Autocracies and Hybrid Regimes

Revision Class – TT21

What we're doing today

- Broad outline of the major subtopics:

  - (Conceptual and classification issues)
  - Hybrid regimes
  - Politics and institutions in autocracies
  - Regime stability and institutions

- Thinking about the exam essay (regime stability)

Hybrid Regimes

- 'Rather than a wave of slower pace of democratization, hybrid regimes represent a new equilibrium.' Discuss. (syllabus)

- Are hybrid regimes better understood as the result of governments' failed attempts to democratise themselves, or their failed attempts to create authoritarian regimes? (2020)

Institutions and Politics in Autocracies

- Why would an autocrat, or an elite, choose to grant power to the wider electorate? (syllabus)

- Why do some authoritarian regimes adopt democratic institutions? (2017)

Institutions and Regime Stability

- What factors explain why some countries democratize whereas others remain under the label of competitive authoritarianism? (syllabus)

- Are electoral authoritarian regimes inherently unstable? (2019)

- What best accounts for the stability of hybrid regimes? (2018)

- What causes dictatorships to fall? (2017 old regs.)

Conceptual and Classification Issues

- Autocracy as residual category of democracy. But what conception of democracy does it negate?

- More commonly, a *procedural* definition that focuses on competitive elections (Schumpeter, 1947; Dahl, 1971; Diamond, 2001), but with different degrees of stringency:

  - Przeworski et al. (2000): (1) outcomes are uncertain, (2) they cannot be undone after the vote, (3) elections are repeated.
  - Geddes et al. (2012): *plus* elections must be minimally inclusive (10% franchise, majority of legislature is elected), with no tutelage.
  - Levitsky and Way (2010): *plus* full franchise, civil liberties, level-playing field.

Conceptual and Classification Issues

- Distinction in kind and/or degree?

  - Dichotomy (Alvarez et al., 1996; Collier and Adcock, 1999)
    - the conduct of politics is fundamentally distinct: (1) no independent authority to enforce agreements, (2) potential for violence (Svolik, 2012)
    - No real 'borderline' cases: rather, cases where we don't have enough information to adjudicate whether our criterion is satisfied.

  - Degree (Bollen and Jackman, 1989; Elkins, 2000)
    - Theoretically: thinking of autocratic degrees in terms of *how competitive* elections are (Levitsky and Way, 2010), *how much power* the elite has over the non-elite (Bollen, 1980) *how small* the winning coalition of the ruler is (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003).
    - Methodologically: reduces measurement error?

Conceptual and Classification Issues

- Distinguishing autocratic regimes along multiple dimensions.

  - "Rather than classifying dictatorships into ideal types or according to their prominent descriptive features, we should instead explicitly identify the conceptual dimensions of authoritarian politics that we want to measure and then develop appropriate scales or typologies for each one" (Svolik, 2012)

- Some prominent discrete and continuous classifications, and their classification criteria:

Conceptual and Classification Issues

1. Ideal types with multiple, overlapping criteria (1st wave scholarship)

- Linz (1974) – Totalitarianism has high degree of ideological legitimisation, power concentration and social control. Authoritarianism as negative category, non-democracy but lacking some of these characteristics.

2. Rules to select/control the autocrat (Geddes, Cheibub et al.)

- "Our definition of regimes emphasizes the rules that identify the group from which leaders can come and determine who influences leadership choice and policy" (Geddes et al., 2014): Party – Personal – Military – Monarchy

Conceptual and Classification Issues

3. Mode of power maintenance/legitimation

- Hadenius and Teorell, 2007: autocrats can maintain power by force (*military*), hereditary succession (*monarchies*) or elections (*electoral dictatorships*)

- Kailitz, 2013: autocrats can claim legitimacy from
  - Dignified source outside the political regime: historical/religious rights (*monarchy*), or (utopian) ideological purposes (*ideocracies*).
  - Procedural legitimacy (*electoral autocracies*)
  - Membership of a rational-legal institution governing 'for the common good': *military rule* and *one-party rule*.
  - No justification, *fait accompli* (*personalist autocracies*)

Conceptual and Classification Issues

4. Selectorate theory (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003):

- Only two variables matter: W (winning coalition), the number of supporters a leader needs in order to maintain power, and S (selectorate), and the size of the pool from which these supporters are drawn.

- W is typically smaller in autocracies than democracies but size of S may vary.

- "inherently continuous conceptualization of institutions [that] allows comparisons across all regimes" (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2010)

