ENCYCLOPEDIA TYRANNICA

A Research Guide to Authoritarianism

Jeroen J. J. Van den Bosch & Natasha Lindstaedt (eds.)



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This book was developed in the framework of the Erasmus+ project: *Mapping & Organizing Research on Dictatorships – Open access Repository*. More information about this project can be found at the back of this book).

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For all those students of dictatorship disoriented in the seemingly boundless literature review, I hope this book will help you find the path again and travel further than you imagined.

For Justyna and Zuza, who both suffered my absence during this editorial death march. Justyna, thanks to you, I survived, and I am immensely grateful for keeping things from falling apart at home, and for letting me back in. I love you both dearly.

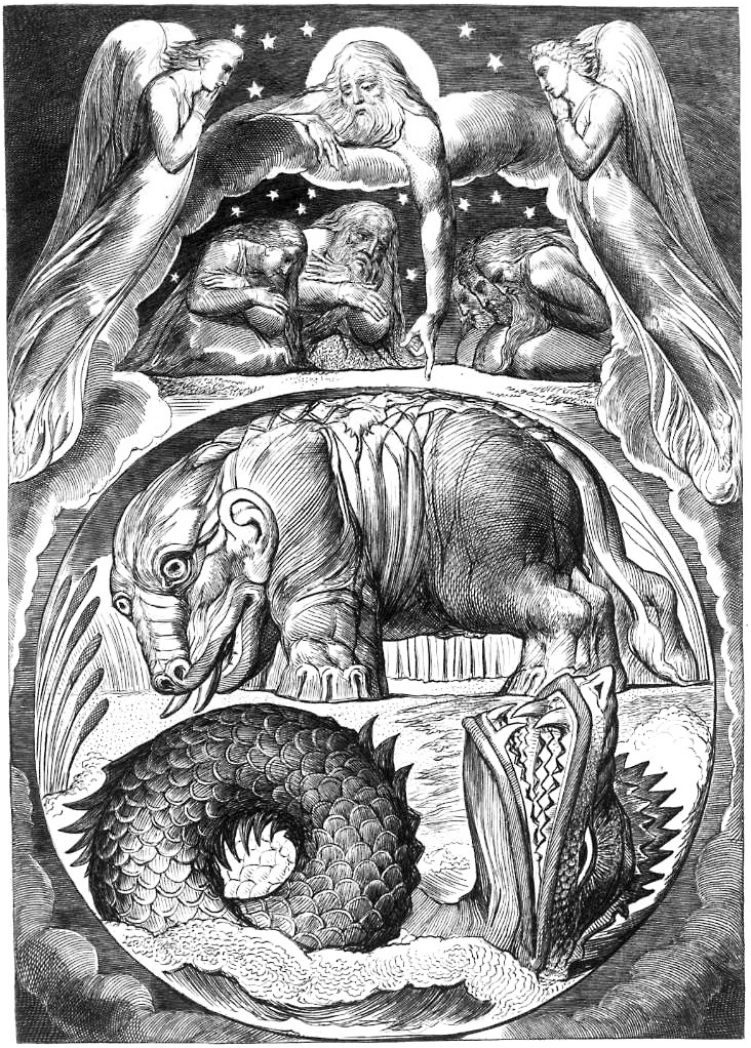
To my co-editor, Natasha: "No road is long with good company."

JVdB

This was a really fun project to work on and enabled me to meet many new academics from all over the world. I dedicate this to all of the academics working hard to understand authoritarianism better.

To my co-editor, Jeroen: This was a huge undertaking. I have no idea how you managed to do it all, but we got there in the end!

NL



On the Cover Illustration

The centerpieces on this book's cover are William Blake's two monsters, 'Behemoth' (top) and 'Leviathan' (bottom) from his *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1826).

The political thinker Thomas Hobbes used a similar symbolism as he penned his (lesser-known) sequel titled *Behemoth* (1681) to his earlier and famous *Leviathan* (1651). The two works contrast each other, with *Leviathan* being a treatise on the ideal, powerful state, and *Behemoth* covering the chaos of the English civil wars.

In line with Jeremy Bentham's words: *"Tyranny and anarchy are never far asunder"* (1843), our cover image likewise contrasts both monsters: Just as dictators justify their aspiration for absolute control (the Leviathan) by pretending that only they can shield the people from chaos and anarchy – incarnated in the primeval chaos-monster, the biblical Behemoth.

Foreword

The start of 2025 is a gloomy period for global democracy. For over a decade, there has been a pervasive understanding that democratic ideals are under threat and that the specter of authoritarianism has reared its ugly head. While this feeling started around 2010, the pandemic lockdowns seem to have cracked humanity in more ways than we anticipated. Isolated and withering during quarantine, many of us have fallen prey to structural angst and are driven by disappointment, mistrust and frustration. Populists, spin doctors, and demagogues are having a heyday fueling and channeling this anger through hateful identity politics.

In this digital age with nascent AI, the nefarious influence of potent tech plutocrats preying on a global pandemic of dopamine-addicted electorates is felt beyond the developed nations. The world seems to be slipping into a double hell: one described by Orwell in *1984* and the one in Huxley's *Brave New World*. Not only can a totalitarian-tech state track everybody's identity, movement and preferences, but people are so flooded with disinformation that they no longer seem to care about the truth. Sometimes, we no longer recognize family members and neighbors.

In the international arena, parallels are being drawn with the interwar period, exactly a hundred years ago. There has been a myriad of explanations given, ranging from staggering global inequality, unsustainable climate deterioration, turbulent markets, and the return of great power politics where 'might is right.'

For spectators, there is solace in the Persian saying "این نیز بُگُذَرَد" (*īn nīz bogzarad*' – this too shall pass'), and autocrats are usually undone by the fallout of their own mistakes eventually. However, for those suffering autocratic rule, change is not possible without people standing up for themselves and others. In this globalized world, we need a moral international order to stand up for the oppressed and safeguard the planet we live on. Understanding the world better is the first step.

Moreover, that is why we created this *Encyclopedia Tyrannica*: to help understand how dictatorships emerge, usurp power, their strategies to cling on, and how they eventually break down but leave stubborn

stains on institutions and collective memories alike. The world is too complex for a single road map, of course, and history never repeats itself in the same way. Like all political regimes, authoritarians have to innovate, adapt, and structure reality. Recognizing their patterns, capturing these in theoretical frames and gaining a better understanding is the first step to lasting change. Scholars and political thinkers have been doing exactly this for centuries.

The encyclopedia was not written as a witty guidebook for wannabe authoritarians but intended as a repository of the most important knowledge derived from comparative authoritarianism from the last seventy years or more. It is the starting place for anyone trying to make sense of this increasingly mad world and hopefully to make it better.

When we embarked on this project in 2021 in the framework of the M.O.R.D.O.R. project (Mapping & Organizing Research on Dictatorships – Open access Repository, an EU-funded Erasmus+ project for higher education), we could not have predicted how much more needed this book would become in 2025.

We would like to thank all our authors for completing this encyclopedic fellowship. Along this journey, we have heeded the wise council of regional experts in Abu Dhabi, Bishkek, Buenos Aires, Dubai, Dushanbe, Johannesburg, Manila, Potchefstroom, Pretoria, Seoul, Tashkent, Tbilisi (to name but our official visits) and we are grateful to all those others guides we encountered underway to recalibrate our understanding of regional affairs and point to useful literature. Also, a big thank you to our anonymous peer reviewers for showing us the path when we traversed on thinner ice.

More information about the M.O.R.D.O.R. project and a full overview of its involved partners can be found at the end of this book.

Our gratitude goes out to the EU donor and the Polish National Agency (FRSE), as well as our publisher, ibidem Verlag, for their trust in this project and for making it all possible. We are grateful to our own respective institutions, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań and the University of Essex, for providing the additional funding needed to publish this book that grew more than double its size in three years.

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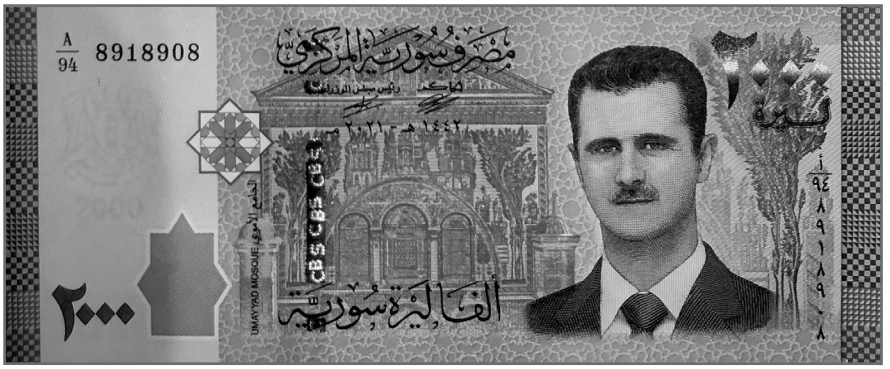


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250 Dinars, Iraq (1994), depicting president Saddam Hussein Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti.

1000 Pounds, Syria (1997), depicting president Hafez al-Assad.

2000 Pounds, Syria (2017), depicting president Bashir al-Assad.



INTRODUCTION

The *Encyclopedia Tyrannica* (hereafter: EncTyr) is more than a classical encyclopedia. It aims to serve as a research guide for students and scholars of comparative authoritarianism, transition and democracy studies, as well as non-academic experts and policy-makers who are less familiar with the theoretical bases of commonly-used concepts.

The EncTyr is also much more than just an "introduction to." It places key concepts in their historical, theoretical and methodological contexts; provides a (sufficiently) exhaustive literature review for any reader to check if they have no personal 'unknown knowns,' and goes even further by presenting entries' variation of application in (the study of) different world regions. Moreover, entries' impact on policy-making, new frontiers in the literature, and a literature review in non-English languages are explored. (Note: The EncTyr does *not* provide an overview and classification of all authoritarian regimes in this world. This has been done before repeatedly in datasets, and would require regular updating in order not to lose relevance. This is not our mission.)

The EncTyr addresses a growing issue that scholars of authoritarian studies are facing today: the ever-expanding sprawl of political theory focused on authoritarianism and its proliferation of niche specializations on its various dimensions (legitimacy, regime behavior, etc.). This is particularly challenging for newcomers to the field, who sometimes need years to start orientating themselves in this vast literature canon, and for those seeking to craft mental maps of how these research traditions have merged and separated and why key concepts evolved.

The field of comparative authoritarian studies has been rapidly evolving since WWII, encountering several paradigm shifts along the way. This has resulted in a somewhat fragmented scholarly community with very differentiated fields of interest. Usually, scholars tend



to specialize in one chosen subset of regimes (e.g., battered democracies, hybrid regimes or closed autocracies). Alternatively, they focus on just some aspects of regime behavior (transition, emergence, repression, etc.). In addition, there is much variation regarding the use of theories and concepts per world region: African studies, Eurasian Studies and Latin American studies (to name but a few), and all these have distinct research traditions with their own interpretation of key concepts (often ignoring alternative approaches). Another issue is the historical evolution of conceptual notions: their original meanings, their current trends (either becoming more refined or more diluted over time), as well as their short-hand use in everyday (non-academic) contexts. This has led to some confusion regarding defining and applying theoretical frames and concepts.

To recap, there is so much specialized literature out there that interested scholars find themselves unable to cover, uncover and discover the relevant literature for related topics. This leads to several issues that have plagued the field. For example, scholars of democratization do not always have a comprehensive understanding of the heterogeneous nature of dictatorship, leading to all kinds of methodological pitfalls. Typically, most of them focus solely on hybrid regimes, but their findings cannot be universally applied and are too often context-dependent. In turn, theorists of authoritarianism find it hard to keep track of the myriad discoveries coming from in-depth case-study work challenging existing beliefs and necessary to update mainstream theories. Area study experts too often hold on to dated theoretical models, unaware of revised versions or better alternatives. As a result, advancements in the wider field tend to be haphazard and with limited synergy.

The mission of the EncTyr is thus aimed at guiding all these different readers, providing them with an (almost) exhaustive treatise of all core concepts in the field, presenting their methodological limitations, their varied application to different world regions, as well as other insights required to facilitate research, prevent blind spots and show which trodden paths lead somewhere (and which ones are proven dead-ends).

The EncTyr does not have the usual (pure alphabetical) outlook of an encyclopedia. It is divided into eight thematic sections, and entries are logically organized per section. Some sections present entries



alphabetically (e.g., concepts), others will follow a logical taxonomy (e.g. classifications of dictatorships) or chronology. The goal is to present information to readers in a sensible way so they can easily compare related information and/or recognize how entries find themselves placed in the general research literature. Additional info boxes are placed near related entries to add background on local phenomena, offer additional examples and expose understudied aspects. For easy reference, there are two tables of contents (structural and alphabetical) for all main entries, in addition to a top-notch Index for relevant details to make retrieval easy.

This is the first work of such depth with a specific scope on authoritarianism and dictatorship studies. Of course, several aspects of democratization and democracy support overlap with this purview (and are included to some degree), but the EncTyr's main focus remains on autocracy, their classifications, related concepts, their behavior and their impact on the polities they rule. EncTyr is designed to become the 'go-to book' for every scholar in this field, regardless of their experience and research purpose.

Intended readership

Students of comparative politics, area studies and democracy studies should find in the EncTyr the most comprehensive compendium (to date) when browsing for definitions of common concepts and their theoretical contexts (including examples). Those writing research papers or dissertations benefit especially from the literature review and methodological sections explaining the scope and limitations of said concepts.

Established scholars can rely on EncTyr to check for personal blind spots – niche aspects of authoritarian studies that they might not have encountered before – and use the detailed literature review to complete or prioritize their own reading lists when doing research. With its internal references to related entries, EncTyr supports browsing and background reading.

Policy-makers and experts working on democratization are offered all the benefits listed above, but on top of this, they are also provided with a structural overview of the field of dictatorship studies and how its niche specializations relate to one another.

Area study experts are invited to use the EncTyr to explore alternatives to outdated (middle-range) theories when doing country studies. The entries' sections on 'regional variation' provide guidance on how concepts may differ in meaning and usage depending (on their application in) world regions. They can benefit from the concise theoretical overview to reframe useful concepts in a wider context.

Educators, last but not least, may find a useful teaching resource in the EncTyr, either to prepare their courses or to present to students as free study materials. Tailor-made for this group, the EncTyr's **didactic companion** offers concrete lesson plans and learning outcomes for several basic courses on authoritarianism.

Didactic Companion

By offering students a solid starting point and experienced scholars a taxonomy to cover their literature review for research, the EncTyr aspires to become a standard reference regarding comparative authoritarian studies. By also offering ready-to-use teaching materials for educators, and easy-to-access background theory for practitioners, the EncTyr thus targets a very broad readership.

The state of comparative authoritarianism

The field of comparative authoritarianism has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past quarter-century, marked by significant theoretical and methodological advancements. This encyclopedia aims to capture the dynamic nature of this discipline, providing researchers, educators, and students with a comprehensive overview of its evolution and current state.

In recent decades, scholars have made substantial progress in understanding the complexities of non-democratic regimes. The field has moved beyond simplistic dichotomies to explore the nuanced landscape of **hybrid regimes**, which often share institutional features with liberal democracies while maintaining authoritarian control. This shift has led to more sophisticated analyses of regime behavior, resilience, and stability.

One of the most significant developments has been the recognition of authoritarian regimes as active agents in the international arena rather than passive, closed, self-centered objects of study. This has given rise to new areas of research, such as **authoritarian learning** and **authoritarian collaboration**, which examine how non-democratic



regimes adapt, innovate, and cooperate in response to shared domestic and international challenges.

The discipline draws from a rich tapestry of intellectual traditions, forming what can be described as an archipelago of multiple modernities. Concepts and theories trace their lineage from various classical or pre-modern thinkers alongside new concepts by contemporary counterparts, creating a diverse theoretical landscape. This encyclopedia seeks to navigate this complexity by elucidating the origins, applications, and evolution of key concepts in authoritarian studies while also highlighting their methodological limitations and blind spots.

A recurring theme in the field is the interplay between **legitimacy**, **repression**, and **co-optation** as strategies for regime stability. Scholars continue to debate the extent to which these elements function as communicating vessels, adapting to changing circumstances and challenges. Scholars explore new authoritarian practices (like **digital authoritarianism** and new forms of **censorship**) and try to appraise and re-evaluate older concepts gathering dust (like the study of **purges**).

While much of the field focuses on institutional analysis, there remains a persistent sub-stream in leader-centric approaches. These interdisciplinary frameworks attempt to systematize our understanding of rulers' characteristics, including **age & health**, **background**, and **psychological profiles**. However, this area of study suffers most from fragmentation and a lack of reliable Large-N data, presenting opportunities for future research and methodological innovation.

The phenomenon of **personalization** in political regimes has gained renewed attention in an era of increasing global inequality and offshore financial havens. Scholars are keenly interested in tracing the pathways to **personalist rule** and its impact on regime dynamics. This focus echoes back to classical concepts of **tyranny** and **despotism**, with each generation of political thinkers introducing new concepts or reinterpreting existing ones to capture the corruption of personalist power and its effects on political systems.

Trust emerges as a critical currency in authoritarian regimes, where institutional checks and balances are often absent or weakened. The study of how trust is cultivated, maintained, or eroded in these contexts and its relationship to cronyism, meritocracy, and information-gathering remains a central concern in game-theoretic models of authoritarianism.

As the field has proliferated, it has also fragmented. We now lack a unified, comprehensive classification system for political regimes that can adequately capture the complexity of contemporary governance structures. Scholars have built upon and reinterpreted concepts over generations, often in response to the global advance of democracy. This has resulted in an inherent bias toward democratic norms as the standard against which other regime types are measured.

The dominance of liberal democratic ideals in political thought, as famously (and controversially) articulated by Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* thesis, has created a pervasive democracy vs. non-democracy dichotomy. While understandable (and relevant), this dominant perspective does hinder our ability to grasp the heterogeneity of non-democratic regimes fully. The conflation of terms like **authoritarianism**, **autocracy**, and **dictatorship** further complicates our analytical frameworks.

Current practice periodizes comparative authoritarianism into generational blocks of scholars and core ideas since WWII. However, the 'first' generation, with their introduction of **democracy** vs. **totalitarianism**, has unwillingly overshadowed alternative approaches of interwar scholars and early-modern thinkers and steered the mainstream onto its current path. It is useful to go back to earlier concepts and thinkers and track down the terminological distinctions they adhered to and why they considered these relevant. For all main concepts, the EncTyr provides such insights.

Moving forward, the field must continue seeking organizational principles and analytical frameworks that are not exclusively anchored in democratic norms. By doing so, we can develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the diverse range of political systems that have existed throughout human history and continue to shape our world today.

This encyclopedia strives to capture these ongoing debates and developments, providing a platform for critical engagement with the evolving field of dictatorship studies and comparative authoritarianism. By offering a comprehensive overview of concepts, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks, we aim to equip scholars and students with the tools necessary to navigate this complex and vital area of political science.



How to use this book?

The EncTyr contains about 208 entries and almost 80 boxes. Entries are of different lengths and depths, dependent on their salience for comparative authoritarianism and the scope available. With limited space, we have opted for shorter reviews, pointing readers in the right direction instead of omitting relevant topics. Smaller, less relevant topics (i.e., 'Caesarism') can be tracked down using the Index.

Boxes are (usually) shorter, stand-alone pieces on specific topics, either interesting cases (Apartheid, Mobutu's Zaire, North Korean Soft power,) a short historical treatise (e.g., primogeniture, the Japanese Imperial Shōwa regime, de-Stalinization), a larger theoretical debate (bar fight theory, coup belts), or a reflection on a well-known (notorious) phenomenon (e.g., genocide, terror, torture). These are placed logically near the most relevant entry (space permitting) and meticulously indexed. Their topics are listed in the alphabetical register and treated on par with other entries. They, too, contain pointers for future reading.

To optimize locating entries, we offer two registers of the main entries: an alphabetical register and a traditional table of contents (ToC). The alphabetical list of entries is longer, includes the topics from the boxes, and, in some cases, breaks down topic titles and lists them twice. For example, Andreas Schedler's classification of electoral authoritarianism is filed under the author's last name and 'electoral authoritarianism.' The ToC, in contrast, presents the entries within the overall structure and the exact order in which they appear and highlights the division into eight logical book sections, which is handy for readers who want to gauge the scope of the EncTyr's coverage.

As mentioned at the onset, the EncTyr is not a mere alphabetical list of all concepts but presents its content in a structured and logical way, organized in eight book sections. (Their detailed overview and logic can be found below.) We do the same with the entries.

To make scanning and retrieval of information easier for readers, the main entries themself are broken down into 'entry sections.' This topical breakdown is roughly the same for all entries, but entry sections were removed if they do not apply, or they can be merged for

clarity and brevity. Also, the exact order of these entry sections differs per entry as information is presented most logically and economically, avoiding repetition where possible. Some shorter entries do not require such a formal breakdown and are written as one piece.

After introducing each topic in plain English, entry sections usually start with the scholarly **DEFINITION**, listing and comparing the most prevalent definitions as well as the entry's defining characteristics. All main entries have a **SEE ALSO** part where they are contextualized in their larger field and how they relate to other entries in the book. **KEY SIGNIFICANCE** illustrates the relevance of a concept within its respective fields, how it changed a certain study field (for good or for bad) and why it is worthy of study. **ORIGIN** traces back its original meaning or use and/or provides information about the inventors of the concept. Whenever we can, we show when and how a concept entered the scholarly mainstream. **LITERATURE** provides a comprehensive overview of the best-known and relevant works dealing with this concept but also mentions important theoretical comparisons, constructionist overviews, etc. Not all entries have **CLASSIFICATIONS**, but where this applies, authors present the most important (sub-)classifications of the concept, as well as their limitations.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES and **MEASUREMENT** are crucial entry sections. The first presents the scope and limits of the concept, the inherent biases and pitfalls of its use in mainstream research, as well as any blind spots that have to be taken into account when applying it in research. The second part is often related and provides guidance on how to measure the concept and any problems related to this, as well as current and popular datasets that collect related data or offer alternative approaches in operationalizing concepts for empirical research. **EXAMPLES**, if not provided before, are meant to bring concepts to life. We have taken additional steps to roam across the larger universe of dictatorships and include lesser-known examples where possible.

Finally, the **IMPACT ON POLICY** is added if a certain concept reframed policy-making in some way. **NEW FRONTIERS** presents current and cutting-edge research or new interpretations (if authors are aware of its existence). **OTHER LANGUAGES** (an optional entry section for authors) offers a selected inroad in non-English treatises on the concept.



REGIONAL VARIATION provides a spatial, geographical overview per world region to note if a concept differs in application or interpretation across various area studies or when it was applied uniquely to a particular world region. Our (world region/area studies) categories are very broad and intended as such. As per general practice, we divide the world into Latin America (including the Caribbean); Eurasia (differing between Western, Central and Eastern, Southern Europe, the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, depending on the concept); the Middle East & North Africa (MENA); Sub Saharan Africa and the Indo-Pacific (lumping South, Southeast and East Asia together, unless specified). We are absolutely aware that several, if not all, of these terms: Latin America, Eurasia, MENA, Sub Saharan Africa and (especially) the Indo-Pacific have political connotations and carry emotional meanings. We do not use these terms to formulate judgments about the nature of rulership in those states in an essentialist manner. Our approach is purely spatial, following convention and grouping the fragmented taxonomy of smaller area studies.

Overview of the book sections

The EncTyr offers a logical breakdown of all terms, concepts and theories related to comparative authoritarianism, but we are convinced that a fully alphabetical list of all entries would not benefit readers. Entries relate to one another, and the larger field and their position in the EncTyr should reflect this, hence our use of book sections. For this reason, we have sorted all entries into eight logical sections, which are described below. Our choice of how to present these entries differs somewhat per section. For most, an alphabetical order suffices, but for Section 2 (Classifications & Typologies) and Section 8 (Actors & Institutions), we have applied a more coherent structure.

SECTION 1 – Concepts & Archetypes – (alphabetically)

This section of the encyclopedia serves as a comprehensive repository of key concepts and archetypes essential to the study of dictatorships and authoritarian regimes. It is designed to provide researchers, analysts, educators, students, and policy-makers with a robust foundation for understanding the complex landscape of non-democratic governance and the prevalent theoretical approaches.

The concepts and archetypes presented here span from ancient Greek and Latin political thought to cutting-edge contemporary research, offering a panoramic view of how our understanding of authoritarian rule has evolved.

The EncTyr covers all the foundational regime archetypes from ancient Greek philosophy: **autocracy**, **democracy, despotism, oligarchy**, **tyranny,** even **aristocracy**, **monarchy** and **timocracy**; and several from Latin: **authoritarianism** and **dictatorship**. These enduring concepts continue to shape our understanding of political systems and provide a historical context for modern regime typologies.

The influence of Max Weber's sociological approach to political authority is reflected in the inclusion of concepts such as **charismatic rule**, **traditional rule**, **patrimonialism** and **sultanism**. These Weberian archetypes have been instrumental in shaping modern comparative politics and remain relevant in contemporary analyses of authoritarian regimes, but even these concepts are not without fault.

In the wake of WWII, the concept of **totalitarianism** temporarily sucked up all the oxygen, with **autocracy** and later **authoritarianism** being related to residual categories between the free world and totalitarian regimes in the specialized literature. Like with **dictatorship**, we explain how these terms bounced back, but with different meanings.

Building on these classical and sociological foundations, we explore more recent regime archetypes that emerged in the scholarly discourse since WWII and continue to be archetypes today. These include **military regimes**, **single-party regimes**, **personalist rule**, and **monarchies** (as the oldest regime type, we provide deeper regional overviews for monarchies). We also delve into nuanced categories that dominated between the 1960s and 1990s, such as **anocracy**, **kleptocracy**, **neo-patrimonialism**, **neo-sultanism**, and **bureaucratic authoritarianism,** which capture the diverse manifestations of authoritarian governance from the previous century but lost traction today.

Recognizing the fluid nature of political systems, we include in-depth discussions on **hybrid regimes**, which blend elements of democracy and authoritarianism and remain a source of continuous confusion in the literature. Additionally, we explore emerging concepts that reflect new dimensions of authoritarian rule, such as **digital authoritarianism** and the role of political **trust** in non-democratic contexts.



Beyond regime categories, this section encompasses a wide array of analytical tools and analytical concepts crucial for understanding the functioning of authoritarian systems. We explore the intricate dynamics of **clientelism** and **corruption**, which often form the backbone of authoritarian power structures. The role of **informality** and **state capture** in shaping political outcomes is examined, providing insight into how authoritarian leaders manipulate institutions to consolidate their rule.

Legitimacy and political **trust** are dissected to understand how non-democratic regimes maintain their grip on power beyond mere coercion. The complex web of **ruling coalitions** and power dynamics within authoritarian systems is unraveled, offering a glimpse into the internal machinations that sustain these regimes. Furthermore, we explore lenses such as **ethnic politics** or **dynasties** to understand authoritarianism.

The primary aim of this section is to offer a comprehensive overview of the conceptual toolkit available to scholars and students of comparative authoritarianism. By tracing the origins and evolution of these concepts, we provide readers with a nuanced understanding of how they have been applied and interpreted across different historical contexts and scholarly traditions.

Our approach is both historical and analytical, ensuring that readers grasp not only the definitions of these concepts but also their theoretical underpinnings and practical applications in research. We have made a concerted effort to include foundational concepts that have stood the test of time alongside once-prominent ideas that have fallen into relative disuse but remain historically significant. Evergreen concepts that have evolved in interpretation but retain analytical value are presented alongside cutting-edge ideas that reflect the changing nature of authoritarian rule in the twenty-first century.

By presenting this rich tapestry of concepts and archetypes, we aim to equip our readers with the intellectual tools necessary to navigate the complex field of dictatorship studies and comparative authoritarianism. This section serves as a crucial reference point for understanding the subsequent parts of the encyclopedia, which delve deeper into specific aspects of authoritarian behavior, governance, performance and much more.

SECTION 2 – Classifications & Typologies – (sorted by type of classification, chronologically)

This section of the EncTyr is dedicated to the critical examination of political regime classifications and typologies, with a particular focus on non-democratic systems. It serves as an essential resource for researchers, educators, and students seeking to understand the diverse approaches to categorizing and analyzing political regimes throughout history and in contemporary scholarship.

The section presents over 50 classification systems (about 35 in detail), organized not alphabetically but chronologically within thematic subsections. This structure allows readers to trace the evolution of regime typologies and understand how different approaches have built upon or diverged from one another over time.

The content is divided into several key subsections. We begin with **Classical & Early Modern Political Regime Classifications**, exploring foundational typologies from ancient and early modern political thought. This subsection focuses on thinkers who developed comprehensive classification systems or significantly innovated upon existing ones rather than those who introduced singular concepts. Following this, we delve into modern political regime classifications, which are further divided into three parts based on the number of categories used: **dichotomous categories**, **trichotomous categories** and **polychotomous categories**. This organization allows readers to understand how the complexity of regime classifications has evolved. The final subsection examines **continuous measures**, exploring more recent approaches that view regime types as points on a spectrum rather than discrete categories. Each subsection begins with an introduction that contextualizes the typologies within the broader evolution of political thought and comparative politics.

All entries in this section are concise yet comprehensive, providing essential background information on each classification system. To this end, the introductory entry to this section, **Classifying Political Regimes & Rulers**, illustrates the taxonomy of all regime classifications and according to which criteria they are presented to readers.

Each entry explores the historical and intellectual context in which a typology was developed, the methodological approach and criteria used for classification, and the specific problems or questions each typology aimed to address. Furthermore, they briefly discuss the



strengths and limitations of each classification system, as well as its impact and legacy in the field of comparative authoritarianism.

The primary goal of this section is to provide a nuanced understanding of how political regimes, particularly non-democratic ones, have been conceptualized and categorized throughout history. By presenting these classifications chronologically and thematically, we aim to illustrate the evolving nature of comparative politics and the ongoing challenges in defining and distinguishing between different forms of governance. We aim to equip readers with the tools to critically assess the methodological underpinnings and practical applications of various regime classifications they may encounter in their research or studies.

This section emphasizes that each classification system represents a specific analytical lens through which political regimes can be examined, compared, and understood. We encourage readers to approach these typologies critically, recognizing that no single classification system is perfect or universally applicable. Ultimately, this section aims to enhance the methodological rigor and conceptual clarity of research in dictatorship studies and comparative authoritarianism, providing scholars and students with the tools to navigate the rich and complex landscape of regime analysis.

SECTION 3 – Regime Behavior – (alphabetically)

This section introduces readers to regime behavior in authoritarian regimes. Indeed, authoritarian regimes are not monolithic. Some authoritarian regimes are more benevolent, while some authoritarian regimes, like Cambodia's *Khmer Rouge* regime under Pol Pot, killed approximately two million people, or about a third of its population at the time. Authoritarian regimes engage in all types of behavior that deserve a much closer investigation.

In selecting various types of behavior for this section, we have focused on the most common tools of autocracies and how these tools actually help regimes become more autocratic. As such, this section begins with an entry on **autocratization**. One of the trends in comparative politics literature is to study what is sometimes conceived as the reverse process of democratization – or the gradual degradation of a regime's democratic institutions and processes. Autocratization is a process that is not limited to democracies, however, as two-thirds

of all autocratization episodes around the world are taking place in regimes that are no longer democratic. Thus, this field of inquiry also acknowledges that there are varying levels of autocracy, not just democracy. This section provides deeper insight into how autocracies (or non-democracies) gain a stronger grip on power.

At the heart of understanding authoritarian politics is a story of survival, and regimes use various instruments at their disposal to elongate their rule. Authoritarian regimes were previously conceived as mostly focused on **repression,** but there is a much wider range of behaviors that autocracies engage in beyond more stereotypical tactics of oppression and state terror (Box 3.13). Authoritarian regimes still use terror, torture, **purges** and show trials, but there are also non-violent methods of cementing authoritarian rule as well.

One of the well-noted tools used by authoritarian regimes is to brainwash the population with **propaganda** and **disinformation**. These tactics were common among totalitarian-style dictatorships during the Cold War, but research has demonstrated that **indoctrination** of citizens with propaganda and building **personality cults** are frequent tools of modern dictatorships as well. China under Xi Jinping, Ethiopia under Abiy Ahmed, and Azerbaijan under the Aliyev family are more recent examples of this.

In addition to relying on charismatic forms of legitimacy, authoritarian regimes also offer carrots of **co-optation** and **patronage** to maintain authoritarian rule. This ensures that autocracies do not have to rely solely on repressing their own people, which could trigger a backlash. While co-opting the opposition serves the purpose of neutralizing pushback, offering jobs and other perks to their supporters to help authoritarian regimes build legitimacy.

Another way in which authoritarian regimes build legitimacy is through utilizing democratic institutions. More recent scholarship has argued that autocracies mimic democracies, not to become more democratic, but because using democratic-like institutions actually prolongs their rule. Autocracies are increasingly likely to use elections and constitutions to demonstrate their popularity and to offer a veneer of commitment to the rights of their citizens. The issue, of course, is that authoritarian regimes find ways to use elections to their advantage, engaging in vote buying, voter suppression and other forms of **electoral malpractice** and fraud while also eliminating term



limits to ensure that power-hungry autocrats can stay in power indefinitely.

This section aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how the behavior of authoritarian regimes has evolved and how these behaviors have helped to solidify authoritarian forms of rule.

SECTION 4 – Ideologies & Worldviews – (alphabetically)

This section introduces readers to a diverse array of worldviews, specifically focusing on those ideologies that are deeply intertwined with authoritarianism and dictatorship. The concepts of liberal democracy, liberalism, and capitalism are not included here, as they are not the focus of this book. For a comprehensive definition and conceptual understanding of '**ideology**' itself, readers are invited to consult this entry under 'Section 1 – Concepts & Archetypes.'

The ideologies presented in this section are not merely theoretical constructs but have historically shaped how political regimes structure their understanding of the world and justify their power. These ideologies play a crucial role in organizing how elites collaborate, establish hierarchies, and legitimize their authority. They also contribute to the development of social constructs that reinforce centralized authoritarian control, often internalized by the populace through propaganda and indoctrination.

However, this is not a one-way process. Prevailing worldviews also influence the perspectives of elites, offering them not only justification for their rule but also a blueprint for what they consider a 'just' political order. Ideologies define what is an ideal ruler, which examples to follow, and what is perceived as the correct or moral path forward. Beyond legitimizing power, these systems of thought shape policy formulation and serve as transformative forces that reshape state-society relations.

Violence is often a tool employed by regimes to implement these ideological visions, which in turn alters the relationship between the state and individuals. Ideologies provide both a road map for justifying action and a framework for its implementation. Ideologies can also be used to mobilize support, muster resources, attract allies, convince the populace, and, at the same time, exclude or persecute certain groups deemed undesirable. These ideological visions may be utopian – whether reactionary (a romantic image of an idealized

past) or progressive (a new, better order) – in any case, they demand conformism, and participation is often not voluntary. The degree of tolerance for alternative worldviews varies across regimes.

A regime's ability to adapt and reformulate its guiding ideology is often key to its long-term survival. Max Weber's theories on a charismatic and traditional rule, along with his concept of routinization of rulership by designing institutional settings, touch upon this idea of ideological evolution.

In selecting ideologies for this section, we have focused on those with the most comparative merit. For example, **racism** and **Fascism** cover their different manifestations in various countries, while **Nazism**, **communism**, and **socialism** are treated rather briefly here due to their specific historical contexts. In turn, their shared formative dynamics can be found under the archetype of **totalitarianism**. We did our best to sketch out internal variations within Marxist movements by contrasting them within one entry (Box 4.9) rather than treating each individually.

Religions have also played significant roles in shaping political ideologies. **Political Islam** has merited its own entry due to its complex and varied tradition, while other major world religions have been grouped under **Religions of the World & Statecraft**. Unfortunately, space constraints have prevented us from including pre-Islamic African religions, pre-colonial Latin American belief systems, shamanistic practices, Jainism, Sikhism, Daoism, Shintoism, or Zoroastrianism. We have made a deliberate effort to include important non-Western ideologies such as Chinese **Legalism (the *Fa* tradition)**, Confucianism, Hinduism and Buddhism (under **Religions**).

This section aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how various ideologies have shaped authoritarian regimes in pre-democratic times, like **Absolutism** and **Republicanism**. Emotional appeals like **ultra-nationalism** and **populism** contrast scientific innovations embraced by **modernization theory** that challenge liberal democracy like **Corporatism**.

SECTION 5 – Origins, Transitions & Breakdowns – (alphabetically)

This section introduces readers to how authoritarian regimes emerge, how they handle transitions and how they fall apart. Thus, this section provides an overview of the various moments and events of regime



instability in authoritarian regimes, and the legacies that have helped shape the emergence and persistence of authoritarian rule.

The section looks at key modes of authoritarian regime and leader breakdown, namely **assassinations**, **coups d'état**, **ousters, depositions** and **abdications**, and **revolutions**. These often-violent modes of transition are driven by a wide range of factors, which these entries uncover and discuss. As these entries highlight, though revolutions are comparatively rarer than other modes of transition and thus harder to predict, the seeds of revolution are often similar to the drivers of military coups. Coups d'état have been the primary mode of leadership transition in some countries, particularly in Sub Saharan Africa in the 1970s and 1980s. While the 2000s saw a dip in the number of coups worldwide, coups seem to be making a comeback. The rich literature on coups is explored in depth, helping to explain why this may be the case.

The section also examines **transitions** more generally, looking at succession, elite pacts and what the **exit options** are for authoritarian regimes and leaders. In order to avoid violence, authoritarian regimes may try to institutionalize **succession** as this provides greater certainty and prevents power struggles. Succession has been successfully executed twice in North Korea, from father to son to grandson, while Cameroon's leader Paul Biya (who is in his 90s) has not yet cemented his son Frank's control over the country. While succession denotes that there has been a leadership transition, it does not indicate if there has been a transition to democracy. As this section explains, institutionalizing succession is actually an indicator of **longevity, stability & resilience**, serving as a sign of continuity rather than radical change.

Elite pacts, on the other hand, are usually associated with pacted transitions to democracy, representing the start of the democratization process. To understand better the aftermath of regime breakdown, this section also explores the process of **democratization** and **democratic consolidation**. Rather than exploring democratization as a process that is driven by the momentum of different factors, the entries in this section add to our understanding of transitions by giving a better grasp of how previous experience with autocracy impacts these processes and the chances for democratic consolidation.

To understand better how the past shapes these transitions, this

section also offers entries on various important legacies, such as **authoritarian legacies**, **colonial legacies, revolutionary legacies** and sentiments such as **authoritarian nostalgia**. All of these factors have important implications for transitions to and the consolidation of democracy and help explain why many new democracies struggle to fend off the forces of autocracy.

This section offers a comprehensive overview of the various modes of change in authoritarian regimes – running the spectrum from elite-led military coups to citizen-led revolutions. Furthermore, while change is an important theme in this section, through various entries, we explain how these legacies of the past continue to shape the regimes of the present.

SECTION 6 – International Relations – (alphabetically)

This part examines the intersection of comparative politics and International Relations in understanding authoritarian politics. Authoritarian regimes are a primary area of focus in comparative politics, but the spread of authoritarianism and democracy is greatly affected by international factors as much as domestic ones.

Much has been written about democratic diffusion and how democracy has spread around the world. While we do provide information about how democracy is promoted (cf. **democracy support** and **democracy promotion**) in authoritarian settings, the importance of **autocratic diffusion** is also explored. Thus, one of the key areas of inquiry in this section is how international factors drive the spread of authoritarian rule. In understanding this, various entries focus on what role powerful autocracies have played in promoting authoritarianism (or **authoritarian promotion**) and what the impact of **authoritarian learning** and **authoritarian collaboration** has been.

Much of the cooperation and sharing of best practices among authoritarian regimes was in response to the fear of democracy spreading through bottom-up revolutions, such as the Flower or **Color Revolutions** and the **Arab Spring**. In both cases, authoritarian powerhouses in their respective regions (Russia and Saudi Arabia) shared with their regional allies how to prevent the overthrow of autocratic regimes and how to best contend with rising levels of citizen frustration and activism.

In addition to sharing the tools and tactics to stay in power, autocra-



cies are also focused on **foreign aid**. For the most part, authoritarian regimes have been on the receiving end of foreign aid, either from being coaxed into transitioning to democracy or to supporting the geo-political concerns of a more powerful ally. After a lull in the post-Cold War period, authoritarian regimes became more intent on influencing and shaping their neighborhoods and beyond, as seen by the more aggressive stance taken by both Russia and China to exert soft and sharp power. This is all part of an effort by authoritarian regimes to enhance their **external legitimacy**.

In addition to exploring less violent options for exerting power and influence, authoritarian regimes are also willing to engage in conflict. While authoritarian regimes have certainly been on the receiving end of **foreign invasions**, they have also been willing to take on these risks as well. This all illustrates that the **foreign policy** of authoritarian regimes is incredibly variable and depends greatly on leadership characteristics, elite structure, capacity levels and geo-political factors.

As authoritarian regimes are often at least one of the actors involved in a conflict, they have also been subject to reprisal by the international community. The most commonly used tool in response to conflict has been to implement sanctions (and the vast majority of regimes that face sanctions are authoritarian regimes). The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is just one example of **international sanctions**, which pack a punch but usually fail to compel authoritarian regimes to change their ways.

This section explores the most important concepts in international relations involving authoritarian regimes to understand better their motivations and actions and how effective authoritarian regimes are in achieving their objectives and thwarting efforts to weaken their power.

SECTION 7 – Performance – (alphabetically)

This section examines the performance of authoritarian regimes. During the Cold War, much attention was given to authoritarian regimes, arguing that they held certain strengths in generating economic growth and industrialization – known as the 'authoritarian advantage.' The logic was that without checks and balances or any sort of gridlock, they were less likely to face policy paralysis and had

the stability to pursue long-term economic plans.

Moreover, while some authoritarian regimes have managed to achieve impressive poverty reduction, such as China which lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, most authoritarian regimes do not perform as well comparatively speaking when it comes to economic **development**. Some authoritarian regimes do offer public goods and welfare, but many authoritarian regimes fail to help their citizens meet the minimum standards of economic security or food security. As Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen remarked, there has never been a famine in a democracy (cf. Box 7.4).

While there are exceptions, many authoritarian regimes also fail to protect their citizens from various types of external shocks, whether it be **disease management** or **disaster management**. After Venezuela was autocratized, it saw a return of malaria and yellow fever, two diseases that were under control when the country was more democratic. Syria had an abysmal response to a devastating earthquake in 2023, as had Myanmar after various cyclones.

In addition to performing poorly with respect to disease and disaster management, authoritarian regimes are also more likely to violate the **human rights** of their citizens, violate minority rights, and fail to uphold or acknowledge the rights of the LGBTQ+ community (Box 7.5). Though **gender equality** can exist in authoritarian regimes, in most cases, women do not possess genuine political power. Studies have also shown that gender equality is an important precursor to democracy, which gives more reasoning for autocrats to pink-wash – or pass pseudo-gender-friendly policies that have little meaning in practice.

The **conflict** behavior of **authoritarian regimes** is another well-studied area of inquiry. For the most part, though there is little consensus on whether or not authoritarian regimes are more conflict-prone than democracies, many authors have concurred that it is personalist regimes that are the most risk-acceptant and unpredictable. The relationship between authoritarian regimes and **terrorism** is another well-studied topic that has looked at the extent to which autocrats are more likely to host terrorist groups and more likely to be the target of acts of terrorism.

While there is also not a linear relationship with regard to the level of autocracy and terror threats, there is a clearer relationship between



authoritarianism and **state fragility & failure**. Just as democracies have not experienced famines, democracies also do not tend to fail. Additionally, it is within these failed states, or states that are experiencing, at the very least, pockets of failure, that we see the emergence of **narco-states** or states that have been captured by organized crime.

The threats posed by organized crime are definitely pervasive, yet other less conventional forms of warfare, such as **cyber-warfare** and **nuclear policy,** also pose psychological, tangible and direct threats to the enemies of authoritarian regimes. Again, there is no consensus on whether or not authoritarian regimes are more likely than democracies to pursue nuclear weapons, but personalist regimes have emerged as the most likely to build nuclear programs in order to offset the inherent weaknesses of these types of regimes. Cyber-warfare is another tool autocracies use in order to overcome their comparative military disadvantage with other democracies. Like terrorism, cyber-warfare is an example of asymmetric warfare that is popular with weaker actors.

Education is one area where authoritarian regimes have a mixed record. While some authoritarian regimes were able to ensure near-perfect literacy rates, other authoritarian regimes have seen dwindling rates of school enrolment. In contrast to democracies, authoritarian regimes use education not just to improve human capital, something that is necessary to foster a healthy civil society and private sector but also to control their citizens through the use of indoctrination. It is the educational system where the vast majority of indoctrination efforts take place, as education during one's impressionable years is critical to making an indelible impact.

Because the goal of most dictatorships is always the survival of the regime first and foremost over the flourishment and success of their citizens, no matter how well autocracies may perform in certain areas and cases, the vast majority fail to live up to the expectations of the 'authoritarian advantage.'

This section provides an overview of all of these theories of authoritarian performance. In doing so, it offers detailed examples of how autocracies perform and what explains the variance in performance levels both within autocracies and compared to democracies as well.

SECTION 8 – Institutions & Actors – (sorted by type, then alphabetically)

This section of the encyclopedia provides a comprehensive examination of the key actors and institutions that shape authoritarian regimes. It is designed to offer a deeper look into the complex power dynamics within non-democratic systems.

Rather than following an alphabetical order, this section is organized into four concentric circles of power, each representing a different level of proximity to the regime's core. This structure allows for a systematic exploration of how power is distributed, exercised, and contested within authoritarian systems.

At the center of our analysis are the supreme power holders and their closest allies. This subsection delves into the personal characteristics of autocratic leaders, including their **background**, **age & health** and **psychological profiles**. It also examines the often-overlooked role of **family** members in sustaining and shaping authoritarian rule. A significant contribution here is the dedicated entry on **female rulers & powerful women** in authoritarian regimes, addressing a critical gap in the existing literature.

The second circle encompasses the institutions and actors directly serving the regime. This includes the key pillars and their central administration: **bureaucracy**, **executives**, **judiciaries**, and **legislatures**. Special attention is given to the coercive apparatus of the state, with in-depth entries on **armed forces**, **police forces**, **intelligence services**, and elite guard units like **presidential guards & praetorians**. The role of political **parties** in authoritarian contexts is also examined, complementing the entry on single-party regimes found in the archetypes section.

The third circle focuses on actors who, while not integral parts of the regime, can be employed to bolster its power. This includes **mercenaries**, **paramilitaries & death squads**, and militarized **youth movements**. These groups, though not present in all authoritarian systems, can be used by autocracies to undermine and threaten the opposition. They can be tools to violate the human rights of their citizens without being directly held responsible for these atrocities.

The outermost circle comprises actors outside the ruling coalition who seek to challenge, disrupt, or replace the regime. This subsection covers **anti-party candidates**, **rebel groups**, **warlords**, NGOs, **civil**



society organizations, and **opposition** movements. It also explores the concept of **uncivil society** and its role in authoritarian contexts.

Throughout this section, we emphasize the interaction dynamics between these various actors and the ruling group. By examining these relationships, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how power is maintained, challenged, and negotiated within authoritarian regimes.

It is important to note that while this section focuses on institutionalized groups and their interactions with the regime, broader societal movements and popular **protests & uprisings** are addressed in other sections of the encyclopedia, particularly under Section 5, 'Origins, Breakdowns, & Transitions.'

Some remarks on transliteration, terminology and the Index

Regarding **transliterations**, we have adhered to the most universal standards of contemporary times. However, exceptions were made for names and concepts that have entered mainstream English usage, such as 'Glasnost' or the spelling of names like 'Gorbachev,' 'al-Qaddafi,' 'Zelenskyy' (not insinuating that these are in the same league), here we have followed the preferred spelling used by authoritative newspapers such as *The New York Times* or *The Guardian*.

When it comes to **terminology**, the editors decided to conform to mainstream practices, using terms like 'authoritarianism,' 'autocracy,' and 'dictatorship' interchangeably unless specified otherwise. Of course, the respective entries in the EncTyr reflect these terms' historical meanings, their evolution over time, and the methodological or conceptual stretching that has accompanied changes. For our purposes – and stylistic consistency – we use all these terms synonymously with 'non-democracies' throughout the book.

A final word on the **Index**: it contains an extensive array of lesser-known concepts and terms that one might encounter in the literature. It also provides specific background information on numerous regimes, both historical and contemporary. However, we have not indexed broad periods, such as the Renaissance or the Cold War, in relation to specific regimes. Instead, users will need to search by country name or regime name to account for these periods. Regimes are listed either by the name of their supreme power holder or (for

collegial regimes) by the acronym or name of their leading political party or ruling institution (e.g., *junta*) when a single clear power holder cannot be identified.

Polities (countries, territories) are indexed only insofar as they include specific information about their political history and authoritarian legacies.

The names of authors and political thinkers have been indexed up until 1950; after that date, only selected scholars and thinkers who made significant theoretical contributions are included. Without this cutoff, the Index would become bloated with too many minor references to authors commenting on or nuancing various political concepts, thus diminishing its retrieval validity.

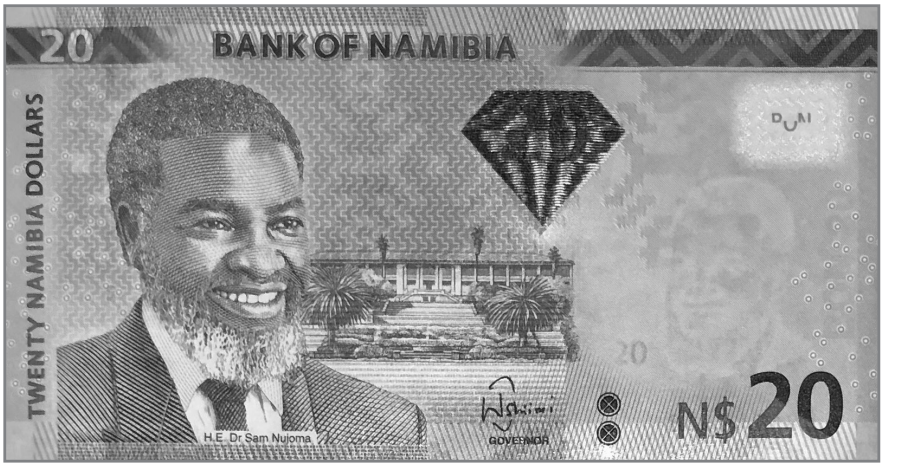
These choices ensure that users can efficiently locate relevant information while maintaining a focus on substantial contributions to the field.

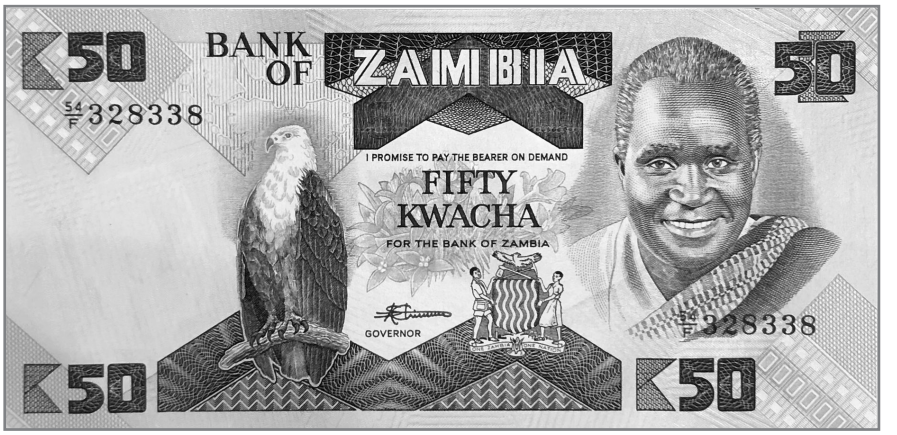
The editors

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SECTION 1
CONCEPTS & ARCHETYPES







20 Dollars, Namibia (1996), depicting Sam Nujoma, independence leader (SWAPO) and first president.

50 Kwacha, Zambia (1986-1987), depicting Kenneth Kaunda, independence leader and first president (UNIP).

1000 Shillings, Tanzania (2011), depicting Julius K. Nyerere, independence leader and first president.



Anocracy

More Murder in the Middle
– Helen Fein (1995)

Anocracy is a label for a group of regimes that fall short of being democracies but are also too pluralistic or unstable to classify them as autocracies. The concept mostly appears in publications that cite or use the **Polity Index** of political regimes or the related reports by the *Center for Systemic Peace* and is used to study the relation between regimes in transitions and political violence.

DEFINITION Anocracies are a residual category in the **continuous measure** *Polity IV* to classify **political regimes**. The *Polity project* was created by T.R. Gurr (1936-2017) in 1975 and continued under M.G. Marshall by the *Center for Systemic Peace*. As a motley group of regimes clustered in the middle space of a numeric scale measuring democracy and closed authoritarianism, anocracies are mistakenly branded as a distinct (categorical) regime type – see 'methodological issues' lower.

