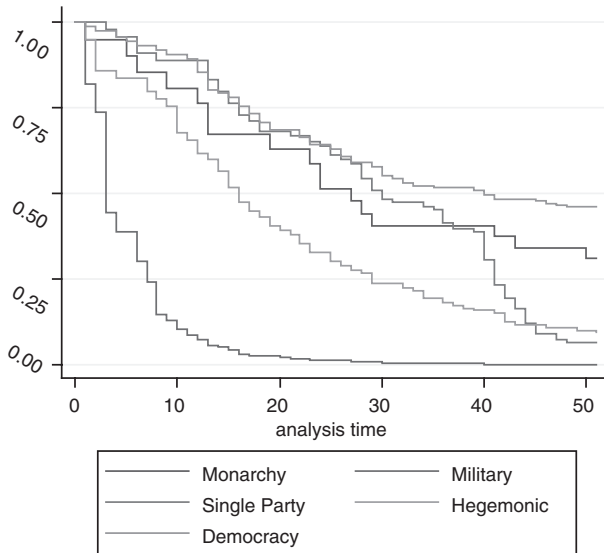
two empirical strategies: First, I make use of survival analysis to model the longevity of autocracies. Second, I estimate a transition matrix. The transition matrix allows identifying relative stability of the different dictatorial regimes, as well as their differing patterns of institutional transformation and collapse.

Figure 4 displays Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for the various types of dictatorial regimes and the democracies. The first thing to highlight is that, as expected, military regimes are significantly shorter lived than the other dictatorial regimes. The cumulative survival rate of military regimes drops to 50% in only 5 years and is less than 10% after 10 years. This means that only a handful of military dictators are as long-lasting as, for example, the Pinochet regime in Chile.

Party dictatorships (both single-party and hegemonic) are significantly more enduring than military regimes are. Single-party dictatorships are the most stable of the dictatorial regimes, followed by monarchies. Hegemonic-party autocracies are, as expected, shorter lived than single-party dictatorships. The cumulative probability that a dictatorship will survive beyond 10 years is 95% for single-party dictatorships and close to 75% for hegemonic

<div align="center">

Table 2
Transition Probabilities and the Transformation of Dictatorships

</div>

Regime $t + 1$	Monarchy	Military	Single Party	Hegemonic	Democracy	Missing	N
Monarchy	0.9709	0.0103	0.0034	0.0137	0.0017	0.0000	584
Military	0.0030	0.8957	0.0182	0.0354	0.0455	0.0020	988
Single party	0.0007	0.0219	0.9501	0.0193	0.0066	0.0013	1,504
Hegemonic	0.0036	0.0205	0.0223	0.9339	0.0188	0.0009	1,120
Democracy	0.0000	0.0142	0.0004	0.0046	0.9808	0.0000	2,609
Missing	0.0000	0.1250	0.0417	0.0833	0.0000	0.0075	24
Frequency	0.0842	0.1445	0.2161	0.1658	0.3860	0.0034	100

parties. Single-party dictatorships reach a 50% cumulative threshold at approximately 30 years, whereas hegemonic-party regimes reach this threshold at 20 years. The cumulative survival probabilities of single-party regimes, however, fall dramatically after 40 years. Most of these regimes transformed into hegemonic-party autocracies in the 1990s.[14]

Patterns of Regime Transformation and Demise

The transition between regimes can be conceived as a Markov chain process, in which countries can move, at any given year, among various institutional forms. Table 2 shows the Markov chain probabilities of the matrix that characterizes the transitions among regimes in the country years during the 1950-2000 period. A Markov chain is a stochastic process in which events can fall under a finite number N of possible states. The current state provides all the necessary information to predict the future state (the Markov property). Such process is said to be memoryless, because movements from state i to state j between time t and $t + 1$ are given by a fixed probability pij that does not depend on events occurring before time t. The Markov chain transition matrix describes the fixed probabilities of movement between the N states. The transition matrix is a simplification of the actual patterns of regime transformation, because it presupposes that the probability to transit into a different regime at $t + 1$ is solely determined by the regime's type at t and not shaped by its entire history.