Conceptual and Classification Issues

5. Level of competition (Diamond, 2001; Schedler, 2002; L&W, 2010)
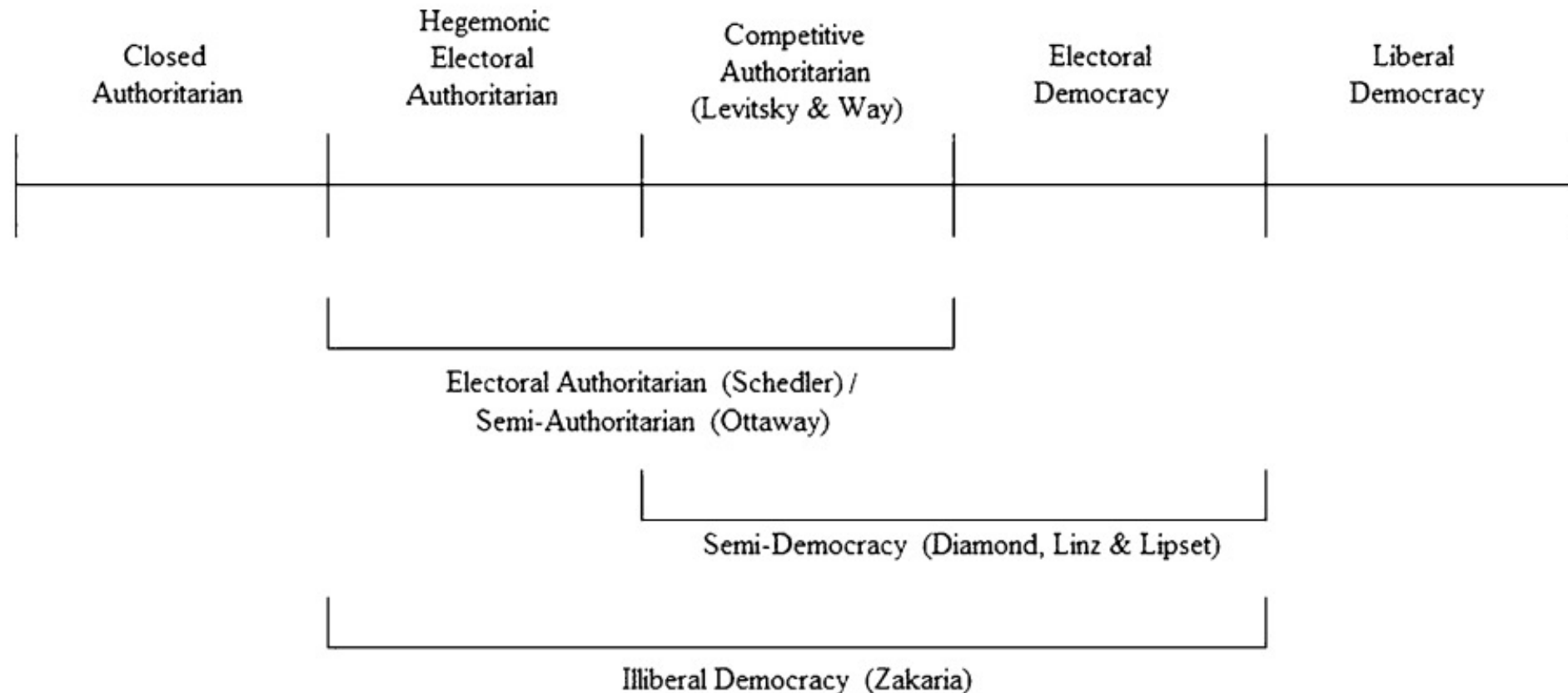
Hybrid Regimes

For the purposes of our discussion, I follow here Levitsky and Way (2010)

Competition

low ←——————————————————————————→ high

Closed authoritarian	Hegemonic authoritarian	Competitive authoritarian	Electoral democracy	Liberal democracy
Saudi Arabia	Kazakhstan	Malaysia	Philippines	Uruguay

- In electoral democracies, elections comply with minimal democratic norms

- In competitive AR, competition is real but the regime tilts heavily the scale using mechanisms such as coercion, patronage, media control and outright fraud.

- In hegemonic AR, they are a farce: results have no relationship to voters' preferences.

Hybrid Regimes

In this framework, Hybrid = Competitive Authoritarian Regimes =

"Civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-a-vis their opponents."

- Prominent alternative view: Gilbert and Mohseni (2011) – multidimensional, discrete categorisation. Regimes as 'hybrid' if they are minimally competitive, but either (1) present high level of civil liberty violations (Sri Lanka), (2) are under tutelage of non-democratic actors (Thailand), or (3) both conditions apply (Iran).

- So careful with the operationalisation your source is talking about.

Hybrid Regimes

- Post-Cold War phenomenon: strategic environment uniquely shaped by Western linkage and leverage incentives for democratisation, and organisational power of ruler (party/state coercive power), in turn a function of legacies and dynamics of hybrid politics.

  - Worth thinking about how these factors have changed 10-20 years (changed patterns of international leverage, 'black knights').

- Claim: regime type that develops characteristic patterns of political behaviour.

Hybrid Regimes

- *Institutional weakness* -> central role of informal institutions: repression from nonstate actors, selective enforcement of the law;

- *'Hybrid' function of parties* -> parties act both as vote-maximisers and as patronage structures (government) or extraparliamentary civil society actors (opposition).

- *'Hybrid' nature of political participation* -> 'middling' level of openness ensure contestation is both legal and potentially effective; regime and competing elites engage in mobilisation and demobilisation strategies of their own -> *public political competition among elites* (Robertson, 2012).

Hybrid Regimes

- How stable? Elections in hybrids are by definition unfair, but turnover is possible. Do they serve as catalyst of regime breakdown?

- Sometimes turnover results in continuation of competitive authoritarianism under the new leader ('regime cycles', Hale, 2005).

- But coordination and coalitions among oppositions have been able to bring about liberalising electoral outcomes (Howard and Loessler, 2006; Gandhi and Reuter 2013; Magaloni, 2010).

- How common is it? (Carothers, 2018)

Hybrid Regimes Stability

- Empirical findings:

- Elections provide a site for contestation but do not cause it: "competitive authoritarian regimes are not especially prone to losing power but are significantly more likely to be followed by electoral democracy" (Brownlee, 2009)

- "Competitive authoritarian regimes are neither more nor less durable than other non-democracies" (Knutsen and Nygård, 2015)

- Early elections in authoritarian systems enhance threat of democratisation, but it recedes over time. Hegemonic multiparty elections with lower levels of competition *may* have a stabilising effect. (Bernhard et al., 2019)