Hegre et al. (2001: 33, 35) juxtapose anocracies to "institutionally consistent democracies and stark autocracies" and states that these "semi democracies" are "partly open yet somewhat repressive." Fearon and Laitin (2003: 75-76, 81) added the element of state weakness, attributing them to "politically weak central governments," which are unable to maintain their monopoly on violence.

Van den Bosch (2013: 85) finds that the category foremost captures the level of regime weakness, that is, when a political regime has weakened to such a degree that it finds itself in the unstable equilibrium between collapse and transformation. However, since the term is widely accepted and does describe a specific set of conditions that can apply to any regime, it might be prudent to just refer to such cases as finding themselves in a "state of anocracy." Still, while regimes in this state can face similar challenges and opportunities, it is probably their (categorical) regime type (democratic or autocratic, with subtype differentiation) that will be more salient to predict how they engage with their environment.

SEE ALSO Anocracies are often equaled to **hybrid regimes** but in contrast to the latter, the **Polity Index** typology was designed to probe the level of political instability (and not the electoral mimicking of democracies). They overlap with other confusing terms like semi-democracies, quasi-democracies and pseudo-democracies (cf. **democracies with adjectives**). Anocracies correspond fairly well to the 'partly free' label of the **Freedom House** ranking, which also uses a **continuous measure** of regimes.

MEASUREMENT *Polity IV* uses two scales: one to measure democracy (0 to +10) and a different one (0 to -10) to gauge consolidated autocracy. Their combined score becomes the polity score, which can range from -10 to +10. This numeral scale is then (erroneously) transformed into regime 'types' encompassing full democracy (+10), democracy (+6 to +9), anocracy (+1 to -5), and autocracy (-6 to -10).

CLASSIFICATIONS Anocracies are subdivided between 'open anocracy' (+1 to +5) and 'closed anocracy' (-5 to 0). The former is a result of failed transitions to democracy and is thus characterized by greater openness, with contesting actors from outside the regime. The latter are regimes with a failed autocratic consolidation, where regime insiders challenge central power (Marshall & Cole 2014).

ORIGIN The term is a neologism derived from the Greek *ἀν* (*'an'* – not, without, lacking) and κράτος (*'kratos'* – power, strength), and is said to be coined by the Austrian-Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1950) in his work *Pfade in Utopia (Paths in Utopia)*. Buber actually used the German term *Akratie* ('acracy') in a different context, referring to the 'absence of domination' in juxtaposition to anarchy (absence of government). (Wojtaszczyk & Jakubowski 2003: 2-23) His translator, R.F.C. Hull, rendered *Akratie* into 'anocracy' in the English version (Buber 1958: chapter 5).

The American political scientist H.H. Eckstein (1924-1999) suggested the term to Ted R. Gurr, who applied it to denote lowly institutionalized regimes where executive power is weak and contested. Gurr hints that the concept is actually an ideal type and that no real-life case comes close to its extreme form (the complete absence of power or control) (Gurr 1974: 1487). (Note that such extreme cases (cf. **state fragility & failure** or civil war) are covered but coded as 'failed regimes' in the *Polity IV* index).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE According to the *Polity IV* data, anocracies are more prone to political violence, in particular civil war (Hegre et al. 2001; Fearon & Laitin 2003; Regan & Bell 2010) or terrorism (Chhabra 2020). While these findings have been criticized – see 'methodological issues' – the *Polity IV* categories can be individually used for diachronic and/or Large-N comparative analysis on leader constraints. For instance, Schofield and Gallego (2011) use the frame to explore the relationship between an autocrat and his supporters during crises. Today, the **Polity Index** dataset is still widely used in Large-N quantitative research, but usually in combination with other indexes and accompanied by control variables. Often, the frame and dataset are used to gauge democratization patterns (toward and from) (Colomer et al. 2016; Croissant & Martín 2006) or the relation between such processes and the rise of political violence (Mansfield & Snyder 2005).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Whenever anocracy is treated as a categorical regime type, scholars risk committing a serious fallacy. There are just too many variables in order to group such an ostensibly heterogeneous bunch of cases under one label that is not even grounded in theory. Gandhi & Vreeland (2004), for instance, show that for a score of zero on the polity scale (its exact middle), there are 17 distinct combinations of the five components. Thus, the group of

anocracies encompasses a range of regimes that can literally be composed of hundreds of combinations (Cheibub et al. 2010).

Another major methodological issue is that among the five components that make up the *Polity IV* index, two of them explicitly refer to political violence, making the correlation of anocracy with civil war 'virtually tautological' (Vreeland 2008; Cheibub et al. 2010). For a general review of the **Polity Index**'s methodological issues, consult the entry directly.

LITERATURE The best (methodological) overviews that cover anocracy are: Vreeland 2008; Cheibub et al. 2010. Frantz (2016) offers a more detailed look at their most common trajectories (back to democracy or full autocracy). Other key texts are mentioned under 'key significance,' higher.

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Anocracy, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Aristocracy

Simply the best
– Tina Turner, *(Simply) The Best.* Capital Records (1991)

The concept of aristocracy was framed differently by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle (cf. **Plato & Aristotle**), reflecting their distinct philosophical approaches to governance and the role of virtue in political life. Socrates, as presented in Plato's dialogues, considered the perfect constitution to be based on the rulers' contemplative and dialectical knowledge of the Idea of the Good. For Socrates, this higher knowledge rendered irrelevant whether there was one ruler (a monarchy) or several (an aristocracy), as what mattered was their philosophical wisdom and ability to govern in accordance with the Good. Thus, aristocracy, for Socrates, was not merely a political structure but a reflection of the rulers' intellectual and moral alignment with universal truths.

This elitist view subscribed to a normative order where it was natural that the power of a particular group surpassed its proportional size. Beyond ancient Greece, the dominant influence of distinguished minorities was justified by their perceived superior wisdom or virtue,

Exemplified by Plato's concept of the 'guardian' class of rulers. The Greek term (ἀριστοκρατία – *'aristokratia'*), a precursor to the English notion of aristocracy, referred to governance by 'the best men' *(aristoi)*. The defense of elite rule during this period rested on the empirical belief in the unequal distribution of the highest human qualities, a systemic feature in the face of abundant illiteracy, exclusive citizenship, slavery and poverty in these stratified city-states or empires (Maloy 2023).

Plato, building on Socratic thought, developed a more systematic typology of constitutions in works like *The Republic* and *The Statesman*. In the former aristocracy is presented as the ideal regime, ruled by philosopher-kings who possess wisdom and virtue. However, in *The Statesman*, Plato introduced a classification based on two criteria: (A) the number of rulers (one, a few, or many) and (B) whether the rule of law is present. Aristocracy, in this framework, is one of the 'good' regimes – ruled by a few for the common



good under the law – contrasted with its corrupted form, **oligarchy**, where the few rule for their own interests. For Plato, aristocracy was thus both an ideal form of governance and a practical category within his broader typology.

Aristotle refined Plato's framework while grounding it more firmly in empirical observation. In his *Politics*, Aristotle adopted Plato's deductive criterion of the number of rulers but emphasized that the distinction between oligarchy and democracy lay not in numbers but in socioeconomic dynamics: oligarchy represented rule by the wealthy few, while **democracy** represented rule by free citizens. Aristotle's classification also distinguished good regimes – kingship, aristocracy, and polity (a mixed regime) – from bad ones: **tyranny**, oligarchy, and democracy without law (Miller 2009; Saxonhouse 2015). For Aristotle, aristocracy was defined as rule by the morally and intellectually superior few who governed for the common good. This emphasis on virtue and public interest aligned with his broader ethical philosophy but also reflected his pragmatic approach to analyzing real-world political systems (Miller 2009; Saxonhouse 2015).

Up until early modern times, classifications of aristocracy were variations on these models. In classical antiquity, Polybius (ca. 200 – ca. 118 BCE) integrated aristocracy into his theory of mixed government, arguing that combining monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy could prevent degeneration into tyranny, oligarchy, or mob rule. His focus on balance influenced later republican thinkers (cf. **republicanism**).

During the early modern period, figures like Niccolò **Machiavelli** (1469-1527) and Jean **Bodin** (ca. 1530-1596) explored aristocracy within republican frameworks. Machiavelli saw aristocracy as potentially functional within non-monarchical states but warned against its tendency to devolve into oligarchy. Bodin acknowledged aristocracy as a legitimate form of government but stressed its feasibility only when collective rule by an elite group was effective.

In Enlightenment thought and revolutionary discourse, thinkers like **Montesquieu** (1689-1755) emphasized aristocracy's role in mixed governments that balanced monarchical and democratic elements. James Harrington (1611-1677) and Edmund Burke (ca. 1729-1797) championed the idea of a 'natural aristocracy,' where governance was entrusted to individuals selected for their virtue and wisdom rather than hereditary privilege.

Burke defines 'natural aristocracy' as a principle rooted in nature and reason, which recognizes that only a minority in society possesses the superior qualities necessary for political leadership. This aristocracy is not a separate or isolated interest within the state but is integral to it, embodying legitimate presumptions of virtue and wisdom. These qualities are often associated with those occupying eminent social positions, such as landowners, high-ranking magistrates, professionals, scientists, and wealthy merchants. Burke argues that these groups are naturally suited to govern due to their proven ability and societal standing (Panizza 1992: 85-86).

However, Burke's natural aristocracy does not equate to meritocracy (Box 1.9). He emphasizes that property ownership should hold a predominant role in representation over individual talent or ability. This preference stems from his belief in the stabilizing influence of property on the social and political order. Property owners, particularly large proprietors, are seen as a 'ballast' for the commonwealth, countering the risks posed by the centralization of power or the potential tyranny of the majority (Panizza 1992: 102). Burke also expresses concerns about the rise of intellectual elites – disconnected from traditional social structures whom he viewed as a destabilizing force akin to the French *philosophes*.

In terms of representation, Burke integrates the concept of 'natural aristocracy' with two other key ideas: 'interest representation' and 'virtual representation.' He contends that parliament should represent the general interests of society rather than specific local or individual interests. This perspective aligns with his broader critique of radical demands for universal suffrage and personal representation, which he saw as rooted in an abstract theory of natural equality and popular sovereignty (Panizza 1992; MacCunn 1913).

Burke's organic, collectivist view of society further underpins his argument. He perceives society as a cohesive entity composed of interconnected communities – families, professions, and corporations – rather than a collection of isolated individuals. Aristocracy was a necessary element to maintain harmony.

Modern interpretations associate aristocracy with hereditary privilege or elite governance based on wealth or status rather than virtue or merit – a significant departure from its classical connotations. For example, Thomas Paine (ca. 1737-1809) already critiqued hereditary aristocracy as corrupt and argued for merit-based governance. Thinkers like Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) described it as a commonwealth ruled by a select group but noted its potential to become oligarchic if unchecked.

Modern interpretations of aristocracy in ancient societies often reflect misconceptions influenced by European medieval models. These interpretations assume that ancient aristocracies were stable, hereditary ruling classes similar to those in later European history. However, this view is misleading when applied to ancient societies, where social structures and power dynamics were more fluid (Van Wees & Fisher 2015).

First, there is a misconception that ancient elites were primarily hereditary, whereas, in reality, wealth and personal merit often played significant roles in determining status (cf. **oligarchy**). Second, the assumption that ancient aristocracies had distinct values exclusive to them is challenged; these values were not necessarily unique to elites and could be shared by other social groups. Third, the belief that aristocrats monopolized both political power and landownership is questioned, as evidence suggests that wealth, rather than birth, was the main social divide. Lastly, the idea of a rising middle class

challenging aristocratic power is seen as anachronistic; power struggles often occurred within the propertied elite itself rather than between distinct social classes (Van Wees & Fisher 2015).

Kailitz and Stockemer (2017) explore the relationship between legitimacy and aristocracy. The authors argue that autocracies with a regime legitimation strategy that ties the fate of the ruling elite to the survival of the regime, such as **monarchies** and communist **ideocracies**, tend to be more durable than other types of autocracies. This is because monarchies derive legitimacy from historical or divine rights, supported by a cohesive aristocracy whose status and privileges are linked to the monarchy's continuation. The unity among the aristocratic elite is crucial for regime durability as it minimizes internal challenges and provides a strong front against external pressures to change or overthrow the regime (Kailitz & Stockemer 2017).

With the spread of ideas on legal-rational **legitimacy,** the number of 'natural' rulers eroded, and aristocracy thus lost its status as an (ideal) regime type. Later thinkers adapted these classical ideas to fit changing political ideologies – ranging from **republicanism** to critiques of hereditary privilege – demonstrating how the concept of aristocracy was molded over time to fit later interpretations of the past while still retaining some features of its analytical value.

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Authoritarianism

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty; power is ever stealing from the many to the few.
– Attributed to Wendell Phillips, American abolitionist and liberal activist

Authoritarianism is, next to **totalitarianism**, the second archetype of dictatorship. Unlike totalitarianism, it does not cause so many controversies and polemics. Also, unlike the latter, authoritarianism did not stimulate the imagination of intellectuals and did not cause their uncritical admiration.

There are two basic approaches to analyzing authoritarianism. One is psychological, and the other comes from the perspective of political science. The psychological approach understands authoritarianism primarily in the sense of an authoritarian personality or authoritarian societies (see Pohl 2015). The basic work is the book *Authoritarian Personality* from 1950 (Adorno et al. 1950), which stimulated the research of authoritarianism in this psychological understanding (cf. **authoritarian personality**).

The political science approach considers authoritarianism as a way of governing, i.e., as a type of political system. It is in this sense that authoritarianism is presented in this entry.

DEFINITION Defining authoritarianism is not easy. The reason is the massive occurrence of authoritarianism in diverse variants. It is, therefore, difficult to establish any definition that could cover all existing cases.

Juan José Linz (Storch de Gracia, 1926-2013) presented the basic and still unsurpassed definition of an authoritarian regime based on an analysis of Francoist Spain. Linz's (1970) conception generated considerable response, including criticism, and became the basis for all later research on authoritarianism. No other (newer) definitions of authoritarianism have brought anything fundamentally new, and they all use Linz (Balík & Kubát 2015; Brooker 2014), although, of course, definitions by other authors do exist (see below).

Linz (1970: 255) defined authoritarianism as: *"political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones."*

According to Linz, authoritarianism allows the existence of different political attitudes, but these are tolerated rather than recognized. However, there may be non-political subcultures more or less independent of the regime, such as churches, cultural institutions, universities, economic entities, etc. Authoritarian regimes are characterized by a zero or



low level of ideologizing the life of the state and society. Ideology either does not exist, is replaced by an 'authoritarian mentality,' or is only limited and not imposed on citizens. This is related to the absence of political mobilization of the population. An authoritarian regime does not force its citizens to demonstrate their loyalty to the regime constantly and does not strive for absolute control of society, including the cultural, scientific, economic, private, and other lives of people. One person (dictator) or a group of persons (**junta** – 'council') rules, and the state is dominated by bureaucratic, military or police structures, but there is no (or only a very limited) mass political party, and there is no fusion of party and state institutions (Linz 2000). In short, one could summarize that authoritarianism deals only with itself, i.e., with political power. Politics is 'reserved' for the rulers, and everything else is relatively free or rather tolerated.

The definition of authoritarianism conceived in this way deserves two additional explanations. The first relates to the term 'authoritarian mentality.' This is a way of thinking and feeling that is emotional rather than rational. The mentality is characterized by a relatively small number of topics to which it can inherently provide an answer. These answers are vague and imprecise; they do not form a sophisticated system. They are often a set of slogans that can be contradictory to each other. The mentality is characterized by general values such as patriotism, truth, economic development, social justice, order, discipline, etc. These are understandable to most social classes. There are several types of authoritarian mentalities – bureaucratic, military, and ecclesiastical, which are partially different, but basically, they are on the same basis, which is order and obedience (Balík & Kubát 2015).

The second explanation concerns the way of defining authoritarianism. Looking at it, it is immediately obvious that it is a 'negative image.' Its definition says what authoritarianism is missing compared to **totalitarianism**. A full comparison can be shown in the form of a simple table.

Although Linz absolutely dominated the conceptualization of authoritarianism, this does not mean that there are no other definitions by other authors. An example is the definition of authoritarianism by Amos Perlmutter (1931-2001). In his definition, Perlmutter (1981) focuses on the institutional aspect of authoritarianism. According to him, authoritarianism is based on three instruments of governance. These instruments are (a) the single authoritarian party, (b) the bureaucratic-military complex, and (c) the parallel and auxiliary structures of domination, mobilization, and control, which mean political police, paramilitary forces, or militant youth movements. In practice, each authoritarian regime uses (combines) these tools with varying intensity according to circumstances and needs.

The importance of Perlmutter's approach compared to Linz's lies in the emphasis on the structural and institutional aspects of authoritarianism. In this sense, Linz's approach innovates but does not negate these aspects. On the other hand, authoritarianism defined in this way is difficult to distinguish from totalitarianism, and Perlmutter himself characteristically understands the classic totalitarian regimes of the communist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany as examples of modern authoritarianism, thereby actually denying the concept of **totalitarianism**.

Table 1.1 – Comparing Totalitarian & Authoritarian Regimes

Characteristic	Authoritarian regime	Totalitarian regime
Autonomy of social structures and the non-political sphere	Yes	No
Control of all aspects of social life	No	Yes
Monopoly control of economic activity	No	Yes
The leading role of a sole mass party	No/Limited*	Yes
Control of state institutions by the party apparatus	No	Yes
Legal or semi-legal political opposition	Limited	No
The existence of a leading ideology	No	Yes
Mass terror affecting the entire society	No	Yes
Violence against political opponents	Yes	Yes
Political mobilization of the population	No/Limited *	Yes
The pursuit of expansion	No	Yes
A model for other countries	No/Limited *	Yes

* Mostly only in the short period of establishing an authoritarian regime.
Source: Balík & Kubát 2015: 66

Table 1.2 – Linz's Classification of Authoritarianism

Approach	**Political regimes**						
Basic division	Democracy	Autocracy / Dictatorship					
Conflated use		Authoritarian regimes					Totalitarianism
J.J. Linz		**Authoritarianism** & subtypes		(Neo-) sultanism	Traditional regimes		
B. Geddes		Party-based	Military	Personalism	Monarchy	(Theocracy)	
S. Kailitz						Ideocracy	

Source: Created by the editors based on: Geddes et al. 2012; Kailitz 2013; Linz 2000.

SEE ALSO Other archetypal terms related to authoritarianism are **autocracy**, **dictatorship** and **totalitarianism**. More info about Linz's classification of political regimes can be found under **Linz & Stepan**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Along with totalitarianism, authoritarianism has become a basic concept for the research on dictatorships. Modern research on dictatorships is inconceivable without it. The concept of totalitarianism, in various ways, influenced entire generations not only of political scientists but also of historians, sociologists of politics and others.

ORIGIN The term 'authoritarianism' comes from the word 'authority.' As Giovanni Sartori (1987) demonstrates, this linguistic fact has become the source of many terminological ambiguities and mistakes. Authoritarianism and authority are two completely different things, and mixing them up is an expression of misunderstanding the two concepts. Authority is an old Latin term (*auctoritas*, from *auctor* – originator, promoter) that has not historically been taken pejoratively. It was a thoroughly positive concept, bringing legitimacy to its bearers (Arendt 1961; Friedrich 1972). Today, the situation is different, and the word authority can appear to us in a negative sense as an abuse of power. Sartori notes that it is important, if not to save the term authority from derogativeness, at least to preserve its independence from the term authoritarianism and thus prevent its depreciation. Why is this important? This is not just a linguistic problem but a meritorious one.

Originally, the term authority was not defined (with exceptions) in the categories of power (political power), according to Sartori, until the time when Max **Weber's** term *Herrschaft* was mistranslated into English. This has caused semantic confusion in such terms as authority, power, political power, influence, force, and coercion. 'Authority' is not 'power' (force) or 'political power' (rule) but influence based on prestige or respectability. Authority reflects significance (in a positive sense) – it is moral influence. In any case, authority does not force us to do anything; it does not take away our freedom. Authority is further associated with **legitimacy**, and it is synonymous with leadership, which has received spontaneous support. '**Rulership**' *(Herrschaft)* and 'authority' are symmetrical. Rulership without authority is either oppressive or powerless. Thus, authority is necessary for democracy, and a crisis of authority equals a crisis of democracy. For that reason, we cannot identify 'authority' with 'authoritarianism;' at most, it is an abused authority or a semantic error. Freedom accepts authority, and authority recognizes freedom. Freedom that does not recognize authority is not freedom, and authority that does not recognize freedom is authoritarianism. Democracy needs authority. If it has this, it does not become authoritarianism. The more authoritarian a regime is, the less it relies on authority.

LITERATURE There is an abundance of literature on the topic of authoritarianism, but it is more modest than that on totalitarianism. Nor has authoritarianism become the subject of artistic treatment in the form of novels or films. The works of Juan José Linz (1970; 2000) remain the basic and unsurpassed work, which are the conceptual starting point for all contemporary research on authoritarianism. Later literature focuses mainly on typologies of authoritarianism (see 'classifications' – lower), the functioning of authoritarian regimes (see 'new frontiers'), or the analysis of individual specific cases (see 'examples').

REGIONAL VARIATION Most dictatorships in the world from the twentieth century to the present had or have the form of authoritarianism. Other types of dictatorships, such as **totalitarianism** or, for example, **sultanism & neo-sultanism** (Chehabi & Linz 1998; Linz 2000) and real 'traditional' regimes (e.g., **monarchy**) used to be rare in the 1970s. From this follows the fact that authoritarianism occurs in many regional variants. This is also the reason why there are many typologies of authoritarianism (see 'classifications' – lower).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES In connection with authoritarianism, two methodological questions can be identified. Both relate to the question of the distinctiveness of authoritarianism in relation to the concepts of 'dictatorship' and 'totalitarianism.' When it comes to **dictatorship** and authoritarianism, there is a tendency to confuse the two terms or use them synonymously (Geddes et al. 2012; Kailitz 2013; Frantz 2018a/b). This approach has become common in mainstream dictatorship studies; however, such an attitude is an example of conceptual stretching when considering Linz's original framework. As Table 1.2 shows, while each Linzean authoritarian-



ism is a dictatorship (and not a democracy), it is by no means the case that every dictatorship is an authoritarian regime. There are different types of autocracy or dictatorship, and authoritarianism is just one of them.

Something similar concerns the relationship between authoritarianism and **totalitarianism**. Authoritarianism, as already said, is often defined negatively, i.e., it is defined in contrast to totalitarianism. It is, therefore, a category juxtaposed in relation to the latter, but both are unique and distinct concepts. It is by no means a 'softer' variant of totalitarianism authoritarianism – it *"cannot just mean that repression is less intense"* – but rather a separate type of dictatorship (Przeworski 2022: 25). The difference between authoritarianism and totalitarianism does not lie in the degree of oppression, the degree of brutality or obscurity of the ruler, but simply put in the way of ruling, in the sense of its scope and reach. Similarly, other approaches have identified the so-called **hybrid regimes** (cf. Levitsky & Way 2010; Schedler 2006), which can be conceptualized as a separate regime type and not a derivative of (closed) authoritarianism or liberal democracy.

MEASUREMENT In his classic book *The Third Wave*, Samuel Huntington (1991) stated that in the twentieth-century, democratic countries were always less than 50 percent of the global sample. The largest number of democracies was between 1922 and 1990 when it hovered around 45 percent. According to a recent *Freedom House* report (2022), which monitors the state of democracy in the world, the situation has not changed much since then. Currently, it is around 40 percent. This means that some forms of dictatorship have always prevailed and still prevail. Given that totalitarianism is a very rare form of dictatorship – as are, for instance, (neo-)sultanistic regimes and others – then most dictatorships in the world thus take the form of some type of authoritarianism.

CLASSIFICATIONS The most frequently cited typology of authoritarianism is that of Juan J. Linz (2000), who defined seven types of authoritarianism. First (a), there is a *bureaucratic-military regime* in which power is in the hands of persons coming from high state bureaucracy or army headquarters (cf. **bureaucratic authoritarianism**). Often referred to examples are the South American states in the second half of the twentieth century. Second (b), there is *organic statism* that represents European corporatist traditional authoritarianism such as Salazar's Portugal or Franco's Spain (cf. **corporatism**). Third (c), there are the *mobilizational regimes in post-democratic society* that arose as a result of the fall of a corrupt and ineffective democracy. Examples here are some European inter-war authoritarianism. Fourth (d), one identifies the *post-independence mobilizational regime*, a product of the national liberation struggle, in conditions that do not favor democracy. Here examples are the dictatorships in Africa after the fall of colonialism. Fifth (e), there is *racial and ethnic 'democracy,'* which assumes permanent and legally anchored political dominance by a minority racial or ethnic group over a majority group. Within the privileged minority, basic democratic principles are respected. An example is South Africa during Apartheid – cf. Box 4.7. Sixth (f), there are *defective and pre-totalitarian political situations and regimes,* which include regimes that aspired to become totalitarian but were blocked from moving toward totalitarianism. An example can be the process of communist conquest of *power in Central Eastern Europe in the years 1944-1948. Seventh (g) is post-totalitarian authoritarianism,* which is represented by communist states that have completed the process of de-Stalinization (cf. Box 3.4) and have resigned their totalitarian ambitions. Note that in another book, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan removed 'post-totalitarianism' from their original typology of authoritarianism and turned it into a separate type of dictatorship (Linz & Stepan 1996) – consult **totalitarianism** for more information.

Linz was followed by Guillermo O'Donnell (1973), who defined three types of authoritarianism: traditional, populist, and bureaucratic. The main criterion is the level of modernization (while Linz favored the mobilization criterion). Traditional authoritarianism (i) is characterized by low modernization, populist authoritarianism (ii) by medium modernization, and bureaucratic authoritarianism (iii) by high modernization. Representatives of traditional authoritarianism are mainly classic military regimes. An example of populist authoritarianism is Juan Perón's Argentina. The main examples of **bureaucratic authoritarianism** are Argentina and Brazil in the 1960s.

An extensive typology of authoritarianism – also following on from Linz – was created by Wolfgang Merkel (1999). His typology includes nine types of authoritarianism: (a) communist authoritarianism, (b) fascist authoritarianism, (c) militaristic authoritarianism, (d) organic-statist authoritarianism,* (e) racist authoritarianism,* (f) modernization authoritarianism, (g) theocratic authoritarianism, (h) dynastic authoritarianism, and (i) sultanistic authoritarianism* (see: **sultanism & neo-sultanism**). Those marked with * fully correspond to Linz's original classification.

Note that many other classifications define authoritarianism more broadly – like **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** or S. **Kailitz,** as shown in Table 1.2 – and have their approach to how this heterogeneous regime archetype can be divided into subtypes. For a detailed overview of how regime types can be mapped, consult the section on **classifications & typologies**.

EXAMPLES One notable example of authoritarianism was Portugal from the 1930s to the 1960s. It was headed by the dictator António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), who presented himself not only as a politician but also as a political theorist. He published theoretical texts in which he tried to defend his dictatorship and argued against the three main ideologies of his time – liberalism, **fascism** and **communism**. He openly rejected democracy and did not hide his authoritarian attitudes in any way (Salazar 1937).

Salazar was conservative, anti-democrat, corporatist, and nationalist. His thinking was based on authoritarian traditions and was inspired by the

social teachings of the Catholic Church. According to him, a strong (but not almighty) state, which is limited by morality, law and God, ensures the organic interest of the nation, not the individual. It is a national dictatorship and not a dictatorship of individuals (their personal power and ambition), social classes or political parties. Only in this way can the harmonious development of society be achieved. Politics then ceases to be politicking and governance is competent and efficient. The basis of the state should be the idea of **corporatism**, which is a means against harmful competition in politics but partly also in the economy. Corporations, unlike political parties, unite the state and society and do not destroy private property. The principle of representation based on professional, social, and economic criteria is more complete than representation based on political parties. **Nationalism** is important, but it is not aggressive, xenophobic, racist, or antisemitic (Corte et al. 2021; Gallagher 2020; Salazar 1937).

Rejecting any utopianism and dogmatism, Salazar considered himself a moderately and pragmatically thinking theorist as well as a practitioner of politics. His goal was to create a 'New State' (*Estado Novo*), which, however, became an ordinary organic-statist authoritarianism (Linz). Salazar ruled as prime minister (1932-1968), and at the same time, he was the head of the only legal political party in the country – the *National Union (União Nacional)*. The legal basis of the state was the Constitution of 1932. All state branches (executive and legislative) belonged to the government, which was independent of the parliament and responsible to the president of the republic. The president was the formal holder of power, but in reality, he only fulfilled the representative role of the head of state and nothing more. All power belonged to the government, but above all to the prime minister (PM), who determined the directions of the country's internal and foreign policy and directed and controlled the activities of other ministers. The ministers were only some sort of assistants to the PM. PM Salazar, therefore, ruled the country personally. An interesting feature of the Portuguese governments was their personnel rather than political composition. Salazar claimed that only the PM and the minister of the interior are political positions; the rest are just part of the technical administration of the country. Although there was a bicameral parliament in Portugal (the *National Assembly* and the *Chamber of Corporations*), it did not influence governance (the legislative process was in the hands of the government). The *National Assembly* was dominated by the *National Union*, which won all the seats in the elections from 1934 to 1973, as the opposition could not participate. The *Chamber of Corporations* was not political but corporative. In practice, parliament was essentially only an advisory and passive institution (Gallagher 1983).

António Salazar was a typical representative of the classical authoritarian thought of the first half of the twentieth century. From this point of view, he did not contribute anything groundbreaking in the field of political theory. However, compared to many other dictators of the time, he stood out for his education and the ability to think theoretically. Also, the political system of the *New State* did not deviate significantly from the authoritarianism of the time. It meant the undemocratic monopolization of political power and the absence of political competition or democratic mechanisms (especially regarding the separation of powers). In short, the regime was Salazar's personal dictatorship, which he personally tried to justify in theory.

IMPACT ON POLICY Authoritarianism fundamentally changes the politics of the country in which it appears. It brings a new political system that is fundamentally opposed to democracy. However, authoritarianism does not necessarily change the whole society. The ambition is not to create a 'new human,' according to some ideological assumptions. Authoritarianism does not seek ideological **indoctrination** of society, which either does not exist at all or is weakly manifested.

NEW FRONTIERS Authoritarianism is a very general concept. In practice, it occurs in many different variants. It means that current research on authoritarianism is not so much about its basic conceptualization, but rather about finding and describing its new forms and functioning (Frantz 2018a; Ezrow 2018). The category of so-called **hybrid regimes** played a big role here (Levitsky & Way 2010; Schedler 2006). The best-known forms of hybrid regimes have been illiberal democracy (Zakaria 2007) and delegative democracy (O'Donnell 1991). Is the hybrid regime a type of authoritarianism, or is it a distinct type of political system? According to Jerzy J. Wiatr (2019: 173-174; 2022: 173-175), this is the first case of the 'new authoritarianism.' It is a civilian (not military) regime with free (but not fair) elections and political pluralism. Still, at the same time, it uses various coercive measures, and, above all, the rule of law does not work, and there is a politicization of justice.

An important issue related to new authoritarianism is the current question of **populism** (see Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017) and its influence on the erosion of democracy or democratic backsliding (Lindstaedt 2021). Is populism creating new types of dictatorship, i.e., new authoritarianism? According to some authors, populism is incompatible with democracy. It is, therefore, inherently a denial of democracy and a threat to it (Pasquino 2008) because it opposes its essential elements, such as the mediation of the will of the people through parliamentary and electoral institutions and procedures, party pluralism, separation of powers, protection of minorities and individual rights, etc. In this context, some authors understand populism as even tending towards totalitarianism (Abst & Rummens 2007; Panizza 2005). Populism has become an essential element of a new form of authoritarianism in the twenty-first century, which, in addition to populism, is characterized by the cult of personality, contempt for the rule of law, and politics driven by fear and nationalism (Rachman 2022).

Marlies Glasius (2018) takes an interesting approach by classifying different autocratic practices and their effects on regimes, therefore aiming



to provide a 'positive' definition of authoritarianism instead of a negative one. Her paper goes beyond elections and focuses on accountability, and not only at a national level. At the level of the international arena, others (e.g., Costa Buranelli 2020) are exploring the phenomenon of 'illiberal solidarism' resulting from distinct authoritarian practices that are being emulated and promoted as fundamental pillars of (regional) autocratic orders. Other works focus on the new tools at the disposal of autocrats and are developing concepts like **digital authoritarianism**.

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Authoritarian Personality (Adorno & Fromm)

Intolerance of ambiguity is the mark of an authoritarian personality.
– Theodor W. Adorno, *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950)

The authoritarian character worships the past. What has been, will eternally be. To wish or to work for something that has not yet been before is crime or madness.
– Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (1941)

The authoritarian personality is a personality type characterized by unquestioning obedience to authority and a strict and oppressive personality toward those considered others or subordinates.

DEFINITION The authoritarian personality was a concept developed in order to explain the support for **fascism** and **totalitarianism** (Adorno et al. 1950). The original tool used to measure authoritarianism was the *California F-scale,* which emphasized what characteristics were present in individuals that would make them more predisposed to anti-democratic **propaganda**.

Authoritarians are defined as individuals who have a higher willingness to submit to authority, whether that be political and/or religious leaders. They tend to hold an uncritical attitude toward authorities of the in-group and identify with leaders who project toughness and strength. Seminal work by Theodor Adorno and his colleagues claimed that there is a preoccupation with dominance and submission. According to Adorno, the authoritarian loves authority and wants to subject themself to it (Adorno et al. 1950). The proclivity toward strong leadership may originate from the issues that authoritarians face in managing uncertainty and ambiguity.

They are also characterized by a very rigid cognitive style and struggle to deal with subjectivity. This leads to boxing people into rigid stereotypes and creating in-groups and out-groups (Frenkel-Brunswik 1954). Authoritarians also hold conventional and traditional values and are more likely to prioritize social order and reject non-conformist behavior (Feldman & Stenner 1997; Hetherington & Weiler 2009). They are more likely to be aggressive toward individuals or groups that they perceive to be exhibiting deviant behavior. Generally, they are threatened by non-conformity and exert hostility toward out-groups; they tend to believe that the world is a dangerous place. In contrast, low authoritarians support individual autonomy, higher tolerance of out-groups, dissent and hostility to authority.

SEE ALSO The authoritarian personality is also associated with dogmatism and social conservatism. While studies of **psychological profiles** are preoccupied with profiling rulers, the authoritarian personality concept was developed to measure the proclivities of potential followers (foremost in right-wing dictatorships). Both approaches are part of a psychological lens through which to understand the individual-level predispositions that align with authoritarian regimes.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The authoritarian personality helped our understanding of the dispositions in character that would explain the rise of **Nazism** in Germany. The thesis had a huge impact on social psychology and what we would now refer to as political psychology (Altemeyer 1981; 1996; Stenner 2005; Oesterreich 2005; Hetherington & Weiler 2009; Titus & Hollander 1957) and in more general discussions of the relation between power and personality (Chancer 1992). This has been the basis for political psychology studies in South Africa (Duckitt 1983) and the Soviet Union (McFarland et al. 1992). From 1952 to 1987, more than 1200 studies were published on this subject. Work by Altemeyer (1988; 1996) has given researchers more empirical evidence of what the authoritarian personality is. Though there is still no consensus on how to measure authoritarianism or its origins, rising levels of authoritarianism have renewed interest in authoritarian personalities.

ORIGIN The term authoritarian personality originated from the works of Erich Fromm who aimed to explain the popular appeal of fascist movements in European societies, and in particular the voting behavior of citizens for the *Nationalist Socialist Party in Germany* (the Nazis) in the 1930s (Baars & Scheepers 1993). At the time, many scholars believed that the Great Depression in Europe would lead to socialist revolutions led by the working classes. Instead, it resulted in mass support for fascist movements that advocated authoritarian leadership.

As an explanation for why this was the case, it was argued that there was a particular personality type that was widespread, that was vulnerable to the appeal of fascist ideologies. Fromm (1941) and later Maslow (1943) argued that social beliefs were the result of the basic needs in one's personality. The personality type described was conservative, fearful of freedom, submissive to authority, obedient, aggressive, and almost sadist (Reich 1975).

By 1950, Adorno and his colleagues introduced a new syndrome and explanation to measure ethnocentric, authoritarian, or pre-fascist attitudes, known as the authoritarian personality, which will be explained in much more detail in the literature overview.

LITERATURE The concept of the authoritarian personality has been highly controversial, but it has made important contributions to political psychology and to our understanding of how attitudes might be a direct expression of personality. Adorno and his colleagues offered a Freudian analysis of the root causes of authoritarian personalities. Accordingly, our personalities are shaped by events that happened in childhood, most notably a childhood of repression (Adorno et al. 1950). More recent perspectives argued that authoritarians were affected by interactions with their environment (Altemeyer 1988; 1996) and, more specifically, perceived social threats (Feldman & Stenner 1997; Stenner 2005; 2009). Karen Stenner argues that the origin of authoritarian behavior stems from their cognitive and psychological incapacity to cope with diversity and stress. The failure to cope causes authoritarians to default to using strategies that require the least amount of cognitive resources, such as relying on authoritarian leadership (Lavine et al. 2002; 2005). Because authoritarians cannot develop more socially adapting responses to threatening situations, they reject what they find threatening and are likely to be drawn to a dominant authority figure that supports maintaining a strong stance against these threats (Oesterreich 2005; Altemeyer 2004).

Thus, authoritarianism, according to some authors, is a coping strategy that has to be triggered when there is a perception of a threat, which causes higher levels of anxiety comparatively speaking to lower authoritarians (Stenner 2005). Authoritarians are less capable of adapting to new stimuli and social situations, which is why they may struggle with



threats from immigrants (Mather & Jefferson 2016).

Many political psychologists argue that when there is a normative threat, this triggers authoritarian behavior and distinguishes authoritarians from the general public. In certain cases of extreme physical threat (such as in the aftermath of a terror attack), the attitudes of low authoritarians may converge with those of high authoritarians (Hetherington & Suhay 2011). While the public may respond similarly to a security threat, it is only authoritarians that are likely to respond after a normative threat, such as threats to the unity and uniformity of society (Stenner 2005). Authoritarians are also more responsive to threatening messages, which can originate from discourse on normative threats (Lavine et al. 1999).

Given that authoritarians can be triggered by social threats or perceived normative threats to the normative order, parties can resonate with these voters if they take policy stances that deliberately address their psychological motivations and cognitions, such as amplifying the threat from immigrants (Brader et al. 2008; Hetherington & Weiler 2009). Other research has confirmed that perceived normative threats, such as from immigrants, matter most for radical right-wing support – even more so than economic threats (Lucassen & Lubbers 2012; Oesch 2008).

Studies that investigated the relationship between economic inequality and personality found that economic inequality could serve as a trigger for authoritarianism. Failure to address inequalities could yield higher levels of intolerance. A study of 15 advanced democracies found that people who live in countries with welfare policies that reduced inequalities were less likely to believe that immigrants reduced wages, stole jobs and drained public services (Crepaz & Damron 2009). In contrast, countries with higher levels of inequality with limited welfare spending were more likely to exhibit authoritarian attitudes and less acceptance of immigration. If authoritarianism worsens with economic inequality, this is evidence that there is an interaction between genes and the environment, and the context matters (McCourt et al. 1999).

As the name would suggest, studies have argued that authoritarian personalities are more likely to support authoritarian forms of rule. Authoritarian attitudes can also create a climate that is supportive of authoritarian movements (Altemeyer 1996). Notably it is the authoritarian's tendency to submit to authority that leads them to unthinkingly follow strong leaders (Adorno et al. 1950; Feldman 2003). Authoritarians also strongly value social conformity, which may lead them to limit the liberties and rights of segments of society that fail to conform to their values (Feldman 2003).

Studies (Altemeyer 1988; Moghaddam & Vuksanovic 1990) show that authoritarians have displayed negative attitudes toward **human rights** and are prejudiced toward out-groups (Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer & Hunsberger 1992; Hunsberger 1995; Wylie & Forest 1992). In South Africa, for example, studies of white authoritarians demonstrated that they were more likely to champion Apartheid (Box 4.7) and support detention without trials and persecution of outgroups (Duckitt 1993; Duckitt & Farre 1994). Other studies have demonstrated that authoritarians from ex-communist countries have opposed the **democratization** process (McFarland et al. 1992; Reisinger et al. 1994).

The work on the authoritarian personality spawned other work by political psychologists looking at the relationship between personality and **ideology**. Recent work in this field has conceptualized support for various ideologies and parties as a form of motivated social cognition that is linked to the need to manage uncertainty and insecurity (Jost et al. 2009). Though studies lack direct evidence of whether or not the relationship is causal, authoritarianism has generally been associated with right-wing attitudes and identifications (Hetherington & Weiler 2009; Stenner 2005; Stone & Smith 1993).

Ideology and authoritarianism also stabilize near the outset of adulthood (Sears 1983). This is due to the fact that authoritarians fear taking risks and social instability. They have a strong need for law and order – needs that are associated with supporting right-leaning ideologies that support the traditional power arrangements. Studies that have looked at the psychological traits of individuals that support the extreme right have found that they show relatively stronger psychological and physiological responses to negative or threatening stimuli (Hibbing et al. 2014). Authoritarians are also drawn to parties that focus on the exclusion of out-groups as the solution for all of their social and economic problems (Klusmeyer 1993).

For the most part, authoritarians have been most attracted to radical right-wing populist parties due to their views on socio-cultural policies, not due to their views on socioeconomic policies, such as being tough on immigration and crime, for example (Rydgren 2005). Right-wing parties are not as appealing to authoritarians as radical right-wing populist parties because *laissez-faire* economic policies provide more uncertainty (Houtman 2003). Authoritarians are also more likely to advocate the use of military force over diplomacy (Kam & Kinder 2007; Hetherington & Weiler 2009). Supporters of left-leaning ideologies that promote massive change are also typically more open to experience, have more cognitive complexity and are able to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity better (Jost et al. 2009; Duckitt & Sibley 2009).

However, researchers have suggested that authoritarians can also be found on the far left as well. The brutal left-wing regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union led scholars to believe that the left could also attract authoritarians (Shils 1954). For example, authoritarians may support the security that a regulatory state provides, such as housing and employment (Malka et al. 2014). The issue, however, is that the far left in many countries often represents groups that are traditionally not part of the mainstream and do not represent the status quo. Given that authoritarians are less comfortable with pushing for massive social change and destabilizing challenges to the existing order, this would explain why author-

itarians have been less likely to gravitate toward the left (de Regt et al. 2011; Jost et al. 2009; Napier & Jost 2008). That said, when a left-wing party is mainstream and when left-wing politics constitutes the norm, such as in Eastern Europe, authoritarians should face little internal conflict about aligning themselves to the left. Authoritarians who grew up in left-wing despotic regimes have been nostalgic about left-wing panaceas for the issues facing their countries today. Barring the left does not constitute the norm; it is more likely that left-wing authoritarians will disengage from politics. Thus, in countries where left-wing politics is not mainstream, if authoritarians who identify with the left become less politically interested, this lowers the chances that elites will adopt policies to appeal to them (Adams & Ezrow 2009).

That same cycle also can take place on the right. If a radical right-wing populist party emerges that is not mainstream enough, it may not gain support from authoritarians. Authoritarians may be late to join radical right parties – deciding to offer their support once they believe that the party has become mainstream enough. Authoritarians are highly conventional, prone to conform to in-group norms and rules of conduct, and will adjust their attitudes to conform to group norms (Duckitt 1989; Altemeyer 1996; Oyamot et al. 2006; 2012; Stenner 2005).

CLASSIFICATIONS Different constellations of personality traits explain the variation in the authoritarian personality (cf. **psychological profiles**). The only other classification is the distinction between right-wing and left-wing authoritarians.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES & MEASUREMENT The authoritarian personality is measured in various ways. However, these measures have been very controversial. The work on the authoritarian personality was one of the first major works in political psychology to combine theoretical claims with social science methods. However, these early studies were heavily criticized on a number of methodological grounds and the literature on the authoritarian personality has differed in terms of how to measure the concept and how an authoritarian personality develops.

One of the issues is that it is problematic to make a psychoanalytic interpretation of personality, and it was difficult to empirically validate a typology that made categorical distinctions between different types of personalities. It also was not clear that the measures being used clearly fit the concept. Milton Rokeach (1954) worked on the concept and renamed it 'dogmatism' to explain the rigid cognitive style that would be attracted to authoritarian movements of either the left or the right. To do so, Rokeach developed a *D-scale* to measure dogmatism, but this was more or less the same as the *F-scale* and shared the same problems. Additionally, neither study used blind ratings or control for socio-demographic and other differences.

There were also issues with Adorno's thesis that the origins of authoritarianism stemmed from Freudian explanations of one's childhood, as later studies demonstrated that there was little empirical support for this. Gordon Allport (1954) argued that these traits were the result of the ego's weakness or personal insecurity and fearfulness. This personal insecurity and fearfulness caused authoritarian personalities to need structure, order, and control of their social environments. It would also cause them to react harshly to social change or unconventional behavior. Allport did not measure his concept, but his simplified explanation influenced later works.

There were also criticisms of the use of a *F-scale* personality test. All of the questions on the test to produce the scale were worded in a way that an agreement indicated an authoritarian personality. As there is a tendency to agree with questions, this produced high scores of authoritarianism. Some people who tended to acquiesce may have been falsely identified as authoritarians. Subsequent research tried to improve the *F-scale* so that there were an equal number of authoritarians and non-authoritarians and so the results would not be so lopsided and influenced by acquiescence.

Another researcher, Glenn Wilson (1973), renamed the concept 'Conservativism' and suggested that some personalities were more susceptible to anxiety when facing uncertainty and would adopt authoritarian social attitudes, which a *C-scale* could measure. The improvement with the *C-scale* is that it required responses of both agreements and disagreements. The *C-scale* was so highly correlated with the *F* and *D-scales* that it suggested that there was little to no difference in what was being measured. Thus, there was a struggle to produce a valid measure of the personality dimension.

Finally, there were criticisms that the measure was biased against right-wing authoritarians. The measure led to the conclusion that authoritarianism would only exist in the right political ideologies, even though so many authoritarianists were living in communist regimes.

Altemeyer (1981) constructed a scale to measure *right-wing authoritarianism* (RWA) but only looked at 'conventionalism,' 'authoritarian submission,' and 'authoritarian aggression.' Limiting the *RWA scale* to attitudinal expressions of these three components led to higher levels of internal consistency. Further studies by Robert Altemeyer disputed Adorno's original psychoanalytic theory that strict child-rearing caused individuals to develop a strong RWA score. Instead, Altemeyer argued that RWA developed through socialization and personal experiences in late adolescence but could decrease when exposed to a liberal education and increase yet again when exposed to a threatening social crisis.

EXAMPLES As mentioned previously, the authoritarian personality (and Adorno's 1950 thesis) had been dismissed on methodological grounds for many years in political science. However, with the rise of Donald Trump, Viktor Orbán, Jair Bolsonaro, Narendra Modi and Rodrigo Duterte, and the rise of right-wing authoritarian populist parties in Europe more generally, there has been an increased fascination with the original authoritarian personality thesis. Hetherington and Weiler predicted the rise of an



authoritarian candidate in US politics due to findings in their 2009 book that authoritarians had been taking over the *Republican Party*. In contrast to the past, where authoritarians may have been drawn to either the Republican or the Democratic Party in the US, over time, this shifted with authoritarians mostly congregating in the *Grand Old Party* – GOP.

Hetherington and Weiler (2009) argued that this process helps us understand the rise of the likes of Trump, a candidate who has drawn support from authoritarians and won two presidential elections. Trump's campaigns tapped into their fears of the unknown, of migrants, and of losing one's identity. Authoritarians long for the good old days, and by using the effective campaign slogan of *'Make America Great Again!'* (MAGA) Trump was able to appeal to this type of voter, subsequently propelling a political novice into the highest elected office in the US in 2016 and winning the popular vote again in 2024. Voters in the Philippines, Hungary, Poland, Brazil, India and France (to name a few) have also been drawn to campaigns that tap into fears of non-conventionalism and immigration, drawing concerns that many countries are taking an authoritarian turn.

IMPACT ON POLICY The prevalence of authoritarianism would pose an issue for democracy. To address this, studies that looked at the rise of **fascism** have pointed to the importance of certain learning and teaching styles and what is taught in the educational system. Research in **education** focused on stressing flexible and non-dogmatic thinking in children during the formative years of their education in order to combat this style of thinking. It is also important within the educational system to teach norms of tolerance and inclusion. However, the educational system has become a battleground in the fight against authoritarianism. Efforts to teach norms of tolerance, inclusion and complex political topics have led to a backlash in some parts of the US, where local governors and politicians have objected to teaching a curriculum that appears to be 'politicized.' Brazil has faced a similar backlash against politics, with the topic being banned from discussion in the classroom while also shunning educators from teaching gender and sexuality education (cf. **gender equality**).

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Autocracy

The first thing to be said about non-hereditary dictators is that they have obtained their position by climbing the slippery pole. They are normally highly intelligent, personally brave, because the contest for dictatorships is dangerous, and rather unscrupulous.
– Gordon Tullock (2004)

Today, autocracy is used synonymously with dictatorships (and authoritarianism). The term implies a distinction from other political systems in terms of the role played by force in the acquisition and transfer of power as well as the concentration of power in one person or a small group. (Heslop 2024) For this reason, it differs from regime types where the real power is diffused, or leadership is structurally collegial (feudalism – Box 1.14) or where force is not the main source of power (cf. electoral regimes). Nevertheless, these differences have been poorly delineated and will not counter the contemporary practice of their use. Their nearest equivalent is 'closed regimes.'

In the words of Gill (2021): *"The study of non-democratic politics is bedevilled by a plethora of terms that are used almost interchangeably and without clear definition: 'authoritarianism,' 'autocracy,' 'tyranny,' 'dictatorship' and 'despotism,' to name only the most common. There is no clear and accepted distinction in meaning among these terms, although the last three do seem to have a significantly more pejorative edge to them than the first two. Much of the discussion about the respective merits of these terms amounts to meaningless hair-splitting."* (Gill 2021: 8)

The 'auto-' prefix in autocracy derives from the Greek αὐτός', which means 'by oneself' or 'of oneself.' The term, therefore, implies governing by oneself – or governing without including one's rivals or challengers. (Anderson et al. 2021: 13) This became the Hellenistic/Byzantine Greek word for emperor, *Autokrator* (αὐτοκράτωρ), and spread to various parts of Western Eurasia. The term was used alongside the Latin *Imperator* (emperor) and *Kaiser* (Bavarian and Austrian spelling) or *Kaisar* (Old High German), both from the Latin *Caesar* (a surname of the Julian gens in Rome, elevated to a title after Gaius Julius Caesar (100-44 BCE) became dictator of Rome; it was used as



a title of emperors down to Hadrian (138 CE) (Harper, no date, b).

The term 'autokrator' gained prominence as a formal title for Russian rulers after their emancipation from Mongol rule and their subsequent consolidation of centralized authority in the Russian lands. It became widespread, especially under Ivan IV (Ivan the Terrible) in the sixteenth century, who in 1547 had styled himself as 'Tsar' and 'Autocrat of All Rus' (Всея Руси Самодержец – *Vseya Rusi Samoderžec*) – among other titles. It is a literal transliteration of *Autokrator* with 'samo-' meaning 'auto-' and 'deržec' – 'krator'). By 1721, all Russian tsars were routinely referred to as: 'Emperor and Autocrat of All Russia.' The term 'Tsar' (Царь) was an older title from the first Bulgarian empire (ca. 680-1018) – of course, derived from the Latin 'Caesar' – and was adopted by the Russian princes to stress they were now the overlords after ridding themselves of the 'Mongol yoke.' It was meant to indicate equal rank with the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire as well as being the supreme powerholder in these lands.

So autocracy was fully associated with (Russian, tsarist) monarchy, and this version differed significantly from other monarchies in Eurasia due to its unique blend of religious, patrimonial, and absolutist characteristics, as well as its divergence from the feudal and constitutional traditions seen in Western Europe.

Russian tsars claimed both secular and spiritual authority. This was rooted in the concept of caesaropapism (Box 1.17), where the tsar was seen as God's representative on Earth and held supreme authority over religious matters. This dual role was formalized under Ivan III and later reinforced by Peter the Great's reforms, which subordinated the *Russian Orthodox Church* to state control. Russian tsardom was also characterized by **patrimonialism**, where the tsar owned a much larger proportion of state lands, enterprises, and resources compared to Western monarchs. The state was effectively an extension of the tsar's personal property, as were (in a way) the unfree serfs living and working these lands for their direct superiors.

While **absolutism** became a retroactive label for various forms of centralized rule across Eurasia, Russian tsardom had maintained a rather personalist and extreme form of autocracy that lacked constitutional constraints until very late in its history (e.g., after the 1905 Revolution). Unlike Western European monarchies that transitioned toward constitutional or parliamentary systems (e.g., Britain after the Glorious Revolution), Russian rulers retained unchecked power over legislative, executive, and judicial functions, even though their monarchy had become very bureaucratic. Even after reforms introduced limited representative bodies like the *Duma* in 1906, these institutions remained subordinate to the Tsar's authority.