In this particular application, each row shows the probabilities of moving from the regime represented by that row to other regimes denoted by the columns from one year to the next (or remaining in the same regime, as denoted by the diagonal cells). Transition matrixes have been used in a

wide range of areas to describe social mobility, voting behavior, transition to democracy, and migration.

The probability gives the frequency with which a regime shifted into another regime, or stayed in the same regime, from one year to another. The diagonal in the table makes it clear that most regimes remain stable from year to year. The advantage of the transition matrix in Table 2 is that it can provide an overview of the most likely shifts among regimes, although it is primarily a descriptive device. This does not provide any information on whether some patterns or sequences of regimes are more likely to occur through time or any information about the durability of individual regimes in particular countries. But it summarizes in a convenient fashion a very large amount of information.

This transition matrix confirms the higher stability of party relative to military dictatorships. It also shows that military dictatorships transform more frequently into democracies, which more frequently become military dictatorships when they fail. Neither of the dictatorial types serves as an absorbing state. The transition matrix is not characterized by what is known as a "steady state." An absorbing state is one to which all regimes converge after enough repetitions. A steady state matrix yields a distribution of regimes to be expected in the long run.[15] If the process of the next 50 years were characterized by the mean transitions we have observed in the past 50 years, we can apply the transition matrix to the distribution of regimes we observe today, where there are a fairly large number of democracies (54.6%) and hegemonic-party autocracies (29.3%), and relatively few single-parties, military, and monarchical regimes, to simulate what the world might look like in the long run. This simulation yields good news for democrats, but not the dream of a democratic world. Only about half of the regimes (53%) would be democratic. The popularity of hegemonic-party regimes would, however, only be a fleeting phenomenon. Autocratic regimes would become more or less evenly distributed between the three main types: hegemonic-party systems (16%), single parties (13%), and military dictatorships (14%). The simulation would leave a few monarchies surviving 50 years from now (4%). This distribution can be understood when one notices that monarchies and democracies are particularly stable institutional regimes and that hegemonic-party systems, instead, are as likely to become democracies as military or single-party autocracies.

It is possible, however, that the appropriate Markov chain matrix to apply was not the one from the average transitions over the past 50 years, given that the geopolitical conditions of the Cold War, which clearly permeated many of the regime transitions before 1990s, are no longer present. The Cold War polarized societies, and these conditions were particularly conducive, as

I have suggested, for the emergence of military dictatorship. The end of the Cold War favored the emergence of hegemonic-party dictatorship.

To capture some of the effects of changing geopolitical conditions, one can simulate the future using two alternative Markov chain transition matrixes: one of the years between 1965 and 1980, and a second one of the past decade between 1990 and 2000. In the first case, the future would look rather pessimistic: After 50 years, only 29% of the countries would be democracies; 33% would fall under military rule; 24% would be single parties, and only 8% would be hegemonic-party regimes. This provides support for my contention that the Cold War favored the reproduction of autocracy, especially the emergence of military dictatorship.

But one can also simulate the future using the Markov chain transition matrix of the past decade, and the future would look highly auspicious to democracy: In 50 years time, 77% of the regimes in the world would be democratic, and hegemonic party autocracies would be practically the only form of authoritarianism in 18% of the countries. Monarchies, military rule, and single-parties would be anachronic reminders of a bygone era (with 1.5%, 2.6%, and 3.6% of the countries, respectively). Thus, the end of the Cold War must unquestionably be associated with the reproduction of electoral dictatorship.

Conclusion

My approach suggests that dictators can minimize the risks of being overthrown when they are able to co-opt potential rivals by offering credible power-sharing deals that guarantee a share of power over the long run. A dictator's promise to share power over the long run is only credible when he delegates to a political organization the power to appoint members of the ruling clique into government positions and when this organization is expected to last over the long run. Autocratic political parties play the functional role of making intertemporal power-sharing deals between the dictator and his ruling coalition possible, increasing the longevity of dictatorships.