(a) Single party elections

(b) Multiparty elections

Survival — Democratic transition — Authoritarian replacement
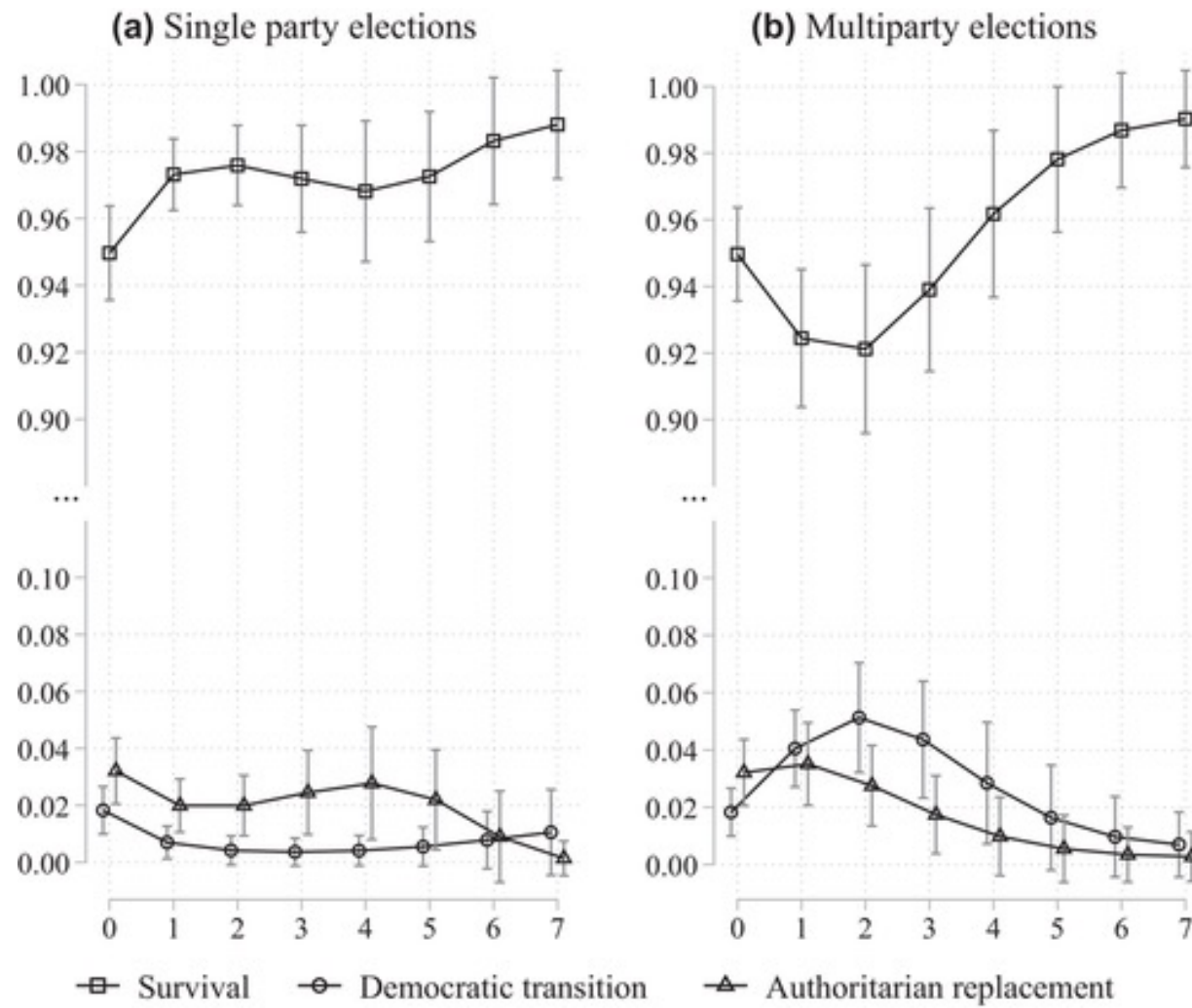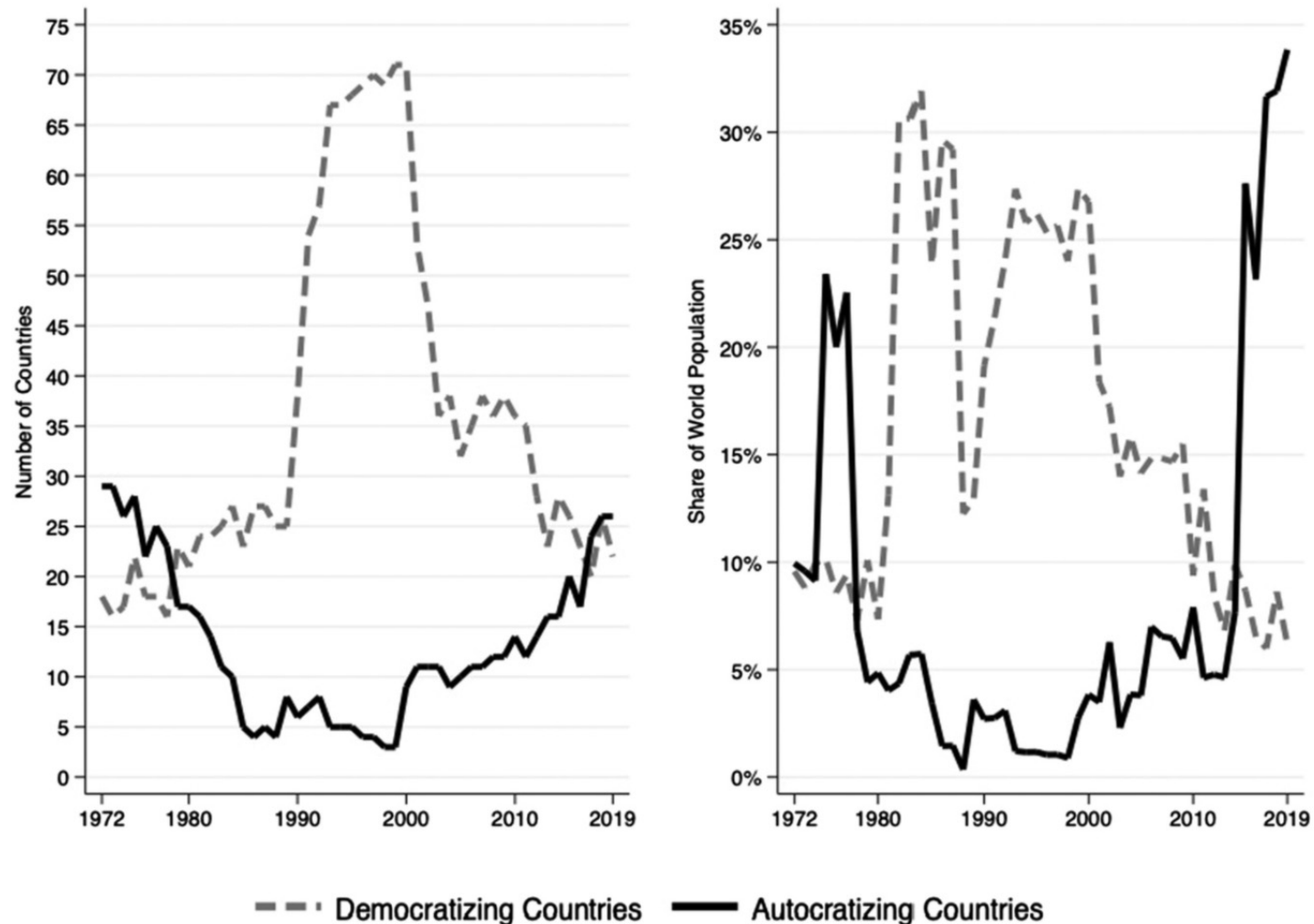
An aside: new and old hybrids?