The English word 'autocracy' appeared in the mid-seventeenth century, with its earliest recorded use in 1655. Initially, it referred to 'independent power' or 'self-government,' but by 1855, it had acquired its modern meaning of 'absolute government' or 'unlimited political power vested in a single individual' (Harper, no date, a). It is fair to say that observers in the nineteenth century had blended the concepts of (Russian) autocracy and absolutism (also in Russia, cf. Belova & Britskaya 2018), but its defining monarchical aspects diluted with the onslaught of republican transitions (**republicanism**). This shift reflects broader historical developments, including the decline of feudal systems and the rise of centralized monarchies and dictatorships (Harper, no date, a).

After WWI, the emergence of the novel totalitarian phenomenon ruffled earlier regime classifications in the 1950s. Only when J.J. Linz (1975) re-interpreted **authoritarianism** to contrast it with **totalitarianism** did both become subsets of the older, general term of autocracy (as shown in Table 1.2), which also still included most monarchies and other forms of traditional rule (Linz's authoritarianism did not).

Note that the typology by **Linz & Stepan** was primarily responsible for this shift in meaning and that interwar scholars had been using autocratic and authoritarian as synonyms before the post-war generations of scholars started dominating the field. (Morgenbesser 2024) For instance, Diana Spearman (1905-1991), a British political thinker, states in her work *Modern Dictatorship* (1939: 10) that: *"Modern autocracy has assumed the extreme form of authoritarian government, that of the centralization of government in the hands of a single man. How far in practice the dictator actually exercises the powers attributed to him it is not possible to say, but in theory he is absolute, and he is retrained by no legal or constitutional rules."* (Cited in Morgenbesser 2024).

In any case, notwithstanding his influence on the field, Linz's distinction did not last, and by the late 1980s, most scholars used the terms dictatorship, autocracy and authoritarianism as synonyms (like the authors in this encyclopedia) unless when juxtaposing authoritarianism and totalitarianism. For example, G. Tullock (1987) – somewhat vaguely – separated autocracies as those regimes that are not feudal nor electoral. He equated the term with dictatorship. In his understanding autocracy could include some hereditary monarchic systems and was defined as a form of government characterized by centralized and absolute power, where authority is concentrated in the hands of one individual or a small group. Tullock's analysis is framed through rational choice theory and centers on the challenges faced by autocrats in maintaining power. He argues that the primary concern of an autocrat is retaining control, which routinely overshadows other policy goals.

So, while historically, the term 'autocracy' implies highly concentrated and unchecked power, its narrow definition applies to those autocracies where all opponents, challengers, or political alternatives outside of the ruling group are excluded from executive decision-making and rule (cf. Anderson et al. 2021: 13). In its broader definition it is applied synonymously with dictatorship and authoritarianism.

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Black Knights

For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game;
Atteches with me, allas, the whyle!
The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle,
That al behoteth and nothing halt
– The Black Knight lamenting
G. Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess,* v. 618-621.

'Tis but a scratch.
– The Black Knight, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, 1975.

Black knights are a colorful term for spoilers in a democratization process. A label for those actors that hinder or circumvent democracy support.

DEFINITION A black knight is an actor that promotes or strengthens authoritarianism in another state, either by using its leverage to halt or reverse democratic developments and consolidation or by intransigently supporting an authoritarian regime (in crisis) that could democratize otherwise (Van den Bosch 2015).

SEE ALSO The term is often used in combination with the **linkage & leverage** theoretical frame, and a black knight's actions fall under **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian promotion**, sometimes even **regime promotion.**

ORIGIN The term 'black knight' was first used in the context of economic sanctions imposed on the autocracies by the democratic West. From this point of view, black knights are *"counter-hegemonic powers whose economic, military, and/or diplomatic support helps blunt the impact of U.S. or EU democratizing pressure."* (Hufbauer et al. 2007; Levitsky & Way 2010: 41). Originally, the term did not receive much attention: In their works on hybrid regimes and democracy promotion across the globe, S. Levitksy & L. Way focused foremost on Western actions and institutions, and the importance of geographical proximity to the West. As an extension, foremost autocratic regimes like Russia, hindering the West's democratic projections in Eastern Europe and beyond, have received the label (e.g., Del Medico 2014; Lebanidze 2014; Natalizia 2019). Levitsky and Way also brought up that China, Japan, France, and South Africa have played such roles as well in the past (Way & Levitsky 2007).

LITERATURE The term is most commonly applied to describe actors circumventing (Western) economic or human rights **sanctions** (Early 2011; Shyrokykh 2022; Sejersen 2019) or within **linkage & leverage** frames for actors engaged in **authoritarian promotion** and **authoritarian collaboration** (Levitsky & Way 2010; Tolstrup 2015; Chou 2017).

Tolstrup (2015) conceptualized a framework for 'black knight bolstering,' meaning electoral interference by external actors in supporting authoritarian regimes during elections to ensure their continuity in power. This support is typically motivated by geopolitical or economic interests or the fear of undesirable regime changes (in proximate countries or strategic allies). The mechanisms of such interference include signaling invincibility to deter opposition, preventing elite defection, undermining opposition activities, managing popular protests, and counteracting pressures from foreign democracy promoters. Russia's interventions in Ukraine (2004), Belarus (2006), and Moldova (2005 and 2009) serve as examples. In all these cases, Russia provided substantial political, financial, and strategic support to bolster incumbent regimes. This included organizing campaign strategies, providing financial resources for



populist policies or vote-buying, endorsing election results despite irregularities, and using diplomatic channels to discredit opposition forces. While such interference can stabilize authoritarian regimes temporarily, it does not guarantee electoral success, as domestic and international factors can counteract these efforts and influence the final result.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Black knight behavior is intrinsically linked with **democratization**. Without the latter, the former cannot be qualified. Only if a democratization process is hindered by outside intervention may we label that external actor's behavior as that of a black knight. Without the democratization context, the label does not apply, not even with extreme cases like **regime promotion** – e.g., if state A topples an autocratic regime in state B and replaces it with a loyal autocracy for security reasons to gain more influence or for pure imperial motives – this is not black knight behavior, just power politics.

There is some biased assumption that only autocratic states can be 'black' knights – *de facto* rendering all actors promotion democracy 'white' knights – but in essence, it does not matter if a black knight is authoritarian or democratic, solely its actions in international politics determine its label. A welcome exception that exposes this nuance is T. Ambrosio's (2014) treatise on US actions to shore up authoritarian Bahrain in the face of nascent **Arab Spring** protests. Strating (2020) provides a critical analysis of Australia as a black knight when it comes to its anti-refugee foreign policy in its neighborhood.

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Bureaucratic Authoritarianism

Democracy is and always will be in some kind of crisis, for it is constantly redirecting its citizens' gaze from a more or less unsatisfactory present toward a future of still unfulfilled possibilities
– Guillermo O'Donnell (2007)

Bureaucratic authoritarianism (BA) is a form of authoritarian regime characterized by a strong bureaucratic organization and technocratic decision-making, often led by the military as an institution rather than through personalist rule. It is associated foremost with Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s and has been very influential in challenging prevailing theories of modernization and democratization of that time.

DEFINITION BA is a form of the authoritarian state characterized by the significant influence of coercive specialists, such as the military and technocrats focused on economic normalization. The concept was developed by Guillermo Alberto O'Donnell Ure (1936-2011) in the 1960s and 1970s to analyze authoritarian regimes in South America. BA regimes are distinct from other authoritarian forms, such as traditional, populist, and fascist **authoritarianism**, and differ from **totalitarianism** in that they do not completely erase the distinction between state and society.

National leadership was primarily composed of individuals who had gained prominence not through

political careers but through bureaucratic roles in large public and private organizations, including international agencies and transnational corporations. Rotation in the presidency among military leaders was a common, though not universal, trait. The decision-making styles of these leaders were typically technocratic (Collier 2001).

Key characteristics of BA states, as identified by O'Donnell, include a class structure dominated by a highly oligopolized and transnationalized bourgeoisie, which serves as the main social base of the BA state. These regimes emphasize coercion and the suppression of political dissent to restore 'order,' often resulting in the political exclusion and deactivation of previously active popular sectors. Decision-making in BA regimes is technocratic, focusing on 'normalizing' the economy through orthodox economic policies aimed at stabilization, implementing deep structural changes, and opening the economy to international capital. Additionally, these regimes typically close democratic channels of access to government.

BA regimes often emerge in the context of severe economic and political crises associated with 'high modernization' in developing countries. While some scholars argue that BA is limited in applicability and overly focused on specific historical circumstances, others, like David Collier, suggest that it may be challenging to falsify generalizations about its social and economic impact because O'Donnell defines BA partially by its consequences (Remmer & Merkx 1982).

Countries identified as approximating BA include Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Spain, Mexico, Greece, South Korea, the Philippines, Poland, Hungary, and Austria (Collier 2001). Further insights into BA can be gained by examining its relationship to concepts such as **bureaucracy** and **patrimonialism**. Max Weber's concept of bureaucracy as a modern form of administration characterized by formal rationality, hierarchy, and impersonality offers insights into the functioning of the BA state. However, some scholars caution that focusing solely on bureaucratic aspects may obscure the power dynamics and resource struggles inherent in these regimes.

The **legitimacy** of BA regimes is inherently fragile due to their reliance on coercion and exclusionary practices, making it difficult for them to secure genuine legitimacy. This fragility underscores the challenges these regimes face in maintaining stability over time (O'Donnell 1973; Remmer & Merkx 1982).

SEE ALSO This entry relates to **bureaucracies** and **military regimes** as well as **modernization theory** and **democratization** and **transitions**. It overlaps with **technocracy** and supplanted earlier Latin American regime types associated with **oligarchy** and **corporatism**.

ORIGIN In the 1970s, militaries ended up creating BA due to several intertwined factors. First, the military possesses a natural advantage in politics because of its superior organization, monopoly on arms, and emotionally charged symbolic status in many societies (Stepan 1988). This inherent power structure allows a military to assert itself in political arenas more effectively than other groups.

Already in 1962 S.E. Finer posited that the professionalization of the military further increases its propensity for political intervention. It tends to make the military more self-centered and focused on its technical tasks, potentially reducing officers' concerns with broader political issues. The military is typically protective of its corporate status and privileges and may intervene to preserve its autonomy or extend its interests and privileges rather than acting in the national interest. Furthermore, the military may perceive itself as the only group capable of establishing or maintaining order within a society, particularly in contexts where political instability or chaos exists (Nordlinger, 1977; Finer 1962).

Military regimes frequently lack legitimacy in the eyes of the public. To address this deficit, they seek to 'regularize' their position by incorporating civilian trappings, including technocratic governments (Finer 1962). Military regimes often embrace modernization as a central goal, aiming to transform their societies through economic development, technological advancement, and social progress. In Latin America, for example, the military often employed BA to advance modernization, particularly in countries like Brazil and Argentina (Perlmutter 1977).

Incorporating technocrats, who are less likely to challenge the military's dominance, provides a stable source of support for the regime while allowing the military to focus on maintaining control. This is illustrated in Nassarist Egypt (1954-1970), where the military sought to secure its position by incorporating technocrats and neutralizing potential opposition from the bureaucracy. (Perlmutter 1977). For example, figures such as Ibrahim Helmi Abdel Rahman, a US-trained economist, were involved in national planning efforts to roll out Arab Socialism (Box 4.9).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The concept of BA emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the inadequacies of existing theories of modernization and authoritarianism in explaining the rise of a distinct type of authoritarian regime in South America. Guillermo O'Donnell (1973), who developed the concept, argued that in some cases, high levels of modernization could lead to political authoritarianism rather than democracy, contradicting the expectations of the dominant 'paradigm of affirmative politics,' which assumed a positive correlation between economic development and democratization (**modernization theory**).

O'Donnell's concept was significant for several reasons. First, it challenged the prevailing optimistic assumptions about the relationship between economic development and democracy, demonstrating that modernization could produce authoritarian outcomes instead. Second, it provided a new lens for understanding the political dynamics of developing countries undergoing rapid industrialization and social transformation, particularly in South America. Third, it offered a framework for analyzing the specific characteristics of these regimes, distinguishing them from other forms of authori-



tarianism. (Remmer & Merkx 1982; Everett 2022). The concept also emphasized the role of the state in promoting a particular model of economic development. This model was characterized by the exclusion of the popular sector and a close alliance between state actors and a highly oligopolized and transnationalized bourgeoisie (O'Donnell 1988).

Additionally, O'Donnell highlighted the importance of threat perception in shaping the behavior of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes. He argued that the level of perceived threat prior to a **coup** significantly influenced both the extent of **repression** and the degree of political and economic 'normalization' pursued by these regimes (Remmer & Merkx 1982).

By focusing on the interplay between social, economic, and political factors, O'Donnell's concept provided a more nuanced and historically grounded understanding of **authoritarianism** in contexts of late development. His work has had a lasting impact on the study of authoritarian regimes, sparking debates about modernization, democracy, and the role of the state in developing countries (Remmer & Merkx 1982).

LITERATURE Guillermo O'Donnell's (1973; 1986; 1988) works in the 1960s and 1970s are the basis for the study of BA, but they absolutely did not constitute a consensus on Latin American politics. A great review of the concept can be found in the collective work edited by Collier (1979). O'Donnell's concept did spark many debates on politics, modernization and democratization, and still does: Brinks et al. 2014.

BA began to disappear as global political dynamics shifted toward democratization in the late twentieth century. This decline is attributed to several factors, including increased international pressure for democratization, economic crises that undermined the legitimacy of authoritarian rulers, and domestic movements advocating for democratic reforms. With mounting challenges both internally and externally, these regimes transitioned toward electoral governments after popular uprisings or negotiated **transitions**.

As with many older concepts (e.g., **prebendalism**), scholars tend to re-engage with them and dust them off to explore alternative viewpoints or critical lenses that have fallen out of disuse. Researchers fall back on the term for the study of bureaucratic legacies (Elías 2017; Graham 2019) or the study of the historical cases of that time: Ma 1999 (on Chile); Bogliaccini et al. 2021 (on Uruguay). There are some examples of its application to other word regions: Everett 2022 (on Russia); Domínguez 2002 (on South Korea); Kressel 2019 (on Spain).

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Censorship in a Digital Age

For intellectual life bad conditions are good and good conditions are bad.
– Constantin Noica (1909-1987), Romanian Philosopher and poet

To be for or against censorship as such is to assume a freedom no-one has. Censorship is. One can only discriminate among its more or less repressive effects.
– J. Michael Holquist (1935-2016), Scholar of Slavic language and literature

Censorship has long been a tool of control wielded by regimes to shape thought, suppress dissent, and maintain authority. However, have autocrats moved away from George Orwell's (1949) premise of *1984* with its totalitarian control on reality: *"Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past,"* and maybe moved on to Aldous Huxley's (1932) *Brave New World* with its more insidious forms of pacification, where *"truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance,"* reflecting a world where distractions and over-saturation replace outright suppression.

In the last hundred years, censorship has evolved between these dystopian ideal types, and the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to locate a nightmarish equilibrium between these two extremes in technologically advanced, high-capacity autocracies.

SEE ALSO This entry brings together various aspects of regime behavior: **repression**, **disinformation**, **cyber-warfare** and **propaganda**, and links them to the logic of regime survival both domestically (**legitimacy**) and internationally (**external legitimacy** and **soft power**). It shortly introduces the evolution of censorship from pre-modern times, the era of **totalitarianism** to the digital age of today's **digital authoritarianism**.

DEFINITION Censorship, traditionally understood, was defined as an external, coercive, and repressive act, typically carried out by the state or state-like institutions to control thought and expression. This liberal conception of censorship emerged from the Enlightenment's struggle to free intellectuals from the dominance of the church and, later, the state. It views censorship as an authoritative intervention in the free exchange of ideas, characterized by force and repression aimed at prohibiting, silencing, or erasing certain ideas or expressions. However, this classical framework is limited as it overlooks the roles of private actors and structural forces in shaping discourse (Bunn 2015).

'New Censorship Theory' broadens this definition by including not only state repression but also a wide range of social institutions, practices, and actors that influence discourse in subtle and often invisible ways. This perspective draws on critiques of liberal civil society by Marxist thinkers like Jürgen Habermas and is further refined by post-structuralists such as Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Structural censorship, a central concept in this theory, highlights how mechanisms like market forces, cultural norms, and self-censorship shape communication. Foucault notably argues that censorship can be productive rather than purely repressive, as it can incite new forms of discourse and delineate the boundaries of acceptable speech (Bunn 2015).

In the digital age, the understanding of censorship has evolved further under the influence of the New Censorship Theory. The Internet has introduced novel opportunities for censorship by both states and private actors. Governments now employ sophisticated technologies to monitor online activity, censor content, and manipulate information flows. At the same time, private platforms like social media companies play a significant role in moderating content, often blurring the lines between state and structural censorship.

CLASSIFICATIONS The digital age has both exacerbated existing challenges and created new ones, as regimes and corporations now have access to unprecedented tools for controlling information and manipulating public opinion. Censorship, as a phenomenon, can thus be understood from three angles, although these intersect.

State Censorship This involves direct suppression by government authorities through measures such as prior restraint (requiring approval before publication), post-publication repression (confiscating texts or punishing authors), economic coercion (financial penalties to deter speech), and Internet filtering (blocking access to specific websites or content) (Perry & Roda 2017; Gerschewski & Dukalskis 2018; Bunn 2015).

Structural Censorship This refers to indirect mechanisms embedded within social structures that shape discourse invisibly. Examples include market forces (economic incentives influencing what gets published), cultural norms (unwritten rules guiding acceptable speech), and self-censorship (internalizing norms to avoid expressing certain ideas) (Bunn 2015; Perry & Roda 2017). Sheen et al. (2024) find that the effects of self-censorship linger even after free speech liberalization because the media can always be punished for their truth-telling ex-post. This has serious implications for information-gathering in dictatorships and underscores the difference between censorship and self-censorship because when deciding whether to censor a report, the regime still learns the information; when the information provider self-censors its report, the regime is not able to learn the information.

Digital Censorship In the digital realm, as shown in the entry for **digital authoritarianism**, technology enables new forms of control over information. This includes social media censorship (removal of content



or suspension of accounts), search engine manipulation (altering search results to promote or suppress viewpoints), surveillance (monitoring online activity – cf. **repression**), **disinformation** and **propaganda** (spreading false information to manipulate public opinion), and cyberattacks (hacking to silence critics or disrupt communication – see also **cyber-warfare**) (Roberts 2022; Dukalskis 2021; Schlumberger 2023).

These types of censorship are not mutually exclusive and often intersect. For instance, state censorship can be reinforced by structural mechanisms when governments pressure social media companies to remove content. (Perry & Roda 2017) To achieve these goals, dictatorships employ a range of censorship techniques, which Dukalskis (2021) groups in the following categories:

Obstructive Censorship (A) focuses on directly suppressing unwanted information and silencing critics through methods such as extraterritorial censorship and domestic censorship, and targeting specific individuals or groups. *(i) Extraterritorial censorship* involves pressuring international companies to censor content, manipulating foreign scholars and journalists, or intimidating dissidents abroad through harassment or violence. *(ii) Domestic media control* of narratives by employing prior restraint, post-publication repression, economic coercion of media outlets, Internet filtering, website blocking, and deploying social media bots to manipulate online discussions. *(iii) Targeting specific critics* who pose direct threats are often targeted through administrative obstacles, reputational attacks, intimidation, or outright **repression** (Gerschewski & Dukalskis 2018; Dukalskis 2021).

Promotional Censorship (B) complements these obstructive measures by actively promoting positive narratives about the regime while downplaying or distracting from negative information. *(a) Public diplomacy campaigns* and *nation branding initiatives* are used to improve the regime's image abroad by showcasing achievements and emphasizing shared values with target audiences. *(b) Diffusion* messaging through **propaganda** and **disinformation** further shapes public opinion by spreading favorable messages about the regime's policies while employing tactics like 'whataboutism' to deflect criticism (Dukalskis 2021).

Despite these advancements in censorship technology, dictatorships face inherent challenges in balancing control with the need for accurate information – a dilemma known as the 'authoritarian data problem.' While censorship helps maintain power by limiting dissenting voices, it can also restrict the flow of valuable information necessary for effective governance. This tension underscores the complexity of modern authoritarian censorship strategies: even as regimes invest in increasingly sophisticated methods of control, they must navigate the risks posed by their efforts to suppress dissenting perspectives (Yang & Roberts 2023; Roberts 2022).

LITERATURE The literature on censorship has undergone significant evolution, reflecting shifts in the understanding of its mechanisms and purposes from pre-modern times to today's authoritarian regimes. In pre-modern and early modern contexts, censorship was predominantly focused on religious texts and enforced by the church and confessionalizing states. The most famous example would be the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* or 'Index of Forbidden Books' (see also Box 4.4). Before Enlightenment its primary aim was to define and maintain religious orthodoxy, and its implementation was often arbitrary and inconsistent. (Bunn 2015) This period marked an era where censorship was largely seen as a tool for suppressing dissent against dominant religious ideologies (cf. **religions**)

The Enlightenment brought about a significant challenge to these practices as intellectuals sought freedom from the authority of both church and state. Arguments for free speech emerged, emphasizing the distinction between legitimate rule and arbitrary domination. The liberal conception of censorship that developed during this time framed it as a coercive and repressive act carried out by state authorities, aimed at silencing dissent and controlling thought. However, this view remained limited in scope, focusing narrowly on overt state **repression**. (Bunn 2015) Johns (2009) explores the interplay between censorship, printing technology, and the development of knowledge. Darnton (2014) examines how censorship functioned in practice, particularly in the context of the Enlightenment.

In the nineteenth century, Marxist critiques expanded the understanding of censorship by highlighting its role in maintaining ruling class power through ideology. Thinkers like Antonio Gramsci introduced the concept of 'hegemony' to explain how consent was manufactured via control over institutions such as education and the press. This perspective revealed that censorship extended beyond state coercion to include subtler forms of control embedded within societal structures (Bunn 2015).

The totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century, such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, exemplified a more extreme form of censorship – at the level of book burning (Box 4.4) and far-reaching state control over **academic freedom** (Connelly & Grüttner 2005). These regimes used censorship not only to silence dissent but also to shape public opinion and construct totalizing ideologies actively. Traditional methods like prior restraint and post-publication repression were combined with propaganda, mass surveillance, and other innovative techniques to enforce ideological conformity (Dukalskis 2021).

The late twentieth century saw the emergence of 'New Censorship Theory,' which built upon Marxist critiques while incorporating insights from post-structuralist thinkers like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. Foucault (1990) challenged the traditional view of censorship as purely repressive, arguing that Victorian-era censorship surrounding sexuality actually stimulated discourse and led to the proliferation of new forms of knowledge and power. Bourdieu (1999) was essential for understanding structural censorship, which operates through social norms, specialized languages, and the dynamics of power within specific domains. He emphasizes how self-censorship and other unreflective modes of con-

trol can be more powerful than overt state repression

The New Censorship Theory shifted attention from overt state repression to the productive and structural dimensions of censorship. It argued that censorship is not merely an external force but a pervasive aspect of communication itself, operating through mechanisms such as market forces, cultural norms, and self-censorship. Foucault emphasized that censorship could be generative, shaping discourse and creating new forms of expression rather than solely repressing them (Bunn 2015; Perry & Roda 2017).

Sue Curry Jansen (1988) provides a comprehensive overview of censorship theory and its evolution. Judith Butler's (1997) work examines the relationship between censorship, language, and power, particularly in the context of hate speech and free speech debates. She critiques the traditional liberal conception of censorship and introduces the concept of 'foreclosure' to describe how certain forms of speech are excluded from public discourse.

In contemporary authoritarian regimes, censorship has adapted to technological advancements. These regimes employ sophisticated digital tools such as Internet filtering, surveillance, **disinformation** campaigns, and social media manipulation to control information flows and shape public opinion. In addition to obstructive tactics like extraterritorial repression of critics abroad, they engage in promotional strategies such as public diplomacy and nation branding to enhance their image globally. Digital censorship often seeks to be less visible than traditional methods; governments use techniques like 'friction' (slowing access to information) and 'flooding' (Box 1.4) to subtly manipulate discourse without drawing attention to their actions (Guriev & Treisman 2015; Gerschewski & Dukalskis 2018; Dukalskis 2021).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Censorship in dictatorships is primarily motivated by the overarching goal of regime survival and power consolidation. Dukalskis (2021) finds that regimes employ censorship to enhance internal security, promote external security, and shape public opinion and beliefs, using a variety of traditional and digital techniques to achieve these objectives.

Internally, dictatorships use censorship to stifle dissent, maintain social control, and neutralize challenges to their rule. By suppressing information that could incite unrest or undermine their **legitimacy**, they aim to prevent the formation of organized opposition. Controlling the narrative allows regimes to limit access to alternative viewpoints that might empower **opposition** movements or destabilize their authority. This strategy is essential for eliminating both real and perceived threats to their survival.

Externally, censorship serves as a tool for managing the regime's international image (**external legitimacy**) and advancing foreign policy goals. Dictatorships are acutely aware of how they are perceived abroad because negative perceptions can result in **sanctions**, diplomatic isolation, or reduced **foreign aid** or investment. To project an image of stability, legitimacy, and competence to foreign audiences, they suppress information about **human rights** abuses, **systemic corruption**, or other practices that could tarnish their reputation. This external-facing censorship often involves public diplomacy campaigns (**soft power**) and nation branding (e.g., **spectacle politics**) efforts designed to showcase achievements and promote cultural or ideological values.

Censorship also plays a critical role in shaping public opinion and beliefs within the regime's borders. By controlling media narratives and investing in **propaganda**, dictatorships manufacture consent for their rule and promote their **ideology**. Silencing alternative narratives ensures that the public is exposed only to information that reinforces the regime's preferred image of competence and legitimacy.

NEW FRONTIERS Artificial Intelligence (AI) is set to transform censorship, making it more efficient, subtle, and pervasive. By automating censorship processes, AI reduces reliance on human labor and enables rapid filtering or removal of content (Gerschewski & Dukalskis 2018). AI tools can scan text, images, and videos for violations of censorship rules, identify critics through behavioral analysis, and manipulate search results to promote pro-regime content while suppressing dissent. This creates the illusion of a diverse public sphere while subtly controlling narratives (Schlumberger 2023).

AI also enables personalized censorship and propaganda by tailoring content to individuals' beliefs and vulnerabilities. It can deliver targeted propaganda messages that resonate with specific audiences, reinforcing biases and creating 'filter bubbles' or 'echo chambers.' These isolate individuals from alternative perspectives, making it harder to challenge dominant narratives or access diverse viewpoints (Roberts 2022).

Moreover, AI facilitates more invisible forms of censorship. It is apt to apply techniques like 'friction' (slowing user access to certain content) and 'flooding' (burying critical information under irrelevant material) to subtly manipulate information flows. Microtargeting censorship for specific individuals or groups further obscures patterns of manipulation, making systemic efforts harder to detect (Roberts 2022).

While often associated with authoritarian regimes, AI-driven censorship also impacts democratic societies. Corporations may use AI for commercial censorship to protect brands or enforce terms of service, while governments could deploy it to censor content deemed a threat to security or public order. These practices risk stifling free expression and eroding civil liberties (Schlumberger 2023; Perry & Roda 2017; Roberts 2022).

The ethical implications of AI-powered censorship are profound. It threatens freedom of expression by limiting access to diverse viewpoints and creating controlled information environments. Since AI systems train on already-biased data, this perpetuates and even amplifies existing social inequalities. Bias in AI systems can disproportionately target certain groups or viewpoints and exacerbate inequalities. Yang and Roberts (2023: 144) drive the argument



home: Even while *ChatGPT* is trained on a proportionally small amount of non-English-language data, *"when we asked the program to elaborate on the reasons why Mao Zedong was a great leader, it gave more laudatory answers when queried in Chinese than in English."* Additionally, the opaque nature of AI decision-making, combined with the current trend of replacing traditional search engines, raises concerns about transparency and accountability, making it difficult to understand when and why content is censored or to hold responsible parties accountable.

The advent of **digital authoritarianism** combined with AI-driven **disinformation** is resulting in a systemic reassessment of media laws by both democratic and authoritarian states. These are complex and opaque procedures, far removed from the concerns of ordinary citizens, and ill intent can blend technological and legal measures to regulate online content to serve the regime while hiding behind the justifications of protecting individual rights with concerns about national security and the spread of harmful content (Perry & Roda 2017). For the elections in Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Mong Palatino (2024) found that: *"existing media laws [are] being weaponized to justify censorship and judicial tyranny. These were clearly designed not to boost democracy and empower citizens, but to deter dissent and punish free speech."*

Conducting experiments with uncensored media access in China, Yuyu Chen and David Y. Yang (2019) find that mere access to uncensored Internet might not be enough; media literacy and a shift in belief systems are needed for citizens in autocracies to demand and use uncensored information: *"so long as the Chinese citizens perceive domestic media to be more informative, more enjoyable, or more reputable when feedback is weak due to the Great Firewall, domestic media outlets are incentivized to maintain their censored news reporting in equilibrium."* (Chen & Yang 2019: 2230). Demand for uncensored information must be actively cultivated and sustained to challenge the censorship apparatus and fundamentally reshape the media landscape.

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Charismatic Rule (Weber) – Charisma & Routinization

Idolizing the politician is like believing the stripper likes you
– Anonymous

Max Weber's concept of charismatic rule is one of the most influential contributions to political sociology, offering a framework for understanding extraordinary leadership and its transformation into enduring systems of authority. Charisma, as defined by Weber, refers to a quality attributed to an individual perceived as possessing exceptional or even supernatural abilities, inspiring devotion and obedience among followers. This 'gift of grace,' rooted in Christian theology, emphasizes the leader's extraordinary personal qualities, sense of mission, and ability to effect moral and ideological transformation (Bendix & Roth 1971). Charisma is not an inherent trait but a social phenomenon dependent on the recognition and validation of followers. It often emerges during periods of crisis or upheaval when traditional solutions fail, creating a collective longing for radical change and extraordinary leadership (Allen 2004).

Sources of Charisma – Max Weber did not derive the concept of charisma directly from the early Christian tradition but instead encountered it in *Kirchenrecht* (Canon Law), a seminal work by Rudolph Sohm (1841-1917), a nineteenth-century legal theorist and

expert on Roman law. Sohm explored the role of charisma in the early church, describing it as a 'divine gift' granted to individuals who spoke religious truths through their spiritual authority. This form of authority initially posed a challenge to the emerging hierarchical structure of bishops and church governance. Over time, however, charisma was institutionalized, shifting from untamed spiritual gifts to being associated with the administrative and formal roles of church leaders. Sohm's analysis of how charisma evolved within ecclesiastical structures profoundly influenced Weber's understanding of the concept, particularly its capacity to disrupt established systems while also being subject to routinization and integration into traditional or bureaucratic frameworks (Tuner 2023).

The sources of charisma are multifaceted: They include individual qualities such as exceptional energy, memory, or physical presence; social contexts marked by turbulence or ideological conviction; and the perceptions of followers who attribute extraordinary qualities to the leader and willingly submit to their authority. Charismatic leaders challenge existing norms and inspire new beliefs, uniting followers into a charismatic community through shared devotion.

"The charismatic following of a war leader may be transformed into a state, the charismatic community of a prophet, artist, philosopher, ethical or scientific innovator may become a church, sect, academy or school, and the charismatic group which espouses certain cultural ideals may develop into a party or merely the staff of newspapers and periodicals" (Weber cited in McCulloch 2014)

In addition, McCulloch (2014) highlights the tendency toward cumulative radicalism among the **inner circle** of charismatic rulers, driven by the need to maintain their positions and prove their loyalty. This dynamic can escalate the intensity and scope of the leader's actions, potentially leading to destructive consequences.

An example is Hitler's inner circle, who's members competed with one another to pitch ever-radical policies to the *Führer* in order to improve their standing. (Hitler encouraged such competition by actively pitting his followers against each other.) Although, charismatic subordinates are not tolerated in dictatorships. If not purged for their popularity, they are passed over for promotion (Gueorguie & Schuler 2016).

However, charisma's inherently unstable nature – dependent on the continued belief in the leader's exceptional qualities – makes it a transient phenomenon vulnerable to challenges and crises of legitimacy. In order to survive, charismatic rule thus requires (repeated, cyclical) 'proof of charisma' or the demonstration or validation of a leader's extraordinary qualities, inspiring loyalty and devotion. This proof often involves acts or traits perceived as miraculous, heroic, or otherwise 'not of this world,' affirming the leader's 'gift of grace.' Followers look for concrete signs, such as successes, victories, or personal magnetism, to justify their allegiance. Rituals or symbolic actions, like speeches or public appearances, can also reinforce charisma by creating a shared sense of awe and purpose (Weber 2019). However, sustaining this proof can be difficult. Failures or routine governance may erode the perception of exceptionalism, requiring leaders to continuously validate their charisma through action or capture it into another form of rulership.

Routinization of Charisma – To address this instability and ensure continuity, charismatic movements often undergo processes of routinization. One pathway is 'traditionalization,' where charisma becomes associated with lineage or kinship. Leadership may be passed down through hereditary claims, transforming charisma into traditional rule. This process is exemplified by hereditary monarchies or systems like the caste structure in India (Weber 2019; Allen 2004). A good example is Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) in the wake of Indian independence. He was clearly a disciple and a publicly designated successor. Moreover, in the eyes of his followers at least, Nehru's charisma was indisputably derived from Mahatma Gandhi (Bendix & Roth 1971: 178-181). The **succession** of Kim Jong-Il and later Kim Jong-Un in North Korea are also good examples of such hereditary charisma *(Erbscharisma)* (Dow 1969).

Another pathway is bureaucratization, where charisma is formalized into rules and institutional structures. In this case, the extraordinary qualities of the leader may be transferred to the office itself – what Weber termed the 'charisma of office' *(Ambstcharisma)* (Dow 1969) – allowing for a more stable and predictable system of governance. Historical examples include the Catholic Church's institutionalization and revolutionary movements evolving into bureaucratic states (Allen 2004; Weber 2019).

The need for routinization does not only emanate from charismatic rulers and their personal preferences for **succession**, it is also driven by their administrative staff's critical role in making the new system work (for them). Initially attracted by the leader's magnetism, these individuals begin to prioritize their interests, such as job security, regular income, and career progression. To safeguard their positions and benefits, they work to institutionalize processes and establish enduring organizational structures, thereby transforming the leader's charisma into a stable, bureaucratic system (Allen 2004; McCulloch 2014).

Succession is, of course, the biggest challenge for routinizing charisma because how can a personal 'gift of grace' be transferred? Weber identifies several strategies to address this, each with drawbacks. (a) Revelation or designation relies on oracles or the leader naming a successor but risks gaps in legitimacy. (b) Hereditary charisma ties authority to bloodlines, offering stability but often detaching charisma from personal qualities, transitioning toward traditional rule. (c) The charisma of office uses rituals, like coronations, to imbue positions with sacred legitimacy independent of the leader's traits. While this routinizes charisma, it can create tension between personal and institutional charisma, particularly as systems grow more bureaucratic and less dynamic. (Weber 2019; Allen 2004)



Routinization significantly alters the nature of legitimacy by replacing personal charisma with a version rooted in tradition, formal rules, or institutional processes. This transition often diminishes the emotional fervor and revolutionary spirit that initially defined the movement as authority becomes more structured and predictable. This process is rarely seamless and frequently marked by tensions. Conflicts arise between those committed to preserving the original charismatic vision and those pushing for institutional stability and order. These struggles can result in clashes between the leader's influence and the emerging bureaucratic or traditional structures, potentially undermining the legitimacy of the newly established system (Dow 1969; Allen 2004). Examples are Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, who, despite being a very adaptable autocrat, does not have the charisma that Hugo Chávez commanded (Box 3.8). Also, Stalin paled in comparison to Lenin's immense charismatic authority.

Charisma as a Transformative Force – As a principle of ruling systems, charisma is often seen as a double-edged sword, capable of both constructive and destructive outcomes. While charisma can inspire social change, innovation, and unity, it also has the potential to destabilize societies, manipulate followers, and lead to catastrophic consequences. From the perspective of legal-rational and traditional rule, charisma is rather seen as a potentially destructive force. Such leaders often emerge in times of crisis and propose radical changes that may bypass or undermine bureaucratic norms or acquire (divine) prerogatives in defiance of established customs or traditions.

The transformative power of charisma is well illustrated by the example of Chinggis Khan, whose leadership reshaped the sociopolitical landscape of the Central Asian steppe while integrating deeply rooted traditions. Chinggis Khan's charisma was pivotal in founding the Mongol Empire, yet his new order did not reject existing structures. Instead, he realigned pre-existing Turko-Mongol traditions, such as hereditary tribal hierarchies and military organization, to consolidate power and establish legitimacy. For instance, he transformed divine order *(t*örü*)* into royal law *(yasa)* to regulate power relations in the ruling coalition and made himself (and his descendants) the ultimate arbiter to interpret it (instead of the Gods, oral tradition, or soothsayers and shamans) His charisma also allowed him to elevate loyal non-aristocratic allies, such as household staff, into key administrative roles, blending innovation with tradition (Van den Bosch 2021: 408-411).

This charismatic foundation endured through routinization. Successors like the Chinggisids ritualized his legacy by blending and institutionalizing his rule, formalizing *quriltai* assemblies and ritualizing ancestral practices (like lifting khans on felt rugs during coronation ceremonies), thus ensuring dynastic continuity for his bloodline for generations (Van den Bosch 2021: 408-411).

Similarly, in modern contexts, revolutionary regimes like North Korea and Cuba institutionalized the charisma of their founders – Kim Il-Sung and Fidel Castro – by embedding their original inner circles – Kim's original brothers-in-arms fighting Japanese occupation (1910-1945) and Castro's fellow veteran revolutionary mountain *guerrilleros*, known as the *generación histórica* of the Cuban revolution (1953-1958), respectively – into enduring political hierarchies (Centeno 2016). These examples demonstrate how charisma, when intense and effectively institutionalized, can leave a transformative legacy that persists across generations.

In modern contexts, charismatic rule can manifest as plebiscitary leadership democracy. Here, leaders derive legitimacy from popular appeal and electoral mandates while relying on personal charisma to mobilize mass support. This is how the concept partly overlaps with **populism** and demagogues (Box 4.6). Although such systems formally adhere to democratic procedures, they often allow leaders to bypass traditional institutions and potentially consolidate power in authoritarian ways. Figures like Napoleon Bonaparte (Box 4.1) exemplify this form of leadership (Weber 2019). Additionally, contemporary scholars have expanded Weber's framework to include 'impersonal charisma,' where charismatic qualities are attributed not to individuals but to ideologies or institutions. This concept has been applied to understand regimes where revolutionary ideologies or political parties hold charismatic appeal rather than a single leader (Breuilly 2011).

Adaptations & Criticisms – Scholars found that charisma is narrowly defined and goes beyond mere personality or charm; it entails the power to effect moral and ideological transformations. Charismatic leaders challenge existing norms, inspire new beliefs, and reshape followers' understanding of the world. A charismatic leader's unwavering commitment to their mission is central to their appeal. This dedication creates a sense of purpose and direction, attracting followers who identify with the leader's vision (McCulloch 2014; Joosse & Willey 2020).

Scholars have expanded Weber's framework in significant ways. E.A. Shils (1965) introduced the concept of 'impersonal charisma,' suggesting that this can attach itself to institutions, roles, and strata that provide a sense of order and meaning, generating 'awe-arousing centrality' in the eyes of the public. W.G. Runciman further argued that bureaucratic structures could exhibit charisma when individuals exceed expectations within formal roles. (Dow 1969, Bendix & Roth 1971) Thorpe & Shapin – studying Oppenheimer – challenged Weber's view that charisma is incompatible with modern rationality and can emerge in modern technical and scientific organizations (McCulloch 2014).

A revised approach by Breuilly (2011) expands Weber's ideal types into a two-dimensional framework, organizing political regimes along two axes. The first axis differentiates rulership between routine (a) vs. extraordinary (b), and the second axis according to personal (c) vs. impersonal rule (d). This simple matrix yields four types: traditional legitimacy (a-c); charismatic legitimacy (b-c); legal-rational legitimacy (a-d); and a fourth (new) type: institutional-charismatic legitimacy (b-d).

Here, a leader in a specific role draws on belief in the institutional order to enhance their power. This hybrid form allows the officeholder to wield significant authority as an arbiter of the system, though their power remains tied to the office they occupy, balancing personal influence with institutional constraints. This fourth type was first identified and worked out by Helen Constas (1961) as 'charismatic bureaucracy' in 1957-1958, before being picked up by others (Van den Bosch 2021: 392-393).

Van den Bosch (2024: 591) has argued this is the difference between Hitler and Stalin: As *Führer* and Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Hitler was the primary ideologue of **Nazism** and enjoyed significant flexibility in reshaping the institutional and ideological structure of his regime, often acting on personal whim rather than adhering to rigid doctrines. This autonomy allowed him to adapt policies and institutions in service of his goals without substantial internal constraints. Also, if one day Hitler would have decided to dismantle existing state institutions and set up new ones, nobody would have been able to stop him. In contrast, Stalin inherited the Communist Party, which was integral to legitimizing his authority within the Soviet system. Despite wielding near-absolute power and modifying aspects of the party's ideology (i.e., reshaping alliances, adjusting the USSR's global socialist strategy, and temporarily accommodating the Orthodox Church during WWII), Stalin could not dismantle or replace the party. It was a cornerstone of the Marxist-Leninist framework underpinning the regime, binding Stalin more tightly to ideological continuity and institutional constraints than Hitler.

Additionally, contemporary scholars have critiqued Weber's (and his followers') male-centric examples: While charisma is not inherently gendered, many critics noticed the Weberian tradition's tendency to focus on male examples: *"Very few of charismatic leaders are female, and if they do exist, they seem to acquire some conventional male characteristics and lose some conventional feminine ones during their period of charismatic transformation. Joan of Arc, for instance, dressed in men's clothes. Nevertheless, the greater number of male charismatic leaders compared to the number of female charismatic leaders should alert us to the significance of structural rather than personal explanations of charismatic leadership."* (McCulloch 2014)

Scholars like Rosalind Gill, Tracey Whalen, and Peter Joosse (2014) critique the predominantly male-centric examples of charisma. They emphasize the need to recognize the charismatic potential of individuals who challenge traditional gender roles and expectations. Examples like Jeanne d'Arc (ca. 1412-1431), Hildegard von Bingen (ca. 1098-1179, the 'Sibyl of the Rhine'), and leaders of new religious movements demonstrate how charisma can manifest through the disruption of gender norms and the embodiment of alternative forms of authority (Joosse & Willey 2020).

The measurement of charisma is almost a study field by itself, deeply immerged in social psychology and psychological profiles of leaders. Derman (2011) untangles how Weber's concept was first enthusiastically embraced in the United States between the late 1930s and the mid-1960s and shaped disciplines on both sides of the Atlantic. Antonakis et al. (2016) provide one of the best overviews of how scholars for decades tried to measure the concept.

Other recent approaches have somewhat given up on exact measurement criteria and used fuzzy proxy variables in attempts to observe its impact. For instance, Roberts and Mueller (2021) try to assess if attractive coup leaders can hold on to power longer. With an experiment, François et al. (2023) found that competent-looking leaders attract more FDI inflows. However, there is no evidence that trustworthy-looking leaders attract more FDI. In any case, much more research is required to untangle the causality between such factors.

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Clan Politics

The day we built our nation based on clanism is the day we buried our sovereignty.
– Hanad Warsame (Somali politician)

A united clan is greater than a divided nation.
– Unknown

Clan politics is rooted in the hypothesis that informal structures significantly influence political processes. While Scottish clans are often cited as a quintessential example of clan politics in Europe due to their kin-based relations, the concept extends far beyond this Eurocentric framework. Clan politics can be broadly understood as the interplay of power, relationships, and decision-making processes that are predominantly informal. Within this framework, clans establish their internal structures, rules, and mechanisms for decision-making (Migdal 2001: 54). These dynamics are deeply embedded in the local cultural, historical, and social contexts in which clans operate.

Clans and their associated political practices can exhibit varying degrees of stability. In some cases, they remain relatively static over time, while in others, they experience significant shifts and transformations, particularly during periods of internal change or external pressures.

DEFINITION Clans are often defined through sub-ethnic, kinship, family, and other relational ties. However, this primordial perspective is too narrow and should be reconsidered. In a broader sense, the concept of the clan encompasses diverse forms of social networking that transcend blood relations and operate across various states and cultures, including their involvement in politics. Kathleen Collins (2006: 17) refers to this phenomenon as fictive kinship, which extends beyond biological ties to include individuals integrated into networks through marriage, family alliances, shared schooling, localism, neighborhood connections, or village affiliations. These networks can be highly individualized and interconnected.

Clan politics constitutes an informal regime where clans dominate as key social actors and political players, reshaping the political system. In such systems, clan networks wield substantial power at the expense of formal institutions and elected officials. This dynamic undermines formal regimes, particularly democratic institutions, eroding their stability over time. Both fragile democracies and authoritarian systems are affected as personalist regimes cling to power (Collins 2006: 3). Hill and Gendron (2020: 232-233) expand this view by arguing that clans can also participate in formal politics or even shape it. Depending on the specific context and historical moment, clans may coexist with democratic institutions.

Over time, the very definition of a clan can evolve. Traditional clans based on blood ties now often include broader groups formed around shared regional origins (regional factionalism), professional connections (such as classmates or colleagues), or simple loyalty. These expanded definitions are particularly common in authoritarian systems that increasingly rely on **personalist rule**. The **personalization** of such regimes can erode traditional clan structures, transforming them into networks centered around presidential 'families,' as seen in parts of Central Asia or Chechnya (cf. **family**).

In some societies, religion also plays a significant role in reshaping clans. The introduction of non-traditional religious beliefs – such as the spread of Hanbali Islam into traditionally Sufi communities – can lead to the fragmentation or transformation of clans. This process fosters the creation of new networks based on shared religious ideologies rather than previous clan affiliations, as observed in certain Chechen, Afghan, or Somali groups.

SEE ALSO As the definition of the clan as claimed above is not well-determined, 'clans' and 'clan politics' (as two inseparable issues) are integrated with other informal structures such as 'traditional' family, tribe, tribal confederation or in modern terms, political parties based on personalities and **informality** rather than the ideas and program (e.g., in Kyrgyzstan) or business corporations. Migdal (2001) brings the concept of state-in-society for overlapping the state and social groups. Clan politics in academic discussions often overlaps with such terms as **patrimonialism**, **neo-patrimonialism**, **patronalism** and **personalist rule**, all covered separately in this volume.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Clan politics can be a valuable analytical framework across various disciplines to study local authoritarian politics and societies.

In *political science*, the study of clan politics focuses on its role in domestic political systems. Unlike analyses centered on formal political structures, such as laws and constitutions, clan politics – when accu-

rately defined – offers insights into the real functionality (or dysfunctionality) of governance in a given state. It complements concepts like **clientelism**, **patronage** politics, and personalism by revealing the informal mechanisms of power, societal interaction with the state, and decision-making processes. Clan politics thus provides a lens to understand how social norms influence political systems and how informal networks operate within or alongside formal institutions.

In *International Relations* (IR), clan politics is particularly relevant in the fields of security and conflict studies. Broadly defined for these purposes, clan politics plays a significant role in both internal and international conflicts. Clan leaders are often perceived (though not always accurately) as **warlords** or as members of alternative informal groups that challenge state authority, such as drug cartels, field commanders, or **terrorist groups** (Anzalone 2013; Šmíd 2015). Giustozzi (2005) offers a nuanced perspective, arguing that while military commanders may claim clan affiliations, these connections are often indirect or even fabricated. Ahmed (2016) similarly highlights the complexity of clan involvement in conflict dynamics, suggesting that such affiliations should not always be taken at face value.

In *ethnography, anthropology*, and *sociology*, clan politics is studied as part of broader social organization within specific cultural, social, or geographical contexts. Research in these fields emphasizes the unique characteristics of each case by examining clans' traditions, stratification, social norms, forms of interaction among members, and relationships with other clans. This approach underscores the importance of fieldwork to understand the internal mechanisms of clans and their role in clan politics. By focusing on localized practices and structures, these disciplines highlight the diversity and adaptability of clans across different societies.

By integrating these perspectives, the study of clan politics provides a comprehensive understanding of its influence on political systems, conflict dynamics, and social organization.

ORIGIN The study of clan politics often traces its origins to the work of Max Weber, who associated clan politics with pre-modern societies, particularly nomadic or semi-nomadic ones (Weber 1968; 1978). According to **Weber**, the emergence of the modern state was expected to render clans and clan politics obsolete. However, this thesis has been widely challenged by subsequent scholars.

Joel Migdal (1988; 2001) notably integrated clan politics and other informal structures – such as families, business networks, and tribes – into his concept of the 'state-in-society.' He argued that these informal groups not only persist within the state but also actively shape it, particularly in contexts where weak state institutions coexist with strong societal structures. Migdal's framework highlights how clan politics thrives in states with fragile formal institutions (Migdal 1988). Similarly, many scholars agree that clan politics endures despite processes of modernization (Collins 2006; Schatz 2012).

In recent years, however, the application of 'clan politics' as a lens for analyzing authoritarian regimes has faced new critiques. Scholars like Ismailbekova (2017; 2021) have questioned the utility of viewing such regimes solely through the prism of clan-based dynamics. Others, such as Norling (2017), have adopted a constructivist approach, even denying the existence of clans as fixed entities.

Despite these critiques, clan politics continues to play a significant role in many modern states. It often reflects enduring forms of pre-modern social control and becomes particularly salient in re-traditionalized societies and political systems. For example, in regions like Chechnya or parts of Africa, understanding local politics frequently requires an appreciation of how clan dynamics influence governance and power structures.

CLASSIFICATIONS The following classification, while not exhaustive, provides a range of examples illustrating the diverse manifestations of clan politics across different authoritarian and democratic regimes. These highlight both traditional and modern forms of clan dynamics, showcasing their adaptability and varied roles in political contexts.

In the traditional sense, clan membership is often relatively static, rooted in familial and geographic ties ('where I was born, there I grew up'). Women's clan affiliation, however, tends to be more flexible, as they typically marry outside the family and join their husband's clan after marriage and thus become integrated into a new community. Modern adaptations of traditional clans have introduced greater permeability, though this remains constrained by the internal norms and politics of each specific clan.

Traditional clans can actively participate in politics. In some cases, political parties are formed based on traditional roots, local identities, or clan affiliations. In authoritarian regimes, victorious traditional clans may consolidate power by marginalizing or incorporating rival informal structures into a new clan-based establishment. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, elites emerging from successive political upheavals (2005, 2010, 2020) often reflect this dynamic. These transitions have sometimes resulted in the arrest or marginalization of key figures from competing factions, while others have been absorbed into **opposition** roles (**co-optation**).

Modern political clans arise from elite formation in contemporary states and societies. These clans are typically informal networks bound by shared ideas or ideological consciousness rather than traditional kinship ties. Such groups may include lobbying organizations, (un-)civil society actors, or political movements that exhibit elements of clan-like behavior. While not formal political parties, these networks often wield significant influence through their informal cohesion and shared objectives.

Workplace or revolutionary clans form through shared experiences in professional environments or participation in politicized events such as **revolutions**. For instance, historical examples include the 'Havel's clan' and 'Masaryk's clan' in the Czech Republic. The staff surrounding Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (the first Czechoslovak president) and Václav Havel (the first post-communist Czechoslo-



vakian and Czech president) developed a sense of collective identity akin to a clan. After Havel stepped down in 2003, members of his former administration dispersed into state institutions and civil society while maintaining informal support networks. In other cases, such as protest movements during **color revolutions** (e.g., *Khmara* ('Enough') during Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003), these groups dissolved without developing into enduring clan structures.

Religious clans represent another variation of clan politics. These emerge when traditional clans undergo transformation or fragmentation due to religious influences and adopt identities centered on religious ideologies. External support often plays a role in these processes. Examples include the Arabization or Islamization of Chechnya and the integration of radical Islamist groups into traditional clan societies in Somalia.

This classification underscores the adaptability of clan politics across different contexts – whether rooted in tradition or emerging from modern social and political dynamics – and highlights its enduring relevance in shaping political landscapes worldwide.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Nevertheless, the quantitative study of clan politics offers a complementary approach by analyzing larger datasets to identify patterns, correlations, and broader trends related to clan dynamics. This methodology often involves surveys, statistical modeling, or network analysis to examine the influence of clans on political behavior, governance, or social structures. While quantitative methods can provide generalizable insights, they may struggle to capture the nuanced and context-specific nature of clan politics that qualitative fieldwork often uncovers. Combining both approaches allows for a more comprehensive understanding of clans and their role in various political and social systems (Koch 2013; Yusupova 2019).

EXAMPLES Clan politics has a wide range of varieties worldwide, starting from historical Scottish tribes through the role of tribes and clans in the Arab or African states and societies, the modern political clans within the political parties, communist elites also forming a clan *sui generis* up to the modern politics based on clans that went through a kind of transformation. The selective overview examines only several types of this phenomenon that demonstrate its dynamism derived from the transformation of their respective societies.