The article presented the fundamental institutional difference between one-party and multiparty autocratic elections. The theory proposes that multiparty elections play a significant role in increasing the bargaining power of the ruling party vis-à-vis the dictator. Autocratic multiparty elections allow potential ruling party rivals to threaten with electoral splits, affording them peaceful instruments to challenge the dictator. If the dictator

wants to avert electoral splits, he must give the various rulings party factions a larger share of the pie than if multiparty elections were proscribed. Multiparty elections can work at constraining the dictator, even when his party might face no overt political competition, not so much because they confer access to the legislature and policy-making power to members of the ruling coalition but because elections give the ruling elite a peaceful avenue to challenge the dictator that is less costly than investing in the formation of a subversive coalition or rebelling.

Empirically, the article presented some preliminary evidence with respect to dictatorial longevity. Party dictatorships (both single-party and hegemonic) were shown to be significantly longer lasting than military dictatorships. The article also discussed patterns of institutional transformation among political regimes. I leave for further research a systematic analysis of these patterns of regime transformation—the factors that account for the origins, transformation, and demise of the various forms of autocratic rule.

Notes

1. The article uses the terms *autocracy* and *dictatorships* interchangeably.

2. The higher the distance between the potential rival's ideal policy position and that of the status quo and the higher the spoils of office, the stronger the incentives to overthrow the dictator by force.

3. Of course, it is possible that the dictator purges, cutting short an individual's permanency in power. Modeling purges exceeds the scope of this article, so one must think of the value of office over time as including any possible discount generated by the probability of purges.

4. The dictators' dilemma is, however, no easy task to solve, because it is necessary that he can deceive the most powerful players into believing that each has a reasonable high chance of becoming the successor. Castañeda (2000) explains the intricacies of the process in the Mexican context.

5. Tullock (1987) rightly underscores that presidential succession every 6 years was a truly remarkable trait of the Mexican dictatorship. Although not as remarkable as Mexico, many dictatorships have also accomplished frequent leadership succession—Brazil and, to some extent, Malaysia are cases in mind.

6. Potential rivals will invest in the existing institutions rather than in conspiring or rebelling: the smaller the distance between the status quo policy and their ideal policy, the less valuable the privileges and spoils of the executive office; the larger the stream of rents and privileges of the smaller offices, the more the share of these rents are expected to increases through time; the more the rival values the future, the lower the expected net benefit of conspiracies and rebellions.

7. Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) and Boix (2003) provide a view of the origins of dictatorship that focuses on economic inequalities among social groups or classes that is consistent with this argument.

8. My approach underscores that party elites with more distant ideological positions will be more predisposed to split the ruling party (see Green, 2007; Magaloni, 2006).

9. My approach provides a strong rationale as to why there are budget cycles under electoral dictatorships or systematic spikes in government spending before elections despite the fact that elections might not be competitive at all (see Blaydes, 2006; Magaloni, 2006).

10. Some of the economists have also relied on similar categories. Tullock (1987), for example, began with the proposition that autocracy was different from totalitarian regimes. Linz's (2000) classification of totalitarian, autocratic, and sultanistic regimes is also not that different from Wintrobe's (1998) totalitarian, tinpots, and kleptocracies. His types derive from suppositions about the preferences of the dictatorships.

11. Military regimes could be sorted out into those where the dictator is constrained to appoint members of the armed forces according to the military ladder and those that are not. My theoretical approach would predict that the former would be more stable than the latter.

12. There is, of course, variation in the level of institutionalization among these three types of regimes that goes beyond the number of political parties. For example, military regimes sharply differ in their levels of professionalization (Geddes, 2007).

13. I use the Banks's (2005) database to generate the types of dictatorship.

14. With the exception of Geddes (2003), some of the extant literature has failed to uncover the stability of party dictatorships, because it takes the dictator rather than the dictatorial regime as the unit of analysis. Bueno de Mesquita, Smith, Siverson, and Morrow (2003) and Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) focus on individual leaders. This creates problems, because the longevity of cases such as Mexico, Malaysia, Senegal, and even China and the USSR is missed, although the approach probably makes sense for less institutionalized dictatorships.

15. In particular, if a transition matrix (M) is applied to obtain the distribution of regimes (v), a steady state matrix is the one in which further applications of M yield the same distribution of regimes: $v = v'M$. In this case, further applications of the transition matrix only yield a steady state distribution after around 1,000 years.

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