Figure 1. Autocratizing vs democratizing countries by the Liberal Democracy Index, 1972–2019 (left side – number of countries; right side – share of world population).
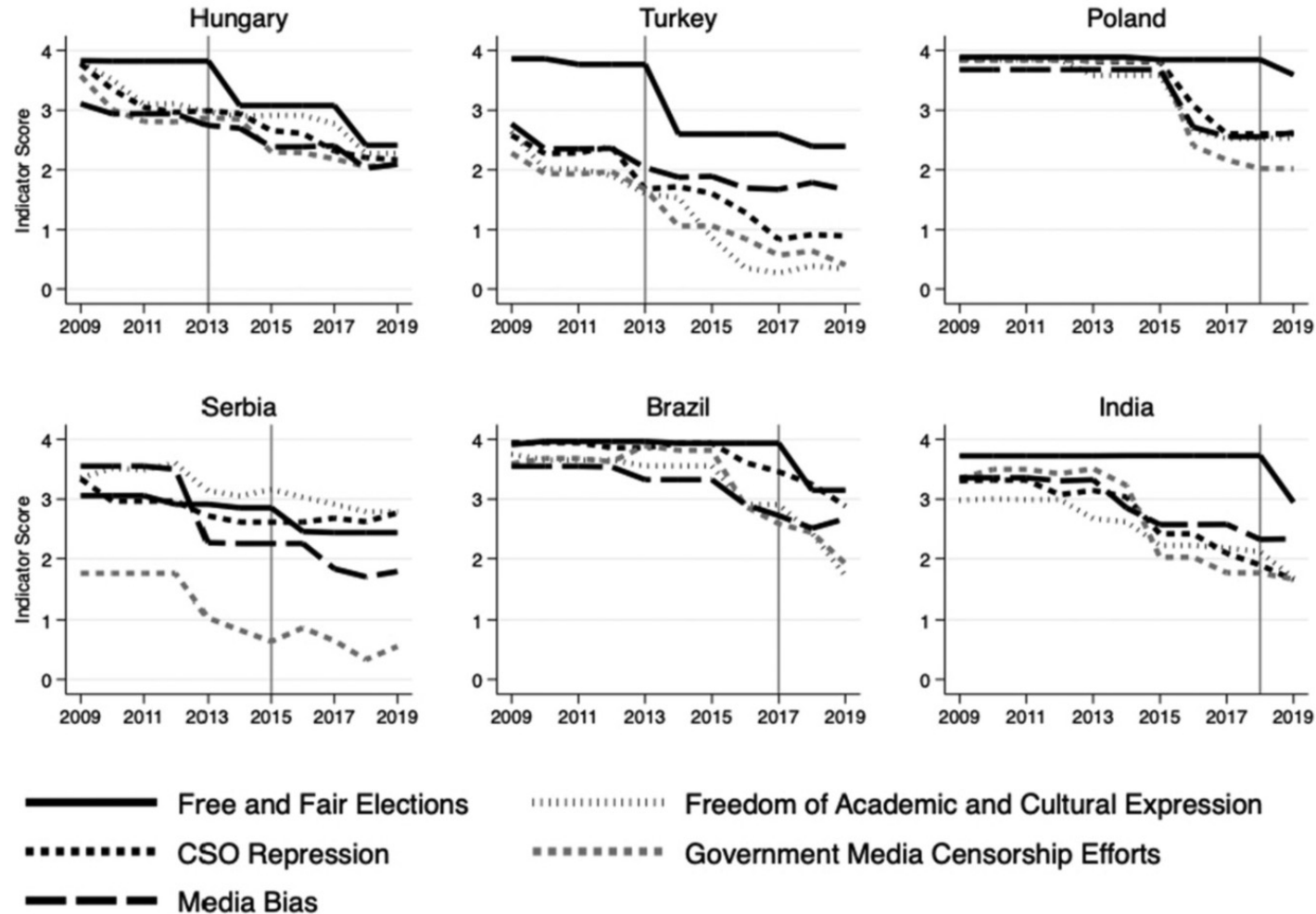
Maerz et al. (2020)

Figure 5. How autocratization unfolds – country examples, 2009–2019 (the vertical line indicates the year before the free and fair elections indicator drops).