Central Asia is often regarded as a symptomatic example of clan politics, where traditional clans coexist with other kinship-based networks, such as tribes, tribal confederations, and local networks. These structures provide fertile ground for discussions on clan-based dynamics. However, the region's clan politics is rooted in a more intricate nexus of overlapping relationships. In her seminal work *Clan Politics* (2006), Kathleen Collins introduces the concept of 'clan networks,' which extends beyond kinship to include local connections – such as neighborhood ties, city quarters *(mahallas)*, villages *(qishloqs)*, workplace relationships, or school contacts. These networks form individualized patterns of relationships and interests that are often leveraged in political contexts. Smith (2021) provides a concise overview of clans in contemporary Central Asia.

Clan politics in Central Asia has undergone significant transformations over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The establishment of Soviet republics and Moscow's control over local politics redefined clan dynamics. During this period, clan politics became intertwined with the Communist Party leadership structure. Local party leaders often represented clan interests within the Soviet framework (Кадыров 2001). However, after the dissolution of the USSR, Moscow's centralized control over leadership appointments in Central Asia was lost. This shift allowed former party secretary-generals to transition into positions of power as presidents and leaders of their respective states, reshaping clan politics around their personalities and **families**.

This evolution frequently led to the emergence of personalist regimes in the region, as seen in Turkmenistan and, to varying degrees, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. While traditional clans did not disappear entirely, they became secondary actors within these new political systems. Frederick Starr (2006) refers to this phenomenon as 'Politics B,' where traditional clan structures were subordinated to the dominant political order centered on individual leaders.

The rise of 'presidential families' became a defining feature of clan politics in post-Soviet Central Asia. Leaders adapted or transformed traditional informal networks into systems centered around their own families. For instance, Kyrgyzstan witnessed its president transition from a democratic leader to one whose power relied heavily on clan and family networks. Similar processes have been observed across the region, where traditional clan politics have been eroded under the influence of **state capture** by local presidents and their families (Berdikeeva 2006). This adaptation underscores how informal structures like clans continue to evolve within modern political frameworks while maintaining their relevance in shaping governance and power dynamics in Central Asia.

Russia presents an intriguing case of clan politics, albeit with distinct characteristics compared to more traditional clan-based societies. Historically, Russian society lacked the typical 'traditional' clans and their associated clan politics. The concept of clan politics in Russia emerged prominently during Boris Yeltsin's presidency in the 1990s. Scholars and journalists introduced the term 'The Family,' which referred not only to Yeltsin's actual family members but also to a network of loyal elite politicians and oligarchs whose careers were closely tied to Yeltsin's leadership (Ламажаа 2007; Бакланов 2023; Gill 2013). This group wielded significant influence during Yeltsin's rule, blending personal loyalty with political and economic power.

Under Vladimir Putin, a new form of clan politics took shape, centered around his trusted circle. This 'clan' primarily consisted of individuals from the *siloviki* (силовики) – members of Russia's power ministries such as the military, security services, and police – and former colleagues from Putin's KGB

background (Taylor 2017). These networks became central to Putin's governance, reflecting a system where loyalty and shared professional backgrounds played a crucial role in consolidating power.

Somali clan politics, in contrast, operate in a more traditional framework. The Somali nation is historically structured around clans based on extensive kinship ties *(tol)*, which are often linked to specific regions due to the nomadic nature of Somali society (Lewis 1961; Press & Torrenzano 1995; Ssereo 2003). Beyond kinship, Mohamed (2007) highlights the importance of *xeer* – a system of mutual agreements or contracts – in shaping Somali clan politics. This dynamic social contract influences both intra- and inter-clan relations. However, in modern Somali conflicts, *xeer* has sometimes been overshadowed by external influences, such as Sharia-based justice systems and Islamist ideologies (Solomon 2014; Ahmed 2020). Groups like *al-Shabaab* exemplify this interplay, as they incorporate clan members into their networks while simultaneously adhering to Islamic principles. Resistance from opposing clans often results in violent confrontations, further entangling clan dynamics with Islamist movements (Taming the Clans, 2018).

Chechnya offers yet another perspective on clan politics, particularly following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Fieldwork in Pankisi reveals a revival of traditional clan structures in Chechen society during periods of *de facto* independence and the Chechen Wars of the 1990s (Souleimanov 2019). Clan identity based on blood ties peaked during this time as a mechanism for wartime survival and post-war reconciliation. However, these traditional structures began to erode with the rise of Ramzan Kadyrov, who transformed his clan into a fictive structure centered on personal loyalty rather than traditional kinship ties. This shift marked a significant deconstruction of traditional Chechen clan politics, particularly among younger generations who rejected the authority of former clan leaders or warlords.

NEW FRONTIERS Clan politics is often seen as a kind of rigid, unchangeable aspect of authoritarian regimes. Nevertheless, even traditional clans transform (and went through it in the past) in which the very understanding of what constitutes a clan evolves: Who is the member of the clan? What are the internal rules of the clan? Who can be co-opted or, on the contrary, expelled from the clan? As Scott Radnitz notes (2011: 127-128): "*Clan and tribe were in fact powerful bases of social and political organization in Central Asia historically, but generations of Russian and then Soviet rule, along with purges, collectivization, and industrialization, have made social life in the region much more complex*."

The complexity and impact of clan politics in authoritarian regimes are shaped by the specific cultural, political, historical, economic, environmental, and personal backgrounds of the clans and their leaders. **Personalization** of power can transform a ruler's political clan into a personal dictatorship, characterized by an exclusive 'inner' clan comprising the dictator and their relatives as a subset of the broader inner circle, as observed in cases such as Central Asia (Horák 2021) and Azerbaijan (Safiyev 2016). Additionally, clan leaders may steer their groups toward merging with or being incorporated into other political entities, as exemplified by Somalia.

Clans often represent groups unified by shared economic interests (Engvall 2016). In some contexts, clan-based societies and their associated politics can evolve into relatively democratic regimes under specific local conditions (Seeberg 2018; Hill & Gendron 2020: 36-39). This suggests that clan politics should be considered when analyzing informal structures, as local settings and the broader transformation of politics and society in each case deeply influence them. Furthermore, elements of clan politics can emerge even in contexts where traditional clan structures are absent, as seen in Russia.

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Clientelism

It takes two to tango.
– Song by Al Hoffman & Dick Manning (1952)

If pigs could vote, the man with the slop bucket would be elected swineherd every time, no matter how much slaughtering he did on the side.
– Orson Scott Card

Clientelism is a complex form of political exchange that operates through informal but structured relationships between patrons and clients. It differs from other forms of corruption like nepotism or systemic corruption by its personal, enduring nature and reciprocal obligations. Despite being rooted in traditional practices, it remains a dynamic feature of modern political systems, adapting to varying contexts while shaping governance and state-society relations.

DEFINITION Clientelism is a social and political phenomenon characterized by an informal, dyadic, and asymmetric relationship between a patron and a client. It is often called a 'lop-sided friendship' (Pitt-Rivers 1954) or an 'instrumental friendship.' (Wolf 2001; Stokes 2009).

The 'patron,' typically an individual with greater socioeconomic or political power, provides benefits such as protection, jobs, or access to public goods and services to the 'client.' In return, the client offers loyalty, support, or other forms of assistance (Landé 1977; 1983). This reciprocal exchange is rooted in personal relationships and often persists over time, creating enduring networks of dependency (Scott 1972; Muno 2013).

Clients not only pledge their votes or support in political matters but also commit to exclusively backing the patron from whom they receive goods and credit. Their loyalty is not just an expression; they are obliged to demonstrate this loyalty through their actions. Clients join factions that align with the competitive goals of a faction leader. According to Kenny (1962: 132), crises reveal how loyalty and support demonstrate the alignment of different patronage networks. Rivalry between patrons gives clients leverage, enabling them to gain support and ensure its continuity. The relationship is reciprocal, with each party investing in the other (Wolf 2001: 180).

ORIGIN The term 'clientelism' originates from the Latin *cluere*, meaning 'to listen or obey,' reflecting its historical roots in ancient Rome (Muno 2013). There, patrons provided protection and resources to their clients in exchange for political support, a relationship governed by a sacral code of ethics.

In ancient Rome, a client was an individual represented by a patron *(patronus)* who spoke on their behalf in legal matters, a role still recognized today. The term *clientele* referred to a group of people who were similarly represented by a *patronus*, a powerful figure or aristocrat. This relationship, rooted in a customary code of ethics, was not based on servitude – clients were free individuals, not slaves or bondmen – but it was often inherited. Clients provided political support and labor, while in exchange, patrons offered protection, employment, or land to cultivate. This mutual arrangement formed a key component of Roman social and political life (Finley 1983; Scheidel 2009; Weber 2005). While its historical antecedents were tied to traditional societies, modern clientelism is closely linked to the existence of the state and operates as a contemporary political phenomenon (Erdmann & Engel 2007).

SEE ALSO Clientelism differs from related concepts such as patronage, nepotism, systemic corruption, and informality in several ways. **Patronage** involves the distribution of collective benefits (e.g., roads or schools) to groups rather than individuals, often as part of high-level politics aimed at maintaining political coalitions. In contrast, clientelism focuses on individual benefits and personal networks (Erdmann & Engel 2007). 'Nepotism' (as shown in Box 1.1) refers specifically to favoritism toward family members in appointments or resource allocation, whereas clientelism extends beyond kinship ties and includes broader social networks based on loyalty and reciprocity.

Systemic corruption and clientelism share similarities with informal institutions that deviate from formal rules and involve the misuse of resources for private gain. However, systemic corruption often lacks the personal and enduring nature of clientelistic relationships. While systemic corruption may also involve one-time transactions like bribes between strangers, clientelism is built on trust and long-term exchanges that may even be inherited across generations (Muno 2013). Both phenomena can involve the misuse of public resources, but clientelism often operates within hierarchical networks mediated by brokers who connect patrons with clients (Wolf 2001).

Clientelism also intersects with broader systems of **informality** but is distinguished by its focus on power asymmetry and the exchange of resources for political support. While informal practices such as social networks or cultural norms may not necessarily involve corruption or abuse of power, clientelism inherently entails an imbalance in authority and resources that shape its dynamics (Hicken 2011).

LITERATURE Studies on clientelism have evolved. Early research (the first wave) in the 1960s and 1970s focused on traditional patron-client relationships in agrarian societies, often viewing clientelism as a pre-modern phenomenon destined to decline with economic development in line with **modernization theory**. See Schmidt et al. (1977) for an overview of the main works of the first wave.

The second wave (1980s-1990s) recognized its persistence even in advanced democracies, highlighting its adaptability to different political contexts (Auyero 2000; Hicken 2011). Researchers began to explore how clientelism operated within competitive political systems, focusing on its role in electoral politics and its relationship with democratic accountability. During this period, studies highlighted the hierarchical networks of patrons, brokers, and clients, as well as the mechanisms through which politicians exchanged targeted benefits for electoral support (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007; Stokes et al. 2013). Methodologically, scholars have employed both qualitative approaches like ethnographic studies to capture the nuances of clientelistic systems and quantitative methods such as surveys to measure its prevalence across countries. Consult Stokes (2009) for an overview of these first two waves.

The third wave of studies emerged in the early 2000s and continues to shape contemporary research on clientelism. This wave is characterized by a more critical and nuanced approach to defining and analyzing clientelism. Scholars have sought to address questions about why and how clientelism persists in competitive regimes with free and fair elections. The third wave emphasizes the adaptability of clientelism to various social, economic, cultural, and institutional contexts, challenging earlier assumptions about its incompatibility with democratic systems. Methodologically, this wave has seen an expansion from qualitative ethnographic studies to include quantitative approaches such as surveys and experiments, enabling cross-national comparisons (Hicken 2011; Nichter 2018).

Throughout these waves, several key themes have emerged. First is the recognition that clientelism is not merely a relic of traditional societies but a dynamic system that evolves alongside political institutions. Second is the growing emphasis on understanding the mechanisms of clientelistic exchange – such as vote-buying or contingent reciprocity – and their implications for governance and public goods provision. Finally, scholars have increasingly linked the study of clientelism to broader questions about state capacity, **state capture**, **informality**, and **systemic corruption**.

Guerrero-Sierra et al. (2024), utilizing various scientific mapping techniques, reconstruct the evolution of clientelism research, highlighting pivotal contributors and shifting paradigms. They confirm the preeminent role of US-based institutions and scholars and their foundational contributions to clientelism theory.

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Box 1.1 Nepotism – Bloodlines & Lifelines

Nepotism is the lowest and least imaginative form of corruption.
– Daniel Alarcón, *At Night We Walk in Circles*, 2013

Blood is thicker than water
– Universal proverb

Nepotism, a prevalent form of corruption, is particularly common in authoritarian regimes. It involves the allocation of jobs, economic opportunities, and favors to family members based on kinship rather than merit – see also meritocracy (Box 1.9). Nepotism is often intertwined with **kleptocracy**, which is typically associated with **personalist rule,** where dictators prioritize personal enrichment over institutional governance.

In many authoritarian systems, key sectors of the economy are dominated by the ruler's family members. For example, in Kazakhstan, former President Nursultan Nazarbayev's relatives controlled vast swathes of the economy. One of his daughters managed the media sector, while another oversaw water, gas, and construction industries. His sons-in-law held significant stakes in sugar production, alcohol distribution, taxation, and parts of the oil industry (Franke et al. 2009). Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan, former (first) President Askar Akayev's wife's clan exerted control over ministries responsible for gold mining and privatization (Ishiyama 2008).

In Indonesia, under Suharto, his family dominated critical sectors such as roads, car manufacturing, and telecommunications (Robertson-Snape 1999). In Uzbekistan, former President Islam Karimov's daughter Gulnara Karimova amassed monopolies in telecommunications and mining, with her fortune reaching $570 million at one point (Ruiz-Ramas & Morales Hernández 2021). The Dominican Republic under Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961) saw his family controlling nearly 80% of the country's industrial production (Acemoglu et al. 2004). In the Philippines, during Ferdinand Marcos' regime, his wife Imelda was a major beneficiary. She received as much as 10% of all ministerial budgets for her projects (Ellison 2005). Family members can directly benefit from laws that undermine competitors. Under Marcos, one of his in-laws, Herminio Disini, benefited from a 1975 Presidential decree that imposed a 100% tax on tobacco filler for all other companies. Diseni's *Philippines Tobacco Corporation*, however, was exempt and only had to contend with a 10% tax (Aquino 1997).

These examples highlight how nepotism not only entrenches **corruption** but also concentrates economic power within ruling families, often to the detriment of broader societal development and institutional integrity. This aspect of nepotism clearly reflects the behavioral reflex of '*Our Turn to Eat'* from **ethnic politics** but is more skewed to personal (family) enrichment than establishing **patronage** with kinship groups.

Moreover, nepotism extends beyond economic (mis) management and infiltrates various spheres of governance. In Kyrgyzstan, for instance, the head of the security forces was appointed solely based on his familial connection to the president despite lacking relevant qualifications. Similarly, in the Dominican Republic under Rafael Trujillo, nepotism reached extraordinary levels. Trujillo assigned key government positions to his family members, including the presidency (held by his brother), two senatorial posts, six major diplomatic

assignments, and high-ranking military roles such as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, undersecretary of defense, and chief-of-staff of the air force. In total, 153 relatives were employed by the government (Acemoglu et al. 2004). Despite many of these appointments leading to embarrassment, Trujillo even made his son a colonel at the age of four and a brigadier general at nine (Hartlyn 1998).

In Iraq, Saddam Hussein also relied heavily on nepotism to consolidate power. His younger son, Qusay, was entrusted with operational control over the armed forces, internal security services, and the *Republican Guard*. Other family members occupied influential positions across the military and intelligence sectors (The Economist 2001). However, this reliance on family connections over merit had significant consequences. Despite Iraq's million-man army and over $50 billion spent on military hardware, a lack of expertise among its leadership resulted in poor battlefield performance (Frontline 1990).

These examples underscore how nepotism can undermine institutional competence and efficiency by prioritizing loyalty and familial ties over qualifications and merit. As with ethnic stacking (**coup-proofing**), putting family members in top positions of the security apparatus provides some level of guarantee of oversight and a form of loyalty that cannot be bought. (Family members know they are likely to share the fate of the ruler in case the regime is ousted.)

Still, there is a costly competence-loyalty tradeoff: nepotism impacts how an economy functions as deserving individuals are slighted, expertise is shunned, and key positions and contracts are gained by familial relationships. This depresses true entrepreneurship and affects everything from policy output and economic growth to battle effectiveness (Cordesman 2004; Okafor et al. 2014).

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Corruption

Initiate a proper handshake and the whole world opens up for you.
– James D. Wilson

Derived from the Latin verb *corrumpere* (to mar, bribe, destroy) in philosophy or social and political sciences, the term denotes the decay of the soul or the abuse of trust in public office, respectively. The citation above – used ironically – is meant to highlight the pervasiveness of such reciprocal interactions in all social and political spheres, regardless of location, era, culture or ethnic background.

The moral and spiritual corruption of a ruler and its consequences is deeply entwined with deviation from the behavioral norms of **traditional rule** dictating harmony, honor, and moderation – like, for instance, the 'mandate of heaven' (天命 – *Tiānmìng*) in premodern Chinese polities. In the Western canon, these normative moral definitions trace back to the works of **Plato & Aristotle** and became a core feature of regime types like **tyranny** and **despotism**.

In political and social sciences, the 1960s saw this moral approach replaced by a legally derived approach as the 'corruption of public office' (Williams 1999: 505), thus embracing the Weberian dichotomy between private and public spheres. Alas, this (normative) legal approach was criticized because of the culturally diverging moral and legal standards, implying a cultural bias between the 'West' and 'the rest.' An economic approach followed, branding corruption as **rent-seeking** and thus a betrayal of the principal-agent relation, either as the deviant behavior of one (embezzlement) or two actors (bribery) (Rose-Ackerman 1978; Klitgaard 1988; Lambsdorff 2007; Muno 2013: 35). Corruption is the catch-all term, including fraud, embezzlement,



graft, and pilfering, among other forms. If corruption is limited to the actions of one individual or one organization with the aim of stealing or defrauding for personal gain, and there is no exchange (no 'tit-for-tat') between parties, it does not qualify as **clientelism** or **patronage**.

The mid-1990s brought a conceptual turn with the study of **informality**, treating corruption more neutrally (as an informal institution) by appraising its functional features alongside its dysfunctional effects, cf. **systemic corruption**. While corruption is considered opposed to the ideal of democracy (and its endemic characteristics of transparency and accountability), it is acknowledged that real-life democracies can coexist with various forms of corruption and informality.

Consensus over its exact definition remains elusive. The most common version sees corruption as the "misuse of public power for private gain." (Muno 2013: 35). *Transparency International* defines corruption as "the misuse of entrusted power for private gain." Additionally, they distinguish between 'according to rule' corruption and 'against the rule' corruption. In the former, the recipient is legally authorized to perform certain activities, while in the latter, the recipient is prohibited by law from carrying out the requested tasks. Despite this lack of consensus, there is a joint understanding: *"although corruption comes in many shapes, shades, and sizes, and with different degrees of tolerability, corruption is always defined with one feature – the inappropriate mix of public and private as it is corrupt for officials to profit personally from public office."* (Johnson & Sharma 2004: 3, cited in Zimelis 2020: 3).

It has been noted that "settling on a single definition and measurement strategy is less useful than allowing multiple approaches to thrive," depending on the research goal (Bussel 2015: 34-35). Contemporary research has proposed more elaborate and nuanced definitions to include, for instance, informal practices on the boundaries of 'legit' and 'non-illegal' practices that are socially acceptable, tolerated by state authorities, and thus rendered structural or to include non-monetary schemes, where reputation rather than money is to be gained, or where reciprocity is maintained for a long time (Polese 2023: 337).

Jennifer Bussell's (2015) typology of corruption is useful as a pragmatic framework that categorizes corrupt practices based on the type of state resources involved and the actors who control or influence these resources. She identifies four primary types of state resources subject to corruption: (i) government policies and regulations, (ii) public licenses and contracts, (iii) government jobs, and (iv) public goods and services. For each resource type, Bussell distinguishes between direct control (actors who allocate the resource, such as legislators or bureaucrats) and indirect influence (actors who exert power over those in direct control, like politicians or intermediaries). This typology is particularly useful in decentralized systems, where multiple levels of government may have overlapping authority over resource allocation. By linking corruption to specific resources and actors, Bussell's framework enhances analytical precision and supports targeted anti-corruption strategies, emphasizing the need for tailored typologies to address diverse research goals and policy challenges effectively.

For the study of political regimes, 'systemic corruption,' 'clientelism,' and 'patronage' are the most important analytical frames and are treated as separate entries in this encyclopedia. These three are nested concepts, with **systemic corruption** covering the largest scope of informal behavioral patterns as widespread and structural, from petty corruption to large-scale embezzlement, with **clientelism** focusing on the actors involved, their personal relationships, and their exchange of goods, services or favors, mostly in business and the public sector; and with **patronage** reserved for high-level politics instrumental to regime cohesion and survival.

Conceptual confusion and overlap remain, and most of the time, the terms clientelism, patronage and **neo-patrimonialism** are used interchangeably. Some notable (proposed) nuances exist but are not applied universally: According to Erdmann & Engel (2006: 21), 'patronage' exchanges publicly owned goods while 'clientelism' exchanges individually owned goods. Patronage is thus 'political clientelism' (cf. Stokes 2007). Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002) propose to reserve 'clientelism' for the political sphere and 'neo-patrimonialism' for the administrative sphere.

Consult also Zimelis (2020) and Mungiu-Pippidi & Heywood (2020) for a recent overview of the research field of corruption studies.

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Democracy

Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.
– Winston S. Churchill

Democracy does not give the people the most skillful government, but it produces what the ablest governments are frequently unable to create: namely, an all-pervading and restless activity, a superabundant force, and an energy which is inseparable from it and which may, however unfavorable circumstances may be, produce wonders.
– Alexis de Tocqueville

The *Encyclopedia Tyrannica* is not about democracy, on which bookshelves have been written. Entries like liberalism, liberal democracy, democratic systems, democratic parties, civil liberties, and electoral systems are auspiciously absent from this book, while others are only touched upon very lightly, like **constitutionalism**.

Of course, we cannot forgo the dichotomy of our contemporary thinking in a world divided by democracies and non-democracies. The state of the free and unfree worlds occupies our thoughts, and various ebbs and flows of several waves (Box 6.3) keep politicians, scholars and the people at large awake at night. No matter how contested democracy is as a concept, the real world requires plans, blueprints and theories for **democratization**, **democracy promotion** and **democratic consolidation**.

Democracy is widely regarded as an *essentially contested concept*, meaning that its definition is inherently subject to ongoing debate and disagreement due to its abstract and evaluative nature (Gallie 1956). This 'contestability' arises from the diverse interpretations and values associated with democracy, as well as the tension between its normative ideals and descriptive realities. Scholars, policymakers, and citizens often use the term democracy to advance specific value claims, either including or excluding certain elements depending on the context and purpose.

One reason democracy is contested is its multifaceted nature. Moreover, its contested nature is amplified by its dual role as both an ideal and a practical system. As an ideal, democracy represents aspirations for equality, participation, and accountability. However, in practice, democratic systems often fall short of these goals due to structural inequalities, institutional limitations, or external challenges such as populism or authoritarianism. Different regional interpretations persist.

The exact nature of democracy becomes even more difficult to grasp when compared to other political systems, which are measured to classify cases and extrapolate trends. However, democracy is considered a 'latent variable,' meaning it cannot be directly observed. To assess it, scholars have come up with various indicators, but there is no agreement on which indicators hold the greatest significance or how they should be integrated. Consequently, different approaches to measuring democracy frequently yield varying outcomes.

This is as true in the field of comparative authoritarianism. Democracy has been defined and debated in various ways, reflecting differing priorities and analytical approaches. A central point of contention lies in whether democracy should be understood in a minimalist, procedural sense or as encompassing broader normative outcomes. Many scholars and citizens associate democracy with desirable characteristics such as civil liberties, the rule of law, and social equality. However, critics argue that 'lumping all good things together' in a definition of democracy itself creates analytical difficulties, as it becomes impossible to study their relationship to democracy empirically. For instance, if social equality or accountability is included in the definition, it becomes challenging to assess whether democracy fosters these outcomes or whether other factors are at play. The section on **classifications & typologies**, especially the sub-sections on **dichotomous categories,** is preoccupied with drawing a sharp line between the democratic and the autocratic.

Joseph **Schumpeter's** (1942) minimalist definition is one of the most influential procedural approaches to defining democracy. He conceptualized democracy as a system in which individuals acquire the power to make decisions through a competitive struggle for the people's vote. This approach focuses solely on the presence of contested elections as the defining feature of democracy, leaving broader characteristics such as civil liberties or equality for separate analysis. Proponents of this view argue that such a narrow focus allows for clearer empiri-



cal study and avoids conflating democracy with its potential outcomes. Critics, however, contend that this definition neglects essential elements that make political competition meaningful, such as the rule of law or freedoms necessary for genuine contestation.

Robert **Dahl** his framework of *polyarchy* (1971) offers an alternative conceptualization that has significantly influenced how scholars analyze democracy. Dahl proposed two core dimensions: *contestation* and *participation*. Contestation refers to the degree to which citizens are free to organize into competing blocs to advocate for their preferred policies, while participation reflects the extent to which citizens can engage in the political process. According to Dahl, both dimensions are necessary components of democracy, though their presence may vary across different regimes. His framework allows for a more nuanced understanding by situating political systems along continua of contestation and participation rather than categorizing them as purely democratic or authoritarian.

With the advent of authoritarian regimes with elections, distinguishing democracy from **hybrid regimes** has demanded an even more nuanced understanding of the defining features of liberal democracy and the ways in which hybrid regimes fall short of these criteria. Democracy, at its core, is defined by free and fair competitive elections, inclusive adult citizenship, the protection of civil liberties and political rights, the genuine governing authority of elected officials, and civilian control over the military. Hybrid regimes, while incorporating some democratic elements such as elections, fail to meet these full criteria and often blend democratic processes with authoritarian practices.

Hybrid regimes occupy what scholars refer to as a 'gray area' between democracy and authoritarianism. They combine features of both systems, creating ambiguity in their classification. This has led to debates about how best to categorize such regimes. While some adopt a dichotomous approach, classifying regimes as either democratic or not, others advocate for **trichotomous categories** that recognize hybrid regimes as a distinct category. In this view, hybrid regimes are often seen as 'diminished subtypes' of democracy, lacking one or more of its essential attributes. For instance, they may hold elections but restrict their competitiveness or curtail civil liberties (Bogaards 2009; Gilbert & Mohseni 2011; Mufti 2018).

Contemporary classifications of **political regimes** are heavily focused on either capturing or measuring this contested concept of democracy or categorizing regimes into broad groups, such as democracies and non-democracies, while also creating categories to understand variations within these groups. Even when democracy is not the explicit focus, these approaches tend to be inherently biased toward democratic principles. Today, democracy systematically serves as the implicit benchmark against which all other regime types are evaluated, reflecting a widespread belief in its superiority. As argued elsewhere in this book, this was not always the case.

This bias is entrenched in Western-centric moral convictions that view liberal democracy as the pinnacle of governance – a belief so deeply rooted that it has become the new normal, the baseline. While liberal democracy has indeed emerged as a dominant model of righteous government, history has seen numerous contenders for the title of 'just rule' cf. **religions of the world & statecraft**. Eventually, all dominant regime types ended up overshadowed by newer models. It remains to be seen when liberal democracy might be replaced by something considered 'more just.'

In any case, despite cold-shouldering democracy so stubbornly in this book, its authors convincingly argue that the non-democratic solutions of the past are unlikely to yield good solutions to our problems of the present.

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Despotism

μήτ' ἀνάρχετον βίον μήτε δεσποτούμενον αἰνέσῃς.
παντὶ μέσῳ τὸ κράτος θεὸς ὤπασεν
(neither a life of anarchy nor one beneath a despot should you revere;
To all in-between the god has given superiority)
– Aeschylus, *The Eumenides,* 526-530

Once a royal honorific in Byzantine times, today, despotism is a pejorative term for all sorts of rogue regimes that wield absolute, arbitrary power for their personal gain, disregarding the needs of society. Alongside the more coherent concept of **tyranny**, despotic rule was probably the first regime

'type' regularly used by Europeans to distinguish their own political systems from those of non-Europeans, foremost the Persians, the Turks, and later the Chinese and Indians (Richter 1990: 175).

DEFINITION The most neutral term to capture despotism would be to refer to *"the extreme bias in the control that some individuals exert over limited resources or other individuals,"* as used in its biological setting when studying social stratification among species (Summers 2005). In political thinking, it overlaps with notions of absolute power and the arbitrary rule of a single ruler, aiming to become but never tied to a specific regime type (like tyranny) since it is rather an extreme ideal type on a political spectrum, with democracy as its opposing pole. For this reason, it is as easily linked to **totalitarianism** as to **monarchy** or **populism**. The term is notoriously misapplied and has a long association with orientalist approaches. Most often, it occurs as a value judgment for any type of rule deemed cruel or oppressive.

Despotism, unlike **tyranny**, once did denote legitimate rule (and was even legal in some countries). A despotic rule might have been unchallenged and, at times, arbitrary (like **absolutism**), but it was legal under the laws of men and still restrained by 'natural law' (cf. **traditional rule**), whereas, under a tyrannical regime, neither law nor consensus exists. Therefore, the right of resistance is and remains a right under the condition that it is directed against tyranny and not against despotism – cf. 'tyrannicide' under **assassination** (Turchetti 2008: 159-162).

SEE ALSO In common use, it can be applied indiscriminately to any form of disliked government. In the scholarly literature, it tends to be considered a synonym for **tyranny**, but the former does not share the latter's coherent scholarly canon nor its consistent application through time (see 'origin'). Still, if understood this way, the concept shares many characteristics found in **absolutism**, **sultanism & neo-sultanism** and **personalist rule**.

ORIGIN The classical Greek δεσπότης (*despotēs*) was subjected to a barrage of attempts to Latinize it into *'despotes, despoticus, despotia'* but such endeavors were unsuccessful until the seventeenth century, after which 'despots' and 'despotism' infiltrated mainstream political thought and accrued many of its biased connotations.

Originally, the Greek *despotēs* referred to the power position of a master over his enslaved persons, and throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, its Latin equivalent would be *'dominus' or 'pater familias'* – 'master of the household.' In parallel with **tyranny,** it encompassed notions of arbitrary rule, but in contrast to the latter, it was a perfectly legal way, by custom, to run a household (οἰκονομία – '*oikonomia*'). As a political concept, M. Richter (1990: 176) finds it first appeared during the Greco-Persian wars (499-449 BCE) as an adverse term to denigrate the Asian enemy and their way of life. Nevertheless, **Plato & Aristotle** were front-runners to apply it to statesmanship: Plato just to denote its arbitrary decision-making; Aristotle to liken it to tyranny – as 'despotic' rule abandons lawful tradition and thus renders subjects into enslaved people (Koebner 1951: 276-277), albeit by consensus.

Aristotle noted that despotic rule was more accepted and natural in some polities. He also mentioned legal precedence in which subjects submitted themselves to rule by an elected tyrant for reasons of expediency – thus to a 'dictator' in its original meaning (see Box 1.2 on electoral dictatorship). Aristotle hinted that this was an established 'barbaric' (non-Greek) tradition because people in Asia were more servile than those in Europe (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1285a, cited in Koebner 1951: 277). This casual observation planted the seed for later conceptualizations of 'oriental despotism' – see lower – likewise strengthened by Herodotus' coverage of the Greco-Persian wars and Xenophon's (ambiguous) treatise of Cyrus the Younger of Persia, oscillating between exemplary leadership and despotic behavior (Ceglarska 2016; Atack 2023).

In Byzantium, *despotēs* functioned (inconsistently) as an honorary royal title, sometimes for the emperor, sometimes just for his sons and sons-in-law, and at times specifically for the heir apparent. The honorific was never associated with a particular office or function but did include large estates (fiefs or appanages). Spouses mirrored the rank of their husbands as *'despotissa'* (δεσπότισσα). In the twelfth century, the title migrated to Central Europe starting in 1163 with King Béla III of Hungary and Croatia, the son-in-law of the Byzantine emperor. By the mid-fourteenth century, some of these princely polities became known as 'despotates' after they became semi-independent from the Byzantine Empire (Guilland 1959).

This is where the misuse of this term starts and its later conflation with **tyranny**. Most medieval scholars did not have access to the complete Greek canon of classical thinkers, and many either overlooked the nuances between despotism and tyranny or ignored the topic altogether – M. Turchetti (2008) lists a few exceptions – and the Latin translation for Aristotle's 'despot' became *dominus* in the works of the by fifteenth-century humanists, who did not retrieve the term or its derivations in the classical Latin vocabulary of Cicero, Seneca and other authoritative thinkers. In France, the term 'despot' disappeared for three centuries, only to reappear toward the middle of the seventeenth century as *despotisme* (coined by Pierre Bayle in 1704), losing its precise signification in the process. By the eighteenth century, tyranny, despotism (and **absolutism**) were commonly used interchangeably (Koebner 1951; Turchetti 2008).

LITERATURE While **Plato & Aristotle** elevated the concept from the household to the level of the polity, they were the first to do so. Their contemporaries still use **tyranny** and despotism as distinct concepts. For instance, Xenophon highlights some of the trappings that absolute power brings, such as paranoia and sycophancy (cf. Box 6.5). For example, in his dialogue on **rulership** and happiness, Hiero – the 'tyrant' of Syracuse – replies: *"To fear a crowd, and yet fear solitude, to fear to go unguarded, and yet fear the very men who guard you, to recoil from attendants*



unarmed and yet dislike to see them armed – surely that is a cruel predicament!" (Xenophon, *Hiero,* 7, cited in Diken 2021: 11).

With the rediscovery of the classical thinkers during the European Renaissance, the orientalist dichotomies of civilized barbarianism were perpetuated (Ceglarska 2016). As a result, **Machiavelli** also identified despotism as an extreme oriental subtype of tyranny, foreign to European political culture (Giorgini 2004: 5–6), but **Montesquieu** was most influential in pushing this orientalist bias into the mainstream classification of regimes, blending despotism with tyranny as a form of corrupted rule, upheld by fear, heralding an era of decline and eventual collapse of the polity (Koebner 1951; Boesche 1990; Turchetti 2008: 172).

It is important to note that 'despotism' also occurs in social biology and anthropology with the aim of understanding human nature and human development (but not exclusively: cf. Jaeggi et al. (2010), who apply the frame to apes). L.L. Betzig (1986) irrevocably linked despotic privilege (here understood as biased access to resources and coercive leadership) to reproductive success, launching a long research tradition (Summers 2005) and even exploring biological explanations for gender politics (Potts & Campbell 2008). Powers and Lehmann (2014) apply the term to study the dynamics of the so-called 'authoritarian turn' in human development (during the Neolithic) when egalitarian hunter-gatherer groups underwent a transformation of (radical) social stratification in their political organization.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The dichotomous worldview (free republics vs. despotic monarchies) enshrined in the thinking of Aristotle and confirmed by his contemporaries found fertile soil with medieval thinkers (even Islamic philosophers) concluding that 'some men have to serve others' and that 'barbarians' are meant to be treated as slaves. When Europe entered its 'age of discovery,' neo-Aristotelianism became a potent force, justifying conquest and enslavement of new peoples, thus allowing obscure thinking on despotism to emerge from under the shade of tyranny (Richter 1990: 182-183). (Note that Aristotle's binary view of Greeks vs. barbarians cannot easily be equated with xenophobia or proto-racism, cf. Dietz 2012; Lockwood 2021).

With **Montesquieu** propagating the moral and political corruption of European polities, he had singled out blame on Louis XI (1423-1483) for bringing despotism to France (Boesche 1990: 746). The identification of despotism thus became a justification for contestation, for revolt against, and even for the ouster of such deprived leadership (cf. 'tyrannicide' under **assassination**).

"Montesquieu's reclassification of governments made 'despotism' into the most important category of vitiated one-person rule in the second half of the 18th century. He specifically downgraded 'tyranny,' a related concept, the boundaries of which had long been differentiated from 'despotism.' As used by Montesquieu, 'tyranny' referred to the intention to overthrow the established power, above all in a democracy. This deliberate alteration of the boundaries between 'despotism' and 'tyranny' registered his awareness of the need to reshape both the historical meanings of these two concepts and the previous relationship between them, against which he had to work if he were to succeed in making despotism into the dominant new category of illegitimate one-person rule in his own time." (Richter 2005: 229-230)

R. Koebner (1951: 301-303) and M. Richter (2005: 230) find that it is no exaggeration that the concept of *despotisme* as popularized by Montesquieu, played a part in the intellectual and political unrest which drove the French monarchy down to the Revolution. Note that his contemporary, Voltaire, vehemently opposed Montesquieu's re-interpretation (and Latinization) of despotism as well as its cultural bias (Koebner 1951) and that A. de Tocqueville, Montesquieu's disciple, could not identify the mobilization by fear in despotic Turkey and Russia, but had to acknowledge the role of religion in these polities (Rahe 2009: 167).

CLASSIFICATIONS No scholar has created meaningful subclassifications of despotism, but there exist two standalone terms that were derived from the core concept.

Oriental despotism The German Sinologist and political scientist Karl August Wittfogel (1896-1988) launched the concept of 'oriental despotism' to account for the specific development path of Asian civilizations in his major work: *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power* (1957). Eager to update Marxist teachings, he finds that the key to 'oriental' civilizations was absolute control over hydraulic projects (for agricultural irrigation) and the creation of elaborate bureaucratic systems to manage these, sprouting a unique type of civilization, differing from Western models, where power was always distributed between contending groups in a more pluralistic fashion. His 'hydraulic despotism' thus locked in characteristics of arbitrary and absolute rule in oriental polities as an ever-present condition. Wittfogel's theory was later criticized both on empirical grounds and for his orientalist bias (Britannica 2016; Eberhard 1958; Mote 1961).

Enlightened despotism The term was invented twice independently: as *despotisme éclairé* by Pierre-Paul Lemercier de La Rivière in 1767 and as *aufgeklärter Absolutismus* by the German historian Wilhelm Georg Friedrich Roscher in 1874. The term was either bestowed upon those absolute monarchs who were receptive to or supported Enlightenment ideas or were self-styled by the same group of rulers to justify their rule. Frederick II of Prussia, Peter I and Catherine II of Russia – all three known as 'the Great' – together with Maria Theresa, Joseph II and Leopold II of the Holy Roman Empire, featured as the most prominent enlightened rulers, although much controversy remains among scholars to the degree their religious tolerance and administrative reforms came from personal convictions or the necessity for authoritarian modernization. In the prevailing narrative, royal power was presented as a social contract, with despots entrusted to use their power for the betterment of their people; in any case, any

reforms touching upon their sovereignty or with the potential to foster dissent were never allowed (Britannica 2019; Black 1990; Behrens 1975).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Until the 1750s, despotism remained firmly in the shadow of the better-theorized concept of **tyranny**. Montesquieu's scholarly revolution not only reversed their relationship but also blurred their distinction. By the end of the eighteenth century, *despotisme "had been used in so many ways, positively and negatively, that it was at once omnipresent and without any single distinctive meaning."* (Richter 2005: 231). Around the same time, despotism and **absolutism** were often used in the same breath, especially by anti-monarchical opposition espousing **republicanism**.

The best overviews of the concept can be found in R. Koebner (1951) and M. Richter (1990, 2005), with Kaiser (2000), Çirakman (2001) and Rubiés (2005) elaborately exposing the orientalist worldviews of the European thinkers toward the Ottoman Empire and other non-Western polities. Read M. Turchetti (2008) for the delineation between despotism and **tyranny**.

NEW FRONTIERS In political philosophy, Bülent Diken (2021) juxtaposes the ancient, early and late modern accounts of despotism to reveal the (dis)continuities and homologies between them. He chases the 'old monster' of despotism, the extreme, rogue phenomenon through its various actualizations in history, always different in its manifestations. Similarly, John Keane (2020) presents an elaborate case to refurbish the concept of despotism to analyze our contemporary counterparts like China and Russia. He investigates their functional aspects at regional and global levels, as well as their ability to cooperate. In line with Montesquieu, he highlights the dangers of complicity by comfortable citizens and how the phenomenon erodes democratic values and institutions.

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Box 1.2 Elected Dictatorship & Protection Pacts

Power shows the man
– Pittacus of Mytilene

The principle of 'elected tyranny' referred to a specific form of political authority in ancient Greece, where a ruler was granted autocratic powers through an elective process rather than by hereditary right or force. Aristotle himself did admit that there existed a legal precedence in which subjects submitted themselves to rule by an 'elected tyrant' (τυραννίς αίρετή or αἰσυμνήτης – *aisymnētēs* or '*aesymnetes*') – a 'dictator' in its original meaning (cf. **dictatorship**) – for reasons of expediency.

In essence, these were crisis solutions or the result of protection pacts: Tyrants were elected in ancient Greece during times of significant political or social crises, where existing leadership structures were unable to maintain order or resolve internal conflicts, i.e., stasis (στάσις – civil strife). This form of governance was seen as a pragmatic solution to manage urgent issues such as factionalism, external threats, or civil unrest. For example, Pittacus of Mytilene (ca. 650 – ca. 570 BCE) was elected as 'aesymnetes' around 590 BCE to restore stability in Mytilene (a city on the island of Lesbos). He served in that post for ten years and was later considered one of the seven sages (early philosophers).

These tyrants were granted autocratic powers temporarily, with the expectation that they would step down after resolving the crisis. Despite their autocratic rule, their **legitimacy** was derived from popular consent, which distinguished them from hereditary monarchs or regular (deviant) **tyranny**, where power was seized by force – cf. **Plato & Aristotle**. This popular approval made their rule acceptable, as they were seen as necessary figures who could mediate between rival factions and restore unity to the polis during turbulent times.

In Aristotle's *Politics*, he describes 'aesymnetes' as its non-hereditary nature and temporary or situational character (Romer 1982). Pittacus, for instance, was elected to deal with political exiles and end internal strife in Mytilene. Although he held autocratic power, his rule was legitimized by popular consent, which differentiated this form of tyranny from the more despotic regimes that would later be condemned in Greek political theory. Theophrastus (ca. 372 – ca. 287 BCE, a pupil of Aristotle), in his treatise *On Kingship,* covered the case of Pittacus (they were both born on Lesbos). A copy of this work circulated intact at the time of Augustus and influenced thinking on 'Roman dictatorship' (as 'elective tyranny'). (Romer 1982: 33) Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (ca. 519 – ca. 430 BCE) was respected as an elected 'dictator of Rome' when he acted fast and rescued a consular army from defeat by the Aequi (a neighboring tribe). According to legend, when he resigned, he returned to his farm instead of consolidating his political power. (Britannica 2024)

The idea of elected tyranny reflects the fluidity of early Greek political systems, where distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate rule were not always clear-cut. In fact, as Greg Anderson (2005) argues, early Greek *túrannoi* (tyrants) were not necessarily seen as illegitimate usurpers; instead, they often represented dominant figures within oligarchic structures who gained power through conventional means. The negative connotations associated with **tyranny** only solidified later in Greek history, particularly after the classical era.

Thus, the principle of elected tyranny illustrates an early form of autocratic rule that was sanctioned by popular will and aimed at addressing specific political challenges. It underscores the complex nature of leadership in archaic Greece, where rulers like Pittacus could be both tyrants and legitimate leaders depending on the context and the needs of the polis.

Protection pacts, while a classical phenomenon, have been prevalent throughout history, though such regimes often prove short-lived. Scholars like Dan Slater (2010; 2018) and Levitsky & Way (2016) argue that counter-revolutionary regimes succeed by uniting elite interests against shared threats, particularly leftist rebellions aiming to seize capital and dismantle property rights. In response, economic and communal elites form protection pacts, ceding power to strongmen for defense. This often leads to **personalist rule**, as seen in anti-communist dictatorships like in South Vietnam (1955-1963) after the *autogolpe* of Ngo Dinh Diem (Ngô Đình Diệm), ultimately killed in a coup backed by the CIA; Laos (1959-1962) where General Phoumi Nosavan elbowed his way to power; Cambodia (1971-1975) where General Lon Nol colluded with Prince Sisowath Sirik effectively ending the rule of Prince Norodom Sihanouk; and South Korea under Syngman Rhee (1948-1960). Even Malaysia's regime, although not personalist, fits the pattern of elite-driven protection pacts. (Van den Bosch 2021: 265)

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Dictatorship

Caesar was the only man who undertook to overthrow the state when sober.
– Marcus Cato the Younger

Dictatorship is an old term that has historically had many meanings, ranging from the concrete to the very general. It is a concept that is burdened with many problems and ambiguities. In general, three basic issues can be identified that are associated with the use of the concept of dictatorship. First is the separation of history from the present. Dictatorship has been understood and perceived differently in the past and differently in the present, or from the twentieth century to the present.

Second, it is the way the concept is used in literature. Many authors use the concept of dictatorship quite loosely and commonly equate it with other terms, such as **authoritarianism** and **totalitarianism**, but also link it with other terms that denote various forms of undemocratic rule.

Third is the question of the definition of dictatorship. How does one define a dictatorship, and can it even be done? Many authors who study non-democratic regimes do not address the question of defining dictatorship at all. Related to this is the question of designing a typology of dictatorship.

In this entry, the focus is on the contemporary concept of dictatorship, not on its ancient historical forms. Assuming that it is a distinct concept that can be defined and that, in turn, therefore it should be differentiated from other terms of non-democratic governance. For example, the concept of dictatorship is not identical and interchangeable with the concept of authoritarianism or totalitarianism, but totalitarian and authoritarian regimes are types of dictatorship.

This more specific definition of dictatorship is required to assess its unique defining features, and hence, this entry takes a different approach compared to the other entries in the *Encyclopedia Tyrannica,* which, following prevailing custom, equates dictatorship with authoritarianism and **autocracy** and freely uses them as synonyms, mostly for stylistic reasons.

DEFINITION The word dictatorship is clear enough. It is simply a general term for any undemocratic regime. Is it possible to define such a generally understood term any more precisely? The simplest and most widely used definitions of dictatorship are minimalist: *"dictatorship is obviously the opposite of democracy"* (Gandhi 2010: 2) or even easier, *"Dictatorships are not democracies"* (Przeworski et al. 2000: 18).

Giovanni Sartori (1971; 1995) stressed that dictatorships are both morally and politically illegitimate because they are always and everywhere based on the usurpation of political power. In other words, in a dictatorship, political power does not come from free elections but is an imposed power. Political power exacts obedience through violence or the threat of its use. In short, anything that contradicts the requirements of democracy is dictatorial; it is *"rule by other means than democracy"* (Brooker 2014: 1).

Dictatorship can thus be defined as a regime in which rulers gain power through means other than competitive elections (Gandhi 2010: 7; Przeworski et al. 2000: 15). It is a negative definition of the concept. Dictatorship is defined not through what it has but through what it does not have. It is not just the lack of competitive elections, because today we have many dictatorships with **elections** of varying degrees of competitiveness (Brownlee 2007: 25), but also the absence of other things: dictatorships do not have the rule of law, political and civil rights, regular changes in power, etc. (Gandhi 2010: 7).

According to Sartori (1995: 72-75), dictatorship is a form of state in which political power is characterized by three basic features: first, it is undemocratic; second, it is unconstitutional; and third, it is coercive or violent. His second defining characteristic of a dictatorship may cause controversy: unconstitutionality. After all, many dictatorships have constitutions (cf. **authoritarian constitutionalism**), and in the past, there were plenty of dictatorships that had overtly undemocratic constitutions (not so much nowadays, as dictatorships have become more camouflaged). For example, the Polish Constitution of 1935 explicitly handed over all state power to the president (Article 4), who was accountable "before God and history" (Article 2, paragraph 2; Konstytucja 1935).

The unconstitutionality of dictatorship in Sartori's conception is based on something else. According to him, a dictatorship is understood primarily in terms of the people who rule it, i.e., in terms of the leaders or dictators, not as an institutional system: *"Traditional doctrine dealt exclusively with the 'dictator-person', not the 'dictatorship-institution'"* (Sartori 1995: 58). This is because its primary and typical characteristic is the strong **personalization** of power that distinguishes it from other political systems.

Leaving aside the rare cases of collectivist dictatorships (the Soviet Union immediately after Stalin's death or South American military **juntas**), the personalization of power is indeed a dominant feature of almost every dictatorial rule. Dictators are individuals endowed with extraordinary powers because of their alleged extraordinary abilities and merits. Their power is not institutionalized and is not subject to legal norms. Dictators rule the state personally from a position of leadership or supreme authority; they are not a state organ or institution. As an example, consider the *Führer* of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler: *"In what sense was Hitler a state organ subject to his legal principles? (...) Probably only in the sense that he was an organ of himself: that is, in no sense. Hitler was not an organ, but a person whose arbitrary will hovered above and outside the authority"* (Sartori 1995: 78).

SEE ALSO Other primordial terms related to dictatorship are **authoritarianism**, **autocracy**, and **totalitarianism**. Each is presented in its historical and



contemporary understanding. The sections on **classifications & typologies** offer a myriad of conceptual frames used to distinguish democracy from non-democracy and subdivide **political regimes**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Dictatorship is the basic and overarching concept of non-democratic rule, from which other concepts, especially authoritarianism and totalitarianism, are derived, which are types of dictatorship. It is universal enough to be used in a variety of contexts and disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. It also has linguistic significance because it represents a word that is commonly used and universally understood. However, all this is on condition that it is understood in a modern, not historical, way as shown below.

ORIGIN The concept of dictatorship has a long tradition of more than 2000 years. The historical prototype of dictatorship was ancient republican Rome. This ancient Latin *dictatura* was a legal institution that was activated in emergencies threatening the state. In such cases, a *dictator* temporarily assumed power but could not change the legal principles of the state (cf. Box 1.2 on elected dictatorship). Over time, this understanding of dictatorship thus 'broke down,' turning into unlimited dictatorial **personalist rule**, as exemplified first by the dictatorship of Lucius Cornelius Sulla and later by Julius Caesar in the first century BCE.

Nevertheless, for centuries dictatorship was still evaluated as a normal albeit personalized power order. Dictatorship has been recommended as a remedy for various problems of the state by Niccolò **Machiavelli**, Jean **Bodin**, Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Even during the Italian *Risorgimento*, Farini in 1859 (in Emilia) and Garibaldi in 1860 (in Sicily) declared themselves dictators in the 'positive' ancient Roman sense.

It was Louis Auguste Blanqui who broke tradition, speaking of the 'dictatorship of revolutionaries' in the interests of the people (cf. Box 1.3), and thus probably inspiring Marx and Lenin. Soviets later used the term as a positive self-designation in the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was not until after WWI that dictatorship took on an unequivocally negative connotation, and only with the rise of **fascism** and then Nazism that dictatorship came to be understood as a kind of separate type of political system or state. The word dictatorship has proved to be an appropriate label for a degenerate republic that has moved away from the democratic model, just as **tyranny** in the past meant a 'corrupt monarchy' characterized by all-encompassing violence. Dictatorship, as interpreted as such in this entry (see 'definition' above), meaning the negative opposite of democracy, is therefore a twentieth-century affair (Baehr & Richter 2004; Gandhi 2010: 3-7; Przeworski 2019; Sartori 1995: 60-61; 1987: 204-205).

LITERATURE Works purely devoted to the general concept of dictatorship are virtually non-existent today. A few are older and often in languages other than English (see Schmitt [1921] 2015; Cobban 1939; Neumann 1957; Duverger 1961; Sartori 1971: 456-485). Since then, the concept has been part of a broader body of work on non-democratic rule that discusses different types of dictatorship (most often authoritarianism and totalitarianism) or various specific dictatorships around the world including its historical forms (see Baehr & Richter 2004), but not dictatorship as a concept.

Given the fact that dictatorship is a general concept, its occurrence in different regional constellations is vast and varied. Most often, it is some type of **authoritarianism**, but also other types such as – especially in the twentieth century – **totalitarianism**, then **sultanism & neo-sultanism**, various traditional regimes (e.g., **monarchies**), etc. In the twenty-first century, one encounters various strongman leaders, including those who operate within democratic systems using populist strategies but have not yet dismantled democracy (Rachman 2022), as well as proponents of what Brooker (2014) terms 'disguised authoritarianism.' These leadership styles are often linked to **populism**, which many scholars regard as a non-democratic doctrine (Abts & Rummens 2007; Panizza 2005; Pasquino 2008). Since the literature on dictatorship is distributed among its specific subtypes, consult these entries individually.

Table 1.3 – Sartori's Typology of Dictatorships

Criteria	Totalitarian	Authoritarian	Simple
Ideology	strong and totalistic	weaker and non-totalistic	irrelevant or feeble
Penetration, pervasiveness	extensive	modest	none
Coercion, extraction, mobilization	high	medium	medium-low
Subgroup independence	none	limited to non-political groups	permitted with exceptions
Policies vs. outer groups	destructive	exclusionary	absorptive
Arbitrariness	unrestricted	within predicable limits	erratic
Party centrality	essential	useful	minimal or none

Source: Author's own work, based on: Sartori 1993: 15.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES In the study of (contemporary) dictatorship, a key methodological question arises: should dictatorship be understood as a distinct general concept encompassing various forms of non-democratic rule, or should it be regarded as synonymous with other types of non-democratic regimes, particularly authoritarianism, as some scholars suggest (e.g., Ezrow & Frantz 2011)? This broad question can be further refined, as exemplified by Hannah Arendt ([1951] 2022), who explored whether dictatorship is merely another term for different forms of authoritarianism, fundamentally distinct from totalitarianism, or whether it represents a broader genus encompassing both authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. While the distinction remains unclear, the first interpretation tends to prevail (Arato 2002: 482-483).