Maerz et al. (2020)

Table 1. Top-10 autocratizing countries (Liberal Democracy Index, 2009–2019). (Table view)

	Change	LDI 2009	LDI 2019	Regime type 2009	Regime type 2019
Hungary	−0.36	0.76	0.40	Liberal Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Turkey	−0.36	0.46	0.10	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Poland	−0.33	0.83	0.50	Liberal Democracy	Electoral Democracy
Serbia	−0.27	0.53	0.25	Liberal Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Brazil	−0.25	0.76	0.51	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Democracy
India	−0.19	0.55	0.36	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Democracy
Mali	−0.17	0.48	0.31	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy
Thailand	−0.16	0.32	0.15	Electoral Autocracy	Closed Autocracy
Nicaragua	−0.16	0.22	0.06	Electoral Autocracy	Electoral Autocracy
Zambia	−0.15	0.42	0.27	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy

Politics and Institutions in Autocracies

- Elites are primarily concerned with their continued political survival. Overriding concern in systems where you cannot compromise their way out of power or be credibly shielded from repression:

  - AP "takes place in the shadow of betrayal and violence" (Svolik, 2012)

- How elites pre-empt challenges and ensure political survival:

  - (Legitimation)
  - Power-sharing
  - Control

Legitimation

- Legitimacy as "rule that is seen in the eyes of the observer as fair and good" (Dukalskis and Gerschewski, 2017) -> provides enhanced order, stability, and effectiveness.

- Regimes with 'strong' claims to legitimacy last longer:
  - Monarchies/Communist regimes are the most stable types of autocracies (Kailitz and Stockemeier, 2017)

  - Huntington (1968) Revolutionary parties are the most enduring
    - "sustained, violent, and *ideologically-driven conflict* serve as a critical source of cohesion—and durability—in party-based authoritarian regimes" (Levitsky and Way, 2012)

Legitimation Strategies

- *Indoctrination*: totalitarian regimes of the past

- *Passivity*: foster a sense of resignation to the regime's rule by conveying its power, cohesion, and unassailability.

- <u>*Performance*</u>: autocracy is accepted and sacrificed for the sake of order, stability, and growth (*specific* vs diffuse support)

- *Semi-competitive elections*: procedural legitimacy, display of (genuine or theatrical) deliberation and responsiveness.
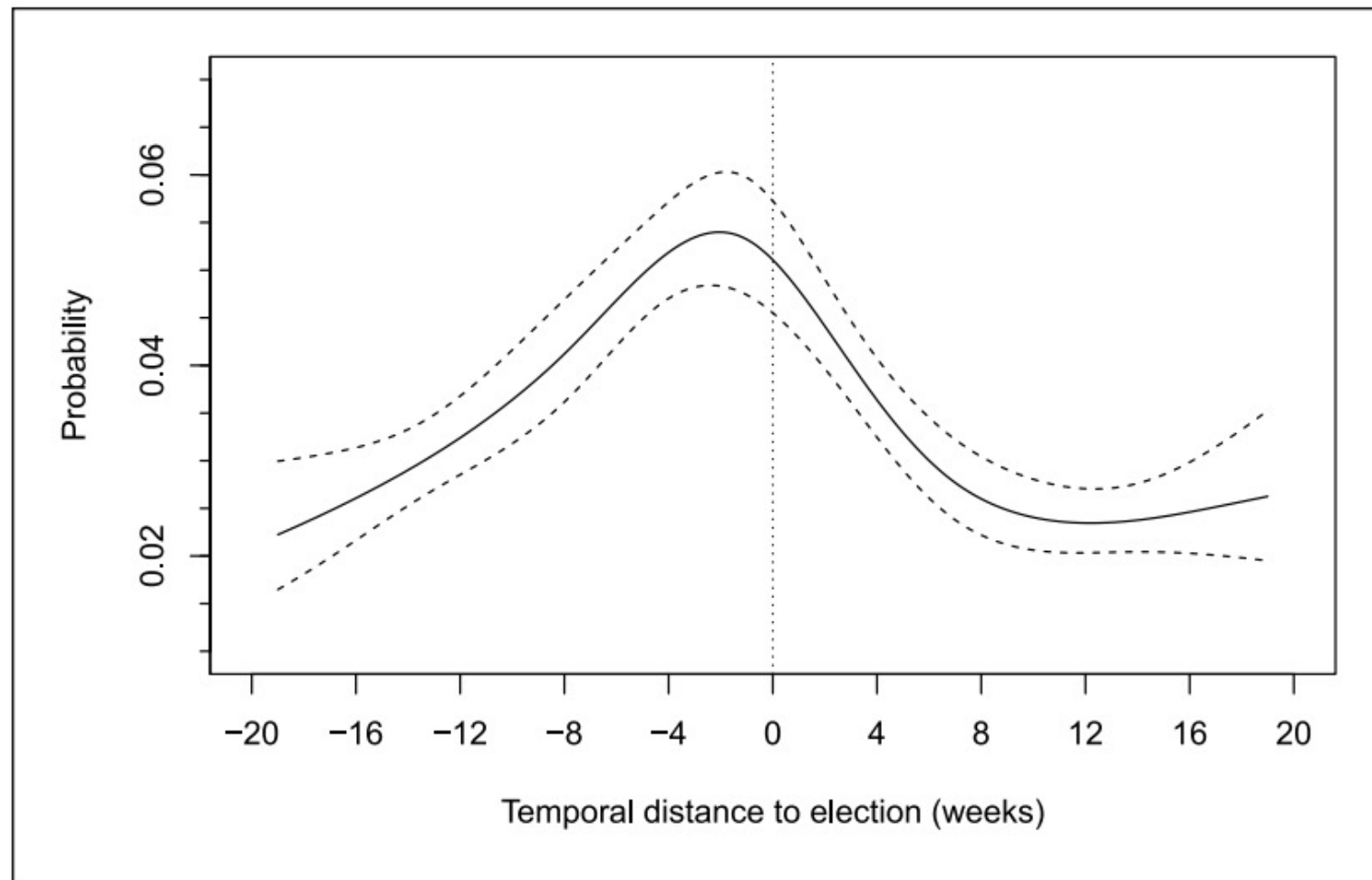
Figure 6. Relationship between temporal distance to upcoming or past elections and the probability of rally occurrence.
Nonparamentric regression; dashed lines represent confidence intervals ($n = 7,312$).