CLASSIFICATIONS Again, since dictatorship is a general concept, there are several typologies based on different criteria. First and foremost, these would be the criteria of 'who rules?' (A) and 'How do they rule?' (B) or a combination of both (Brooker 2014: 13). Typologies based on the classical duality of authoritarianism vs. totalitarianism adhere to criterion B. If we search for classifications using criterion (A) 'who rules?', then we get three basic types of dictatorship: military, one-party and personal (Brooker 2014; Ezrow & Frantz 2011).

An original and highly complex typology of dictatorship was provided by Giovanni Sartori (1971; 1995: 84-86), which combines both criteria (A & B). These are four classifications of dictatorships based on four basic separable criteria, which are: (i) intensity, (ii) goal, (iii) origin, and (iv) ideology. Based on the criterion of *intensity* (i), he distinguished three types of dictatorship: simple, Caesarist and totalitarian. Simple and totalitarian dictatorships overlap with the usually juxtaposed authoritarianism vs. totalitarianism. A Caesarist dictatorship is a regime in which all political power is held by a single charismatic leader who is authentically supported or even enthusiastically admired by the masses (note, 'Caesarism' is described in **term limits**).

According to the criterion of the *goal* (ii), dictatorships are divided into two types: revolutionary dictatorships and dictatorships of order *(dittature d'ordine*). Revolutionary dictatorships seek radical political and social change in the name of reconstruction and progress, while dictatorships of order seek to preserve a threatened *status quo* (conservative dictatorships), to return to the *status quo ante* (reactionary dictatorships) or to implement some grand plan that requires special political guardianship (paternalistic dictatorships). This last kind of dictatorship often takes the form of a kind of 'pedagogical' dictatorship, whose representatives claim that they aim to prepare the nation for democracy, which is not yet possible (and is routinely delayed).

Regarding the criterion of *origin* (iii), i.e., from which environment the ruling circle is derived, Sartori distinguished between political, military and bureaucratic dictatorships. In political dictatorships, the rulers are recruited from the political class; in military dictatorships, they are 'people in uniform,' i.e., soldiers, and in bureaucratic dictatorships, the state apparatus holds political power. The last criterion is the *ideological* (iv) character of the regime. Here, a distinction can be made between non-ideological and ideological dictatorships. Obviously, non-ideological dictatorships will most often take the form of authoritarianism, while ideological dictatorships will be primarily totalitarian or ideocratic.

This typology of dictatorship did not enter the mainstream because it was not translated from its original Italian. Sartori (1993: 15), in one of his later texts in English, presented a simpler typology consisting of three types: totalitarian, authoritarian and simple, as shown in Table 1.3.

Compared to his previous typology of dictatorships, what is new here is that he separated *simple dictatorship* from authoritarian dictatorship and redefined it. It is a non-democratic regime that has two main characteristics. First, it is ruled by one man, and a developed institutional background does not back this personalized political power, nor does a political party back it. Second, the state is relatively moderate, i.e., it minimizes oppression, is non-ideological, and allows for a relatively free public life. It is thus something that would roughly correspond to **hybrid regimes** or new or disguised authoritarianism (cf. **electoral authoritarianism** and **populism**). Authoritarian and totalitarian dictatorships conform to Linz's (2000) 'standard' definitions (cf. **Linz & Stepan**).

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Box 1.3 Dictatorship of the Proletariat: A Stretchy Concept

For there are very few so foolish who would not rather govern themselves than be governed by others.
– Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

In Marxist philosophy and political theory, the concept of **dictatorship** of the proletariat did not have anti-democratic connotations (Mayer 1993: 255), but this changed over time. Originally, it was a specific stage in the abolishment of class relationships and capitalist modes of production, where the working class becomes the ruling class and assumes power over the state. It is a specific stage in the transition towards a classless society, or communist society, where the processes of the abolishment of private property of the means of production, as the specific expression of class exploitation in the capitalist mode of production, is at the forefront.

Joseph Weydemeyer developed the term, though Karl Marx first used the phrase in the series of articles, that later appeared in the book *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850*. Marx initially abandoned the concept but later revisited it in his analysis of the Paris Commune and his "Critique of the Gotha Programme."

The Paris Commune was a revolutionary government that briefly ruled Paris from 18 March to 28 May 1871 (see also: **Anarchism**). Its origins lie in the political and social upheaval following the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), which saw the defeat of France and the collapse of Emperor Napoleon III's regime. It is well known, that the Commune had very little to do with the contemporary understanding of the notion of dictatorship, since it was the specific conquest of (geographically limited) state power by the working class and the abolishment of class exploitation and class society as such.

The Gotha Programme was a political platform proposed in 1875 during the unification of two major German socialist groups: the *Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany* (SDAP) and the *General German Workers' Association* (ADAV), founded by Ferdinand Lassalle. The program aimed to establish the ideologies and policies that would guide the newly unified party, which later became the *Social Democratic Party of Germany* (SPD – *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*). Marx repeated his concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat in his "Critique of the Gotha Programme," where he emphasized a 'transition' phase between two stages of communist society. The dictatorship of the proletariat marks the first stage, while the second represents true communism, where both classes and the state are abolished. Marx also referred to the dictatorship of the proletariat as a 'state' during this interim period, contrasting it with the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (Draper 1962; 1987; Johnston 1971).

Georgy Valentinovich Plekhanov (1856-1918), activist, ideologue and 'father of Russian Marxism,' made significant contributions by introducing the Marxist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat to Russian Social Democracy. Like Marx, Plekhanov argued that the dictatorship of the proletariat was not about minority rule or a mere seizure of power but rather a genuine class project led by the proletariat. Initially, Lenin viewed the dictatorship of the proletariat as a temporary measure, necessary until a free and democratic, classless state could be established. However, he later adopted a more permanent conception of this dictatorship (Mayer 1993; Barany 1997).

The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat became a major point of contention within the Marxist movement, most notably in the debates between Karl Kautsky and Lenin. Kautsky (1854-1938) was a prominent Marxist theorist, philosopher, and a leading figure in the *German Social Democratic Party* (SPD) as well as the Second International. While Marx originally conceived of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a dictatorship of the majority, meaning the rule of the working class aimed at abolishing private property and class distinctions, this idea evolved significantly after the Bolshevik Revolution. Marx's vision was not one of a dictatorship by a political party but rather a class-based project that would dismantle capitalist structures.

However, under Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the concept was adapted to suit their needs: Lenin argued that in Russia's specific conditions, the proletariat needed a vanguard party to lead and consolidate power during the transition to socialism. This interpretation effectively transformed the dictatorship of the proletariat into a 'dictatorship of the Party,' which claimed to act on behalf of the working class. After Lenin's death, this conception was further radicalized under Stalin, who

used it to justify widespread violence and repression in order to secure and maintain revolutionary gains. In Stalin's revision, violence became central to ensuring the survival of the revolution, marking a stark departure from Marx's original emphasis on majority rule and the goal of creating a stateless society.

Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communists introduced a slightly different version of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Due to the different material conditions from those in the West, Mao expanded the conception of the revolutionary subject, which also led to the introduction of a novel concept of the *People's Democratic Dictatorship* (人民民主专政 – *Rénmín Mínzhǔ Zhuānzhèng*) (Bose 1995). Mao claimed that it *"is based on the alliance of the working class, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and mainly on the alliance of the workers and the peasants, because these two classes comprise 80 to 90 per cent of China's population"* (Mao 1949) The concept refers to a system where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) claims to represent and act on behalf of 'the people' (primarily workers, peasants, and other revolutionary classes) while maintaining dictatorial control over those deemed counter-revolutionary or reactionary forces. So, the 'democratic' aspect refers to participation by revolutionary classes in governance under CCP leadership, while the 'dictatorship' aspect justifies the use of force or coercion against those perceived as enemies of socialism or threats to CCP rule.

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Digital Authoritarianism

Propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state
– Noam Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda* (1991)

Digital authoritarianism is the use of digital technology by authoritarian regimes to censor, surveil, repress and manipulate domestic and foreign information environments. Digital authoritarianism also comprises the surveillance of individuals and the masses through the use of cameras, facial recognition, drones, GPS tracking, and other digital technologies to support authoritarian governance.

DEFINITION Digital authoritarianism is the efforts by authoritarian regimes to control the information environment. Digital authoritarianism involves *blocking and restricting* information online (**censorship**). This could be blocking or shutting down a communication platform or a deliberate shutdown of mobile networks, Internet access and communications apps, for example, during riots and protests.

Digital authoritarianism encompasses using *restrictive social media laws* to allow critics of the government to be detained under the pretext of spreading 'fake news.' Online users could be persecuted (Reuter & Szakonyi 2015). Digital authoritarianism also includes more blatant forms of censorship. Censorship and instilling fear in those using online platforms (either social or new media) to criticize the government is still a common tactic. Cyber-attacks (cf. **cyber-warfare**) constitute another form of digital authoritarianism.

In addition to more blatant use of censorship, authoritarian regimes can also make it more difficult for information to flow. This strategy is known as 'friction' (see Roberts 2018). Regimes can cause Internet shutdowns and Internet slowdowns. They can remove social media posts. They can make it more difficult to access government information, which is important for publicizing government failures. They can create fees for accessing information that should be free of charge to access. Friction causes delays, but journalists may not even realize that they are being affected. Internet protocol address lists can be used to block foreign online content. Traffic header inspections can monitor online activity. Legal control of Internet service providers can shut down the Internet.

Digital authoritarianism relies on *manipulating content*. Digital authoritarianism is about **disinformation** campaigns, the objectives and modes of which can vary. One of the ways that authoritarian regimes manipulate the public is through flooding (as shown in Box 1.4). Flooding entails the government producing information to distract and confuse from information that the government would rather



citizens did not have access to. Regimes can flood social media with disinformation that is supportive of the regime or demonizes the opposition (Roberts 2018). They can use automated bots to promote government **propaganda** or flood anti-regime protest media. Troll armies are used to harass critics, spread misinformation, and erode trust in independent media outlets.

By doing so, this provides plausible deniability for the use of censorship, propaganda and repression. This also can ultimately confuse people. If there is an onslaught of propaganda to convince the public of something, it makes it even harder for citizens to discern what is false and what is the truth. For example, the Chinese government uses social media to pay government employees to generate about 448 million comments every year (Tucker et al. 2017). Flooding can be used to target a domestic audience or used to target another country's population, as was the case with Russia's electoral interference in the 2016 US Presidential election.

Digital authoritarian involves *surveillance.* Surveillance systems that were supposed to improve public safety are being used to target activists, groups and individuals. GPS can be used to track movements. Email and social media can be surveilled as well (Reuter & Szakonyi 2015). Authoritarian regimes are also using AI, machine learning, facial recognition, malware hacking and satellite infrastructure to control individuals and groups. Any critics of the government or human rights groups are targeted and harassed. The digital tracking power of the Internet has made it easier to identify who is blogging information that the government deems to be offensive, and as a result, thousands of bloggers have been arrested. Additionally, authoritarian regimes are making use of spyware programs that can turn mobile into surveillance tools, giving an attacker full access to the data in these devices. This can be used to target activists, opposition members, journalists and others (Allen & La Lime 2021).

SEE ALSO Digital authoritarianism is an authoritarian practice manifested in the virtual space of the digital age, primarily on social and new media but can be aimed at infrastructure (i.e. **cyber-warfare**). It encompasses new forms of **censorship** fueled by **disinformation** to either boost regime support at home (**propaganda**), identify silent critics (**repression**, **secret services**) or portray regimes in a more favorable light abroad (**soft power**). The term is associated with the concepts of 'fake news,' networked authoritarianism, tech-enabled authoritarianism, and cyber sovereignty.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Digital authoritarianism has not only impeded individual rights and liberties but has reshaped the power balance between democracies and autocracies. Authoritarian regimes are able to consolidate power and diffuse tools for digital surveillance. With digital authoritarianism, authoritarian regimes are exerting increased and unchecked control over their population through digital technologies and other populations as well.

Digital authoritarianism enables preventive repression and exploitation of **human rights** – the most important first line of defense for authoritarians (Ritter & Conrad 2016). Preventive repression is activities that the government uses to decrease the risk that the opposition would threaten the government, such as enabling them to mobilize and organize public dissent. Preventive repression involves identifying, monitoring and tracking potential regime opponents in order to neutralize them (Dragu & Przeworski 2019). States are less reactive than they were when the Internet was starting to explode. Today, they are proactive in limiting citizens access to information (Morozov 2011).

Digital authoritarianism also allows authoritarian regimes to appear to have a hands-off approach to repression. These strategies have changed the landscape of how information is disseminated and have given a huge advantage to incumbent regimes that can harness social media to control the narratives (Kendall-Taylor et al. 2020). Digital authoritarianism also normalizes constant surveillance and expunges any demands for privacy.

ORIGIN Not until the early 2000s was there any mention of digital authoritarianism. For the most part political science scholarship had very little to say on the matter. The literature that addressed this topic assumed that information and communication technologies would play a democratizing role. Most scholarly work also focused on the role of the Internet in the US and other advanced liberal democracies (Kalathil & Boas 2001). No work countered the popular belief that the Internet would undermine authoritarian regimes.

Early work in the 1990s could not be concluded because Internet access was not spread out. Case studies seemed to demonstrate that contrary to conventional wisdom, authoritarian regimes were finding ways to counter the political impact of Internet use. Singapore was already using legal, technical and social measures to shape the development of the Internet as early as 2000. Ambitious censorship schemes are being implemented in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. More work would follow suit, but the term digital authoritarianism was not used until 2011, and other works focused on networked authoritarianism or more descriptive words to explain authoritarian regimes' use of censorship of the Internet and technology.

China's first regulation of the Internet was the *Provision Directive on the Management of International Connections by Computer Information Networks in the PRC*, which was signed in 1996. At this point, fewer than 20,000 Chinese had access to the Internet – and this was mostly government officials and academics. By the 2010s, there was an uptick in literature on the efforts by authoritarian regimes to stifle social media, particularly after the events of the **Arab Spring**. As the case study in the example below reveals, the pioneer of digital authoritarianism was China.

LITERATURE Various studies have looked at the impact of the Internet and improvements in technology on democracy. With the power of the Inter-

net, authoritarian regimes were initially concerned that the digital revolution would unleash the forces of democratization and lead to authoritarian breakdown. Many authoritarian regimes have been unable to control what their citizens are able to access completely. However, *Freedom on the Net*, a comprehensive study of Internet freedom in 65 countries, has demonstrated that Internet freedom is deteriorating. More countries are following the Chinese model of censorship, surveillance, disinformation campaigns, arrests of government critics and technical breakdowns and attacks. It is not only autocracies like Egypt, Cambodia and Venezuela that are embracing these tactics but also gray zone democracies like Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Kenya and the Philippines. The incorporation of these tactics of digital authoritarianism is an example of how flawed democracies are backsliding.

The literature on digital authoritarianism found that social media did not undermine autocracies. Espen Rød and Nils Weidmann (2015) highlight how authoritarian regimes can use the Internet to their favor. Daehee Bak and colleagues (2018) claim that the Internet is really only helpful in protecting citizens from repression in countries that are already democratic or at least have competitive **elections** and some constraints on the **executive**. For authoritarian regimes, the impact of the Internet on protecting their citizens from repression is very limited (Bak et al. 2018).

Technological systems were initially lauded as being able to spearhead democratic progress, enabling citizens to share information more freely, coordinate activity and hold governments accountable. In Ukraine's Orange Revolution, citizens used networked platforms to access alternative media to communicate and coordinate large groups (Goldstein 2007). Networked platforms were used to help coordinate in Iran in 2009 and Egypt in 2022. This was known as liberation technology, according to Larry Diamond (2010). It was any form of information and communication technology that expanded political, social and economic freedom. Social media was hailed as a technology that would liberate societies and support free speech. Nevertheless, the Internet and social media have also enabled authoritarian regimes to surveil their societies to an unprecedented extent. Authoritarian regimes found ways to limit their citizens' use of networked platforms for free speech or collective action.

CLASSIFICATIONS As the definition already explained there are many different dimensions and practices to digital authoritarianism. These can include surveillance, manipulation, flooding, friction and other restrictions. Thus, there are efforts to censor and restrict, efforts to manipulate and confuse and efforts to surveil and watch over closely. In the category of manipulation and confusion, we find the concept of 'fake news.'

Fake news is a term that authoritarian regimes have used to delegitimize any information that is critical of the regime. Ironically, it is more often that authoritarian regimes or their surrogates use fake news to confuse, distract and polarize. Fake news encompasses many different things, including misleading content that uses misinformation to frame an issue or individual; impostor content where the sources are impersonated; fabricated content where the new content is 100 percent false and designed to deceive and do harm; false connection, where the headlines, visuals or captions do not support the content; false context when genuine content is shared with false contextual information; and finally manipulated content, where genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive. Fake news is not satire – which has no intention to cause harm but could have the potential to fool. Fake news has the intention to mislead.

MEASUREMENT Measuring digital authoritarianism requires looking at various actions and restrictions. There are numerous measures of media freedom and censorship offered by **Varieties of Democracy**, **Freedom House**, and the *Economic Index,* among others. However, to more specifically measure digital authoritarianism requires looking at which countries black out the Internet infrastructure and where there is infrastructural isolation such as a firewall. It may also be important to look at the license restrictions to Internet service providers (ISPs), content moderation mandates and to what degree ISPs face prosecution. Studies can also look at whether platforms and websites face prosecution, blocking and denial of services, content filtration and blocklisting. Finally, investigating the environment for Internet users, prosecution, blocking, blocklisting and denial of anonymity.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Measuring digital authoritarianism is complicated by the fact that it is difficult to quantify different forms of digital manipulations. While measuring censorship laws is more straightforward, it is more challenging to ascertain the extent of friction and flooding taking place. Accessing the data on surveillance is also difficult to find as this data may not be readily available. It is also difficult to measure the impact. For example, was public opinion shaped by digital manipulation or other factors?

EXAMPLES China and Russia are notably at the forefront of this phenomenon. Of the two, China has the most experience in digital authoritarianism. China is a trailblazer and one of the leading exporters of regulatory orders for the Internet. A poll of Chinese citizens revealed that 60 percent had a positive image of the government's role in Internet supervision and saw it as a sign of the government's progress. Thus, not only is China using the Internet to prolong authoritarian rule, but it is also doing it in a way that is attractive to its citizens.

Much has been written about Internet governance in China (King et al. 2013; Laskai & Segal 2021; Lu & Zhao 2018; MacKinnon 2011; Roberts 2018; Tkacheva et al. 2013; Yang & Mueller 2019). China has almost a billion Internet users – 830 million representing almost 60 percent of its population. It, therefore, can shape the digital experience of about a fifth of the world's population. China has always advocated



a model of Internet governance that used censorship and surveillance instead of an open model supported by liberal democracies (Sherman 2021). China has essentially provided the world with a blueprint for the establishment of a digital totalitarian state (Qiang 2021).

The Chinese digital governance model has demonstrated how other authoritarian regimes can harness technology to stabilize, strengthen, and legitimize authoritarian governments (MacKinnon 2011: 36). The Chinese government has offered training courses and seminars for 36 countries about information management and restrictive online practices (Qiang 2021; Sherman 2021) – cf. **authoritarian collaboration**.

China is also the supplier of choice for any autocratic regime wanting to improve its surveillance systems, and its techniques are increasingly copied and adopted by other countries. China's *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) recipients have passed cyber-security laws that are more restrictive of online content, sometimes mirroring laws already enacted by China (Sherman 2021). For example, Vietnam recently established data localization requirements (Sherman 2021) – cf. **authoritarian learning**.

The Chinese government has also aggressively promoted its 'Digital Silk Road,' a series of fiber optic cables, mobile networks, satellite stations and smart cities built by global Chinese technology companies (Qiang 2021). Through its subsidized Digital Silk Road projects, China has played an important role in increasing the usage of AI surveillance technology, offering $17 billion in loans and investments in telecom networks and other big data initiatives throughout the developing world (Eder et al. 2019). Chinese companies are installing Internet and mobile network equipment and offering high-tech tools to assist governments with surveillance as well. In addition to surveillance, mapping, cloud storage and data analysis are also provided, which may help regimes spy on their domestic political opponents (Parkinson et al. 2019). At least 80 countries in the Global South have adopted *Huawei*'s Safe City solutions or other Chinese surveillance and security technology platforms (Greitens 2020).

In Tanzania and Nigeria, for example, this additional support has helped these countries crack down on Internet content. In response to the **Arab Spring**, some authoritarian leaders began to share information-blocking technology. Protests in Egypt, Iran and Ukraine found that mobile service was disabled (Steinert-Threlkeld et al. 2015). Vietnam, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, just to name a few, have blocked offensive content to maintain the *status quo*. The Turkish courts banned *YouTube,* which was deemed offensive to Atatürk (the state's founder). Thailand blocked *YouTube* because there was a derogatory message about the king in one of the private messages on the website. Many technology-deprived countries have been persuaded by the efficacy of China's surveillance security models. China not only serves as an inspiration, but many countries may be more likely to support China in international organizations in exchange for China's investment.

In China, the central Internet regulator is the *Cyberspace Administration of China,* which answers to the *Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission*, which is headed by Xi Jinping himself. Censorship on the web is part of a larger surveillance effort, which seeks to process, track and control most networked platforms. In China, political dissent is considered a crime and is closely watched. Additionally, China's cyber-laws target corporations to ensure that there is private dependence on the state.

In China, all website owners have to hold a state license (an Internet Content Provider license or IPC). This makes website owners legally responsible for all published content and requires the self-discipline demanded by Internet services. They are responsible for making sure that unauthorized information remains blocked. There are forbidden words and topics listed and circulated in media and service operators. Off-limit topics are the Hong Kong protests (cf. Box 6.4), the anniversaries of the Tiananmen Square massacre, and the detention of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang.

China has one of the most technologically advanced Internet infrastructures for managing Internet traffic. The *Chinese Firewall* (called internally the 'Golden Shield Project' – 金盾工程 – *jīndùn gōngchéng*) is a centralized system of Internet traffic choke points that enables the government to block servers and sites across the country and protect them from international Internet traffic (Ramesh et al. 2020). The firewall blocks platforms like *Twitter, Google, Facebook* and *YouTube,* as well as virtual private networks (VPNs) (Kolton 2017).

With the Great Firewall (which China began working on in 2011), the Chinese state has built a national version of the Internet, in which it holds full power and exercises control at will (Creemers 2016; King et al. 2013; Weber 2019). The firewall is a collection of software and hardware systems that is used to monitor and filter communications. It can block, censor and patrol anything deemed politically unacceptable (King et al. 2013). It blocks mobile apps and forces foreign companies to adapt to domestic regulations. The firewall does not work as a wall but as a management system with many moving parts, exercising flexibility and agility. It does not just censor information but also surveils and manipulates information. The system does routine management of daily flows of information and also works in overdrive during a crisis (MacKinnon 2011). Internet companies are also expected to invest in their technology and personnel to censor information, according to China's Cyberspace Administration. Those who fail to do so face huge fines and can lose their license (Ruan et al. 2020).

Whenever there is a moment of tension, the government shuts down all communications in that location so that citizens cannot use the Internet or their mobile phones. For example, in July 2009, the Internet was completely shut down for ten months in the entire province of Xinjiang after ethnic riots took place.

In its day-to-day activities, flooding is a common

tactic used by the Chinese government. For example, a *New York Times* report indicated that 4600 *Twitter* accounts reposted posts from Chinese diplomatic envoys and official news organizations in the first week of June 2020 to serve as a distraction. Many students are recruited to blog and write favorable posts about their employers and the government. Independent online writers are co-opted and invited to special conferences and press events.

China has also established a system of digital control that can identify potential dissenters in real time. To do so, China has supported and co-opted domestic technology, and Chinese tech companies are legally compelled to offer the government access to data on citizens (Simonite 2019). China also has the largest surveillance network of over 200 million closed-circuit cameras. Using data on each individual, the Chinese government then only allows compliant citizens to participate fully in society and the economy through the social credit system that has been established. With the social credit system, people and companies can be blocklisted for behavior that is considered to be non-compliant, while good behavior is rewarded with preferential treatment in housing, employment, medical care, travel and access to the Internet (Liang et al. 2018). Additionally, big data about citizens' behavior is fed into algorithms to shape economic and social interactions in ways that reproduce the norms of the regime.

The Chinese government also exercises control over devices and networks. Under the guise of protecting children from inappropriate content, software must be installed on all computers sold in China. This software censors political and religious content, logs user activity and sends this information back to a central computer server belonging to a software developer's company. This software also made users more vulnerable to cyber-attacks. Mobile phones are used to track citizens and monitor their movements and communications. They must provide identification when buying a SIM card (Kavanaugh et al. 2011). Only if the battery is entirely removed is tracking no longer possible (Gallagher 2013). It is impossible to evade digital control via cellular data. *Skype* was used in 2006 by the Chinese government to track and log politically sensitive chat sessions inside China. Data leaks in 2019 revealed that 2.6 million people were being closely tracked in real time through a facial recognition company called *SenseNets*. Surveillance enables authorities to warn and harass Internet users through electronic messages.

The Chinese government also has control over domain names, and companies and organizations can only use domains that end in '.cn.' This again was implemented in order to clean up pornography and fraud as a pretext to shut down hundreds of thousands of websites (Taylor 2022).

New users in China must register their websites and blogs with government identification and must agree with conditions to limit their speech. China does not allow any anonymity. Real names must be registered in order to use popular messaging services or to comment on websites and forums (Caragliano 2013). Singapore has followed suit in making sure new users register their blogs and websites as well with the government.

Russia offers lower-cost digital disinformation tools to repress potential opposition and democracies abroad. Russia's digital authoritarianism is less centralized, more reactive and lacks choke points. It has to rely on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block or filter content, sites or users based on blocklists that are maintained by the government that must be frequently updated. As a result, in comparison to China, Russia's blocking is also more unevenly implemented. However, Russia is working on improving its use of automated filters and access restrictions.

While most of China's Internet governance laws were introduced in the 1990s and early 2000s, Russia's were established much later, mostly after the 2011 protests, and the *Internet Isolation Law* in Russia was not introduced until 2019. Nevertheless, Russia has more recently been governing its network infrastructure better. This signifies a broader trend toward less visible, more technical digital control mechanisms rather than going after critics of the state via prosecution. Since 2018, regional service blackouts have been executed in both Ingushetia and Moscow.

The visible forms of digital authoritarianism persist. Many countries have passed extremely strict laws for journalists. Russia passed a law in 2014 that required blogs with over 3000 monthly visitors to register. Bloggers are liable for the accuracy of what they write, with anything too critical of the government likely to be deemed false. Egypt, which has the third most journalists in jail, passed legislation that requires social media users with more than 5000 followers to obtain a license from the *Higher Council for Media Regulatio*n. China has also banned social media accounts from posting without a permit since 2017. Similar laws face social media users in Iran who have 5000 followers. Cambodia requires all websites to register with the *Ministry of Information*. Jail sentences are handed out for up to two years for spreading fake news online as a pretext to shut down critical media.

IMPACT ON POLICY There are a series of policy suggestions that have been put forth to tackle digital authoritarianism. The work in this area has crossed over into International Relations (IR), as digital authoritarianism is an issue without borders, particularly in the ease with which technology transfers. Thus, there may need to be tighter export controls on technologies that advance digital authoritarianism. There may be more calls to sanctions regimes that engage in digital authoritarianism and to offer secondary sanctions to the firms that supply them with the technology. There needs to be a greater effort to work with partner countries to build better cyber-security capacity. Furthermore, there needs to be a more concerted public awareness campaign around **disinformation**, including providing funding for educational programs that can build digital critical thinking skills among younger people (i.e., media literacy, news literacy). Democracies will



also need to work to develop a competitive model of digital governance that offers a code of conduct that can counter authoritarian models.

NEW FRONTIERS Digital authoritarianism is a relatively new field of study that will require a better understanding of how technology can be managed. In particular, it will be important to look at the impact of COVID-19 on digital authoritarianism. COVID-19 has allowed countries to engage in much more intrusive levels of cyber-policing and surveillance. In the interest of public safety, many countries, both democratic and non-democratic, have allowed their privacy concerns to be overshadowed in the name of public safety, sometimes in ways that are not necessary or productive.

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Box 1.4 Flooding

When the flood comes, fish eat ants; when the water recedes, ants eat fish.
– Lao proverb

Flooding is the process where regimes use social media to inundate citizens with information that is supportive of the regime and/or demonizes, disrupts or drowns out the opposition (Roberts 2018; Tucker et al. 2017). Most often used by autocracies, flooding entails providing so much content, which could be innocuous or entertaining, that citizens are distracted from issues that are politically sensitive to the regime (Tucker et al. 2017; Sanovich et al. 2018; Munger et al. 2019). Because of the onslaught of both government propaganda and possibly truthful apolitical news, flooding also makes it more difficult for citizens to coordinate – as they cannot discern what is false and what is true (Østbø 2017). The goal is to provide citizens with so much misinformation that, at the very least, confuses people or creates apathy. In Venezuela, while anti-Maduro protests raged on, the government flooded Twitter with apolitical posts to distract Venezuelan citizens (Munger 2019). In Saudi Arabia, cyber-armies spammed a trending hashtag to disrupt unwanted conversations, known as 'hashtag poisoning' (Bradshaw & Howard 2017). Authoritarian regimes can also use flooding to amplify ideas that are not relevant or that are divisive. Bahrain coordinated a flooding attack on X (formerly Twitter) filled with sectarian hate speech (Leber & Abrahams 2019).

Flooding can be accomplished in numerous ways – using automated bots or human armies of trolls. Bots have been used in Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Syria and the Philippines (Leber & Abrahams 2019), while in Serbia and Vietnam, dedicated pro-government bloggers are used to spread regime **propaganda**. The Chinese government uses social media to pay government employees to generate about 448 million comments every year (Tucker et al. 2017).

Some authoritarian regimes focus on an external audience. North Korea has used troll armies to undermine democracy in South Korea. Thousands of pieces of propaganda have been posted, but instead of trying to flood South Koreans with *Juche* ideology, the focus is instead on issues that are controversial in South Korean politics (Benedictus 2016). Russia has also notably used flooding on its citizens and its neighbors, providing a wide range of content that is both aggressive and harmless (Cirone & Hobbs, 2023).

Bot armies are useful for hijacking an existing hashtag with pro-regime messaging, generating new conversations that distract, and harassing activists to inflict fear in potential critics. The result is that this overwhelming amount of information dominates and drowns out **opposition** narratives, effectively making flooding a form of **censorship** (Abrahams & Leber 2021).

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Dynasties

The rise of a dynasty is like the birth of a star, a dazzling display of light and heat, but its fall is like the dying embers of a fire, fading into darkness.
– Tom Holland

Contemporary dynasticism often blends traditional hereditary rule with modern forms of rulership, sometimes in a true neo-patrimonial fashion. Political families may utilize democratic institutions such as elections to maintain power while undermining democratic norms. These hybrid dynasties challenge conventional understandings of dynasticism by highlighting the adaptability and resilience of family-based power in diverse political contexts.

DEFINITION The concept of a 'dynasty' lacks a single, universally accepted definition, as scholars have formulated various definitions to serve different purposes (Ruud & Nielsen 2018). At its core, a dynasty is generally understood as a family in which power is transferred from one generation to the next. However, the criteria for what constitutes a dynasty can differ significantly. One key element of these definitions is the minimum number of family members who must hold office for a family to be considered a dynasty. In some cases, particularly in well-established democracies like the US, four or more family members are required (Kenawas 2015; Smith 2018). In contrast, other definitions might require only two family members or stipulate that a family must maintain power in a specific geographical area for a certain number of years.

The types of familial relationships included in the definition of a dynasty also vary. While some definitions focus on direct lineage or male politicians, most encompass a broad range of familial ties, including marital and extended family connections. Dynasties can exist at various levels of government, from national to regional and local levels. The timeframe for dynastic succession can also differ, with some definitions specifying that power must be transferred within a particular period, either consecutively or simultaneously (Kenawas 2015).

Another factor complicating the definition of dynasties is the notion of conscious inheritance. Although the term 'dynasty' often suggests a deliberate transfer of power, this is not always the case. Successors may hold different political views from their predecessors, challenging the idea of dynasties as self-aware political projects. Furthermore, internal conflicts and rivalries within a dynasty – such as those between siblings or uncles and nephews – can undermine the perception of dynasties as unified entities (Ruud & Nielsen 2018).

Also, dynasties interact quite differently in various types of political regimes. For this reason, it will be easier to stick to something simple. A good pick is Jeroen Duindam's proposition, which endeavored to clear a path through the myriad definitions of monarchic dynasties in the world. He settles for: *"Any polity governed by a ruler surrounded by relatives and a body of servants qualifies."* (Duindam 2016: 12).

SEE ALSO The concept of dynasties is naturally linked with hereditary **succession** and sometimes to rotational selection or election between a few eminent, eligible families, hence its association with **aristocracy** and **oligarchy**. It thus links ruling to the **family**: historically, kingship to kinship; in dictatorships and democracies, it links offices to political clans (cf. **clan politics**). In dynasties it is impossible to separate the public from the private (**informality** and **neo-patrimonialism**), but there was less tension between these spheres before the emergence of legal-rational **rulership**. For instance, nepotism (Box 1.1) was expected, not deviant.

ORIGINS The term 'dynasty' originates from the ancient Greek word δυναστεία *(dunasteía),* which means 'lordship' and 'sovereignty.' In contemporary usage, it commonly refers to a ruling family or a lineage of kings or princes. Although dynasties are often associated with hereditary succession, this was not universally practiced among all monarchies. The term is used to describe these systems of rule because, even when succession was not strictly hereditary, the ruler's kin often remained close to power.

Aristotle's typology of governments in his work *Politics* categorized **oligarchy** as the (collegial) rule of the rich, but variation existed (e.g., different property rates), and sometimes it was hereditary (like the rule of powerful families or *dunasteía*), which is called the **tyranny** among oligarchies (because it goes against the egalitarian principle among the elites themselves), see also: **Plato & Aristotle**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE While traditional forms of dynastic rule have declined with the rise of democracy, personalized leadership with semi-dynastic traits persists in politics and business today, particularly in autocratic states, but not exclusively. This suggests that the underlying principles of dynastic power – such as the importance of family connections and the inheritance of privilege – remain relevant in certain contexts.

Dynasticism manifests in various ways across different regime types. In **democracies**, dynasticism presents a paradox as it appears to contradict the principle of equal opportunity. Despite the necessity for electoral endorsement, political families persist, raising concerns about fairness and the quality of representation.

Democratic institutions can either hinder or facilitate dynasticism. For example, electoral systems that favor candidate-centered campaigns, like Japan's single non-transferable vote system before 1994, tend to benefit candidates with name recognition and established networks, often those from political **families** (Smith 2012).

Additionally, decentralized candidate selection

processes within parties can empower local actors who may favor dynastic candidates due to their influence and resources. Dynastic candidates also inherit an incumbency advantage (Box 8.2) from their predecessors, leveraging name recognition, existing networks, and access to resources to secure party nominations and win elections. This is evident in the high proportion of legacy politicians in Japan's cabinet. The persistence of dynasticism in democracies raises normative concerns about the narrowing of the political class and potential bias toward those with inherited privilege (Smith 2018).

In non-democratic regimes, dynastic patterns vary widely and are shaped by the nature of authoritarian power and strategies employed to maintain control. In **personalist regimes** where power is centralized and institutional constraints are weak, dynasticism is a common tendency. Rulers already rely on family members when governing and select successors to consolidate power within the ruling family.

Hybrid regimes also witness dynasticism as these regimes favor the ruling elite and dominant (non-democratic) political ruling **parties**. Political families may manipulate **elections** and suppress **opposition** to maintain dominance, as observed in Indonesia and the Philippines (Kenawas 2015).

In **monarchies**, dynastic rule is inherent as power is vested in a royal family with typically hereditary succession. Dynasties typically emerged in hindsight once a lengthy succession had been established. Since this relied heavily on biological chance, there was a continuous search for ways to regulate it (cf. harems in Box 5.11). When kingship and rule were perceived less as institutional roles and more as personal positions, they became increasingly dependent on individuals. This heightened the temptation to alter circumstances by removing these individuals (Ehlers 2004: 6).

While not all monarchies are absolute, even constitutional monarchies involve some degree of dynasticism since the royal family retains symbolic and sometimes political roles. Thailand's Chakri monarchy exemplifies this persistence despite periods of military rule (Thompson 2012).

LITERATURE While nepotism (Box 1.1) may appear to be a natural human tendency within families, the question of whether dynasticism, too, is inherently human requires a more nuanced exploration. The interplay of cultural norms, institutional structures, and power dynamics across societies and historical periods complicates any straightforward attribution of dynasticism to human nature.

Jallinoja (2017) argues that the tendency for status to become a family matter in elite circles, such as the prevalence of cousin marriages among European royalty, reflects a 'mystical bond' established by kinship. This bond, while varying across contexts, suggests a deep-seated human inclination to favor and elevate one's kin. Similarly, Smith (2012; 2018) observes that even in democracies like Japan and Ireland, where ideals of equal opportunity prevail, political dynasties persist. This phenomenon, often explained by the 'power begets power' dynamic, demonstrates how name recognition, inherited resources, and political connections enable 'favored sons' or 'democratic scions' to leverage family ties for political advantage.

Duindam (2015) further emphasizes the historical intertwining of kinship and kingship, noting that dynastic rule has been a common form of political organization throughout history: *"Remarkably, even the dynastic cycle recurs, in the literary imagining of families as well as in the practice of businesses – self-made men founding their company, first generations of successors consolidating it, and spendthrift youngsters raised in opulence squandering their predecessors' achievements in the third or fourth generation. (…) Do these family cycles correspond to the Chinese dynastic cycle and Ibn Khaldûn's [cf. Box 6.7] model of generations?"* (Duindam 2015: 317)

Ruud and Nielsen (2018) link the prevalence of dynasticism to the human need for trust in uncertain environments. In contexts where institutions are opaque or reliable information is scarce, individuals naturally form networks of trust based on family ties. From this perspective, dynasticism serves as a strategy for navigating uncertain political and economic landscapes by leveraging the trust inherent in familial relationships.

However, viewing dynasticism as purely determined by human nature oversimplifies its complexity. Institutions and political strategies play a significant role in shaping its extent and form. Chandra (2016) highlights how institutional structures influence the character and consequences of dynastic politics. For instance, in India, state control over resources combined with weak party organizations incentivizes dynastic practices. Nevertheless, alternative institutional arrangements with stronger party regulations and meritocratic selection processes could reduce their prevalence. Similarly, Thompson (2012) describes political dynasties in Asia as 'modern hybrids,' blending traditional notions of hereditary **charisma** with strategic political maneuvering. Rather than reverting to age-old practices, elites employ dynasticism as a calculated strategy to consolidate power, manage factionalism, and enhance **legitimacy** within modern systems.

Haldén (2020) underscores the historical integration of kinship into European political orders as a precondition for stability and cohesion. While coercion and violence played roles in maintaining power, collaboration and shared norms among family-based elites were equally critical. This perspective suggests that dynasticism is not inherently human but rather emerges from strategic alliances and power-sharing arrangements among elites. (This echoes sentiments about the local chieftains in Africa, cf. Baldwin 2016).

To recap, while certain human tendencies – such as favoring kin or seeking **trust** in uncertain environments – may contribute to the prevalence of dynasticism, it is not simply an inevitable outcome of human nature. Instead, dynasticism is shaped by the interplay of cultural norms, institutional structures, power dynamics, and calculated political strategies. The question of whether dynasticism is inherently



human remains open to debate; however, it is clear that its persistence reflects both deeply rooted social behaviors and specific contextual factors that enable its reproduction over time.

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Ethnic Politics & Comparative Authoritarianism

In a moment of crisis, the wise build bridges and the foolish build dams.
– Nigerian proverb

The intersection of ethnic politics and dictatorship studies is a complex area that is not frequently explored in depth despite the significant role ethnicity can play in authoritarian regimes. Surprisingly little comparative work has been done on systematically explaining why ethnicity becomes politicized (Basedau et al. 2011). Several factors contribute to this relative neglect. The main reason is that ethnic politics are predominantly linked to conflict studies and how such identities intersect with class, religion, and frames of mobilization (e.g., Gisselquist 2013). The second reason is that the literature on ethnic politics is preoccupied with democratic or electoral contexts where ethnic groups have more visible avenues for political expression and mobilization. In **single-party regimes,** politicians often mobilize support along local-level divisions, such as tribe or clan. However, the transition to multi-party systems can incentivize politicians to appeal to broader, national-level identities based on religion, language, or region (Posner 2007).

In **personalist rule**, tyrants actively deepen such schisms as part of their overall strategy of divide and conquer (Van den Bosch 2021). They often rely on balanced ethnic coalitions where power is distributed relatively equally among coalition members. This is because personalist leaders often lack the institutional mechanisms to credibly commit to power-sharing agreements, leading to a mutual commitment problem between the ruling group and potential coalition partners. In contrast, party-based authoritarian regimes can provide institutional arrangements that mitigate these commitment problems and allow for unbalanced ethnic **ruling coalitions** where power is distributed unequally (Beiser-Mcgrath & Metternich 2020).

Regime type thus significantly shapes the salience of different ethnic divisions, but various factors shape ethnic dynamics. A previous generation of scholars investigated the different structures to explain different sets of ethnic relations (Horowitz 1971; Esman 1994). States shape ethnic consciousness and foster political mobilization through policies on resource allocation, education, and language. For example, David Brown's (1994) classification of states in relation to ethnicity still offers an interesting understanding of how different types of states manage ethnic politics. (a) *Ethnocratic states*, such as Burma, are dominated by a single ethnic group and often impose assimilationist policies that marginalize minorities, leading to ethnic tensions and rebellions. (b) *Corporatist states*, like Singapore, manage ethnic interests through controlled participation and strive to integrate ethnic identities into a cohesive national identity, transforming ethnicity into a resource for unity. (c) *Neo-patrimonial states*, exemplified by Indonesia, are marked by elite factionalism and personalist power, which can politicize ethnic communalism and lead to regional rebellions. (d) *Internal colonial states*, such as Thailand, focus on core region development, creating economic disparities that fuel ethnic unrest in peripheral areas. (e) Lastly, states defined by *class relations*, like Malaysia, use ethnic ideology as a tool for maintaining power and managing class dynamics, often employing a 'divide-and-rule' strategy to balance class and ethnic interests.

Basedau et al. (2011) distinguish between structural, institutional, and historical factors to gauge the salience of ethnicity. (i) Structurally, the ethnic demography of a society plays a key role: high ethnic *fractionalization* (many small groups) may hinder politicization due to collective action challenges, while ethnic *polarization* (fewer, larger groups) facilitates mobilization by emphasizing clear differences. (ii) Institutionally, political frameworks like ethnic

party bans and electoral systems influence how ethnicity enters politics. For instance, proportional representation systems can enable ethnic parties by lowering barriers to entry, whereas bans on ethnic parties may redirect political organizations toward other identities like class or ideology. (iii) Historically, **colonial legacies** such as 'divide-and-rule' strategies, land distribution practices, and prior interethnic conflicts leave enduring rivalries that shape the salience of ethnicity in politics. Countries with fewer historical drivers of ethnic division, such as Burkina Faso and Tanzania, often exhibit lower levels of ethnic politicization.

With liberalization and the shift from single-party regimes to multi-party electoral settings, scholars try to isolate the impact of regime type from structural and historical factors. For example, the experiences of Zambia and Kenya, who both transitioned to multi-party systems, saw a shift in the salient ethnic cleavages, from localized tribal identities in the single-party era to broader linguistic (Zambia) or ethno-regional (Kenya) divisions in the multi-party era. (Poser 2007). Basedau et al. (2011) find little evidence that 'ethnicized' party systems harm democracy.

However, this is not the whole picture: The presence of strong local leaders or intermediaries can significantly influence how ethnicity plays out in electoral politics. These chiefs, religious leaders, or ethnic elites, often holding moral authority and control over resources, can act as brokers between politicians and voters, potentially enabling cross-ethnic mobilization and mitigating the formation of rigid ethnic voting blocs (Koter 2013; 2016; Baldwin 2016). The availability of information about candidates and political issues can also impact the role of ethnicity in electoral choices. In information-poor environments, where voters lack access to detailed policy platforms or candidate track records, they may rely more heavily on ethnic cues to make decisions (Conroy-Krutz 2013).

Although it took a while for the field of comparative politics to catch up (Erdmann 2004), today, most research on ethnic politics is concerned either with party politics (e.g., Chandra 2005; Bogaards 2007; Basedau & Stroh 2009) and electoral politics (e.g., Hultquist et al. 2021). In non-electoral regimes, ethnic politics are still under-researched.

Exceptions are some studies on militaries and **coups** (e.g., Roessler 2011; 2016). As a result of colonial legacies and long episodes of personalist rule, in many cases, militaries have been subject to ethnic stacking for **coup-proofing** purposes. While 'ethnic stacking' can provide a degree of stability in the short term, it can also create long-term risks. It can lead to a cycle of coups (coup traps – Box 5.2) as different ethnic factions within the military vie for control of the state. When there is an ethnic mismatch between the civilian leadership and the officer corps, especially if the military is dominated by a group different from the leader's (a default **colonial legacy** in Africa), the risk of instability increases. Leaders may attempt to restructure the military to align it with their ethnic base, but this entails increased coup risks (Harkness 2016).

The size of a leader's ethnic group significantly influences their strategies and the stability of **military regimes**. Leaders from smaller ethnic groups are more inclined to depend on coercive repression and ethnic stacking to retain power. With a limited support base, they face heightened vulnerability to challenges from larger groups, prompting them to ensure military loyalty through ethnic favoritism. In contrast, leaders from larger ethnic groups often have greater flexibility, enabling them to adopt a wider array of strategies, such as forming multi-ethnic coalitions or utilizing institutional tools like political parties to address dissent (Opalo 2011).

Overall, **autocratization** negatively affects ethnic relations by fostering dominance among majority ethnic groups and increasing discrimination against minority groups on average. Furthermore, it often disrupts collaborative inter-ethnic decision-making and power-sharing arrangements, impacting both majority and minority groups (Panzano 2024).

While ethnic politics plays a crucial role in many authoritarian regimes, its study within the context of dictatorship remains underdeveloped due to a preoccupation with electoral and party politics, methodological challenges, and academic tendencies to separate ethnicity from regime studies. This gap presents an opportunity for further research that could provide valuable insights into how dictatorships manage ethnic diversity and conflict. To this day, most works have focused on Africa, although there are odd exceptions (e.g., Kelley 2010).

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Gatekeeping (Tolstrup)

'Hodor'
– Hodor, *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019)
(Adaptation by George R.R. Martin's book series: *A Song of Fire and Ice*)

Gatekeeping is a middle-range theory that captures the practice of curating international relations by **political regimes.** This frame plays a crucial role in understanding how authoritarian regimes manage external influences to maintain their power.

The concept of gatekeeping was developed to address and update some limitations of the structural model by S. Levitsky and L. Way, their **linkage & leverage** theory (2006; 2010), which emphasizes the external pressures and connections that can influence **democratization**. While this structural model highlights the importance of external factors for **democracy promotion**, they often overlook the agency of domestic elites in shaping these influences.

Invented by Jakob Tolstrup (2013; 2014), gatekeeping refers to the actions taken by domestic elites – referred to as gatekeeper elites – to control or mediate the flow of external influences into their countries. These elites can be political leaders, economic stakeholders, or civil society figures who can facilitate or constrain ties with external actors. By managing these connections, gatekeeper elites can either enhance or diminish the impact of foreign pressures on their political systems (Tolstrup 2014).

In practice, gatekeeping involves strategic decisions about which external relationships to cultivate and which to restrict. For example, political elites may choose to strengthen ties *(linkages)* with certain international organizations or countries that support their regime's stability while cutting, limiting or surveilling interactions with those advocating for democratic reforms.

A regime can also tackle *leverage*. It can strategically pit a state emanating unwanted influence against another by employing counterbalancing tactics, leveraging its competing interests to its advantage. This is called *counterbalancing*. Simultaneously, regimes can manipulate the intentions and motivations behind foreign actors' pressure – *creating competing interests* – to make them cease or desist from intermingling in a regime's domestic affairs.

A brief example concerning Uzbekistan can effectively illustrate the model of gatekeeping within authoritarian regimes. Central Asia gained increased importance to the US following the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1996 and even more so after al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks in East Africa in 1998. Despite the earlier US foreign policy focus on promoting **human rights** and **democratization** in Uzbekistan, the US needed the regime's cooperation to efficiently conduct *Operation Enduring Freedom* in Afghanistan following the events of 11 September 2001. Consequently, the *War on Terror* and democracy promotion became competing policy priorities in US-Uzbek relations (Van den Bosch 2018).

In addition, when Russia began to reassert its influence in the region after 2003, Uzbekistan quickly counterbalanced US leverage by enhancing its geopolitical ties with Moscow. This strategic move allowed Uzbekistan to maintain a degree of autonomy despite external pressures. Following US criticism of the Andijan Massacre on 13 May 2005, the Karimov regime ordered the closure of a US military base on its territory. These events exemplify how Tashkent was able to reassert its position in response to US leverage, demonstrating the regime's ability to manage external influences through gatekeeping strategies (Van den Bosch 2018).

In the Ivory Coast (a former French colony with dense ties to France), Laurent Gbagbo's standoff with France exemplifies some of the available gatekeeping strategies employed by authoritarian regimes to maintain power. Gbagbo had come to power in a sudden coup in 2000 after Aimé Henri Konan Bédié had rigged elections. This immediately triggered a civil conflict, with the opposing presidential challenger petering out in a tense standoff between the two camps, divided by French troops (Van den Bosch 2018).

During this Ivorian civil war, he skillfully managed external influences to his advantage; despite

France's significant military presence through *Opération Licorne* and its role as a mediator in the conflict, Gbagbo leveraged nationalist rhetoric to frame French involvement as an imperialist intervention. By promoting a narrative of 'second independence,' he rallied domestic support against perceived foreign domination, thus strengthening his political position (Van den Bosch 2018).

Gbagbo's regime also exploited geopolitical linkages by balancing French influence with support from other African nations and international actors. This strategic counterbalancing allowed him to maintain a degree of autonomy despite external pressures. Furthermore, Gbagbo delayed elections and prolonged the state of emergency, using these tactics to postpone political reforms that could threaten his hold on power. By manipulating both internal and external dynamics, Gbagbo effectively gatekept foreign influence. (Van den Bosch 2018)

In November 2004, Laurent Gbagbo's regime accidentally bombed a French military base near Bouaké, killing nine French soldiers and one American missionary. In retaliation, France destroyed the Ivorian air force and seized the airport. Gbagbo responded by deploying his *Young Patriots* (his **paramilitary**) to incite anti-French violence, targeting foreigners and Western expatriates in Abidjan and other cities. Thousands of Europeans were forced to hide as looters attacked property and harassed individuals. This form of gatekeeping distracted the French from retaliating against Gbagbo's forces, as France was forced to secure and evacuate thousands (Van den Bosch 2018).

This escalation exemplifies Gbagbo's gatekeeping strategy, using nationalist rhetoric and orchestrated unrest to resist French leverage while consolidating his regime's control amidst international tensions. (Gbagbo was eventually defeated by rebel forces in 2010). There are ample ways authoritarian leaders can navigate complex international landscapes to reinforce their domestic authority while minimizing the impact of foreign leverage.

Ideological compatibility, as an aspect of **soft power**, can assist an external government in advancing its policies by fostering a more favorable reception among various groups within the target state or getting international support from allies and like-minded regimes to lessen foreign pressure. This selective engagement or strategic manipulation of ties between countries allows authoritarian regimes to benefit from international cooperation without succumbing to pressures for political liberalization.

Proximity to democratizing centers (e.g., the EU's Eastern neighborhood) or an authoritarian gravity center (cf. Box 6.2) like Georgia and Armenia next to Russia makes it difficult to erode linkages or block leverage. The thinner the linkages, the more control elites have. This is particularly true for personalist regimes with no domestic audience costs (Box 7.1).

Cuba serves as a quintessential example of a personalist gatekeeping state, particularly during the period from 1989 to 2002. In the face of economic challenges following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, Cuba implemented selective economic reforms that allowed it to maintain control over societal change while presenting an image of liberalization. By selectively opening certain sectors to foreign investment and legalizing limited self-employment, the Cuban government created a *façade* of reform that placated external pressures without fundamentally altering its authoritarian structure (Corrales 2002). This strategy enabled the state to act as a gatekeeper, controlling access to economic opportunities and ensuring that benefits were distributed primarily among loyalists within the ruling party and military. By maintaining tight control over these economic reforms, Cuba effectively managed external influences and preserved regime stability, demonstrating how gatekeeping can be used to balance internal pressures with external demands.