Hellmeier and Weidmann (2020)

Does Legitimation Matter?

- 'Old school' approach, marginalised in recent literature:

  - "Explanations of regime breakdown in terms of legitimacy are either tautological or false [...] Some authoritarian regimes have been illegitimate since their inception, and they have been around for 40 years." (Przeworski, 1991)

- Yet regimes still invest in nationalist education projects, broader-based growth models than the 'winning coalition' framework would allow, hold elections to signal invincibility.

- Gerschewski (2013): important to see legitimation strategy as mutually reinforcing with other forms of autocratic survival strategies.

Power-Sharing

- Most autocrats rely on a coalition of actors (the royal family, party, military, oligarchs) who control key resources for regime stability. But politics in autocracies is highly secretive and informal: no elite contract can be enforced by independent authorities.

- Problem of power-sharing -> risk of regime personalisation.

- Under this conditions, even a coalition with a credible threat to bring down the autocrat will have (1) informational asymmetry problems, (2) coordination problems, (3) dimished threat credibility at t+1 if monitoring fails. -> opportunistic power-grabs often go unopposed.
    - (Svolik, 2012, Chap. 3)

September 1999 · **January 2000** · **December 2003** · **December 2007** · **September 2011** · **April 2014**
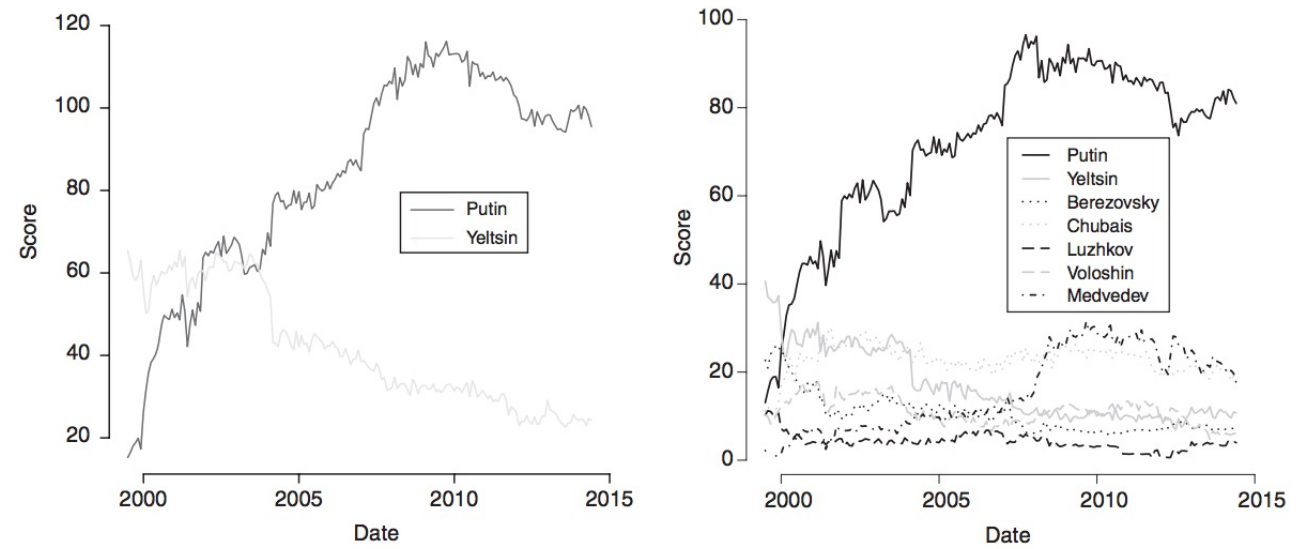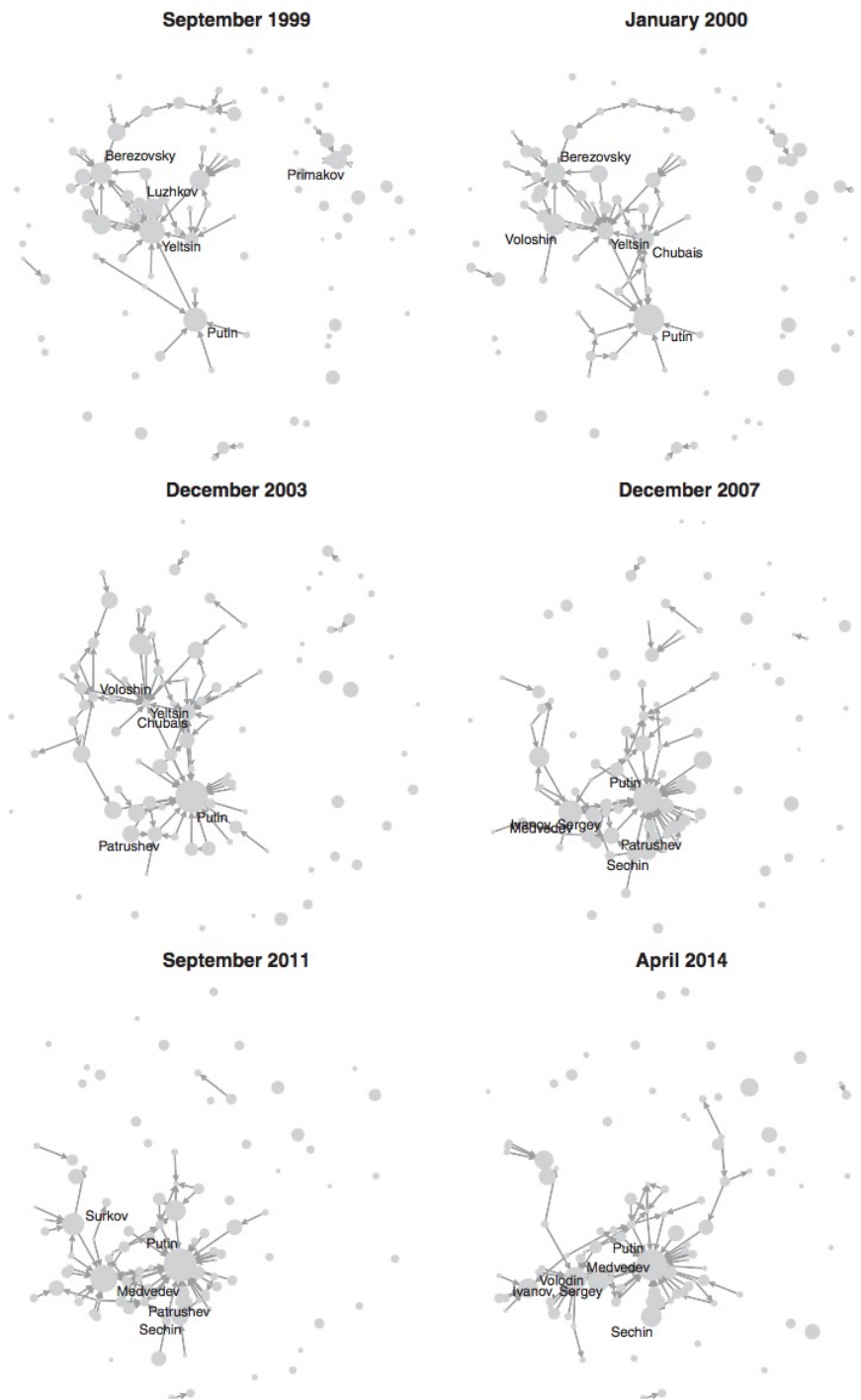
Figure 3. Influence of different patron–client networks. Note: The plot represents the sum of standardized influence scores for a patron's clients and clients' clients, including the influence score of the patron himself. In the right plot, none of the selected patrons are counted themselves as clients of any patron, e.g., for Voloshin the client–patron tie with Yel'tsin is ignored, and for Medvedev the tie with Putin is equally ignored, etc. In the left plot, the analysis is based on the assumption that Putin himself is not a client of Yel'tsin.

Baturo (2016)

Power Sharing: Institutional Solutions

- The regime personalisation trap creates risks of elite cohesion. How can autocratic elites share power more effectively?

- Deliberative and decision-making bodies increase transparency and organize political concessions to other elite actors:

    - Autocrat learns about and can neutralise threats from elites