The effectiveness of gatekeeping depends on several factors, including the regime's internal cohesion, its economic dependencies, and the geopolitical context. Cutting off linkages with the outside world, like North Korea or Turkmenistan have done, has insulated these regimes to such a degree that they become almost impervious to outside pressure. Strong central control and a unified elite can enhance a regime's ability to manage external influences effectively. Conversely, divisions within the ruling elite or significant economic vulnerabilities can undermine gatekeeping efforts.

Overall, gatekeeping provides a dynamic framework for understanding how authoritarian regimes interact with external actors. It highlights the agency of domestic elites in shaping international relations and underscores the complexity of external influences on political development. By incorporating gatekeeper elites into analyses of democratization and authoritarian resilience, scholars can better account for variations in how regimes respond to global pressures.

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Hybrid Regimes & Democracies with Adjectives

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.
(Parable of the Tower of Babel)
– Holy Bible, Book of Genesis 11: 5-7.

Hybrid regimes, often situated in the 'gray zone' between 'democracy' and authoritarianism, represent a distinct and enduring category of political systems characterized by a blend of democratic and authoritarian features. These regimes are not merely transitional phases toward full democracy or authoritarianism but are stable in their own right (Lindstaedt 2021). The traditional approach of classifying political systems along a single continuum of 'democraticness' is inadequate, as it fails to capture the complex interactions between democratic and authoritarian elements within hybrid regimes (Wigell 2008).

Levitsky & Way (2010: 3-4) sum it up nicely: *"The study of post-Cold War hybrid regimes was initially marked by a pronounced democratizing bias. Viewed through the lens of democratization, hybrid regimes were frequently categorized as flawed, incomplete, or 'transitional' democracies. For example, Russia was treated as a case of 'protracted' democratic transition during the 1990s, and its subsequent autocratic turn was characterized as a 'failure to consolidate' democracy. Likewise, Cambodia was described as a 'nascent democracy' that was 'on the road to democratic consolidation;' Cameroon, Georgia, and Kazakhstan were labeled 'democratizers;' and the Central African Republic and Congo-Brazzaville were called 'would-be democracies.' Transitions that did not lead to democracy were characterized as 'stalled' or 'flawed.' Thus, Zambia was said to be 'stuck in transition;' Albania was labeled a case of 'permanent transition,' and Haiti was said to be undergoing a 'long,' 'ongoing,' and even 'unending' transition."*

DEFINITION Historically, scholarship on hybrid regimes has been criticized for a 'democratizing bias,' which viewed them as 'diminished' democracies rather than recognizing their unique characteristics. This perspective often led to the misconception that hybrid regimes were simply flawed democracies on a path to democratization – for this reason, they were called 'democracies with adjectives' – cf. 'transitology' – Box 5.3. (Diamond 2002; Levitsky & Way 2002). To counter this bias, some scholars propose viewing hybrid regimes as forms of 'authoritarianism with adjectives,' emphasizing their authoritarian nature and encouraging a nuanced analysis of their specific attributes (Snyder 2006).

Key dimensions that define hybrid regimes include electoral processes, constitutionalism, reserved domains, and state capacity. While **elections** are typically held in hybrid regimes, these often fall short of democratic standards due to manipulation by **incumbents** who may restrict **opposition** parties or violate civil liberties to maintain power. Hybrid regimes also frequently exhibit weaknesses in **constitutionalism** and the rule of law, such as limited judicial independence and arbitrary rule application. Additionally, 'reserved domains' controlled by non-democratic actors like the military can undermine democratic accountability by exerting significant influence over policy (Gagné & Mahé 2020; Lindstaedt 2021; Snyder 2006).

SEE ALSO This encyclopedia has a whole subsection in **classifications & typologies** devoted to various approaches to delineate hybrid regimes (as standalone types). Under **trichotomous categories,** we present the earliest attempts from the 1990s, which used the term 'semi-democracies' (**Gasiorowski** and **Mainwaring, Brinks & Pérez-Liñán**), to the later shift in focus to either 'flawed competitiveness' (**Levitsky & Way**) or **elections** as a tool for regime survival (**Schedler**), and then the latest approaches using several dimensions of **Dahl**'s 'polyarchy' (1971) (i.e. **Regimes of the World** and **Anderson, Brownlee & Clarke**).

The perspective of hybrid regimes emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional regime classifications, particularly in the context of the post-Cold War era. During the 1980s and 1990s, the prevailing 'transition paradigm' (Box 5.3) viewed political regimes as moving linearly toward democracy. This framework, however, proved inadequate for understanding the complexities of regime change, as it failed to account for the possibility of regimes becoming 'stuck' in an intermediate state or regressing toward authoritarianism (Carothers 2002). The increasing prevalence of regimes that exhibited both democratic and authoritarian characteristics – often referred to as 'gray zone' regimes (neither black nor white) or the 'murky middle' – further challenged existing **dichotomous categories**. The rise of these regimes, especially after the third wave of democratization (Box 6.3), highlighted the need for a new conceptual framework that could encompass these hybrid forms of governance (Diamond 2002).

ORIGIN While it is challenging to pinpoint a single originator of the hybrid regimes perspective, since several scholars have played influential roles in its development (see 'literature' below). Although there is rather agreement that Terry Karl introduced the notion of 'hybrid' regime in 1995 to refer to a state that contains both democratic and authoritarian forms of rule. (Gilbert & Mohseni 2011; Colomer et al. 2016)

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The existing literature's initial focus on 'democracy with adjectives,' such as 'illiberal democracy' or 'semi-democracy,' in the

mid-1990s limited understanding by emphasizing democratic aspects while often overlooking, in essence, novel authoritarian adaptations. By 2000, this paradigm still implicitly assumed a (temporarily stalled) trajectory toward full democracy, which did not accurately reflect the political realities in many countries and thus lost any analytical value. The emergence of the hybrid regimes' perspective was crucial in recognizing these regimes as distinct types, allowing scholars to move beyond simplistic classifications and better capture the complexities of global political systems (Levitsky & Way 2002; 2010; Diamond 2002; Snyder 2006).

The significance of the hybrid regimes perspective lies in its ability to provide a more accurate classification of political systems, facilitating nuanced analyses of regime change – although the concept has led to much confusion as well. By acknowledging that **democratization** is not a linear or inevitable process, this perspective allows for the possibility of regimes moving in various directions, including stagnation or regression toward authoritarianism (Schedler 2009). It also enables researchers to explore the unique effects of hybrid regimes on political, economic, and social outcomes, shedding light on issues such as conflict, economic development, and human rights. Furthermore, by offering a more precise picture of political realities, this perspective enhances policy relevance, informing decisions related to democracy promotion, development assistance, and conflict prevention (Diamond 2002).

LITERATURE The study of hybrid regimes has been significantly shaped by several key works that have advanced the understanding of these complex political systems. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter's seminal work, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (1986), is foundational in this field for making the distinction between 'liberalization' and 'democratization.' They highlighted that those political transitions could result in outcomes other than full democracy, introducing terms like *'dictablandas'* and *'democraduras'* to describe regimes that blend democratic and authoritarian elements. This work laid the groundwork for recognizing the diversity of regimes that can emerge from transitions, including hybrid forms (Bünte 2022).

Juan Linz's (1964; 1975; 2000) contributions, particularly his innovative typology of political regimes (cf. **Linz & Stepan**) of 1975 based on pluralism, mobilization, leadership restraint and ideology, provided a framework for understanding non-democratic regimes beyond simple dichotomies. Linz's work helped conceptualize hybrid regimes as distinct from both democratic and fully authoritarian systems (cf. Gilbert & Mohseni 2011).

Larry Diamond (2002), Andreas Schedler (2002) and Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's (2002) joint publication in a special issue of *The Journal of Democracy* (Volume 13, Issue 2) was a game changer, not only for bringing attention to hybrid regimes, but for treating them as a subtype of authoritarianism.

Their research highlighted how elections could be used as tools of control while violating democratic principles. Levitsky & Way (2010) and, to a degree, Schedler (2002) brought to the fore **competitive authoritarianism**, highlighting that for autocrats, there was real legitimacy to be drawn for free **elections** skewed in favor of **incumbents** – although with real competition comes outcome uncertainty. Together, these scholars laid the groundwork for understanding hybrid regimes and have been instrumental in developing this perspective into a rich and diverse body of literature. This, however, did not end the terminological 'Tower of Babel' that followed (cf. Armony & Schamis 2005).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES This section and the one below continue with the presentation of the relevant literature that has shaped this field but grouped per approach for better oversight. Defining hybrid regimes so far has been an arduous journey. Since democracy itself is an inherently contested concept and its diffuse, heterogeneous counterpart, 'authoritarianism,' is almost always viewed as its negative (non-democracy), then how can one make sense of the observation that there is a separate regime type 'in-between' these two badly delineated reference points (the former narrow but with fuzzy boundaries, the latter residual, internally diverse and diffuse). Also, the tools required to define hybrid regimes are all democracy-biased (either directly, if hybrid regimes are considered a diminished democratic subtype, or indirectly, as they are a corrupted form of 'non-democracy'). This has been a long road indeed. Therefore, this section continues by presenting some of the methodological works that have 'cleared away most of the debris' – so to speak – after the collapse of the proverbial Tower of Babel.

Richard Snyder (2006) nicely articulated the main arguments to abandon the transition paradigm and for the field to move beyond studying politics through the lens of democracy, not only when it comes to **democratization** but also when classifying hybrid regimes: *"Instead of seeing such regimes as democracy 'with adjectives' and calling them, for example, 'illiberal democracies' (Zakaria 1997) or 'semi-democracies' (Case 1996), the contributors to the present volume understand them as authoritarianism with adjectives, calling them electoral authoritarian regimes."* (Snyder 2006).

Matthijs Bogaards (2009) reviews two systematic approaches to studying hybrid regimes: the concepts of 'defective democracy' (cf. Lautz 2004; Merkel (et al.) 2004) and 'electoral authoritarianism' (Schedler 2002; Levitsky & Way 2002). Each approach focuses on one side of the spectrum but fails to cover the middle ground where these regimes overlap comprehensively. To address the limitations of existing approaches, Bogaards proposes a 'double-root strategy' that integrates both defective democracy and electoral authoritarianism into a comprehensive framework: *"The boundary between defective democracy and authoritarianism is crossed when suffrage restrictions are determined arbitrarily, when elections are manipulated to secure the position of those in power, and when a majority or significant number of office holders is not democratically legitimated. The threshold separating competitive and full-scale authoritarianism, following Levitsky and Way, is the possibility for the opposition to participate in elections."* (Bogaards 2009: 412).



Table 1.4 – Classifying Hybrid Regimes & Democracies with Adjectives

Approach	Main argument	Features	Examples	(R)
Transitional situation	Temporary phase that will stabilize as either auth. or dem.	These regimes are in an ambiguous state without clean consolidation. They are unstable and bound to become either dem. or auth. regimes	Linz 1973; 2000 Polity IV – Anocracy (continuous) Early works on this topic (ca. 1975-1995)	B D
Diminished subtype of democracy	An incomplete form of democracy, lacking freedom, equality and control (restraints on powerholders).	These regimes lack one or more prerequisites to be counted as liberal dem.	O'Donnell 1994 (delegative dem.) Diamond et al. 1995 (semi-dem.) Case 1996 (semi-dem.) Zakaria 1997 (illiberal dem.) Merkel 2004 (defective/deficient dem.)	A C E
Diminishd subtype of authoritarianism	A corruption of closed autocracy by allowed flawed elections.	Fundamentally auth. because elections are a tool for control and false legitimacy.	Schedler 2002 (electoral auth.) Levitsky & Way 2002 (competitive auth.) Ottoway 2003 (semi-auth.)	A E
Residual category	Has features from both auth. and dem. Cannot be pigeonholed.	These fluid regimes have unique features from both conceptual roots.	Gasiorowski 1993 (semi-dem.) Freedom House – Partly Free (continuous) Mainwaring et al. 2000 (semi-dem.) Epstein et al. 2006 (partial dem.) Bunce & Wolchik 2008 (mixed)	C
			Bogaards 2009 (two-rooted concepts) Wiggel 2008 (2-dimensional matrix) Gilbert & Mohseni 2011 (3-dimensional matrix) Anderson et al. 2021 (NAND)	E
Independent (sub) type of authoritarianism	Presence of auth. control institutions despite dem. *façade.*	Auth. party and/or tutelary body interferes with electoral process and civil liberties.	Dichotomous approaches	D E
			Geddes 2005 Ezrow & Frantz 2011 Gandhi 2008	D
			Magaloni 2006 (hegemonic party regimes) Hadenius & Teorell 2007 (limited multiparty regimes)	E

Additional (general) **remarks (R)** about this approach:
A – Conceptual stretching and loss of analytical value of original core concept (by adding adjectives)
B – Conflate inherent attributes of the regime type with (temporary) features of the state (capacity) and systemic factors (crisis)
C – Overlook this regime type's complexity if they identify only one inherit (positive) distinctive dimension: flawed competition
D – Downplay the relevance and/or existence of hybrid regimes
E – Foremost use democracy-biased criteria to conceptualize their typology

Source: Author's own work based on: Cassani 2014; Mufti 2018; Bogaards 2009; 2022; Gagné & Mahé 2020; Gilbert & Mohseni 2011.

Carsten Q. Schneider (2010) echoes this approach and argues for treating hybrid regimes on their terms (not merely as a transitional or residual category) but as a distinct regime type with their own operational logic. They combine democratic and authoritarian features, often in dysfunctional ways, making them inherently unstable but unlikely to transition to either end of the democratic-authoritarian spectrum fully. (Later works contested this claim of instability as regimes did prove to be more durable. Morlino (2009) proposes that one decade is enough to conclude regimes have found an equilibrium.)

Mikael Wigell (2008) criticized existing typologies for differentiation regimes solely one dimension (competition); he proposes two instead: 'electoralism' and 'constitutionalism' and creates a two-by-two matrix with four types: democratic, constitutional-oligarchic, electoral-autocratic, and authoritarian.

Leah Gilbert and Payam Mohseni (2011) present an excellent state of affairs after about a decade of booming research on this topic. Inspired by Linz (2000), they embark on a multi-dimensional differentiation between democracy and autocracy. They argue that the shift from classifying regimes as 'democracy with adjectives' to 'authoritarianism with adjectives' has not resolved the issue but rather displaced it: *'The above discussion highlights two important regime dimensions for classification – 'competitiveness' and 'competition' as defined by Sartori. Democracies are competitive regimes with fair competition whereas authoritarian regimes are uncompetitive regimes with unfair competition. Hybrid regimes occupy the conceptual void of competitive regimes with unfair competition."* (Gilbert & Mohseni 2011: 280).

This conceptual untangling is then worked out along three dimensions, which are particularly effective in capturing the complexity of hybrid regimes by integrating (a) competitiveness, (b) tutelary interference, and (c) civil liberties. Each dimension is viewed dichotomously, emphasizing differences in kind rather than degree. This configurative approach allows for the comparison and measurement of hybrid regimes relative to other regime types. Hybrid regimes are not defined solely by flawed competition; they may also be characterized by other factors, such as reserved domains of power, which are areas where certain groups or institutions maintain control regardless of electoral outcomes (Mufti 2018: 115-116).

Their approach yields three specific subtypes: (i) *Illiberal hybrid regimes* are characterized by competitive elections but low civil liberties; (ii) *tutelary illiberal hybrid regimes* feature competitive elections, low civil liberties, and significant tutelary interference; (iii) *tutelary liberal hybrid regimes* combine competitive elections and broad civil liberties with tutelary interference (Gilbert & Mohseni 2011).

Andrea Cassani (2014) eloquently maps the ongoing debate on how to classify hybrid regimes. During the last decade, it has moved in two main directions: analysis of their stability and examination of their predisposition to democratize. Due to their moments of liberalization, they are the most promising candidates for democratization (cf. **Hadenius & Teorell** 2007) but – annoyingly – are not found to move in that direction (cf. Levitsky & Way 2010). If they are seen as finding an equilibrium in the 'in-between,' their inherent instability should not be assumed, and flawed elections actually prolong their reign. Several voices notice that not all shades of gray have a "significant effect on regime breakdown" (Brownlee, 2009: 530, cited in Cassani 2014: 543-544). This article observes that scholars do not agree on the identity of hybrid regimes (see Table 1.4) and, therefore, arrive at contrasting results.

Mariam Mufti (2018) expands upon Cassani (2014) and offers a recent roadmap to understand scholarship on hybrid regimes. Table 1.4 is drawn from their insights and expanded with additional observations and examples.

CLASSIFICATIONS Hybrid regimes present a multifaceted challenge due to their inherent blend of democratic and authoritarian features, which defies straightforward categorization. The literature offers various approaches to classification, each with its strengths and limitations. It would be tedious to list and describe each one, but most of the mainstream approaches are listed under 'examples' in Table 1.4. Consult them directly for their defining criteria and (sometimes) operationalization.

Transitional Situation (I) The earliest classifications of authoritarian regimes and dictatorships lacked the analytical tools necessary to address the role of elections and the phenomenon of rising 'electoralism.' Consequently, when scholars encountered hybrid regimes, they often dismissed them or considered them as temporary phenomena that would eventually align with either democracy or authoritarianism. While this perspective is now considered outdated, it was understandable given that hybrid regimes were still emerging as a distinct category at the time.

Diminished Democratic Subtype (II) In early approaches, hybrid regimes were frequently framed as incomplete or defective democracies. This classification initially prioritized the presence of (albeit flawed) elections while neglecting many of their authoritarian characteristics (suppression of civil liberties). At the start, such frameworks were closely associated with the 'transition paradigm,' which conceptually insinuated only two possible trajectories for these regimes: either evolve into full democracies in time or regime collapse.

A key classification is Wolfgang Merkel's research (2004; 2007) on 'defective democracies' and 'embedded democracies', which added depth by exploring how democracies can exhibit various deficiencies in civil liberties, rule of law, or electoral integrity. This perspective highlighted the need to move beyond a simplistic dichotomy of democracy versus authoritarianism and to recognize the varying degrees and types of democratic deficits that can exist (Merkel 2004; Møller & Skaaning 2010; Bogaards 2022).

Merkel's typology is based on the path-breaking work of Lauth (2004) on democracy and renders his



understanding of the complexities and variations within democratic regimes into an operable typology. His classification identifies three core dimensions that define a democracy: (i) vertical legitimacy, (ii) horizontal accountability with the rule of law, and effective government (iii). Each of these dimensions plays a crucial role in maintaining the integrity and functionality of a democratic system.

Vertical legitimacy (i) refers to the foundational relationship between citizens and their rulers, primarily established through elections and the safeguarding of political rights. This dimension underscores the importance of citizen participation in the electoral process as a means of legitimizing governmental authority. Horizontal accountability (ii), coupled with the rule of law, forms the second dimension. It emphasizes liberal constitutionalism and the mechanisms that ensure government branches hold each other accountable, preventing any one branch from becoming overly dominant. The third dimension, effective government (iii), highlights that only those representatives who are duly elected should have the authority to make binding decisions on behalf of the populace (Merkel 2004).

These dimensions manifest in five 'partial regimes' that collectively constitute what Merkel terms an 'embedded democracy.' These partial regimes include elections, political participation rights, civil rights, horizontal accountability, and effective government. Each regime is assessed using ten criteria operationalized through 34 indicators. When these criteria are violated or compromised, the result is a 'defective democracy,' where the interconnectedness of the partial regimes is disrupted, leading to a degradation in democratic quality.

Merkel's typology is particularly valuable for its theoretical grounding in identifying less-than-fully democratic regimes. It categorizes these regimes based on specific deficiencies: (a) *Exclusive democracy* – This occurs when there are issues with voting rights or when elections are not free, fair, or competitive. It also includes scenarios where political participation rights are restricted. (b) *Illiberal democracy* – In this type of regime, civil rights are inadequately protected, and the judiciary fails to ensure equal access and treatment under the law. (c) *Delegative democracy* – This form arises when mechanisms for horizontal accountability are ineffective, typically due to an excessively powerful executive branch that overrides checks and balances. (d) *Tutelary democracy* – also known as democracy with reserved domains, occurs when non-democratic actors keep some areas of policymaking (trade regulations, public spending, military oversight, etc.) out of the hands of democratically elected representatives.

Diminished Authoritarian Subtype (III) By 2002, however, a significant shift occurred in scholarly thinking. Hybrid regimes began to be conceptualized as diminished subtypes of authoritarianism rather than defective democracies. Despite this shift, these classifications were often prone to 'conceptual stretching,' as it was unclear which defining features of the original autocratic archetype were being diminished. (Most classifications treat authoritarianism as non-democracy; thus, its defining features are negative ('a lack of')). Still, scholars such as Andreas Schedler (2002: 2009), Steven Levitsky & Lucan Way (2002; 2010) made significant contributions by examining how hybrid regimes combine elements of both democratic and authoritarian systems and have appropriated elections for regime survival.

Residual Category (IV) Many hybrid regimes are treated as residual categories – essentially unclassifiable within existing frameworks. Early research on hybrid regimes often did not progress beyond identifying their existence. However, those works who did, inspired valuable methodological studies that sought to build conceptual and analytical bridges between democracy and autocracy: Wigell 2008; Bogaards 2009; Gilbert & Mohseni 2011 (covered above).

Distinct Authoritarian Regime Type (V) Another group treats hybrid regimes as a specific type of authoritarianism in its own right rather than a diminished form of either kind. Here regimes are sometimes denoted as authoritarian subtypes but remain firmly within the broader umbrella of authoritarianism. Such approaches tend to dismiss hybrid regimes as a concept.

Dichotomous approaches to regime classification – those that draw a strict line between democracy and authoritarianism – offer limited analytical flexibility. The precise placement of this dividing line varies depending on the classification system in use, as discussed in detail in the section on **dichotomous categories**, but hybrid regimes tend to fall under authoritarianism (although those with minimalist definitions of democracy muddy those waters again.)

Polychotomous categories, on the other hand, often distinguish more radically between democracy and non-democracy. Unlike earlier frameworks, they do not view the presence of elections in 'hybrid regimes' as a corruption of any authoritarian archetype, which they distinguish along other (non-electoral) criteria anyhow, cf. **Geddes, Wright & Frantz**. Instead, these approaches emphasize how such regimes employ institutions and practices designed to control electoral processes and restrict civil liberties. Within this broader perspective, some scholars classify hybrid regimes as subtypes of authoritarianism while maintaining a clear conceptual distinction from democracies.

To conclude, for comparative authoritarianism, the focus of hybrid regimes on electoral competition can also lead to an under-appreciation of non-electoral regimes that lack even the semblance of democratic institutions. These regimes, which include **totalitarian** systems and **theocracies**, are often grouped into a broad category of 'closed regimes,' which fails to capture their distinct characteristics.

Additionally, hybrid regimes are dynamic entities that can shift toward greater democratization or more pronounced authoritarianism over time. Static classification based on one main attribute (flawed competition) at a single point in time does not necessarily reflect their fluidity and potential for change (in either direction). Tutelary bodies can close the electoral space when things do not go their way, and

state weakness can lead to regime collapse – this is true for hybrid and hegemonic regimes. On the other hand, elections seem to matter for **democratization** and dismissing their importance blinds typologies for **transition** studies.

Finally, the terminological babel is strong in this field. 'Democracy with adjectives' is used for hybrid regimes in almost all approaches despite great epistemological differences regarding the latter's identity. The road goes on.

NEW FRONTIERS Weyland (2024) studies hybrid regimes from a historical perspective during the first wave of democracy. Due to limited modernization and weak societal activism, these hybrid regimes were controlled by entrenched elites who undermined liberalism's formal institutions through informal manipulations and electoral fraud. This entrenched elitism, coupled with pervasive instability, obstructed transitions to democracy. Győrffy & Martin (2023) study their internal dynamics using Hungary as a case study, tracking its downward spiral of corruption and ideological degeneration, manifested with a shift in its electorate. Pérez Sandoval (2023) studies hybridization at the sub-national level across continents, where hybrids have been the norm at the provincial level but still show quite some variation among cases.

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Ideocracy

I've got a 3-point plan that's going to fix EVERYTHING
– President Camacho, *Idiocracy* (the movie, 2006)

Ideocracies are distinguished from other autocracies by their all-encompassing ideological ambition to reshape society entirely. While other authoritarian regimes might employ ideology instrumentally or cosmetically, ideocracies place it at the core of their legitimacy and actions. Whether viewed as a broad category or encompassing totalitarianism as a subtype, the concept of ideocracy offers a valuable framework for understanding regimes driven by utopian ideologies and their pursuit of societal transformation.

SEE ALSO The reinvention of ideocracy solves the main issue of **totalitarianism** as a regime type in that the latter has several well-defined criteria, which combination makes it almost impossible to apply to any other cases besides its few original cases. No later cases comfortably fit the totalitarian terms, resulting in conceptual stretching. The conceptualization of ideocracy dismisses requirements like a single vanguard party, centralized leadership and other criteria but keeps the core criterion of a guiding **ideology** intact. With subclassifications, ideocracies can encompass **theocracies,** and thus, various contemporary **Islamic States** and (maybe) discern between their revolutionary and consolidation phases.

ORIGIN The concept of 'ideocracy' emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century in Europe, shaped by the profound political and social transformations that followed the French Revolution and the rise of revolutionary **socialism**. This period was marked by significant upheavals in Europe's political landscape, prompting conservative and liberal thinkers to critically assess the dangers posed by large-scale government and abstract political ideologies. These ideologies, often seen as detached from reality, were perceived as threatening to the established order rooted in tradition and historical knowledge. (Backes & Kailitz 2015)

Conservative and liberal critics feared that such abstract ideologies, with their grand visions of societal transformation, could lead to new forms of fanaticism that would ultimately cause more harm than good. They argued that these ideologies risked denying essential 'facts of nature' and could plunge societies into misery rather than delivering the utopian promises they espoused (Backes & Kailitz 2015).

The term ideocracy itself was coined in 1833 by Heinrich Leo (1799-1878), a German conservative historian. Leo used the term to describe regimes founded on the rule of 'fanaticism,' which he saw as prioritizing abstract ideas over historical realities. He characterized ideocracies as rigidly adhering to these ideas, deeming dissenters 'unworthy of life' and inherently prone to instability, unsustainability, and radicalization (Backes in Backes & Kailitz 2015). Although the term originated in this specific historical context, it has more or less been recycled to recalibrate the analytical potential of **totalitarianism** and improve the comparison of various ideologically driven autocracies throughout history.

DEFINITION Ideocracy is generally defined as a political system where rulers justify their governance through a totalitarian and utopian ideology that demands absolute adherence and seeks to reshape society completely (Piekalkiewicz & Pen 1995). This ideological commitment is the defining characteristic of ideocracies, setting them apart from other political systems.

Like totalitarian regimes, ideocracies differ fundamentally from other regime types in their ambition to permeate and transform every aspect of society based on their utopian ideology. Unlike other autocracies, ideocracies aim not just for the right to rule but also to control and radically transform society. The enforcement of this control is secondary to the ideological ambition itself. (The mission trumps the acquisition of power).

CLASSIFICATIONS Piekalkiewicz & Penn (1995) offer a classification scheme rather than a typology. Their approach uses ideology as the sole criterion for differentiating between regimes. As a result, a regime characterized by a monistic ideology or worldview is termed an ideocracy, one with limited ideological pluralism is labeled an authoritarian regime, and a system where multiple competing ideologies exist is considered a democracy. Later, they expanded this with an additional dimension of coercion and distinguished between 'totalitarian' and 'populist' ideocracies.

In Bernholz's framework (in Backes & Kailitz 2015), totalitarian regimes are considered a subset of ideocracies; they represent ideocracies that have not yet achieved their utopian goals and, therefore, employ repressive measures, such as force and violence, to overcome resistance. *Mature ideocracies*, however, have realized their ideological objectives and no longer require extensive repressive instruments. Historical examples include theocratic regimes like Pharaonic Egypt.

From a rational choice perspective, totalitarian regimes are seen as immature ideocracies that have not yet achieved the supreme values embedded in their ideology. These regimes use their combined secular and spiritual power to pursue these values, which take precedence over all other considerations, potentially leading to repressive measures and violence. Mature ideocracies, having achieved their ideological aims, theoretically do not need repression and violence. Iran's transition from a revolutionary state under Ayatollah Khomeini, marked by significant repression, to a more stable theocracy illustrates this transition, cf. **Islamic States** (Bernholz in Backes & Kailitz 2015).

On another dimension, *religious ideocracies* (**theocracies**) ground their legitimacy in religious doctrines, while secular ones draw on non-religious ideologies like **communism** or **fascism**. A typology of political regimes that includes ideocracies was developed by **Kailitz** (2007; 2024).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Ideocracies require more than just tacit acceptance from the populace; they demand explicit support for the ideology, distinguishing them from other autocracies that might settle for passive obedience. This stems from their ambitious goal of achieving unanimity and reshaping society based on their utopian vision. While ideocracies strive for complete ideological adherence, they often settle for pragmatic loyalty as the initial revolutionary fervor wanes. Typically, ideocracies develop an ideology-based elite responsible for driving social transformation, controlling key positions, and ensuring loyalty to the regime. The Soviet *nomenklatura* (Box 1.11) serves as an example (Kailitz in Backes & Kailitz 2015).

In contrast to modern pluralistic democracies that rely on consensus-building, debate, and compromise, ideocracies are inherently monistic, prioritizing the implementation of their ideology over individual rights and freedoms. While they might recognize individual rights in principle, overarching ideological goals take precedence. The central distinction between ideocracy and totalitarianism lies in the temporal dimension: totalitarian regimes are immature ideocracies actively striving for utopian goals through coercive means, whereas mature ideocracies have achieved these objectives and theoretically no longer require such **repression**.

I argue that with an elegant elaboration using subtypes, ideocracies could be a viable alternative to capture and isolate ideology-driven and primarily ideology-legitimized autocracies, replacing **totalitarianism**.

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Ideology

What seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical denegation of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological.'

– Louis Althusser (2014: 264-265)

Ideology is an inherently elusive concept, eliciting varied interpretations across different contexts and political realities. Its meaning has evolved significantly over its relatively short history of just over two centuries. Initially understood as the 'science of ideas,' it later came to be associated with notions of false consciousness, the misrepresentation of reality, and, more recently, as an assemblage of values, beliefs, and worldviews.

The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence



of liberal ideology, while the twentieth century was defined by the dominance of **socialism**, **fascism**, and later neo-liberalism. Theoretical perspectives also shifted: the first half of the twentieth century saw the rise and consolidation of ideologies, whereas, by the 1960s, the 'end of ideology' thesis gained traction. The Cold War's conclusion and socialism's defeat further popularized the idea that ideology had reached its endpoint, encapsulated in Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992).

Reflecting this complexity, David McLellan aptly described ideology as *"the most elusive concept in the whole of social science"* (McLellan 1995: 1).

DEFINITION Today, ideology is most commonly used as a specific concept that denotes a set of values, ideas, and beliefs. Different definitions stress different aspects of ideologies. For instance, Michael Freeden considers ideology as a political instrument, a program for action, defined as follows: *"ideologies are the instruments through which members of a society navigate among the many concepts that political life and its processes produce, and then chose, or decontest, a meaning that reduces that unmanageable polysemy. They are held by people and groups who are action-oriented, either in deed or in thought, and who wish to change, reform, uphold or resist political arrangements, be it in a desultory or insistent fashion."* (Freeden 2021: 4)

Roger Eatwell (1993: 10) argues that a political ideology is a belief system: *"a relatively coherent set of empirical and normative beliefs and thought"* that addresses various important questions: historical processes, political and economic systems, etc. Crucially, an ideology can act as either a stabilizing or a radical force, with political ideologies are essentially the product of collective thought. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that ideologies are 'ideal types' that ought *"not to be confused with specific movements, parties or regimes which may bear their name"* (Eatwell 1993: 10).

Malcolm Hamilton (1987) stressed its relational aspects, proposing that an ideology is a specific *"system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements, and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct, which its proponents seek to promote, realise, pursue or maintain."* (Hamilton 1987: 38).

Michael Freeden's conceptual morphology of ideologies categorizes political concepts into core, adjacent, and peripheral elements to explain their structure and adaptability. *Core concepts* are the essential, enduring ideas that define an ideology and distinguish it from others. *Adjacent concepts* are secondary but crucial for contextualizing and refining core ideas. *Peripheral concepts*, meanwhile, are more marginal and flexible, allowing ideologies to adapt to specific cultural or temporal contexts without altering their fundamental identity.

To illustrate, in liberalism, liberty is the *core concept*, defining the ideology's focus on individual freedom and autonomy. Without liberty, liberalism would lose its fundamental identity. *Adjacent concepts*, such as equality and individual rights, support and refine liberty by ensuring it is fairly distributed and protected from infringement. For example, equality ensures that everyone can exercise their liberty, while rights safeguard freedoms. *Peripheral concepts*, like market efficiency or environmental sustainability, are more context-dependent and adaptable. These allow liberalism to address specific issues in different times or places without altering its core principles, ensuring both coherence and flexibility within the ideology.

Freeden emphasizes the relationships between these concepts – such as their proximity, hierarchy (priority), and permeability – to show how ideologies organize contested meanings into coherent frameworks. This approach allows for understanding both the stability of ideologies over time and their ability to evolve in response to changing circumstances, making them effective cognitive maps for navigating political life: *"Those cores are durable but not essentialist. Nor are they immutably wired into the underpinning of an ideological argument; their position in the ideational structure may flexibly and contingently be subject to temporal and cultural reinscribing. Cores are multiple assemblages that together plot the many paths an ideology can take; their force may combine both rational and emotional commitment."* (Freeden 2021: 10).

SEE ALSO The concept of ideology is always connected to political parties and different political regimes. Liberal, neo-liberal, socialist, social-democratic or extreme right-wing (fascist) political movements, politicians, parties, or regimes always propagate several ideas, presuppositions of the existing order and visions about the future. Ideology is used to legitimize the *status quo* or advocate for changes to the existing order, mobilizing for resistance, revolution, and sometimes even wars and invasions.

Regarding autocracy, ideology is mostly associated with **totalitarianism** and **ideocracies**, in particular **theocracies**. It is considered a tool of their **legitimacy** and a stabilizing factor (cf. **longevity, stability, resilience**).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The concept of ideology is one of the crucial concepts in explaining the political and to clarify the nature and ideational origins and foundations of political rule. Ideology shapes all political regimes, particularly dictatorships, by providing a framework of beliefs and values that justify and sustain their authority. In dictatorships, ideology often serves as both a legitimizing tool and a mechanism of control, especially in ideocracies.

Under **totalitarianism** or other **ideocracies**, such as Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler or the Soviet Union under Stalin, ideology was central to the regime's identity and governance. These regimes use a single, official ideology – such as **fascism** or **communism** – to legitimize their rule, unify the population under shared goals, and suppress dissent. The ideology is propagated through **propaganda**, **indoctrination**, **education**, and cultural control, creating a perception of inevitability or naturalness about the regime's dominance. This ideological control extends to all aspects of life, from politics to culture and even private behavior, ensuring conformity and loyalty to the regime.

Authoritarianism may use ideology more flexibly or superficially. While they may adopt certain ideological elements to justify their rule (e.g., **nationalism** or anti-communism), these regimes often rely more on pragmatic governance, **repression**, and **patronage** networks than on comprehensive ideological indoctrination. For example, many postcolonial dictatorships in Africa or Asia used nationalist ideologies to consolidate power but never sought to control every aspect of life in the way totalitarian regimes do.

Ultimately, the relationship between ideology and dictatorship varies depending on the type of regime. Ideocracies rely heavily on ideology. Dominant worldviews also shape the outlook of elites, providing them not only with a justification for their authority but also a framework for envisioning a 'just' political order. Ideologies establish ideals, norms and values for leadership, identify role models to emulate, and define what is seen as the appropriate or moral course of action. Beyond merely legitimizing power, ideologies influence policymaking and act as transformative forces that redefine the relationship between the state and society.

ORIGIN The term ideology was coined in post-revolutionary France. Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy introduced this term in his lecture at the *Paris Institut National* in 1796. He also used it in his papers and articles that were published in a book entitled *Mémoire sur la faculté de penser (Memoire on the Ability of Thinking)*. He also published *Elements of Ideology*, in which he further elaborated his views on the concept (Vincent 2009; Stråth 2013; Steger 2008). De Tracy *"coined the term for his rationalist method of breaking complex systems of ideas into their basic components. Consciously directed against established religion and its transcendental claims to absolute Truth, the ultimate purpose of Tracy's new 'science of ideas' went far beyond intellectual contemplation."* (Steger 2008: 1).

Issues with 'ideology' emerged as soon as the concept was introduced. Namely, many ideologues, among them de Tracy, were supportive of Napoleon and his regime. However, after he gave concessions to the church, they began criticizing him from liberal and anti-theological positions. Napoleon then began using the term ideology and ideologues in negative terms, claiming that they were daydreaming and were completely detached from reality. By the 1830s, both usages were present in dictionaries – the original meaning of ideology as the theory of ideas and also the Napoleonic usage as ideas that were detached from political reality (Stråth 2013). However, today, the prevalent understanding of ideology and its function within our societies is mostly negative and in line with Napoleon's original critique. However, de Tracy viewed ideology in an opposite way: for him, ideology was *la théorie des théories*. It constituted the queen of the sciences because it necessarily preceded all other sciences, which were all based on 'ideas' (Vincent 2009: 2).

LITERATURE Within the Marxist theoretical tradition, much work has been done to explain the role of ideology in our lives. Marx and Engels' critique of ideology can be found in their unfinished work *On German Ideology* (*Die Deutsche Ideologie*, first published in Moscow in 1926.). However, Marxists of the twentieth century turned exactly to the concept of ideology in order to grasp the variation of social change in different parts of the world and also to explain the success of revolutions or unsuccessful attempts of radical reform. Accordingly, ideology played a crucial role in the failed attempts at **revolution** in the 'Western' world.

Marx and Engels argued in their famous political pamphlet that the ideas of the ruling class – as assembled within an ideology – are always the ruling ideas in every epoch, and these function as the *'camera obscura,'* which shows the real life and existing relations and conditions turned on its head. So, it is something similar to, as Engels would claim, 'false consciousness.'

Antonio Gramsci developed his concept of ideology in close relation to the concept of hegemony, for which he is still renowned today. Often, Gramsci's concept of hegemony is conflated with his theory of ideology, although it is clear that ideology is a tool for establishing hegemony, which is a much broader concept that encompasses class alliance, class leadership, and consensus. *Hegemony* is borne out of the sphere of production, through class alliances and consent, that is built by the true incorporation of different class interests into the emerging or existing historical bloc and is cemented by ideology. Moreover, Gramsci differentiated between organic and arbitrary ideologies: Organic ideologies are those that are "necessary to a given structure," that is, that are necessary for maintaining and cementing a specific mode of production. Arbitrary ideologies are, according to Gramsci, 'willed,' but are not connected to any real class interests in society and are hence "individual movements, polemics." (Gramsci 1971: 376-377).

Most famously, Louis Althusser developed a specific understanding of ideology in his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (*Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'État*). Althusser argues that ideology is key in the reproduction of relations of production and conditions of production – that is, capitalist exploitation. In this sense, ideology is exercised through what he calls 'Ideological State Apparatuses' that function predominantly through and by ideology. Althusser finds that "no class can hold state power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the Ideological State Apparatuses." (Althusser 2014: 245). Althusser's main claim is that ideology interpellates abstract individuals into specific and ideologically-mediated subjects, and that ideology always has a material existence, and it is not something that is purely connected to the level of ideas.

Karl Mannheim developed a very intriguing understanding of ideology. He did not follow Marxist interpretations in full: In his seminal work *Ideology and Utopia* (*Ideologie und Utopie, 1929*), he contrasted these two different notions. He distinguished between *particular* (a) and *total* (b) ideologies. Particular ideologies (a) were, according to Mannheim, based on individual psychology and



interests, while total ideologies (b) were actually comprehensive worldviews and had a developed system and structure of reasoning. Moreover, both ideology and utopia are a specific set of ideas that actually do not correspond to the existing reality and thus differ from scientific knowledge. However, he also argued that utopias are mental frameworks that are aimed at changing the *status quo* and are based on ideas that are beyond the existing reality, while ideologies are used and instrumentalized to defend the *status quo*. In this sense, one has to examine the 'social roots' of specific ideas. This also means that different social classes have different ideologies; while some will function as the defenders of the status quo, others might take the form of a utopia in the sense of aiming to change the current state of affairs (Mannheim 1998; Freeden 2003; Hammersley 2020; Vincent 2009). Mannheim also claimed that this scientific examination of ideas – ideologies and utopias – is possible only when one is aware of their social roots and class position. In this way, one can engage with examining ideas – he called this the sociology of knowledge, which is something very similar to de Tracy's meaning.

During the first two decades of the Cold War, different scholars developed interesting theories, following Mannheim's distinction between particular and total ideologies. The latter argued that the world, at least the Western world, was coming to a point where ideology would become obsolete – grouped together, these scholars are known as the 'end of ideology' movement. Daniel Bell (1988) probably published the most famous book, entitled *The End of Ideology*, while other US scholars also focused on the issue (Lipset 1960; Dittberner 1979). S.M. Lipset famously predicted that within affluent Western societies, "the democratic class struggle will continue, but it will be a fight without ideologies" (Lipset 1960: 408). They all believed that the new, social-democratic consumer society, grounded on strong welfare benefits and full employment, would encompass a reality where few things could be challenged, while the communist ideology (as a total ideology) would become ever less influential among the working classes because their living conditions improved.

At the end of the Cold War, Francis Fukuyama repeated this argument, although in a qualitatively different manner. Namely, for Bell and Lipset, the end of ideology represented a social-democratic vision of the world; for Fukuyama, it was the end not only of ideology but also of history. Liberal democracy and capitalism, arguably, were to dominate the world without any serious ideological competitor.

Since the 1990s, two important contributions have been made to the field of explaining and understanding ideology in relation to politics and society. Michael Freeden introduced the 'morphological' concept of ideology, where he points out the connection of the morphological approach to the linguistic turn and hermeneutics in social sciences. According to Freeden (2013), this approach is based on seven crucial elements: (a) ideologies are permanent for political thinking, disregarding whether they are good or bad; (b) ideologies emerge everywhere, not only among the elites, but "at all levels of social articulation;" (c) ideologies should be analyzed "as particular combinations of political concepts, whose meanings are not always immediately transparent but decipherable through a systematic appreciation of the nature of political language;" (d) this is based on analyzing the micro-foundations of ideologies to grasp the nuances and variations between the different concepts that bring forth various broader systems of ideas and concepts; (e) ideologies are understood as "discursive competitions over the control of public political language – a control that facilitates the crafting of significant political decisions and subsequent actions by and for collectivities;" (f) the morphological study of ideologies is founded not on normative and ethical views, but on the careful analysis, deconstruction and interpretation of different semiotic and extra-semiotic elements; (g) ideologies are understood as something actual and not false, and we can understand political thinking not through but as ideologies (Freeden 2013).

The famous philosopher Slavoj Žižek has been working on conceptualizing ideology at the intersection of Marxism, Hegel's philosophy and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Emphasizing that no one can escape ideology and that ideology is manifested most clearly in the material practices and relations that seem natural to us. So, ideology is actually a set of ideas that have a material impact, and they naturally present the world while at the same time claiming that the world, as we most usually see it, is not ideological (Žižek 1993; 1994; 2009).

The study of ideology and its role in autocratic regimes has been gaining importance due to the empirical fact of witnessing the rise of different authoritarian regimes worldwide. Ideology was deemed a necessary element of totalitarian rule in the 1950s and 1960s by scholars (Arendt 1962; Friedrich & Brzezinski, 1956). However, Linz famously argued that authoritarian regimes are specific *"political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism; without elaborate and guiding ideology (but with distinct mentalities); without intensive nor extensive political mobilization (...) and in which a leader (or occasionally a small group) exercises power within formally ill-defined limits, but actually predictable ones."* (Linz 1964: 297). According to Gerschewski (2023), there can be two different approaches taken by authoritarian regimes and rulers. Either to overemphasize the ideological underpinning of their rule or to seek depolitization and legitimation through performance.

One of the most vibrant fields has been the exploration of the failures of the neo-liberal ideology to achieve any sort of cohesion, which has resulted in different democratic backsliding and the spread of different authoritarian regimes based on different ideologies. Some research has been conducted in analyzing levels of Bonapartism (Box 4.1) and Caesarism (covered in **term limits**) for different politicians and political parties regarding their ideologies and means of addressing the 'people' (see: Heino 2020; Meckler 2022).

Kneuer (2017) has argued that contemporary

autocratic regimes do base their authority on ideological legitimation, just as most authoritarian and totalitarian regimes did in the twentieth century. She introduced the concept of mission, which is conceptually different from ideology and a crucial element in the quest for legitimacy in authoritarian regimes: *"When missions are constructed by authoritarian rulers – according to the fundamental premise of this article – a variety of legitimation sources are combined by consciously linking performance objectives (output) with ideational-identitarian narratives ('we-identity')."* (Kneuer 2017).

Escribà-Folch et al. (2020) conducted an empirical study on autocratic regimes since the 1960s, revealing that **personalist rule** (like tyranny) tends to lack a broader, unifying ideology. This absence often necessitates stronger **coup-proofing** measures to maintain stability. In contrast, party-based regimes rely heavily on ideological legitimization to sustain their rule. Holbig (2013) argues that in China, ideological legitimacy has not diminished but has instead undergone continuous transformation and adaptation. These changes reflect the evolving interests of the Chinese Communist Party elite within a rapidly shifting international context.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The basic problem with analyzing political ideologies is the different definitions of the concept: *"The most obvious difficulty with the term 'ideology' is that, as we have seen, it has been given fundamentally different meanings, and social scientists frequently use it without clarifying the sense intended, or apparently without being fully aware of the different meanings it can have."* (Hammersley 2020: 29). We can also point to two other specific problems. First, if ideology is defined as false consciousness or false beliefs – one has to explain why these ideas, beliefs, etc. are false or not true. This results in the basic problem: who can define what is true or false, and who has the competence to do that? It presupposes an extra-ideological position, which is paradoxical if we are all, or almost all, submerged into false consciousness. Second, the problem with defining ideology as an all-encompassing system that completely defines our behavior fails to explain how and why certain changes come about if it is in the interest of those in power to maintain their ruling position and thus spread the current ideology.

NEW FRONTIERS Michael Freeden claims that ideologies *"map the political and social worlds for us. We simply cannot do without them because we cannot act without making sense of the worlds we inhabit."* (Freeden 2003: 9). In this sense, the future exploration of ideologies should denounce the current 'post/non-ideological' formation and stress the importance of studying ideas and practices, that seem sometimes natural but are actually ideologically produced and framed. Moreover, more attention should be given to the interconnection between social structures (ideologies) and the agency of individual and collective actors in changing the social and political reality.

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Informality

I love informality the way the soil loves rain.
– Marty Rubin, Canadian writer

Informality belongs among *"the most heterogeneous and conceptually overloaded terms in the social sciences"* (Aliyev 2017: 19). It is a general term denoting a part of social reality that is not formal or official. Frequently, the relation between formality and informality is described using the metaphor of an iceberg, where formality stands for the visible part of the iceberg, while informality corresponds to the much larger part of the iceberg hidden beneath the sea level. While the metaphorical waters of informality are frequently murky, informality should not be confused with illegality. Though some informal practices can be illegal, and some informal networks or organizations can be involved in criminal activities, informality and illegality are not the same thing.

DEFINITION Problems with defining informality begin with an ontological paradox. In primitive societies, there were no formal (officially sanctioned or written) regulations, and in this regard, informality is older than formality (Böröcz 2000: 391). However, the concept of informality as such had been meaningless before the emergence of formality. As Polese & Morris (2015: 3) rightly argue, the concept of informality makes sense only after the emergence of complex societies where the state or another overarching entity tries *"to regulate relationships and interactions between people."* These regulations are written, i.e., officially sanctioned, and those regulations or norms that are not officially sanctioned or written can be considered informal. In this regard, formality and informality have always existed side-by-side (North 1990: 6), and this ontological dichotomy led a number of authors to define informality as merely everything that is not formal (Böröcz 2000; Ledeneva 2012).

However, this simple definition is relatively vague because it says what informality is not (in-formal, un-official, un-written), but it does not specify what informality empirically is. This may confuse because in practice authors typically study several manifestations of informality – informal institutions, networks, organizations, structures, practices, politics, or governance – and some of these terms are frequently used interchangeably. However, in political science, the institutional approach to informality prevails, and most definitions of informality, in fact, define informal institutions.

Most of the definitions of informal institutions in political science build on the conceptualization of Helmke & Levitsky (2004: 727), who define informal political institutions as *"socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels."* Although this definition states what informal institutions are, it does so in contrast to formality and implies that formality and informality are two analytically separate categories. This is, however, challenged by several authors, such as Gel'man (2012), Polese & Morris (2015), and Kopeček (2019), who rather perceive formality and informality as closely intertwined.

SEE ALSO Several widely-used concepts such as **neo-patrimonialism**, **sultanism & neo-sultanism**, **state capture**, **rentier states**, etc., are based on the existence of extensive informality in respective states and societies. A number of individual informal institutions or practices have become a frequent topic of political science research, such as **systemic corruption**, nepotism (Box 1.1), **clientelism**, cronyism (Box 1.10), **prebendalism**, **rent-seeking**, etc.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The metaphor of an iceberg suggests that without studying informality, a number of political phenomena would remain hidden, misperceived, or unexplained. For example, Starr (2006), when studying post-Soviet Central Asia, uses the terms 'politics A' (formality) and 'politics B' (informality), and suggests that politics B dominates over politics A. On the contrary, Hale (2015) (cf. **patronalism**) and Aliyev (2017), who focus on the post-Soviet area, claim that it is the formal arrangements which are more important and that the informal institutions, networks, and practices react to changes to formal arrangements. In the African context, the most common approach is an *"evolutionist perspective arising from the new institutional economics, in which informal institutions are seen as remnants of pre-modern times."* (Meagher 2007: 408).

Although informal institutions also exist in highly formalized democracies (Azari & Smith 2012), the concept of informality in political science has been mostly used in research on **democratization**, democratic consolidation, **hybrid regimes**, and various types of autocracies, and the prevailing perception of informality has been rather negative. Typical research topics thus include **systemic corruption**, **clientelism**, **clan politics** etc. While Helmke & Levitsky (2004) have already shown that informal institutions can also play a positive role, the perception of informality as neither positive nor negative has spread in the academic literature only recently (Aliyev 2017; Isaacs & Polese 2016; Polese & Morris 2015; Polese et al. 2017). In the words of Aliyev (2017: 52-53), it is rather *"some by-products of informal practices – such as clientelism, nepotism, corruption, or patronage networks – [that] can be seen as negative."*

ORIGIN The concept of informality entered social sciences in the 1970s via Hart's (1973) anthropological research on household incomes in Ghana. In his seminal work, he introduced the term informal sector, which was further developed (as informal economy) by a number of scholars (e.g., Castells & Portes 1989; Feige 1990; Portes 1983; Portes & Sassen-Koob 1987). However, it was North (1990; 1991) who began to use informality within the institutionalist approach, and it was mainly through his work that the concept of informal institutions entered political science.

The institutional approach as such can be traced back at least to the Enlightenment, however, a systematic study of institutions dates back to Max Weber. The old institutionalism, which had dominated political science until the 1950s, focused on studying state organs and formal norms (e.g., constitutions) from a comparative perspective. The new institutionalism (or neo-institutionalism) is a reaction to the behavioralist criticism of the old institutionalism and perceives institutions simply as 'norm patterns which shape behavior.' (Lauth 2000: 23). The seminal neo-institutionalist works date back to the late 1970s and early 1980s (e.g., Katzenstein 1978; Evans et al. 1985). The neo-institutional approach began to rise in importance in the 2000s and belongs among the most widespread approaches in contemporary political science. The concept of informal institutions was introduced to political science by O'Donnell (1996), who differentiated between formally and informally institutionalized democracies. Later, the concept of informal institutions was elaborated by Böröcz (2000), Lauth (2000; 2004), and Helmke & Levitsky (2004), who also provided the first typologies of informal institutions.

LITERATURE A general discussion about the concept of informality can be found in Knight (1992) or Misztal (2000). A concise overview of the history of institutionalism is provided by Immergut (1998), Selznick (1996), and Alvesson & Spicer (2019). An overview of institutional approaches is provided by Peters (2019) and by Gandhi & Ruiz-Rufino (2015). A large volume edited by Christiansen & Neuhold (2012) is a collection of seminal works on informality in political science research. Two volumes edited by Ledeneva (2018a/b) explore individual informal political practices and institutions from all over the world.

REGIONAL VARIATION An extensive literature aims at analyzing informality in different geographical contexts. An overview of research on informality in Latin America is provided by Helmke & Levitsky (2006), in Africa by Bratton (2007), and in post-Soviet Eurasia by Morris & Polese (2015). In the Russian context, it is typically informal practices and networks, which are the main subject of research (Ledeneva 2012; 2013). There is also a strong focus on **clan politics** in Central Asia (Collins 2006; Isaacs 2011; Polese et al. 2017). A similar approach is typical for studies on the Caucasus region, such as on Chechen *teips* (tribes) (Galeotti 2002) or Azerbaijani regional groupings (Kopeček 2016; Sidikov 2004). In Africa, a number of studies analyze informality in a developmental context (Meagher 2007), while studies of informality in cities and urban areas are typical for Africa, Latin America, and India (Roy & AlSayyad 2004).

CLASSIFICATIONS There have been only a few attempts to classify informal political institutions, which can be divided into two basic approaches. The first one is based on induction and generalization of empirical reality. This is how Lauth (2000) constructed his five basic types of informal institutions – clientelism, corruption, the threat of the use of force, civil disobedience, and custom law. A similar approach is taken by the editors of the *Global Encyclopedia of Informality* (Ledeneva 2018a/b), who cluster individual examples of informal practices and institutions according to their functional similarities. The result is not a typology *sensu stricto* but rather a comparative overview of functions that informal institutions or practices have.

The second approach is based on the deduction and construction of modes of interaction between formal and informal institutions. This is the way how Helmke & Levitsky (2004) identified four types of informal institutions according to their relationship to the formal ones – complementary, substitutive, accommodating, and competing. A similar typology was developed by Grzymala-Busse (2010), who focused on mechanisms of how informal institutions affect formal institutions – replacement, undermining, support, and competition, and by Azari & Smith (2012), who differentiate between completing, parallel, and coordinating informal institutions.

MEASUREMENT Quantitative measuring of informality is relatively limited. Informal economy can be measured directly in microeconomics using surveys of individual households or indirectly in macroeconomics, comparing aggregated data on declared income, employment, consumption, etc. (Hussmanns 2004; Smith 1987) Informality in political science and other social sciences is mostly analyzed using qualitative methodologies and only a few informal institutions or practices are measured quantitatively, such as **corruption** (e.g. *Corruption Perception Index* or *Global Corruption Barometer*). Indirectly, the level of informality can be abstracted from some of the highly aggravated indices, such as the *Fragile State Index*, the *Rule of Law Index*, or the *Democracy Index*, or large international surveys, e.g. the *World Bank Enterprise Survey*, or the *Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey* (BEEPS).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As noted by Aliyev (2017: 29), a crucial decision to be made by any political science scholar when studying informality is to choose the appropriate unit of analysis – e.g., informal institutions, practices, or networks. The selection of the unit then determines whether the researcher focuses on norms, patterns of behavior, or individual actors. A possible solution is also *"to rely on a mixed designed that combines institutional-, networking-, and practices-based methods."* (Aliyev 2017: 32). Aliyev (2017: 26-28) and Helmke & Levitsky (2004: 734) agree that studies on informality are typically based on extensive fieldwork, in which data are collected using interviews or observations. Inevitably, this methodological approach results in case studies or small-n comparisons, although Large-N comparisons also exist (e.g., Bratton 2007; Karlsson 2013).

OTHER LANGUAGES There is a large bulk of non-English literature on informality, and a number of concepts from other languages have found their way into the English language literature. The best example is Russian, from which terms such as *blat*



(a type of reciprocal network), *kompromat* (a form of blackmailing – Box 8.3), *sistema* (non-transparent and non-hierarchical system of governance), or *chornyi piar* (black PR) emerged (Ledeneva 1998; 2006; 2013). However, the analytically most important concept from Russian is 'subversive institutions' (*podryvnye instituty*), which Gel'man (2012: 296-297) described as a bacillus infecting formal institutions in order to cause *"systematic distortion and perversion of [formal] institutions in the wake of institution building and in the course of institutional evolution."* Originating from Spanish, we see terms such as *dedazo* (Box 1.5) – the Mexican informal institution of *"imposition of the next president by the outgoing executive"* (Langston 2006; 144) – or *ronda campesina* (Box 1.6) – self-organized peasant patrols in rural Peru (Degregori et al. 1996; Fumerton 2001). Interesting concepts also originated in smaller languages, such as *trafika* (from Czech) – a system of partisan appointments to managerial posts in the public sector to reward supporters (Hanley 2018; Kopecký 2012; Naxera 2014) or *aqsaqal* (from Turkic languages) – a traditional leader (Tokluoglu 2012).

NEW FRONTIERS Given the regionally focused character of most of the studies on informality, cross-regional comparisons are needed. One of the few examples of cross-regional comparisons of informality in political science is the article by Ledeneva & Efendic (2021) comparing informal networks in Russia (*blat*) and China (*guanxi*). A growing bulk of literature aims at studying informal institutions within consociationalism in countries as different as Iraq, Lebanon, India, or Bosnia and Herzegovina (e.g. Adeney & Swenden 2019; Bogaards 2019; Dodge 2020; Zdeb 2022).

How to cite:

Kopeček, Vincenc, 2025. Informality, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism*, Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Box 1.5 Dedazo – Handpicking a Successor

Dedazo (big finger in Spanish) is a term that refers to an informal political practice in twentieth-century Mexico under the rule of the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* (PRI), in which the president or a high-ranking official handpicked a person for a particular government position or political office without going through a real and competitive formal selection or electoral process. The most famous *dedazo* practice occurred in the context of selecting a presidential successor by the incumbent president himself. While in most authoritarian regimes, the **succession** of the executive is frequently a source of instability, in Mexico between 1929 and 2000, the institutionalized practice of *dedazo* contributed to the predictability and stability of the political regime based on a hegemonic political party. Major contributions on Mexican *dedazo* have been made by Langston (2006) and Eisenstadt (2003).

A late example of *dedazo* in Mexico was the selection of Carlos Salinas de Gortari as the PRI presidential candidate in 1988. Salinas was chosen by the then-president Miguel de la Madrid as his preferred successor, despite opposition from other party members and without a competitive primary election being held. Salinas went on to win the presidential election, but the results were highly controversial, with accusations of widespread fraud and vote-rigging.

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Box 1.6 Vigilante Policing: 'Ronda Campesina'

Self-defense is nature's eldest law.
– John Dryden, English Poet and playwright.

Ronda Campesina (Peasant Round) is a form of community policing that originated in rural areas of Peru in the 1970s and 1980s. It is a self-defense and justice system created by rural communities to protect themselves from crime, violence, and other threats. The *Ronda Campesina* system is based on the traditional practices of communal work and mutual aid that have long been part of rural life in Peru. In addition to their law enforcement role, *Ronda* members (*ronderos*) also serve as mediators and arbitrators in disputes within the community. They often rely on traditional forms of justice, such as restorative justice and community service, rather than relying solely on the formal legal system. The *Ronda Campesina* has been credited with reducing crime and improving public safety in many rural areas of Peru. However, the system has also been criticized for abuses of power and violations of human rights, including the use of excessive force and extrajudicial killings. The importance of the *Rondas* has declined since the 1990s. For more information on *Ronda Campesina*, see, e.g., Fumerton (2001) or Starn (1999).

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Junta

A military coup needs a sacrifice and courage that you can't find in an army without morale
– Jalal Talabani (1933-2017), interim president of Iraq (2005-2014)

The Spanish word for *junta* ('council') can refer to the act of an autocratic takeover (a coup d'état) or the group of powerholders in (a more collegial subtype of) **military regimes** after such a takeover. The term originally refers to the various consultative committees of the Spanish monarchy in the sixteenth century (see 'classifications' under **coup** for details).

The term junta indeed carries strong negative connotations, often associated with violent **repression** and **human rights** abuses. In the Cold War era and its immediate aftermath, military juntas were prevalent in regions like Latin America, Southeast Asia, and parts of Africa. Many became synonymous with brutal and undemocratic rule. For instance, juntas in countries like Chile under Pinochet or Argentina during its 'Dirty War' period epitomized these associations, cf. terror (Box 3.13). With the rise of democracy, military rule declined, and along with it, global norms shifted, making the term less desirable.

Many contemporary military regimes have sought to distance themselves from the overtly militaristic image that the term 'junta' evokes. This is evident in processes of 'civilianization,' where military rulers adopt civilian titles, attire, and institutions to mask their control while maintaining *de facto* power. For example, in Thailand or Myanmar, military rulers have used constitutional frameworks or nominally civilian governments to lend an air of legitimacy to their rule. Such strategies make the use of junta less fitting as these regimes attempt to present themselves as more aligned with democratic norms.

Also, scholars have been using the term less. The main reason is that comparative authoritarianism has developed various classifications for military regimes that are more precise or explicitly denote their hybridity when such rulers hide behind a civilian or monarchic component. Previously, there was just one accusatory label for all of them: junta.

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Kleptocracy

Pluck the chicken, but don't let it squawk
– Haitian president, Jean Jacques Dessalines (ca. 1758-1806)
Corruption steals from the poor. It steals the promise of a brighter future.
– Jim Yong Kim, president of the World Bank (2012-2019)

The term kleptocracy has its roots in the Greek words κλέπτης – *kléptēs*, 'thief' and κράτος – *krátos*, 'power, rule.' While it is often defined as 'rule by thieves,' the concept is more nuanced than this simplistic definition suggests. The term 'kleptocracy' has become widely used to describe the illegal but systematic functioning of political, economic, and social structures. The basic feature of injustice is when power or mandate are systematically abused, resulting in unfairness and enrichment at the expense of others. It may also include elements of violence, oppression and complex divide-and-rule strategies that rulers may resort to in order to maintain dominance (De Luca et al. 2011: 3).

However, the reality is even more complicated by the fact that the ruling body, which has been accused of kleptocracy, uses a variety of instruments to conceal its operations, manipulate facts, and improve its image for citizens. Often, kleptocracy is associated with grand corruption in a state apparatus that has developed in a largely organized form. The research on the correlation between **corruption** and political regimes is relatively wide, and it includes studies of corruption in democratic and non-democratic regimes. Among others, we can mention these authors: Brooker 2014; Johnston 2014; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka 2016; Yadav & Vineeta 2011.

SEE ALSO Because of its complexity and dependence on the understanding of other terms with better-delineated theoretical frames, such as **systemic corruption**, **rent-seeking**, **prebendalism**, **neo-patrimonialism**, **clientelism**, **patronage**, **hoarding**, etc., the exact meaning of kleptocracy has rather remained elusive.

DEFINITION Kleptocracy is challenging to define precisely, as it overlaps with terms like 'predatory state' (Lundahl 1997), **state capture**, and strategic corruption. These concepts are often viewed as variations of kleptocratic states or as significant features within such systems.

This is primarily related to the era in which kleptocracy is studied and which aspects of corrupt governance are emphasized. In many cases, a kleptocracy is theorized and embodied in a form of "*government which uses coercion as its primary means of gaining power-over the compliance.*" (Haugaard 2023: 1).

For Wedeman (2018: 87), kleptocracy means *"a form of vertically integrated, hierarchically organized corruption in which the main corrupt hierarchies come together at the peak of political power. A kleptocracy is thus not simply a state controlled by thieves; it is a system in which a 'thief-in-chief' or small ruling cabal controls a broader circle of thieves who have captured pieces of the state."* Similarly, Rose-Ackerman (1999) defines kleptocracy as a government that views the civil service as a source of personal gain. As a result, it supports projects that provide corrupt opportunities and personal gains to its members. At the same time, it does not support reforms aimed at making the civil service more efficient in key areas of the economy that benefit the kleptocrats.

However, Rose-Ackerman distinguishes between two types of state systems in which kleptocracy occurs. The roots of kleptocracy may stem from a government's strong or monopolistic position that encourages corruption or, conversely, from a government's weak control over the economy and administration, leading to widespread corruption. In the latter case, corruption becomes a common pathological phenomenon of a weak or failing state, with members of the state's administrative apparatus engaging in mass corruption, sometimes euphemistically labeled 'poor governance.' Rose-Ackerman states that the pattern of kleptocratic behavior varies depending on the type of kleptocracy: *"In short, the strong kleptocrat runs a brutal but efficient state limited only by his own inability to make credible commitments. The weak kleptocrat runs an intrusive and inefficient state organized to extract bribes from the population and the business community*" (Rose-Ackerman 1999: 119). The fact that kleptocracies arise especially in weak states is also confirmed by Acemoglu et al. (2004: 163), stating, that *"kleptocracies emerge in weakly institutionalized polities, where formal institutions neither place significant restrictions on politicians' actions nor make them accountable to citizens."*

To understand kleptocracy as a system, it is necessary to understand its interconnectedness with (grand) corruption, although they are sometimes (incorrectly) used interchangeably. Coates and Quest (2005: 2) claim that *"kleptocracy and corruption are now used interchangeably, with kleptocracy referring to systems of rule and corruption to venal acts and abusive practices. Kleptocracy is only one of a network of vicious circles that obstruct development, although it is one about which correctives can be applied."*

ORIGIN Although the original usage of the term kleptocracy goes back to the early nineteenth century, when Leigh Hunt used it for the description of organized criminals in Spain (Bullough 2018: 25), the contemporary depiction is relatively recent. It was Andreski, concerned with the situation in Latin America and African colonies in the post-war era, who, in his book *The African Predicament,* demonstrated and described a system in postcolonial Africa. In particular, he was interested in the establishment of elitist structures in newly established countries when *"Instead of pursuing egalitarian policies, they begun with prioritizing ties to their tribes or families. As a consequence of the lack of common iden-*



tity and often very artificial substance of the ex-colonial state, including diversity in languages, religions and values, political representatives, civil servant, military officers, and others started to enrich themselves, their relatives, members of their tribe or other groups possessing the power." (Andreski 1968).

Unlike 'normal' autocrats, who could also be corrupt but for which self-enrichment is not their main objective, a kleptocratic regime's single aim is to maximize its own **rents**. In other words, in kleptocracies, corruption *"rather than a weakness or a disorder, it is the effective functioning of systems designed to enrich the powerful*" (Chayes, 2017: 146).

In his 1997 book *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, Jared Diamond conceptualizes kleptocracy as a longstanding tool of exploitation used by elites in centrally governed, non-egalitarian societies. These elites typically use tribute or taxation to divert resources from commoners to themselves. Diamond identifies four strategies that kleptocrats have historically employed: (i) disarming the populace while arming the elite, (ii) redistributing a portion of the collected tribute in ways that please the masses, (iii) using monopolized force to maintain public order and reduce violence, and (iv) constructing an ideology or religion that justifies their kleptocratic practices (Diamond 2017).

Andreski (1968) focused on the defective components of governance, particularly the pervasive corruption across state and public institutions. He defines kleptocracy as a system where the functioning of authority is driven by the mechanisms of supply and demand rather than by laws and regulations. According to Andreski, a kleptocratic state operates as a generalized model of laissez-faire economics, even if its economy is nominally socialist. However, he argues that 'pure' kleptocracy, like pure democracy or autocracy, is an ideal type that has never fully materialized, as bonds of solidarity inevitably interfere with the unrestrained workings of supply and demand (Andreski 1968: 109).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE & IMPACT ON POLICY Kleptocracy is commonly associated with authoritarian regimes, especially dictatorships. Here, in particular, there is interconnection and reinforcement, as greater control over economic resources allows for a longer and tighter grip on the political system, widening the circle of supporters and increasing the profits from these activities. However, as Haugaar (2023: 372) noted, even "*the politics of actual democracy are unstable, sometimes tending toward the ideal type, increasing stability, but at other moments moving away from the democratic ideal type, toward authoritarianism and kleptocracy. Today, we are in the latter moment.*" Recently, democratic societies have been experiencing cases that illustrate the full scope, complexity, and diversity of the world's corruption challenges. These cases may indicate potential trajectories toward more or less kleptocratic regimes. On this topic see: Kuhner 2017; Vella 2020; Chayes 2017; Rotberg 2017.

Economic factors play a strong role in this respect. Typologically, a kleptocracy is, or was, a state rich in natural resources (cf. the **resource curse**). Congo-Zaire was a notorious outlier, but Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria are also known African examples. It can also be a state that is able to effectively attract **foreign aid** (Congo-Zaire; Equatorial Guinea), which plays a role in keeping the kleptocracy in power.

The following rulers (all **personalist regimes**) can undoubtedly be counted among the classic examples of kleptocracy in this sense of postcolonial **state capture** at the hands of corrupt, mafia-like and thieving rulers who transformed the state and the local economy into a private company-mafia structure. Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko (1965-1997) as shown in Box 1.7; Equatorial Guinea under Francisco Macías Nguema (1968-1979) and then his nephew Teodoro Obiang (president since 1979); Nicaragua under the Somoza family (1936-1979); Haiti under François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier (1957-1971) and then his son Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier (1971-1986); and the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos (1965-1986), (cf. Wedeman 2018: 88).

Of course, some powerful rulers manage to avoid such inefficient policies. They enrich themselves and their **families** (cf. nepotism in Box 1.1) but do not push rent-generating programs so far as seriously to undermine growth. Countries with a high degree of corruption that are politically secure and tightly controlled from the top may suffer from fewer static inefficiencies than those with an uncoordinated struggle for private gain. Their rulers have a long-run viewpoint and hence seek ways to constrain uncoordinated rent-seeking so that long-term gains are maximized (Rose-Ackerman 1999: 120).

The longevity of kleptocratic regimes in weakly institutionalized political environments raises important questions about their ability to function without strong institutions over extended periods. Examples include Mobutu Sese Seko's 32-year rule in Zaire, the Duvalier dynasty's 29 years in Haiti, the Somoza family's 43 years in Nicaragua, and Ferdinand Marcos for 21 years in the Philippines. These regimes effectively contain opposition and insulate security forces from external influence by generating funds through ineffective policies. Acemoglu et al. (2004) argue that kleptocrats maintain power through a divide-and-rule strategy (cf. **hoarding**), which allows them to bribe politically pivotal groups off the equilibrium path, ensuring their continued dominance despite costly societal policies. This strategy enables rulers to remain in power by preventing unified opposition, a point also supported by Coates & Quest (2005).

In the context of kleptocracy, the term's essence is defined by the role of the kleptocrat. There are two types: a kleptocratic dictator who establishes and leads the entire system and one who operates within weak institutions and state instability without centralized power. A strong kleptocrat is often associated with state capture, which Hellman et al. (2000: 2) describe as influencing the formation of laws and regulations through illicit payments to officials. Olson (1993) characterizes such a kleptocrat as a 'stationary bandit' who monopolizes theft through taxes while maintaining order and providing public goods to enhance productivity. This type of kleptocrat acts

like a monopolist, optimizing economic output for profit. However, Rose-Ackerman (1999) argues that this level of control is rare, requiring kleptocrats to develop other power strategies to profit from certain economic sectors.

Andreski (1968: 194) notes that kleptocracy involves selling what the law forbids, such as appointments and government contracts. Lundahl (1997) details methods like foreign trade taxation, smuggling, tax farming, sale of public offices, inflation, confiscation, loan manipulation, aid embezzlement, and misuse of state enterprises. These methods enrich the governing elite and are orchestrated by the state administration, leading to entrenched structures similar to those in predatory states.

The 'new' kleptocracies emerging in contemporary authoritarian regimes differ significantly from the 'old' forms, though the latter have not entirely disappeared. New kleptocratic models are characterized by decentralized and oligopolistic systems of corruption, where powerful oligarchs, supported by networks of bankers, gangsters, and financial operatives, compete for profits by capturing segments of the state (Wedeman 2018: 89). Unlike old kleptocracies, which primarily operated within state borders – depositing assets abroad or borrowing heavily for personal enrichment (Andreski 1968: 176) – new kleptocracies are deeply integrated into global trade. They exploit transnational mechanisms to evade sanctions and generate domestic revenue through oligarchic structures (Bullough 2018).

This internationalization of kleptocracy has transformed it into a powerful foreign policy tool. Kleptocrats establish formal economic, cultural, and political ties while engaging in covert influence operations. They cultivate transnational networks to camouflage financial flows and enhance their reputations (Cooley et al. 2018: 40). Paradoxically, this shift occurred during post-Cold War efforts to increase global transparency. Unable to rely on direct foreign bank transfers or anticommunist credentials, kleptocrats now use sophisticated networks to launder wealth through tax havens or luxury real estate and protect assets under Western or Middle Eastern property laws.

In a second phase, kleptocrats focus on 'reputation laundering,' obscuring evidence of corruption and 'rebranding' themselves as global citizens. This involves acquiring dual citizenship or residency in safe countries (including the EU), engaging in global PR campaigns ('Black PR' a mix of **soft power**, **propaganda** and **disinformation**), sponsoring events like sports clubs, and conducting philanthropy to distract from corrupt practices (Cooley et al. 2018: 45; Heathershaw & Cooley 2017). These strategies allow kleptocrats to maintain power while integrating into the global system.

CLASSIFICATIONS Classifying kleptocracy is challenging due to the unique circumstances and developments in each country and time. However, it can be viewed as a social phenomenon that societies confront, react to, and juxtapose themselves against. Haugaard (2023) explores kleptocracy as a sociologically constructed ideal type of political power alongside authoritarianism and democracy, using Weberian analysis. He identifies four dimensions of **power**: agency, structure, social knowledge, and social ontology (2023: 2). These dimensions allow for the examination of kleptocracy's theoretical functioning and its sociological implications.

In a kleptocracy, agency is characterized by power as domination or oppression, with no separation between political and economic power. Economic domination is intertwined with state and societal capture. Ideally, kleptocratic societies exhibit a binary structural relationship between the powerful and the powerless, leading to instability. This instability often shifts power toward authoritarianism, creating a hybrid form of kleptocracy-cum-authoritarianism. The lack of an ideology to justify this stratification contributes to instability, while subaltern ideologies may emerge to maintain or challenge the power dynamics.

The social ontological dimension in kleptocracy involves accepting the impossibility of change and achieving ontological security through routine structural reproduction. The powerless focus on survival, while the powerful wield control over life and death (Haugaard 2023: 352-356).

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Box 1.7 The Mobutu Regime: A Poster Child for Neo-patrimonialism, Sultanism & Personalist Rule

The departed spirit of Mobutu Sese Seko can rest secure in the knowledge that his own contribution to the concept of sultanism has not been neglected.
– Crawford Young (1999: 165)

He built his political longevity on three pillars: violence, cunning and the use of state funds to buy off enemies. His systematic looting of the national treasury and major industries gave birth to the term "kleptocracy."
– *New York Times*, Mobutu's Obituary (1997)

Mobutu Sese Seko's rule over Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo – DRC) stands as one of the most illustrative examples of **personalist rule**, **sultanism**, and **kleptocracy** in modern political science. His nearly 32-year reign (1965-1997) was marked by a unique blend of ruthless political maneuvering, ideological pragmatism, and an extraordinary ability to manipulate both domestic and international actors. Below are some selected aspects of Mobutu's rule that have boosted him to the top in comparative authoritarianism studies.

Mobutu's rise and survival as an authoritarian ruler were deeply intertwined with his ability to manipulate the international system during the Cold War. His regime exemplifies how authoritarian leaders can exploit global geopolitical rivalries to sustain their power.

Mobutu ascended to power with significant Western backing. In the aftermath of Congolese independence in 1960, the country descended into chaos, with the West cold-shouldering the democratically elected prime minister Patrice Lumumba (Box 5.1), and regional secessionist movements in Katanga and Kasai provinces exacerbating instability in concert with rising cold war tensions.

The son of a cook and a hotel maid, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu was born in Lisala, in Equateur province, in 1930. After a stint as a journalist, Mobutu turned soldier. He had become good friends with Lumumba in Léopoldville (Kinshasa) in the run-up to Congolese independence in 1960 and joined his cabinet as a military aide. As the Congo crisis deepened, the anti-colonial Lumumba clashed more openly with unresponsive Western powers and started counterbalancing by asking the Soviets for help. Immediately, he became branded as a communist by panicking cold war warriors. As a rising army officer, Mobutu positioned himself as a trusted ally for all sides, swiftly moving up through the military ranks to the top command. For the West, once it became clear that the Congolese president, Kasavubu, was not the right ally, as the latter did not have the required popular support nor the backing in parliament to take on Lumumba, they started increasingly to rely on the young military commander to 'solve' this protracted crisis in the heart of Africa.

So came the first **coup** in 1960, with tacit Western support, placing Lumumba under house arrest, surrounded from all sides by the Congolese army and protected by another smaller ring of neutral UN forces. Betrayed by a UN vote regarding his political future, Lumumba escaped his arrest but was captured and airlifted to the secessionist province of Katanga, where he was tortured and murdered by his political rival Moise Tschombe (with Belgian backing).

Mobutu stayed in power with US backing and rode out successive crises and insurrections, portraying an almost artistic ability to bribe political rivals back into the fold. When Congo, war-torn and chaotic, was somewhat stabilized, and it was time to hand over power, then came the second coup in 1965, a surprise to the West.

Mobutu's consolidation of power was marked by a ruthless elimination of political rivals through violence, co-optation, and manipulation. One of Mobutu's earliest acts as ruler was to dismantle existing patronage networks and replace them with his own loyalists. This process often involved outright violence. The public execution of former Prime Minister Évariste Kimba and other political figures in 1966 served as a chilling warning to potential dissenters (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002). Similarly, Pierre Mulele, a rebel leader who had been lured back to Zaire under promises of amnesty, was brutally executed in 1968. These acts were not merely punitive; they were calculated spectacles designed to instill fear across Zaire. In 1969, Tschombe – by then in exile in Spain – was lured on a trip, and his plane was highjacked and diverted to Algeria, where he was put under house arrest and died under suspicious circumstances (a heart attack).

Beyond violence, Mobutu employed co-optation as a tool for neutralizing opposition. Prominent figures were offered lucrative government positions or access to state resources in exchange for their loyalty. This prac-

tice undermined the credibility of opposition movements while expanding Mobutu's patronage network. For example, he strategically appointed officials from diverse ethnic groups to prevent any single faction from consolidating power against him.

Mobutu also manipulated divisions within the opposition to weaken potential challengers further. He encouraged factionalism by creating multiple small political parties that fragmented resistance efforts. This tactic ensured that no cohesive force could emerge to threaten his rule (Schatzberg 1991). Additionally, he maintained tight control over Zaire's security forces (cf. **coup-proofing**) – particularly the *Division Spéciale Présidentielle* (DSP), an elite unit loyal solely to him – thereby insulating himself from coup attempts.

While Mobutu lacked a systematic ideology akin to Marxism or Négritude, he developed a distinctive set of practices aimed at consolidating his authority and fostering national unity under his leadership. Central to this effort was his 'Authenticity' campaign. Launched in the early 1970s, *Authenticité* sought to reject Western cultural influences and promote a uniquely Zairian identity. This initiative included renaming Congo as Zaire, requiring his citizens to adopt African names, banning Western attire (in particular neckties), and emphasizing traditional customs (Young & Turner 1985). While some scholars dismiss *Authenticité* as a 'light' ideology primarily designed for **propaganda** purposes, it resonated with many Zairians by fostering national pride after decades of colonial domination.

The campaign also served as a vehicle for Mobutu's **personality cult**. He styled himself as Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa Za Banga ('the all-powerful warrior who goes from conquest to conquest'), portraying himself as both a traditional African chief and a modern statesman. He was referred to as *Mokonzi* 'Big Man' in Lingala. Events like the 'Rumble in the Jungle' – a boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Kinshasa in 1974 broadcasted live on television – further reinforced this image on an international stage (**spectacle politics**).

During his rule, Mobutu masterfully exploited Cold War dynamics to secure ongoing support from Western powers (**gatekeeping**). He presented himself as an indispensable ally against communism in Africa, often framing his regime as the only alternative to chaos – a narrative encapsulated in his 'Mobutu or chaos' foreign policy logic. This argument resonated particularly well with US administrations during the Cold War, which prioritized stability over human rights concerns. For example, during George H.W. Bush's presidency in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Mobutu successfully leveraged this narrative to stave off calls for democratic reforms despite mounting domestic and international criticism (Young & Turner 1985).

Mobutu's ability to manipulate international actors extended beyond the United States. He cultivated close ties with France under President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, securing additional military and financial support by aligning himself with French interests in Africa. Mobutu also played regional conflicts to his advantage; for instance, his support for French interventions in Rwanda during operations *Noroît* (1990-1993) and *Turquoise* (1994) reinforced his value as a regional power broker (Schatzberg 1991). However, this strategy of external reliance ultimately proved unsustainable. With the end of the Cold War and the diminishing threat of communism, Western tolerance for Mobutu's corruption and repression waned. By the mid-1990s, Mobutu found himself increasingly isolated on the international stage.

Mobutu's regime is perhaps most infamous for its kleptocratic practices. He treated Zaire's state resources as his personal property, siphoning off billions of dollars into overseas bank accounts while presiding over one of Africa's most impoverished nations. **Corruption** under Mobutu was not merely tolerated; it was institutionalized as part of his governance strategy. He famously advised officials to "steal just a little," signaling that corruption would be overlooked so long as it did not threaten his rule (Schatzberg 1991). This system allowed him to maintain loyalty among elites while ensuring that no rival could accumulate sufficient resources to challenge him.

The scale of Mobutu's personal enrichment was staggering. He regularly chartered a Concord jet to service his personal Versailles (the Gbadolite Palace), which he constructed in the middle of the rainforest. By some estimates, he amassed a fortune exceeding $5 billion – an amount equivalent to Zaire's total national debt at the time of his ouster (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002). However, this kleptocracy logically also contributed to Zaire's economic collapse in the 1990s, undermining Mobutu's ability to sustain his patronage networks.

Despite widespread discontent among both elites and ordinary citizens, Mobutu managed to avoid successful coups throughout his reign. The same with the (cyclical) rebellions, where he always managed to convince allies to provide essential support on his behalf – a remarkable feat for an authoritarian ruler presiding over such continuous instability.

Mobutu's regime, which had endured for over three decades, collapsed in 1997 due to a confluence of internal decay, external abandonment, and regional upheaval. The end of the Cold War marked a turning point as Western powers, particularly the US, withdrew their support. No longer needed as a bulwark against **communism**, Mobutu faced mounting criticism for his **systemic corruption** and **human rights** abuses. France, his last major patron, also distanced itself due to its own tarnished reputation following controversial interventions in Rwanda. Internally, decades of **kleptocracy** had hollowed out the Zairian state. The economy was in shambles, infrastructure crumbled, and the army was demoralized and ineffective. Mobutu's superficial democratic reforms in the early 1990s failed to quell public frustration, further eroding what was left of his **legitimacy**.

Meanwhile, the Rwandan genocide and refugee crisis destabilized Zaire. Mobutu's support for Hutu militias angered Rwanda, which allied with Uganda and Angola to back Laurent Kabila's rebellion. Kabila's *Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo* (AFDL), supported by regional powers and fueled by popular discontent, swiftly overran Mobutu's weakened forces. Isolated internationally and unable to counter the rebellion, Mobutu fled to Morocco into exile, marking the rapid collapse of his fragile personalist regime. He



died one year later of prostate cancer on 7 September 1997 in Rabat. He was buried in the European cemetery in Rabat. His grave is marked only with the initials "MSS" and remains there to this day. Discussions about repatriating his body back to Congo have only been met with disagreement – cf. Box 5.6 on dictators' bodies.

Mobutu is almost the ideal type of **personalist ruler** because he ticks *all* the boxes. Lemarchand (2003: 31) called his regime the purest illustration of a thoroughly patrimonialized system. Young and Turner (1985: 165) noted that Mobutu's "predatory" rule involved the permeation of the state by a level of corruption so pervasive as to have become its most visible and defining property. (Bach 2011: 279) He was a master of manipulation and ambidextrous when it came to the dictatorial toolkit. As a staunch ally of the West, but with good working relations with some communist powers, his penchant for spectacle and diversion, combined with his long tenure, his Zaire acquired an infamous reputation as the decades proceeded.

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Legitimacy & Legitimation

The worst form of injustice is pretended justice
– Plato

Legitimacy refers to the belief or perception that a rule, institution, or leader has the right to govern. It is a judgment about the rightfulness of **rulership** and is often shared by individuals within a society, leading to collective social effects such as more efficient and consensual governance (Hurd, no date). Legitimacy is thus an essential component for the stability and acceptance of any political system or authority figure.

External legitimacy is when actors outside the polity (other states, international organizations, audiences or international regimes) signal a normative evaluation of a political regime. This contrasts with *domestic legitimacy,* which refers to the acceptance of political rule by the ruled (citizens and other residents) governed by the regime. In this entry and throughout the encyclopedia, we equate domestic legitimacy with legitimacy covered here. **External legitimacy** is covered in the section on **international relations**.

Legitimation (also spelled legitimization or legitimisation) is the process by which legitimacy is established or enhanced. It involves actions taken by actors or institutions to justify the power and authority of a regime in terms of societal norms and values. This can include normative appeals or material incentives aimed at gaining acceptance from subordinates (Hurd, no date). Legitimation is inherently a social and political process that seeks to align the actions of a political regime with accepted norms to gain acknowledgment as legitimate.

Self-legitimation (or *regime legitimation*) is when the regime itself undertakes this process and resorts to various strategies to create and disseminate narratives using multiple media and platforms at different levels. This has been defined as: *"the capacity of a political system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate or proper ones for the society"* (Lipset cited in Grauvogel & von Soest 2024).

SEE ALSO The distinction between *legitimacy* and *legitimation* is well-established, yet the lines between these concepts and related ideas, such as trust, support, and loyalty, can sometimes be unclear. While

political or institutional trust is often used as an indicator of a regime's legitimacy, they are not synonymous. (Political) **trust** refers specifically to confidence in particular institutions, whereas legitimacy encompasses the broader acceptance of the regime as a whole. Similarly, support and loyalty differ from legitimacy. *Support* includes citizens' behaviors that may appear compliant but do not necessarily indicate a perception of the regime as legitimate. *Loyalty* often pertains to elites' actions, which might be driven by genuine affection or calculated cost-benefit analyses (Grauvogel & Soest 2024; Gerschewski 2018).

ORIGIN The concept of political legitimacy has its roots in ancient Rome, where it evolved over centuries. The term 'legitimate' is derived from classical Latin, signifying 'what is legal' or 'what conforms to the law.' Cicero employed phrases such as *legitimum imperium* and *potestas legitima* to denote legally established power and magistrates. He also used the term to differentiate a legitimate enemy *(legitimus hostis)* from a thief or pirate, based on the existence of signed treaties that validated their status, thus bestowing **external legitimacy** on Rome's enemies (as sovereign actors) (Coicaud 2002).

The notion of legitimacy gained significant prominence during the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the subsequent Bourbon Restoration (1815-1830). This era marked a pivotal shift in political discourse, with legitimacy becoming central to debates about the right to govern. Royalists utilized the concept of 'legitimacy' to contrast their preferred form of government with the negatively perceived concept of 'democracy,' which initially lacked a widely accepted name. The use of 'legitimate' inherently suggested its opposite, 'illegitimate,' and these terms were further defined through their relationships with other political concepts (Richter 1982).

DEFINITION The concept of legitimacy has undergone significant evolution, reflecting the shifting dynamics of political systems, philosophical thought, and governance structures throughout history. In its earliest form, legitimacy in ancient Rome was closely tied to the idea of conformity to the law. During the Middle Ages, the term 'legitimacy' itself came into use, retaining its association with legality while expanding to include political considerations such as the justification of delegated power. At this time, legitimacy became linked to the quality of a title to govern and was understood as a legally validated political activity (Coicaud 2002).

In the modern era, the concept gained prominence when the old political order was shaken after the French Revolution and with the rise of **republicanism**. Democracy had no political-moral monopoly yet. Royalists employed it against **democracy** (seen as a negative). In the post-revolutionary reactionary movement, legitimacy became foremost anchored on historical precedents and traditions (cf. **traditional rule**).

In the nineteenth century, liberal thinkers like François Guizot (1787-1874) redefined legitimacy by shifting its focus from mere legality to moral notions such as justice, right, and reason. Guizot argued that legitimacy was incompatible with absolute power, regardless of its origin, and he painted Napoleon Bonaparte, a military usurper, as an example of democratic illegitimacy (Coicaud 2002; Richter 1982).

He emphasized the historical origins of legitimacy. Guizot argued that although all power partly originates from force, no authority desires to be perceived as a product of violence. Legitimate governments strive to dissociate themselves from it. He linked legitimacy to **constitutionalism**, asserting that absolute power is illegitimate (Richter 1982).

Alexis de Tocqueville, directly drawing from Guizot, expanded on existing liberal theories of legitimacy by exploring checks and balances in modern democracies (the danger of emerging **tyranny** and total domination by one individual) and how they align with the values of the governed. He posited that liberal democracy (the US model at the time) was the only legitimate alternative to Bonapartist dictatorship (Box 4.1), thus reinforcing the evolving discourse on political legitimacy (Coicaud 2002; Richter 1982).

In contemporary understandings, Max **Weber** contributed significantly by introducing an empirical framework for analyzing various forms of legitimacy. Moving away from purely normative ideals, Weber focused on how political rule functioned in practice. He identified three ideal types of legitimate authority: rational-legal rule (based on laws and procedures), **charismatic rule** (rooted in the personal qualities of a leader), and **traditional rule** (derived from longstanding customs). This approach allowed for the study of legitimacy across both democratic and autocratic regimes (Tannenberg et al. 2021). Consult the entry on **rulership** for a full overview of his typology and its subtypes; many are treated separately in this encyclopedia.

Modern definitions recognize legitimacy as a multifaceted and dynamic concept. It encompasses belief in the rightness of a political system, acceptance of rulers' authority, perceived obligations to obey laws, willingness to comply with regulations, normative justifications for support, procedural fairness, and government performance. Contemporary scholars emphasize that legitimacy is not static but involves ongoing interactions between those in power and those being governed. Measuring legitimacy empirically remains challenging because it requires examining not only formal institutions and procedures but also citizens' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Diamond 2004; Tannenberg et al. 2021; Gerschewski 2018; Grauvogel & von Soest 2024; Levi et al. 2009; Sadurski et al. 2019; Weatherford 1992; Whiting 2017).

This complexity underscores the evolving nature of legitimacy as both a theoretical construct and a practical reality. In practical terms, Nicole Roughan (in Sadurski et al. 2019) proposes a concept of 'micro-legitimacy,' which focuses on the legitimacy of individual actors within the state rather than solely evaluating the legitimacy of the state as a whole. (See also Box 1.8 on Kakistocracy & Ochlocracy).



KEY SIGNIFICANCE Legitimacy is a fundamental component for the stability and effectiveness of any political system, whether democratic or authoritarian. When a political regime is perceived as legitimate, its citizens are more inclined to obey its laws, cooperate with its policies, and participate in its institutions. This willing compliance reduces the need for coercion (**repression**), thereby making governance more efficient and the supreme powerholders more secure from popular insurrection (Tannenberg et al. 2021; Coicaud 2002; von Haldenwang 2016).

Legitimacy plays a crucial role in promoting stability by reducing conflict and violence. When citizens believe in the regime's right to govern, they are less likely to resort to violence or upheaval to achieve their political objectives. It fosters cooperation and compliance as citizens are more willing to support government initiatives, even if they do not directly benefit from them, because they view the broader system as just and deserving of support. Moreover, legitimacy strengthens regime **longevity, stability & resilience**, enabling a government to endure crises and challenges, both domestic and international. A reservoir of legitimacy built over time through effective performance can sustain a regime during difficult periods (Coicaud 2002; Levi et al. 2009; Grauvogel & von Soest 2024; von Haldenwang 2016).

In terms of enhancing effectiveness, legitimacy facilitates policy implementation by reducing resistance and ensuring citizen buy-in. It mobilizes resources by making it easier for governments to raise taxes, recruit soldiers, and gather support for public projects. Citizens are more willing to contribute to a system they believe in. Furthermore, legitimacy reduces the costs of governance as voluntary compliance with laws and regulations allows the government to allocate resources more efficiently (Tannenberg et al. 2021; Jones 2019; Levi et al. 2009).

Legitimacy also supports justice by reinforcing the rule of law. It ensures that everyone is subject to the same rules applied fairly and impartially, contributing to a sense of justice and fairness in society. A legitimate government is more likely to respect individual rights as it derives its authority from the consent of the governed and recognizes its responsibility to serve its interests. Additionally, legitimacy promotes political equality by ensuring all citizens have a voice and stake in the political system (Coicaud 2002; Krygier & Roughan in Sadurski et al. 2019).

Of course, we are interested in the role of legitimacy in authoritarian regimes. Even without democratic elections, rulers seek legitimacy through various means such as appealing to tradition, cultivating charismatic leadership, demonstrating economic competence, providing essential services, maintaining order and security, manipulating **elections** or controlled participation forms, promoting resonant **ideologies** among segments of the population, and seeking international recognition (i.e., **spectacle politics**) to bolster domestic standing. Authoritarian regimes often face greater challenges in establishing and maintaining legitimacy due to the lack of inherent accountability mechanisms found in democratic systems. Nonetheless, achieving a degree of perceived legitimacy is crucial for reducing reliance on repression and promoting order and stability (Dukalskis 2021; Gerschewski 2018; Tannenberg et al. 2021; Diamond 2004; Grauvogel & von Soest 2024).

LITERATURE The study of legitimacy and legitimation in authoritarian regimes has been significantly influenced by several key works that explore how these regimes establish and maintain their rule. The foundational contribution comes from Max Weber, whose analytical framework (**rulership**) for understanding legitimacy does not discriminate between regime types.

Building on Weber's insights, Juan Linz's (1975; 2000) work on totalitarian and authoritarian regimes provided a comprehensive analysis of how these systems maintain control through **ideology**, **propaganda**, and **repression,** as well as older sources of **traditional rule**. Linz's exploration of the dynamics of non-democratic rule remains highly influential in understanding the mechanisms of authoritarian governance.

Johannes Gerschewski (2018; 2023) has been pivotal in advancing the study of legitimacy in autocracies. He argues that legitimacy is a crucial feature of autocratic rule, contributing to regime stability. In his 2013 article, Gerschewski outlines three pillars of autocratic stability: legitimation, repression, and co-optation. His subsequent work delves deeper into the concept of legitimacy in autocracies, examining its meaning, rival concepts, and measurement challenges (Gerschewski 2018; 2023).

Christian von Soest and Julia Grauvogel (2015; 2018) have conducted extensive research on the legitimation strategies of authoritarian regimes. Their work emphasizes the multidimensionality of legitimacy claims, exploring how autocracies draw upon various sources, such as performance, ideology, and identity, to bolster their rule. They highlight how these legitimacy claims influence a regime's resilience, particularly when facing international **sanctions** (Grauvogel & von Soest, 2014; 2017).

B. Hoffmann (2009; 2015) investigated the importance of external legitimacy for authoritarian regime legitimation using the case of Cuba. S.H. Whiting (2017) focuses on China, examining how the state uses law and legal institutions to bolster regime legitimacy. Not only does their interpretation and construct of 'the rule of law' powerfully shape the legal consciousness of ordinary rural citizens; moreover, this state-constructed legal consciousness enhances regime legitimacy.

Alexander Dukalskis (2021) examines how authoritarian regimes use **propaganda** and public discourse to construct legitimacy. His analysis of the authoritarian public sphere reveals how countries like China and North Korea shape narratives to justify their rule and suppress dissent (**disinformation**).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Defining and measuring legitimacy has caused many headaches. Weber's influential typology provided a foundational framework but has been criticized for oversimplifying

the complexity of legitimacy by collapsing different dimensions into one.

David Beetham (1991a/b) advocates for a more nuanced approach that separates legality, justifiability, and consent as distinct criteria for assessing legitimacy. Beetham emphasizes that legitimacy is not just about subjective belief but also the extent to which authority meets objective criteria, such as adherence to rules and normative justifications. In his view, power is legitimate to the extent that (a) it is legal, that is, acquired and performed according to the existing rules and procedures; (b) these rules are compatible with norms prevailing in the society; (c) the subjects express their support for the system through political participation and symbolic acts (Beetham 1991: 15-20).

For the study of dictatorship, Potz sides with Weber: *"while the ruled certainly take into account the first two criteria, that is, whether the rulers abide by the rules and whether these rules are congruent with a broader axiological/moral/ideological consensus, it is their subjective disposition, not the objective facts, which, in the last analysis, influences their political attitudes and behaviour."* (Potz 2020: 65).

Meanwhile, John Rawls's (1993) normative view, with its emphasis on public reason, justice and fairness as a basis for legitimacy in liberal democracies, raises questions about its applicability to non-democratic settings, where public discourse is often constrained (**censorship**) (Gerschewski 2018; Sadurksi et al. 2019).

Legitimacy is thus seen as a latent property that is difficult to observe directly. It is inferred from observable phenomena such as stability, compliance, and support; however, these indicators can be influenced by factors beyond legitimacy itself. Critics argue that legitimacy becomes readily observable primarily when it is in decline or absent, which poses challenges for measuring it in stable systems, whether democratic or authoritarian. Przeworski (1991) suggests that understanding legitimacy individualistically offers limited explanatory power for macro-phenomena like stability because organized interests rather than isolated individuals drive collective action. This perspective raises questions about the appropriate level of analysis for studying legitimacy (Gerschewski 2018).

The subjectivity and context-dependence of legitimacy further complicate its measurement. Legitimacy relies on the perceptions and beliefs of individuals and groups, which vary significantly across societies and change over time. Contextual factors such as cultural norms, historical experiences, and economic conditions play crucial roles in shaping legitimacy beliefs, making it challenging to develop universal measures applicable across diverse political systems. Weatherford (1992) emphasizes the need for more valid measures of legitimacy orientations for comparative analysis and proposes attributes like accountability, efficiency, procedural fairness, and distributive fairness. However, these criteria can be difficult to operationalize consistently (Weatherford 1992; Gerschewski 2018).

The relationship between *legitimacy* and *legitimation* is crucial for understanding how regimes seek to build and maintain legitimacy. Legitimacy refers to the belief in the right to rule, while legitimation involves the process of justifying that rule. The methodological challenges in defining legitimacy have direct implications for studying legitimation strategies; if measuring legitimacy itself is difficult, assessing the effectiveness of different (self-)legitimation efforts becomes even more challenging. Scholars have employed various methods to study legitimation, including analyzing official discourse, media content, public opinion surveys, and expert assessments. Each method has limitations, necessitating triangulation to gain a comprehensive understanding of legitimation processes (Grauvogel & von Soest 2024).

Applying the concept of legitimacy to authoritarian regimes presents additional challenges due to its strong normative association with democracy. This raises questions about whether dictatorships can be considered legitimate in any meaningful sense. Authoritarian regimes often rely on different sources of legitimacy than democracies (see 'measurement' below), and this requires adapting conceptual frameworks and measurement tools to account for the specificities of non-democratic contexts (see 'classifications' below). The repressive nature of authoritarian regimes complicates gauging public perceptions of legitimacy since citizens may engage in preference falsification by expressing support out of fear of reprisal. This limits the usefulness of surveys and other methods that rely on public expression of opinions, cf. Robinson & Tannenberg 2019.

CLASSIFICATIONS Steffen Kailitz (2013; 2024) revisits the classification of **political regimes** with a focus on legitimacy and durability. He argues that different types of autocracies employ distinct legitimation strategies that contribute to their longevity. Kailitz further explores how regime legitimation influences elite cohesion and strengthens authoritarian regimes. His typology is discussed in the relevant section under **Kailitz**.

Grauvogel & von Soest (2024) provide an excellent overview of several classifications used to distinguish between various *legitimation strategies*. (Note that while these scholars refer to 'legitimation' strategies, they are actually 'self-legitimating' actions as most are initiated and cultivated by the regime itself.) Typologies covered include their own six-fold frame: (i) foundational myth, (ii) ideology, (iii) personalism, (iv) procedures, (v) performance, (vi) international engagement. Further they cover: Omelicheva 2016; Maerz 2020; Tannenberg et al 2021 (see below) and Williamson 2021. There is also the simplified model by Du Boulay & Isaacs (2019), who bundled such categories together back into the three original Weberian types: charismatic, traditional and legal-rational.

MEASUREMENT Marcus Tannenberg et al. developed expert-coded measures of *regime legitimation strategies* (RLS) across 183 countries from 1900 to 2019, based on the dataset by **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem). As sources (following Weber), they distin-



guish between legitimacy from performance, the person of the leader, rational-legal procedures, and ideology; and they measure the legitimation claims by regimes themselves (self-legitimation).

Democracies are performance-based and rely less on ideological claims than closed regimes, but **hybrid regimes** tilt toward the latter. Regarding charisma, Israel pivoted around the authority of dominant prime ministers (e.g., Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu) and South Africa was swept away by the mythic status of Nelson Mandela. Hybrid regimes are interesting in that they combine all four claims in large measure.

Party-based regimes, particularly those with a **single-party**, often rely heavily on ideological claims to legitimacy. This is especially true and logical for regimes with roots in Marxist-Leninist ideologies. These regimes emphasize the party's role in leading societal transformation and maintaining ideological purity as a justification for their authority. They are person-centered during their revolutionary phase.

Military regimes typically justify their rule through performance-based claims, emphasizing their ability to maintain order and security. They often argue that their intervention is necessary to restore stability or protect national interests, thus framing their governance as a temporary necessity rather than a permanent solution.

Monarchic regimes followed by **personalist regimes** most often make person-centered claims and rely much less on performance claims than expected. Personalist rules, of course, dole out **patronage** and use **co-optation** to stay in power.

Populism intersects with these regime types by emphasizing leader-based legitimation claims. Populist leaders often portray themselves as direct representatives of the people's will, bypassing traditional institutions and emphasizing personal connections with the populace. This approach can lead to an increase in personalist legitimacy claims within populist movements (Tannenberg et al. 2021).

NEW FRONTIERS The study of legitimacy and legitimation, particularly in authoritarian regimes, has been evolving rapidly in the last few years. Authoritarian regimes often rely on **propaganda** and **censorship** to shape public discourse and bolster legitimacy. Investigating how these regimes adapt their messaging to different audiences, both domestically and internationally, offers valuable insights. For instance, Boussalis et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of analyzing rulers' speeches and government propaganda to uncover legitimation processes during periods of transition or challenge. Rosenfeld and Wallace (2014) highlight the need to examine the impact of technological advancements on propaganda's future as AI becomes increasingly sophisticated.

A little gem is Martin Sabrow's article *Time and Legitimacy,* which explores the role of time (symbolic periodization) as a cultural and political factor in the legitimacy of the Nazi regime and the German Democratic Republic (DDR). Sabrow (2005) examines how both dictatorships utilized temporal concepts to establish and maintain legitimacy despite lacking democratic mandates. The study conceptually bridges similar self-legitimation strategies undertaken by **dynasties** in pre-modern **monarchies**. Sajó (2021) also presents various comprehensive strategies by hybrid regimes on how to stay in power.

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Box 1.8 Kakistocracy & Ochlocracy: Preludes to Authoritarianism?

The absence of legal hierarchies facilitates the rise of the less scrupulous.
– Nicolás Gómez Dávila (1913-1994)

Linguistically derived from Greek, kakistocracy literally means 'rule by the worst.' The word, which was reportedly first coined in mid-seventeenth-century England, was revived in the wake of the rise of different forms of **populism** and of the poly-crisis that struck Europe and other parts of the world during the last fifteen years. Not surprisingly, and also because a general standard definition is lacking, it is most often used randomly and in a highly judgmental matter. One notion to which kakistocracy is closely connected, however, is that of institutionalized incompetence – a situation in which incompetence is only rampant and, under certain conditions, rewarded.

'Institutionalized incompetence' mostly comes into being in two sets of political-societal circumstances and environments. The first is authoritarian and semi-authoritarian systems with high degrees of cronyism (Box 1.10) and **corruption**. In these, access to positions in government and the various state organs is primarily determined by other factors (personal connections and **patronage**, regional and genealogical ties, sycophancy (Box 6.5), abiding by the correct social codes and jargon, etc.) than by competence, experience and qualifications.

The second soil for some forms of kakistocracy are democratic systems with governance structures and decision-making processes, which, over time, have become so hyper-complex that inertia looms around the corner. Confronted with sacrosanct austerity, huge tangles of rules, regulations and procedures, stifling managerialism and juridification, endless consultations, and pressure to accommodate all sorts of interests and sensitivities, officials and rank-and-file staff – though themselves often competent and qualified – face situations where hands-on work and tangible results become increasingly difficult.

'Ochlocracy,' for its part, is better known as mob rule. Jasmin Hasanović (2015: 60), thereby quoting Esad Zgodić, defines it as *"the direct rule of the mob or mass, or, perhaps, its effective ability to indirectly – but crucially – influence governments. In the absence of democracy and the engagement of its actors, ochlocracy mimics itself in a willingness to appear as a democracy."* Ochlocracies surf on the intimidating effect of large, aggressive crowds yet differ from nihilistic outbreaks of unrest in the sense that the street agitators, demagogues (Box 4.6) and, more recently, online activists and influencers who take the lead in them usually have some, be it often incoherent, political-societal demands.

Historical episodes characterized by frequent ochlocratic mob rule were the long crises of the late Roman Republic (133-44 BCE) and the French Revolution and its aftermath (1789-1795). These two particular examples show that an authoritarian restoration of authority often follows ochlocracies. More recent historical examples include the reckonings with real and alleged collaborators in several European countries during the weeks or months between the departure of the Nazi German occupation forces and the restoration of sovereign state rule (1944-1945). In some areas, intertwined as they were with older local feuds, clannism, personal politics and factionalism among resistance fighters, these sometimes took the form of micro-civil wars.