    - Elites receive 'public' signal of the autocrat's commitment
    - Rules for elite bargaining become formalised over time, inviting cooptation of elite actors outside the ruling coalition

- Boix and Svolik (2013), Gandhi (2008)

Legislative performance of the Russian State Duma: the role of parliament in an authoritarian regime

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ABSTRACT

Authoritarian governments remain in power much longer when they distribute benefits to their supporters in an institutionalised way. Permitting parliament to fulfil a legislative function is an important strategy for autocrats to obtain long-lasting support from their allies. Political parties play an important role in this process – while having strong influence on the behaviour of MPs, empirical evidence from the Russian State Duma suggests that loyalty is rewarded with support for the legislative proposals of individual members. Amendments to government bills are high in quantity and often substantially significant. Legislative performance is, however, mostly limited to the United Russia party.

Control

- Dictatorships exercise control over potential challengers and the mass public in two principal ways: repression and co-optation.

  - Repression: "sociopolitical control to deter specific activities and beliefs perceived as threatening to political order" (Goldstein, 1978)
    - Includes high- and low-intensity activity (lawsuits, surveillance, intimidation)

  - Cooptation: "intentional extension of benefits to potential challengers to the regime in exchange for their loyalty" (Corntassel, 2007)
    - Generally resources and policy concessions, rather than power.

Control

- Problems of repression:

  - Undermines (domestic and international) legitimacy
  - Increases monitoring costs: decreased responsiveness to challenges/demands
  - Moral hazard: need for repression comes with increased reliance on security apparatus

  For rising levels of challenge to autocratic rule, the autocrat is faced the a dilemma of whether to (1) empower the military, quell the threat at the cost of policy autonomy ('military tutelage') or accepting the risk of a military coup in case of autocrat-military conflict, (2) underfund the military, risking regime change from domestic challengers. (Svolik, 2012, Ch. 5)

Control: Institutional Solutions

- Some 'control' institutions – security apparatus, judiciary – are mostly in the business of repression.

- Others are functional to cooptation: e.g. *parties*.

  - Unlike, eg, clientelistic transfers, cooptation via parties creates *long-term* stakes in the regime: benefit increase with seniority.

  - Institutionalise patterns of career progression to political, administrative, and economic appointments. Parties serve as country-wide HR departments: *nomenklatura* system, party core groups.

  - Enlisting selectively 'co-optable' individuals into the party, the autocrat can prevent social mobility of potential opposition.

  (Svolik, 2012, Ch. 6)

Institutions and Regime Stability

- 'New institutionalism' agenda in the study of non-democracy: institutionalisation of autocratic rule is functional to regime survival (Geddes, 2003; Gandhi, 2008):

- credible commitment
- patronage distribution   ⟹   ~ Power-sharing
- signaling
- information acquisition   ⟹   ~ Control
- monitoring

Institutions and Regime Stability

- Legislatures

- Regimes that institute legislatures have more durable ruling coalitions (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007), avoid violent nonconstitutional leadership transitions (Svolik, 2012), are less likely to be replaced by a rival regime (Wright and Escribà-Folch, 2012).

- The claim is that these serve as co-optation and power-sharing institutions, solving uncertainty and information asymmetry problems.

Institutions and Regime Stability

- Multiparty Elections
- We have seen that in competitive authoritarian regimes, competitive (though unfree and unfair) elections do not increase likelihood of regime breakdown.

  - What about hegemonic party regimes?

- In hegemonic party regimes, elections do seem to have a positive effect on regime survival (Bernhard et al., 2020), but also null findings (Boogards, 2013, McCoy and Hartlyn , 2009; and Kaya and Bernhard, 2013) in regional studies.

Institutions and Regime Stability

- Political Parties

- One-party autocracies are among of the most stable subtypes of autocracy (Magaloni and Kricheli, 2015).

- Party-led autocracies are more stable and less vulnerable to economic shocks (Geddes, 2018).

- Mechanisms: parties constrain personalism, increase opportunities for patronage, guarantee political control on appointments.

- Ok but…

Institutions and Regime Stability

- These institutions are endogenous!

- If parties, legislatures and other formal institutions are manipulated in such a way that benefits the ruling elite, they will simply reflect the constellation and distribution of power in authoritarian regimes rather than shaping them. (Pepinski, 2012)

- E.g. elite consensus -> parties -> regime durability OR
- Regime strength -> party competition is innocuous -> durability

Institutions and Regime Stability

- Institutionalist literature infers *motive* from *function* (Brancati, 2014):

  - An institution might have a certain effect but the autocratic elites might not have adopted it for *that* purpose.
  - An institution might not have the outcome that the leader intended

- Often external pressures to adopt democratic-emulating institutions, not autocratic design. And if these are 'manipulated' by autocrats to their aims, then autocrats would have had the capability to pursue those aims with alternative means.

Institutions and Regime Stability

- A possible omitted variable: *State power* (Slater and Fenner, 2011)

- Many of the mechanisms through which authoritarian rulers assert control quite closely with familiar dimensions of state infrastructural power (patronage, coercion).

- If an autocrat inherits a strong state, the incentive to join the autocrat will be higher. State power -> party cohesion. But then state power might be the source of stability as well.

Preparing for the exam

- Be *very* careful with operationalisations and definitions of concept in a messy literature.
  - Best: engaging critically with the assumptions behind authors' choices
  - But some times *better*: taking a framework and running with it
- In an open-book exam, the returns to rehearsing arguments are much higher than memorising evidence or cites.
- But: prepare a repertoire of case studies, examples (Lewitsky and Way, case studies comparisons in syllabus). You can find large-N studies that say anything and the opposite of it.

Preparing for the exam

- Try to link this information to other topics. Obvious candidate: Democratisation

- In the exam, signpost, signpost, signpost.

- **Stay within the word limit.**

Why do some authoritarian regimes adopt democratic institutions? (2017)

- Intro: Define authoritarian regimes

- Thesis: We can best explain the seeming contradiction between authoritarian regimes and the adoption of democratic institutions on a strategic account that argues such choices are the rational outcomes of attempts to maintain power by authoritarian elites

- outline causal mechanisms in general

- Legislatures -> co-optation

- Elections and Parties -> mass mobilisation, elite conflict management, deter defection.

- Response: Strategic choices mean they must have good shot of success because paints authoritarian leaders as rational utility-maximisers. So evidence where adopting dem institutions leads to auth downfall contradicts causal logic

Are electoral authoritarian regimes inherently unstable?

- Define EAR and what regime stability means in this context
- Thesis statement – Electoral institutions are an effective and cheap way of managing elite fragmentation and constructing durable ruling coalitions | electoral institutions are an endogenous response to a pre-existing lack of elite cohesion, which is the key issue behind the instability of such regimes | the instability is not inherent to the electoral aspect of the regime but rather the adoption of electoral institutions is a symptom of more fundamental weakness
- Theory: Function of electoral institutions in EAR, their relationship to regime durability
- Empirics: Burma and Egypt

What best accounts for the stability of hybrid regimes?

- Thesis: While some institutions enhance stability of hybrid regimes by offering credible commitment and a channel for information gathering, stability ultimately depends on regime rents.

- Definition of hybrid regime, stability

- **Elections**: Function = legitimacy, deter challenger. But double-edged sword. Need to look beyond these for sources of stability

- **Power-sharing: (Boix Svolik 2013) and Control Institutions**

- *Limitation*: legislative institutions undermined by circumvention

- **Rents**: Electoral victories ultimately built upon an unlevel playing field genuine binding institutions such as PRI fell following the loss of patronage → Institutions lack agency and instead remain heavily dependent on resources of the regime