The civil unrest and anarchy after the financial meltdown in Albania in the spring of 1997 can also qualify as one. Some commentators consider the movement of the *Gilets Jaunes* (Yellow Vests) in France (2018-2020) to be an ochlocracy, but that is highly disputable. Rather, it was a social protest movement that was mobilized outside of the traditional channels of social protest, like trade unions and opposition parties. Mob rule does not exclusively occur in a state of absence of effective state power. As happened during the Jacobin terror in post-revolutionary France (1793-1794), in Russia during the Red Terror (1918-1922) and in China during the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' (1966-1976), for example, regimes and their affiliates instrumentalized or incited mob rule to eliminate political opponents and 'harmful' social classes.

'Flash-in-the-pan politics' driven by the mediatic craze of the day and fear of politicians not to antagonize potential voters, 'trials by social media' and online call-out culture and 'doxing' (the act of publicly revealing someone's private or personally identifiable information without consent) can be considered contemporary forms of ochlocracy. Finally, ochlocratic mob rule can come into being if and where the legitimate state authorities, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary are no longer able or willing – or at least perceived to be unable or unwilling – to fulfill their core task of protecting the population, thus resulting in mob justice, vigilantism and attacks against institution buildings in reaction. So, in that respect, ochlocracy can be an outcome of, or a reaction against, kakistocracy.

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Linkage & Leverage Theory (Levitsky & Way)

Waarabu hujuana kwa vilemba
(Arabs know each other by their turbans)
– Swahili proverb

The theory of 'linkage & leverage' (2006; 2007; 2010), developed by Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, provides a framework for understanding how external influences can affect **democratization** processes in **hybrid regimes**, in particular **competitive authoritarianism** (a narrower subset of A. Schedler's **electoral authoritarianism**). Levitsky & Way's model focuses on two main concepts, linkage and leverage, but has been updated to include 'gatekeeping' (covered separately, see below).

Linkage refers to the density of economic, political, social, and organizational ties between countries. The original theory focused on the links between Western democracies and other non-democracies. These linkages encompass several dimensions, including (i) economic linkage (trade and investment, FDI, foreign aid), (ii) geopolitical linkage (diplomatic ties, membership in international organizations, alliances), (iii) social linkage (migration and tourism, visa regimes, but also elite education abroad), (iv) communication linkage (media penetration, cross-border telecommunications, Internet connections), and (v) transnational civil society linkage (i.e. connections with international NGOs, churches or other transnational networks and international regimes).

High levels of linkage with democratic countries increase the costs of authoritarian behavior for regimes because they heighten international attention to abuses and raise the likelihood of external intervention or sanctions (Levitsky & Way 2010).

Leverage, on the other hand, is defined as the degree to which governments are vulnerable to external pressure for democratization. This vulnerability is influenced by factors such as the state's economic size and strength, the presence of competing foreign policy issues that might distract external actors, and the availability of alternative regional powers that can provide support to the regime. High leverage allows external actors to exert significant influence over domestic political developments by threatening or applying sanctions or by offering incentives for democratic reforms (Tolstrup 2010).

Jakob Tolstrup (2013; 2014) later expanded on Levitsky and Way's model by addressing its limitations. He argued that while Levitsky & Way primarily focused on Western influences and democracy promotion, these linkages are essentially neutral and can also be used to exert negative influences that counter democratization processes (cf. **black knights**). Tolstrup also criticized the original model for overlooking the agency of political elites in target countries, suggesting that these elites can actively shape the impact of external influences through their own strategic actions (Tolstrup 2010) – that addition is detailed in the entry **gatekeeping**.

Van den Bosch (2018; 2021) argued that while leverage was traditionally understood in terms of hard

power – such as military and economic strength – it lacked an ideological dimension. He proposed that **soft power,** defined by Joseph Nye (2011: 20-21) as *"the ability to affect others through co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction to achieve preferred outcomes,"* is an indispensable element of leverage.

By incorporating soft power into the model, Van den Bosch emphasized that states could use ideational and cultural tools to connect through transnational ideological networks and influence both foreign and domestic behavior without relying solely on coercive capabilities: Either by mobilizing the population (even at regional level) to support the regime's foreign policy goals – like the recent wave of anti-French protests in West Africa rallied with anti-neocolonial sentiments to push out French diplomatic and military presence from the region (Châtelot & Bensimon 2023), or by mustering an international coalition and diplomatic pressure.

The combination of high linkage and high leverage tends to promote **democratization** because it increases both the incentives for authoritarian rulers to liberalize and the capacity of domestic opposition movements to challenge incumbents. Conversely, in regions with low linkage and leverage, authoritarian regimes are more likely to persist due to weaker external pressures for reform.

Levitsky & Way's framework has been influential in explaining why some competitive authoritarian regimes transition toward democracy while others remain stable or become more authoritarian. The additions by other authors have primed the model to study **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning**. The dimension 'transnational civil society linkage' (v) is also a great match for Owen IV (2010) his framework of **regime promotion** and his concept of *transnational ideological networks* (TINs) that promote specific political ideologies across borders. This model thus highlights the significant role that international factors can play in shaping domestic political outcomes, particularly in a globalized world where cross-border interactions are increasingly common.

This framework has been widely applied in other regions, although the coding criteria to operationalize **competitive authoritarianism** and separate it from hegemonic authoritarian regimes have been problematic (Guliyev 2012), as shown in the overview of their regime classification (**Levitksy & Way**) in the subsection on **trichotomous categories**.

For applications to other world regions, consult: Hartmann 2016 (Africa). For the West, see Freyburg et al. 2015 (on the EU as a democracy promoter); Weyland 2018 (on the US); and for Eurasia: van der Zwan 2023 (on China's *One Belt One Road*). Additional interesting case studies are Beyer & Wolff 2016 (Transnistria), Hughes & Sasse 2016 (Chechnia and Crimea), Broers 2016 (Nagorny Karabakh), and Gratius 2022 (Venezuela).

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Military Regimes

Se dice que de cuando en cuando la democracia debe bañarse sangre para que pueda seguir siendo una democracia
(It is said that from time-to-time democracy must bathe in blood so that it can remain a democracy)
– Augusto Pinochet, Dictator of Chile

Military regimes are basically defined as systems of "managing government by the military" (Perlmutter 1980: 96). They are a relatively new phenomenon that started only after the modernization and professionalization of armed forces, a process that began in Europe in the seventeenth century, first with the rise of 'standing armies' (instead of feudal armies and **mercenaries**) and took off after Napoleon's (organizational, tactical and ideological) reforms in the nineteenth century. For more on this evolution, consult, for instance, Mears (1969; 1988); and specifically on the professionalization of armed forces in Latin America, see J. Gandhi (2008). Note that standing armies were a long-established tradition in India and China, and Spartans, Romans and Ottoman Janissaries were front-runners in Europe, while the Songhai (West Africa) and Majahapit (Java, Indonesia) empires were noteworthy outliers.

DEFINITION Although military regimes are most often established through violence or coups, this is not what distinguishes them from other forms of nondemocratic rule, but rather the fact that armed forces are the sole ruling institution (Gandhi 2008: 25). Yet military coups may give rise to a form of government in which *"military officers are major or predominant political actors by virtue of their actual or threatened use of force"* (Nordlinger 1977: 2). Here, the military have a monopoly on the use of force and may exercise political power either directly, or indirectly by controlling civilians; parties may be allowed, and elections may be carried out (multi-party, no-party, one-party), or not at all, but regimes, where persons of military background are chosen in open elections, are not to be considered as military (Hadenius & Teorell 2006: 6-8; Kailitz 2013: 47-48).

The degree of authoritarianism varies across different military regimes, as they may also include civilian bureaucrats and politicians and combine their military nature with **technocracy**, **corporatism** and **bureaucratic authoritarianism** in a 'military-civilian regime' (Perlmutter 1980). The military generally retains (full) control over policy and security forces, and leadership comes from a current or former military officer or a group of them – a **junta** (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 166).

SEE ALSO Military regimes (often called **juntas**) are one of several **political regime** archetypes and a key component of civil-military relations and their corresponding literature. Their distinct military organizational nexus (**armed forces**) translates into their distinct behavior, resilience and modes of **transition**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Military regimes are one of the main regime types. As pointed out by Barbara Geddes et al. (2014a: 149), military regimes constitute a distinct subset of authoritarian rule because the military officers leading them display a significantly different behavior than non-military authoritarian leaders. Accordingly, military rule's general features and governing ways include a cohesive and disciplined internal organization and respect for a clearly defined military hierarchy; the concentration of power over the security apparatus by a centralized command structure; the use and threat of force; maintaining order, obedience, coercion; deterring opposition and shared socialization among regime members via **indoctrination** during training (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 171; Geddes et al. 2014a: 148; Remmer 1989).

As explained by S. Kailitz (2013: 44-48), military regimes possess an exceptional character in that the military is not supposed to rule the country in 'normal times;' they thus tend to find justification for a more permanent rule with an internal or external threat to the country. This is oftentimes sustained by the argument that only the military is able to save the nation from social conflict or civil war in times of crisis, including the argument for the protection of the civilian government from threats such as communism, Islamism, terrorism, separatism, and even acting in situations politicians fail to manage such as human-caused and natural disasters (Kailitz 2013; Farooq 2012) – see also **bureaucratic authoritarianism**.

ORIGIN Military regimes are a modern phenomenon; their study began in the 1960s at a time when newly independent governments following decolonization fell to military intervention (Geddes et al. 2014: 149). They are thus generally restricted to developing countries but are not limited to any region of the world. In fact, in the 1970s and 1980s, military regimes were the most common type of authoritarian rule, along with one-party states. Since the early 1990s, however, regimes of this type have receded sharply (Hadenius & Teorell 2006: 9).

LITERATURE Early studies in the 1960s and 1970s primarily focused on the causes of military intervention, the factors influencing the occurrence of military **coups**, the military's governance features, and the effects of military rule in economic development, giving rise to models of interpretation drawing on **bureaucratic authoritarianism**, neo-conservatism, or anti-Keynesianism, for example (Fossum 1967; Geddes et al. 2014a: 149; O'Donnell 1973; Schamis 1991). Both initially and subsequently, empirical case studies, especially from Latin America and Africa, were the major drive of this literature's advancements. The most prominent aspects found in the literature concerning military regimes, in general, have otherwise been related to their internal organization

and stability, durability, correlation with violence and repression, conflict propensity, and their very ending.

Internal organization In spite of their key attributes of internal hierarchy, discipline, muscled leadership and fairly casual use of force, military regimes appear to lack the needed stability to maintain power long. Leadership, for instance, may change frequently in this type of regime, which reflects the internal tensions occurring in military ranks, either between different branches, different command levels, or different generations (Hadenius & Teorell 2006: 15). As a consequence, leader overthrow, and disobedience are frequent, and officers often rebel and may resort to mutiny (Frantz & Ezrow 2011), see also **protests & uprisings**. Other reasons for military rule's vulnerability include poor economic governance and unsatisfactory performance in terms of internal and external security (Fossum 1967; Kailitz 2013: 44).

Durability There is a consensus that military regimes are the most short-lived of autocratic regimes (Geddes 1999; Hadenius & Teorell 2007; Kailitz 2013). Their lesser durability and proneness to breakdowns are due to several reasons, such as the preferences of military elites toward their own unity and survival over permanence in political power, the destabilizing effects of factionalism resulting from exposure to politicization, commitment to temporary rule defined by specific objectives, and sensitivity to pressure for democratization (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 171-174). Accordingly, when threats to the military institution arise, the military may take drastic measures, ranging from staging a coup and ousting a civilian government to voluntary withdrawal from power (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 186).

Furthermore, what may be determinant for the regime's longevity are its relationships and political alliances with civilians under some degree of power-sharing (Clapham & Philip 1985). In cases like Congo, though, K. Emizet (2000) connects the fall of General Mobutu Sese Seko's regime to his efforts to legitimize his rule by 'civilianizing' the system, while the military was becoming more professionalized and more politicized, which ultimately created internal contradictions and military inefficiencies.

Repression The correlation between military rule and violent **repression** is not linear, despite the widespread perception that the use of force is rather easily banalized in military regimes. During the initial phase after the seizure of power, in which domestic resistance may occur, higher rates of civilian killings may be registered, although a more humane treatment of prisoners and reluctance to carry out domestic repression may also transpire in cases where commanding officers intend to enforce preexisting democratic legal norms (Geddes et al. 2014a: 155-156).

Poe et al. (1999) find military-led autocracies to generally display a higher rate of **human rights** violations when compared to civilian governments, though regular officers and soldiers do not necessarily carry these out, but internal security officers and national police. Now, when comparing dominant party regimes and military regimes to **personalist rule**, the former are found to be less likely to repress civil liberties and violate personal integrity (Davenport 2007). In this context, it is interesting to note that in some cases, the correlation may be reversed or ambivalent, for military officers have overthrown civilian dictators after being ordered to repress opposition demonstrations with violent means. Some examples are the first military interventions in some African countries after decolonization (Decalo 1976; Englebert 1998).

Conflict propensity Military dictatorships are found to be more likely than civilian autocracies to resort to military force and initiate war, especially those governed by military strongmen in comparison to those led by a military institution (Debs & Goemans 2010; Lai & Slater 2006; Weeks 2012). For instance, Honig and Reichard (2015) model why some dictators go to war again right after a military defeat (to offset the costs of a post-defeat legitimacy crisis). However, Nam Kyu Kim (2018) deconstructs the idea that military regimes initiate conflicts because of an inherently aggressive nature. The main driver of increased conflict propensity, the author finds, is the presence of territorial threats from neighboring countries that make their security environment more hostile and generate militaristic behavior.

N.K. Kim (2019) actually delves more deeply into this matter to develop a reverse causality argument; it is the persisting presence of threats to homeland territory that create the conditions for the rise of military regimes, in particular juntas, that is, a country is more likely to experience collegial military rule when it engages in territorial disputes. Siverson & Johnson (2018) find that military regimes need less time to decide if and when to go to war than their non-military counterparts.

Transition According to Geddes et al. (2014a: 158), between 1946 and 2010, only 43 percent of military regimes fell to insurgency, popular uprising, or invasion. The outcome of nonviolent breakdowns has been democratization in the majority of cases, especially that of military regimes (62 percent), but less in the case of dominant party regimes (45 percent) and personalist dictatorships (36 percent). The conditions and consequences of military regimes ending can be manifold. There are thus varying degrees of problems, obstacles and challenges posed by the demise of military rule, which have been assessed on an empirical basis. C. Danopoulos (1988) compiles a large set of case studies including Argentina, Benin, Brazil, South Korea, Poland, Panama, and Turkey, among others, to reflect on those issues in the light of factors such as democratization, disengagement, new political parties, and changing civil-military relations.

Moreover, the impact of an outgoing authoritarian regime on a new democracy is held as fairly important. T. Demirel (2005) namely looks into how the perception of military rule as success or failure may impact the stability of a later democratic regime



and shows that because the three military interventions in Turkey (1960, 1971, 1980) were not perceived as overly repressive by political actors, nor as total failures in economic, political and military terms, the indispensability of a democratic regime has been demeaned. This lack of negative evaluation of military rule has led civilians and soldiers to consider a military coup as good a viable option as any other (Demirel 2005: 264). Of course, the possibility that those perceptions are carefully constructed is to be taken into consideration.

CLASSIFICATIONS Typologies of military regimes abound and vary significantly depending on the author's methodological approach. The most widespread and cited classification is Barbara Geddes' (1999; 2003) differentiation between party-based regimes (**single-party regimes**), military regimes, one-man rule – which she labels '**personalist rule**' – and mixed authoritarian regimes – see also: **Geddes, Wright & Frantz**. In fact, she does not endorse military-led personalist regimes as conceptually distinct; to her, these are just personalist, either from a military officer's standpoint or a civilian's. That is why the term 'military-led autocracy' is preferred by Geddes et al. (2014b) to cover both forms of rule, that is, both the prevailing decision-making by a group of officers representing the military institution – which the authors label 'military regime' – and the military strongman rule. However, this classification is not that straightforward and has encountered a few refining categorizations and nuancing (Cheibub et al. 2013; Hadenius & Teorell 2007; Kailitz 2013), especially because some regimes combine two or more of these classifications and because the distribution of power, type of leadership and influence on policy are not always clearly separated (Lidén 2014: 54).

Among the subtypes of military regimes, the five listed below are most common in the literature, but older classifications exist, dating from times when electoral autocracy was still rare.

Pure military regime A military dictatorship defined by military, executive power and a nonexistent or ineffective legislature (Hadenius & Teorell 2007). Such regimes rule overtly and directly without civilian partners and do not hide in the shadows. This subset has the largest number of cases; for a thorough listing of examples, see Hadenius & Teorell (2006).

Junta This label, most commonly used synonymously for military rule (Geddes et al. 2014a: 152), is, in fact, an authoritarian military subtype with elite-constrained leaders, making decisions and exercising power in a collegial manner (O'Donnell 1973; Remmer 1989; Weeks 2012). '**Junta**' is a Spanish word for 'meeting,' used to describe a reunion of people belonging to an institution, collective, or community in order to deal with matters directly affecting them as members of that group (Real Academia Española). The application of this idiomatic stance to this type of regime comes from a substantial representation of empirical cases located in Latin America. Accordingly, a junta refers to a group of high-ranking military officers exercising military rule in which decision-making power is concentrated, and civilian bureaucrats may have a secondary role or not (Gandhi 2008: 26; Kailitz 2013; Weeks 2012). Additionally, a junta can be a transitional form of military rule that precedes the establishment of a strongman rule (Geddes et al. 2014a: 153). Here, security forces follow a regular military chain of command, and the leading highest-rank military officer ruling the regime is expected to retire from power and make place for another, as observed by K. Remmer (1989) regarding military regimes in Latin America.

Strongman rule This designates a military regime with a personalist leader, that is, a one-man rule by an officer. One key feature is the concentration of power defined by the **personalist rule** of the security forces (Remmer 1989). Another specificity of military strongmen includes, for instance, a higher likeliness to belligerence and citizen abuse than juntas or civilian personalist rulers (Geddes et al. 2014: 149). Examples include Chile under Pinochet, Egypt under Nasser, Indonesia under Suharto, Spain under Franco, and Uganda under Idi Amin (Weeks 2012).

Hybrid military regimes This amalgam combines military rule with other forms of government such as a **single-party** (e.g., Algeria 1977-1991; Iraq 1980-2002; Mali 1982-1990) or multi-party regimes (e.g., Algeria 1997-2003; Brazil 1974-1984; Indonesia 1971-1996). These hybrids remain understudied.

Rebel regimes These come to power as a result of insurgency; in this case, a rebel movement distinct from the regular armed forces takes over power by military means and remains unsubstituted by another regime; **rebel regimes** are usually very short-lived, possibly due to their excessive turbulence and unruliness (Hadenius & Teorell 2006: 6, 16). Examples include Angola 1975-1979; Cambodia 1975; Mozambique 1975-1976; Uganda 1986-1988.

Some well-known, older typologies, for instance, were proposed by E. Nordlinger (1977) based on the military's goals: (a) *praetorian moderators*, making a 'displacement coup' to replace one civilian regime to install another; (b) *praetorian guardians*, that are more willing to take over government for several years, and (c) *praetorian rulers*, which are unwilling to relent power, are more repressive and institutionalize – see also **presidential guards & praetorians**.

A. Perlmutter (1980) focuses on the composition and types of elites involved: *corporative, market-bureaucratic, socialist-oligarchic, army-party, and tyrannical* military regimes. Clapham & Philip (1985) enhance the degree of repression, role and goals of the military: *veto regimes, breakthrough regimes, moderator regimes, and factional regimes*.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As argued above under 'classifications,' measurement is made fairly difficult by the existing diversity and sometimes overlapping typologies. Interestingly, to cite G. Lidén (2014: 50), *"scrutinising the typologies of dictatorships and their variants provided by previous research reveals some loosely connected or almost arbitrary alternatives."* Each

depends, in fact, on different *foci* when measuring indicators such as the composition, role and goals of the military; the degree of professionalization of the military; the degree of civilian involvement in the regime; the level of repression exercised; the architecture of governing power; among others.

Military rule has been defined in several different ways by different scholars, which makes it more difficult to apply evenly to empirical case studies and draw stable conclusions (Geddes et al. 2014: 149). Generalizable conceptualizations are difficult to establish since there is a cross-variability of many key factors and qualitative differences across regime subtypes and empirical cases.

MEASUREMENT Many datasets include military rule, but their coding criteria differ. For instance, **Geddes, Wright & Franz** have coding criteria that look at the military background of the incumbent, the inner circle and (denoted) successors, if the military hierarchy is still intactand if the powerholders are actually restrained by the rules and norms of the military apparatus through which they wield power. (Geddes 2003: 226) For **Hadenius & Teorell** (2007: 146), military regimes are defined more simply as states in which military officers are major or predominant political actors by virtue of their actual or threatened use of force.

There is also a growing disparity between the quantitative and qualitative findings: while coups and the number of military regimes have been on the decline, this does not mean that military influence on politics has diminished over time. Coup databases (cf. 'measurement' under the entry **coup**) are unable to account for this important nuance, and therefore, Croissant et al. (2007) created the *Political Roles of the Military* (PRM) dataset with information on 120 democratic and autocratic regimes and a total of 138 regime spells for the period 1999-2012.

NEW FRONTIERS More recent literature has attempted to both deepen and specify the understanding of military regimes by researching little explored subjects in specific case studies and time frames.

Reny (2022) proposes a typology of military regimes that sheds light on variation in military control in executive, legislative and bureaucratic powers, distinguishing between the level of military control (high, middle, low) with the aim to track their trajectories over time.

A few examples are the study of spatial regional correlation and diffusion of military regimes in Sub Saharan Africa between 1978 and 2014 (Caruso et al. 2019); the focus on the agenda dynamics and policy processes in the military regime of Kenan Evren in Turkey between 1980 and 1983 (Yldirim et al. 2020); the analysis of the liberalization process in Myanmar since 2008 as a survival strategy by the Burmese military to persist in their long-term military rule (Croissant & Kamerling 2013).

How to cite:

Da Mota, Sarah, 2025. Military Regimes. *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism*, Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

REGIONAL VARIATION (by Jeroen J.J. Van den Bosch) – Below are listed some (once) known comparative works for different world regions. Only Eurasia has received very few regional analyses since the collapse of the USSR (mostly because party rule dominated this region).

Latin America Studies of military regimes in Latin America examine their political, economic, and social dimensions. Biglaiser (2020) discusses the role of economists and generals in economic reforms under military rule, highlighting technocracy's intersection with authoritarianism. Dix (1994) analyzes military coups and governance during the Cold War. Klein & Luna (2017) focus on Brazil's military regime, while Loveman (1994) examines 'protected democracies' and transitions to civilian rule. Pérez-Liñán & Polga-Hecimovich (2018) explore coups as mechanisms of regime change. Richards (1986) links economic crises to the breakdown of military authoritarianism.

Sub Saharan Africa The study of military regimes in Africa reflects the continent's complex political history. Gutteridge ([1975] 2023) examined African military regimes' achievements and challenges, while Howe (2001) explored militaries' roles in security and governance. Luckham (1994) highlighted the interplay between militarization and democratization. Markakis & Waller (2013) analyzed Marxist military regimes, while McGowan (2003) provided data on African coups from 1956 to 2001.

MENA Studies of military regimes in the MENA region highlight diverse dynamics shaping military roles. Droz-Vincent (2011) examines Arab armies during the 2011 uprisings, Pollack (2019) analyzes Arab military ineffectiveness, Cronin (2013) focuses on Saudi Arabia's military, and Barany (2021) discusses Gulf militaries' roles in regime protection – on this topic, see also **monarchies in the Arab world**.

Indo-Pacific Studies of military regimes in the Indo-Pacific highlight diverse responses to political structures. Lee (2015) examines military responses to protests in authoritarian Asia, McCarthy (2015) explores civil society limitations under militarized regimes, and Slater (2020) investigates rebellions' influence on authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia.

Eurasia Consult Reese (2002) for an overview of the Soviet army and Lehrke (2013) and Marat (2009) for the post-independence transitions.

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Monarchy

Immediately from God derives the office of His ecclesiastical Vicar
– Otto Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Ages*, 1900

Man will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest
– Attributed to Denis Diderot (1713-1784)

Currently, hereditary rulers constitute 22 percent of the world's heads of state. However, the majority of these monarchs serve in ceremonial roles within democratic systems. The historical trajectory of such monarchies often involves transitions from absolutist rule to constitutional arrangements. For instance, the English monarchy provided a model for democratization over centuries, beginning with the *Magna Carta* in 1215 and culminating in the *Glorious Revolution* of 1688, which limited monarchical power and established parliamentary authority. (Lawrence 2023). This pathway has been emulated by states such as Sweden (1809-1974), Japan (1889-1947) or Bhutan (in 2008), although under (at times radically) different circumstances, including foreign pressure.

ORIGIN The word 'monarchy' came from Latin *monarchia* and originated from the ancient Greek term μονάρχης – *monárkhēs*, and suggests *mónos* (alone) as the single ruler or leader *(árkhēs)*, denoting a ruler with supreme power over their territory. This entry distinguishes monarchies as dynastic institutions and as political regimes.

DEFINITION This entry harbors neutral conceptualizations of monarchies, building on the comparative understanding of their common elements like dynasties, their households, courts and armies, as well as their usual features (ritual and display). Nonetheless, defining a monarchy is a complex task that requires moving beyond simplistic notions of a single ruler holding power for life. Any comprehensive definition must consider cultural and historical contexts, as well as the diverse forms and functions monarchies have assumed over time.

A central feature of monarchies today is hereditary rule, which distinguishes them from other forms of governance. Succession in monarchies is and has often been based on hereditary principles, where power is passed down within a family lineage. This characteristic is absolutely fundamental to modern monarchies (Anderson 1991; Lawrence 2023) and sets them apart from earlier (more varied) systems where succession might have been determined through election, conquest, or other means.

Whether the ruler is a basileus/basilissa, caliph, chieftain, despotes/despotissa, emir, emperor/empress, inca (coya), kaiser/kaiserin, khan/khatun, king/queen, malik/malika, maharaja/maharani, negus (and negusa nagast – 'king of kings'), oba, pharaoh, prince/princess, raj/rani, shah/shahbanu, sultan/sultana, tlatoani/cihuacoatl, tsar/tsarina, tennō/kōgō, wáng/wángfēi – the hereditary principle remains a dominant element in almost all monarchies. However, one should not consider this form of **succession** as its core defining feature. Whatever succession 'rules' there were, they were always bent to accommodate context or interests, and therefore their shared feature of 'dynasticism' is a better match (cf. **dynasties**).

The relationship between the monarch and the state is another critical aspect of defining monarchy. Monarchs are frequently seen as embodying the state itself, representing its will and personality. In constitutional systems like Westminster-style democracies, monarchs often serve as 'parliamentary heads of state,' where their role in governance is symbolic but integrated into the legislative process. Laws are enacted when both parliamentary houses and the head of state agree, demonstrating the monarch's ceremonial yet significant role within the state apparatus (Monod 1999; Kumarasingham 2020).

Religious and symbolic dimensions further complicate the definition of monarchy. Many monarchies have historically been associated with 'sacred kingship,' where rulers are perceived as divinely appointed or having a mystical connection to higher powers (cf. **religions**). The intensity of their sacral characters ranged from a living deity, demigod, divine representative on Earth, protector of the Faith, to 'mere' sovereign of an earthly realm. Even in modern constitutional monarchies, remnants of this sacral authority persist as they may occupy a special position in church hierarchies.

Monarchies are not static entities; they have evolved in line with their polities and adapted to changing political and social conditions for millennia. The transition from ruling monarchies to 'parliamentary monarchies' is only one (small) part of this evolution, marked by challenges, failures, and pragmatic adjustments. While monarchy might appear anachronistic in contemporary democracies, it has persisted by adapting its role within modern political systems. However, many had to give up sovereign power to survive under colonialism, imperialism or the shocks from global conflicts like WWI.

Monarchy is a belief system curated and cultivated by dynasties. Dynastic successions have served as a fundamental way of retroactively structuring historical narratives and time (linear, cyclical or circular). Monarchies are a story of continuity: An individual monarch's reign may be seen as part of a larger historical timeline, stretching across centuries, creating a narrative of permanence. Monarchs pass down artifacts, documents, or traditions, solidifying the passage of time through family legacies. Symbols like regalia (crowns, thrones), royal titles, and coats of arms are ways to mark time. These symbols represent the eternal and unchanging nature of royal authority, with time becoming synonymous with the stability the monarchy provides.

This resonates with human beings and their deep need for stability. The presence of monarchy as a



continuous institution offers a psychological anchor in the face of existential anxieties about change and mortality. Their entwinements with religion, sacred ritual and notions of 'just rule' are no coincidence but meant to solidify their images. Monarchies structure national and communal time through ceremonial practices that create collective memory. Dynasties were not afraid to switch **religions** (competing branches) or even extend patronage to additional belief systems if this allowed them to modernize a stale narrative. (Mistakes were made, often with detrimental consequences.) By witnessing or participating in royal events (like national holidays, cyclical rituals or commemoration of royal anniversaries), people align themselves with larger historical narratives, reinforcing their identity as part of a nation or cultural heritage.

Such views are partly embedded in Weber's routinization of **charismatic rule** and **traditional rule** as a belief system, and this is indeed where contemporary monarchies are running out of steam. While highly adaptable, once the spell is broken, a monarchy cannot be 'created' from scratch in the current political setting. So, without the continuity, they cannot draw **legitimacy** from it. In this regard, international law and the nation-state model (with fixed borders) have made it almost impossible for monarchies to replicate as a regime type. Before, new dynasties split off from former imperial nexuses once they had cut off the control of a weakened center and acquired sovereignty. Contemporary monarchies seem very unlikely to multiply their current numbers through conquest.

Lawrence (2023) takes the position that monarchies are distinct from regime types, as they can exist within autocratic, democratic, or hybrid systems. Unlike single-party regimes, military dictatorships, or personalist autocracies, which are inherently undemocratic, monarchies possess a unique compatibility with both autocracy and democracy. For example, Saudi Arabia operates as an authoritarian monarchy under the al-Saud family, while Denmark functions as a parliamentary democracy led by Queen Margrethe II. This adaptability highlights that monarchy itself is not a regime type but rather a form of governance that can coexist with varying political systems (Lawrence 2023).

When confronted with a standard definition of **political regimes,** however, such an approach is brought to a screeching halt. Monarchy as a political institution or as a political regime is not the same. As a tutelary body with merely symbolic power, a constitutional monarchy is just a democracy if it meets all requirements for the latter regime type. Not every state with a military is automatically equated with a military regime if the armed forces are not the powerholders.

In monarchies (as a regime type), a 'royal' tutelary body run by a dynastic network must hold supreme power (cf. absolute monarchy) or share power (either with a military institution or civilian party) to be considered a political regime. Once the institution gives up power, the other defining characteristics of the political system and the **ruling coalition** determine the nature of the political regime.

So, monarchies (as institutions) are dynastic political networks, often characterized by hereditary succession, self-legitimizing their rule on an image of continuity and governing line with established custom and tradition, often religious. The ruling network is a dynasty that constantly reinvents and cultivates its image and continuously renegotiates its position as *primus inter pares* by curating the ruling coalition.

For survival as an institution, they sometimes hand over supreme power like today's constitutional monarchies in democracies (e.g., Western European examples) or accept subnational autonomy in federative systems (e.g., Malaysia, India, Indonesia), or they shield military powerholders who play first violin in military-monarchic hybrids and co-opt their legitimacy to facilitate *de facto* military rule (e.g., Thailand). In these cases, they cease to be regimes. Depending on the resulting nature of their regime constellation, dynasties have specific **exit options & leader fates**.

SEE ALSO This entry is thus very closely entwined with **dynasties** and monarchic **legitimacy**, often prescribed by **religions**. Most have procedural forms of **succession** and hence are noted for their **longevity, stability & resilience**. Related concepts of feudalism (Box 1.14) and **absolutism** have been questioned and nuanced. In the last two decades, building on solid quantitative data, monarchies have been studied through the lens of **assassinations**, even **purges**. The position of women in such regimes (**female rulers**) has become a central feature in the last two decades, beyond the study of harems (Box 5.11). Still, the study of monarchies has historically been shaped by various biases, which can still distort our understanding of these political systems today.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES For too long, oriental, gender, absolutist and imperialist biases – both in primary sources and scholarly treatises – have stubbornly impeded (more) objective and holistic studies of monarchy. Furthermore, while these and other misconceptions persist, recent works have made enormous strides forward to address them.

Orientalist bias Notably is the bias between the 'East' and 'West' that is also latent in concepts like **despotism**, **tyranny** and **sultanism**. In the words of Jeroen Duindam:

"States in early modern Europe have traditionally been understood by historians as bureaucracies and representative bodies gradually acquiring autonomous status and finally emancipating themselves from dynastic leadership. In the same tradition, Asian empires have been seen as 'palace polities' governed by the quirks of individual despots and liable to abrupt regime change, yet without the capability to generate profound and lasting reform." (van Berkel & Duindam 2018: 3).

The orientalist bias reflects the tendency to view Eastern societies and cultures through a Western lens, often leading to distorted and prejudiced interpretations. This bias has historically framed Asian rulers as despotic figures who lacked concern for

their subjects' welfare, treated as mere enslaved people, unlike European subjects, perpetuating the notion of 'oriental despotism' up until **Montesquieu** (cf. **despotism**) and later **Weber** labeling the Ottoman Empire as **sultanism** (cf. Box 1.13 on *Kadi* justice). Such perspectives fail to account for the complexities and nuances of monarchies of the Indo-Pacific, imposing age-old Western frameworks and assumptions that obscure the realities of governance in these regions (Said 1978). By reducing Asian (especially Ottoman, Indian and Chinese) monarchies to simplistic stereotypes, orientalist bias reinforces a dichotomy between 'civilized' Western governance and 'backward' Eastern rule (Flüchter & Richter 2012: 113-115).

Besides stereotypes, Eurocentric perspectives also prioritized European frames and interpretations of monarchy while marginalizing non-European systems. Throughout time, Western scholars have often sought to understand non-European monarchies through European analogies, such as applying 'housefather literature' to interpret rulership in China or Mughal India. A good example is Max **Weber's** labeling of such regimes as modern forms of **patrimonialism**. This approach imposes European cultural frameworks on distinct contexts, resulting in misinterpretations and generalizations that fail to recognize the unique characteristics and developments of non-European monarchies (cf. **religions**). A more balanced approach would involve examining knowledge transfers both within Asia and Europe and between these regions to avoid privileging European perspectives (Subrahmanyam 1997).

Gender bias Gender bias in the study of monarchies manifests in the marginalization or misrepresentation of women's roles and influence. Historically, scholarship has focused predominantly on male rulers, associating leadership with masculine qualities while neglecting the significant contributions of women as queen mothers, regents, or queens-regnant, as shown in the entry on **female rulers**. Female power has often been portrayed as illegitimate or degenerative, linked to meddling and conspiracy rather than strategic political acumen. Box 5.11 on harems also illustrates the important position of women in **succession** and securing **dynasties**. This perspective ignores the substantial influence women wielded within monarchical structures, thereby perpetuating a narrow and androcentric view of monarchy (Sharpe 1991).

Absolutist bias Rulers were once attributed with absolute power by their historiographers. The bad or good rule thus coincided with weak or strong rulers, thus assuming that rulers should – and could – attain complete central authority over their followers, preferably in a harmonious fashion. Absolutist bias assumes that monarchs wielded absolute power, overlooking the constraints they faced from advisers, councils, and other institutional structures. It is true that even in constitutionally 'symbolic' monarchies, some sovereigns retained or regained a powerful presence due to experience and networking (with some similarities to incumbency advantage – Box 8.2). Still, even under **absolutism**, their power was often limited by checks and balances imposed by local elites or institutional frameworks. Historical representations of royal grandeur frequently obscure these limitations, creating an exaggerated image of monarchical authority that fails to reflect the realities of governance (Henshall 1992). This bias simplifies complex power dynamics and neglects the collaborative or contested nature of rule within many monarchies. Since the 1970s, more attention has been given to the role of local levels and middlemen in the study of monarchy (van Berkel & Duindam 2018: 4; Aldrich & McCreery 2016).

Imperialist bias Imperialist bias reflects the disproportionate amount of scholarship on empires, cold-shouldering the intricate insights from small polities, much more varied in form with their tailor-made solutions to local contexts in the absence of powerful bureaucracies. This is, of course, quite normal; empires arguably left more important, durable legacies (cf. **imperial legacies** and **colonial legacies**), transferred more practices and served as models for one another. This bias does not only affect monarchies; comparative authoritarianism is also biased to such 'authoritarian gravity centers' (Box 6.2). It is the combination of available primary sources, relevance and imperial fascination that have skewed scholarship in this regard. Overall, contemporary scholars are aware of this and make efforts to balance the comparative scales.

LITERATURE Up until fairly recent times, the study of monarchy was equated with the study of recorded human history (which in itself is also a bias, of course), but for its treatise in comparative authoritarianism, one can find monarchies quite neglected up until recently. Here, one may point the finger at the decision of **Linz & Stepan** (following Weber's theory of **rulership**) who placed monarchies outside the universe of authoritarian regimes (under traditional rule, cf. Huntington 1966). Due to their influence in framing classifications, dictatorships were thus routinely delineated as those non-democratic, non-monarchic types. Even the game-changing typology of **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** (1999) initially did not cover monarchies, even if B. Geddes had abandoned the Linzean categorical segregation and welcomed totalitarian regimes back under the label of authoritarianism (as single-party regimes).

To my knowledge, it is (in part) the study of **personalist rule** (and their tendency for hereditary succession, cf. Brownlee 2007) that initiated more comparisons with monarchies in comparative politics, while their resilience in the Middle East and Northern Africa (cf. Arab exceptionalism – Box 6.1) led to a reappraisal of monarchy as a (surprisingly) stable regime. The **Arab Spring** also brought to attention their patterns of **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning**.

Still, contemporary monarchies are mostly covered in (splendid) individual case studies, with few comparative works bridging world regions. Larger comparisons are usually descriptive and do not apply theories of comparative authoritarianism or



are focused on monarchic institutions in democracies, e.g., Anckar 2021.

In any case, an overview of the main works on pre-modern monarchies is beyond the scope of this entry (the bibliography below is not a bad starting point), but for dictatorship studies, the next three entries cover the Arab world, the Indo-Pacific and Sub Saharan Africa and present some specific features of these monarchies, the regional context of their emergence and decline, and some modest case studies as examples.

NEW FRONTIERS There is an uptick in scholarly interest with many works mixing Large-N data with case studies to gain new insights: Gerring et al. 2021 (on the rise of mass communication and monarchic decline); Guillén 2018 (on their ability to protect property rights); Jugl 2020 (on the influence of their country size); Ottinger & Voigtländer 2021 (on the political impact of individual monarchs). Deserving attention are also those studies tracing the authoritarian origins of Western democratic systems and the role of monarchies in that long process of democratization: Ginsburg 2020; Hazell & Morris 2020.

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Monarchies in the Arab World

A crown, a throne could not be based on the not too very solid foundation of blood.
– Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Shah of Iran (1941-1979)

The emergence and persistence of Arab monarchies reflect a complex interplay of historical accidents, deliberate policy choices, economic resources, and international support. These regimes were not merely products of cultural traditions but were shaped by broader political, economic, and geopolitical forces that defined their trajectories throughout the twentieth century.

Today, MENA is home to the largest remaining cluster of monarchies in the world, with four absolute monarchies and four formally constitutional monarchies where monarchs are somewhat restrained but still hold supreme power. Usually, observers distinguish between the six Gulf monarchies and only add Morocco and Jordan when they widen their scope. (From 1979 onwards when the Pahlavi dynasty fell to the theocratic regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, all monarchies in MENA have been exclusively Arabic).

Arab monarchies have varied titles. For example, four Arab monarchies are considered kingdoms. These are the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Kingdom of Morocco. Three Arab monarchies are considered emirates: The Emirate of Kuwait, the Emirate of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Interestingly, the title of the head of the UAE

is not just emir or prince, but 'president' as per its constitution. The last one, the oldest dynasty in the region, is the Omani Sultanate established in 1744.

Arab monarchies are unique in their blend of traditional tribal governance, Islamic legitimacy, and modern statecraft, often functioning as **rentier states** that use wealth from natural resources, particularly oil, to sustain both their ruling authority and extensive **patronage** networks.

CONTEXT The emergence of Arab monarchies in the Middle East is primarily a phenomenon of the twentieth century, with only the Moroccan and Omani dynasties predating the 1900s (Anderson 1991). Their creation was shaped by a combination of historical contingencies and deliberate policies, particularly those implemented by the British Empire. These monarchies arose from the interplay of internal dynamics and external influences, reflecting broader processes of state formation, nation-building, and geopolitical strategy intrinsically linked to **colonial legacies**.

A significant factor in the establishment of Arab monarchies was British imperial policy. Britain, seeking to secure its strategic interests – most notably access to India – favored monarchy as a form of governance in the region. Unlike the French preference for republican structures, British policymakers viewed monarchy as a traditional and manageable system that could ensure stability. This approach led to the establishment of monarchies in territories such as Iraq, Jordan, and the Trucial States (now the United Arab Emirates). Monarchs were seen as figures capable of consolidating power and fostering national unity, particularly in newly independent states where tribal and regional divisions posed challenges to cohesion (Cleveland 2018; Mansfield 2019).

The process of state formation and nation-building was closely tied to the establishment of monarchies. Monarchs served as unifying symbols, centralizing authority in a way that transcended local divisions. The adoption of European models of hereditary **succession** further transformed traditional forms of rule in the Arab world. Even in regions with established dynasties, this shift enhanced the power of monarchs, moving from more consensual governance structures to systems where rulers exercised greater absolute authority. The introduction of hereditary succession expanded monarchs' arbitrary authority, replacing traditional practices like the Moroccan *bay'ah* – 'the pledge of allegiance' (cf. 'Islam' in **religions**), which implied mutual responsibility between ruler and people – with a constitutional framework that separated sovereign representation from election, in fact consolidating monarchical rule and making it less accountable before, during and after successions. (Cleveland 2018; Mansfield 2019).

A notable development during this period was the adoption of the title 'king' (*malik*) by several Arab rulers, replacing traditional titles such as 'sultan' or 'amir/emir.' This change reflected an effort to modernize the monarchy's image, aligning it with Western notions of kingship and projecting a sense of modernity (Anderson 1991).

The durability of Arab monarchies can be attributed to several factors. Strategic use of resources, particularly oil wealth, has been instrumental in maintaining stability. Monarchies have distributed oil rents to foster political loyalty and mitigate dissent while creating pseudo-representative institutions that provide a semblance of participation. External support has also played a crucial role; Western powers like Britain and the United States have provided diplomatic, economic, and military assistance that bolstered these regimes against internal and external threats (Bank et al. 2014; Yom & Gause III 2012).

Additionally, Arab monarchs have cultivated tribal – *'asabiyyah* (عصبيّة – *'aṣabiyya*), kinship as social cohesion – together with religious legitimacy to strengthen their rule. While cultural determinism alone cannot explain their persistence (cf. Arab exceptionalism – Box 6.1), relationships with tribal leaders and religious authorities have been strategically leveraged to legitimize monarchical authority (Yom & Gause III 2012). Women have been notoriously excluded from power, although they still play important roles within dynasties, different from the Harem system of pre-modern times (Box 5.11). Maktabi (2021) investigates the appointment of women as adjudicators in court in the Gulf monarchies between 2005 and 2020.

FEATURES While the creation of monarchies was significantly shaped by British imperial policy, the military also played a pivotal role in nation-building within monarchies: In the mid-twentieth century, the politicization of officer corps and military coups led to the fall of monarchies in Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya, establishing military-dominated republics (which then turned personalist).

After WWI and the implosion of the Ottoman empire, surviving monarchies like Jordan and Morocco adapted by embedding the military into their regimes as stabilizing forces. Monarchies forged close ties with tribal and rural elites, incorporating them into security forces like Jordan's *Arab Legion* and Morocco's *Forces Armées Royales*, fostering loyalty and national identity (but headed by Western officers or Berbers, respectively). Jordan's Arabization of the army came in 1956. These militaries were thus 'tamed' under monarchic state- and nation-building and did not politicize (Droz-Vincent 2020).

Gulf monarchies took a different path, as their state-building took place in the 1930s and uncontested territories under British protection. Therefore, they maintained small, family-dominated armies supplemented by foreign contractors to avoid empowering local militaries that could threaten their rule. These armies were heavily reliant on external patrons like the United States for security guarantees after independence (oil and military bases were the bargaining chips). Over time, monarchies converged with republics in establishing full authoritarian control (**coup-proofing**) but retained unique features such as tribal integration and dynastic leadership within armed forces (Droz-Vincent 2020).

The military's role evolved from regime shield-



ing to power projection, particularly in Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which expanded their capabilities post-2011 amid regional instability (Barany 2021; Droz-Vincent 2020).

Tribalism remains influential, often overshadowing institutional ties in military and political appointments. Furthermore, oil wealth underpins many Arab monarchies through 'rentierism,' enabling resource distribution to maintain stability and fund social programs. (Hanieh 2018; Herb 2005) Basedau and Lay (2009) find that oil-rich countries can achieve political stability through a combination of extensive wealth distribution, substantial investment in security apparatuses, and external protection. In contrast to oil-poor nations and challenging the assumptions of **rentier state** theory, the institutions of oil-rich countries do not seem to be predominantly defined by **patronage** and **clientelism**.

While some federalist systems rotate the crown between royal tribes, many operate as dynastic monarchies and rely on male hereditary succession (although not primogeniture – Box 5.10), where ruling families dominate political decision-making and control key state apparatuses. Here, monarchs are constrained by internal family dynamics, resource availability, and personal attributes.

In contemporary times, Arab monarchies have remained quite absolutist with limited institutional checks, especially in the Gulf. For this reason, the label **sultanism** has been applied to them as well (cf. Davidson 2021). Arab monarchies are classified based on their structure, sources of legitimacy, and governance styles. In the Arab world, monarchies are often divided into 'dynastic' and 'linchpin' types.

Dynastic monarchies, such as those in the Gulf (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Qatar), rely on extensive family rule and oil rents (**rentier states**), where the royal family dominates political decision-making.

Linchpin monarchies, like Jordan and Morocco, revolve around a single monarch who balances elite groups such as tribes or the military: the Sultanate of Oman is a hybrid, non-dynastic but with oil wealth. While monarchies differ in their structures and strategies, they converge in authoritarian practices, blending tradition, external support, and rent distribution to maintain stability (Bank et al. 2014; Herb 1999).

External patronage, however, has been critical to their survival (e.g., **black knights**). Western powers like the United States have provided diplomatic and military support (like Britain and others before them), ensuring these regimes' stability amidst regional upheavals. Notably, Arab monarchies demonstrated remarkable resilience during the **Arab Spring** uprisings, avoiding collapse through **authoritarian collaboration** and lessons drawn from the failures of neighboring republics (**authoritarian learning**).

The Arab Spring spurred significant inter-monarchical collaboration through financial, diplomatic, and even military support. Additionally, it has driven a remarkable surge in state expenditures. Furthermore, the Arab Spring triggered constitutional reforms in certain cases. However, not all monarchies have participated equally in these developments. While all oil-rentier states expanded state spending, constitutional reforms were primarily observed in Jordan, Morocco, and, to a lesser extent, Oman (Banks et al. 2014; Korotayev & Khokhlova 2021; Elkahlout & Hadid 2021).

These historical and contemporary features underscore the adaptability and enduring relevance of Arab monarchies in a region marked by political volatility. While these regimes have undergone a significant transformation from more traditional, consensual forms of rule to more centralized and absolute systems, these ruling dynasties have managed to stay in control in the face of all the modernizing demands of **political Islam** and retained former colonial states as allies while gradually asserting their emancipation and (in some cases) regional dominance, unlike the de-colonial projects in Iran, Afghanistan or the Islamic Caliphate (cf. **Islamic States**) (Kostiner 2000).

REGIONAL VARIATION Six out of the eight Arab monarchies are located in the sub-region of the Arabian Peninsula. What separates the *Gulf Cooperation Council* (GCC) monarchies from Jordan and Morocco is their resource-based economy. In addition, both Jordan and Morocco are less dynastic than the GCC monarchies.

Jordan does border Saudi Arabia, so only Morocco is geographically outside the monarchic cluster. This was not always the case of course: In Algeria, the monarchy was abolished during the French colonial conquest in the nineteenth century, as the Ottoman-affiliated Dey of Algiers was overthrown in 1830.

Egypt and Libya lost their monarchies through military-led coups driven by nationalist and revolutionary ideologies. In Egypt, the monarchy was installed under British influence in 1922. In Libya, the monarchy was established in 1951 under King Idris I with significant support from Britain and the UN (following Libya's independence from Italian colonial rule). The Free Officers' coup in 1952, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser and Muhammad Naguib, and the 1969 Libyan revolution spearheaded by Muammar Qaddafi ended these monarchic experiments, respectively.

In Tunisia, the monarchy ended in 1957 when Habib Bourguiba, leader of the nationalist *Neo Destour* party, declared the Republic of Tunisia and deposed King Muhammad VIII al-Amin Bey (tainted by French collaboration).

Saudi Arabia is a unique political regime due to its combination of absolute monarchy, religious legitimacy, economic power, and assertive leadership. As an absolute monarchy, the al-Saud family wields near-total authority, with the King directly shaping domestic and foreign policies. This dynastic structure is reinforced by Wahhabism, a conservative interpretation of Sunni Islam, which legitimizes the regime through a historical alliance with the religious establishment. Saudi Arabia's custodianship of Islam's holiest sites, Mecca and Medina, further enhances its religious and symbolic authority within the Muslim world (Hanieh 2018; Ottaway & Ottaway 2019).

The al-Saud family itself is vast, with an estimated 10,000 members. Various factions and family lines compete within the dynasty, influencing internal politics. Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) currently serves as the crown prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, effectively acting as the kingdom's *de facto* ruler (his father is 88 years old). Since he was appointed crown prince in 2017, MBS has personalized power by sidelining traditional power-sharing mechanisms within the royal family. He has centralized decision-making by diminishing the influence of other senior princes and key institutions, such as the *Council of Ministers* and the religious establishment.

MBS has also restructured Saudi Arabia's military and security apparatus, removing potential rivals and placing loyalists in key positions. For example, he merged the Ministry of Defense and the National Guard under his control (This '**presidential' guard** previously was a power base for other royal factions). Additionally, he launched anti-corruption campaigns, most notably in 2017 when dozens of princes, officials, and businessmen were detained in Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel. While framed as a reform initiative, this move was widely interpreted as a means to neutralize rivals and consolidate his grip on power (Hanieh 2018; Ottaway & Ottaway 2019).

Through these measures, MBS has shifted Saudi Arabia from a more consensus-based dynastic monarchy to a highly centralized system centered on his leadership.

Economically, Saudi Arabia exemplifies a **rentier state**, leveraging its vast oil wealth to maintain stability through resource distribution and funding development projects. This wealth underpins its regional influence and strategic alliances, particularly with the US. Recently, under Crown Prince MBS' *Vision 2030* initiative, Saudi Arabia has embarked on significant economic diversification and social reforms while consolidating political power through far-reaching repression (Ottaway & Ottaway 2019).

Unlike other monarchies, Saudi Arabia's fusion of **theocracy**, oil wealth, and custodianship of sacred Islamic sites grants it unparalleled authority in both domestic governance and regional politics, although when it comes to **regime promotion**, its radical variety of Islam is not a good match for its neighbors.

The UAE is a unique political regime among Arab monarchies due to its federal structure, hierarchical power dynamics, and assertive military and economic policies. Unlike the unitary systems of other Arab monarchies, the UAE is a federation of seven emirates, each governed by hereditary rulers who retain significant autonomy, particularly in economic matters. Abu Dhabi dominates the federation due to its vast oil wealth and political influence, with its ruler traditionally serving as the UAE's president. Dubai complements this by acting as a global financial and trade hub, with its emir serving as PM (Hanieh 2018; Ottaway & Ottaway 2019).

The UAE's federal system creates a distinctive balance of power between the central government and individual emirates, while its military unification in 1996 fostered national identity and strengthened federal cohesion. Under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ), the UAE has pursued an assertive foreign policy, projecting power regionally through interventions in Yemen and Libya, earning it the nickname 'Little Sparta.' Its military modernization and strategic use of oil wealth have enabled it to play an outsized role in regional politics (Droz-Vincent 2020).

Jordan and Morocco, classified as 'linchpin monarchies,' rely on religious legitimacy, historical narratives, and strategic alliances for stability. Both monarchies have engaged in constitutional reforms to enhance procedural legitimacy while maintaining ultimate royal authority.

In contrast, Bahrain operates as a 'dynastic monarchy,' heavily reliant on oil rents and family-based rule. Its political landscape is marked by repression of its Shia majority and dependence on Saudi-led GCC support for regime survival.

Yemen, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait each represent unique political settings within the Arab world, shaped by their historical trajectories, governance structures, and economic contexts. Yemen stands apart as a fragile state plagued by conflict and poverty. Unlike its Gulf neighbors, Yemen lacks significant oil wealth and has endured chronic instability, tribal divisions, and weak governance. Its current state of collapse highlights the challenges of state-building in the context of internal fragmentation and external intervention (**state fragility & failure**).

Oman is distinguished by its 'hybrid' monarchy, blending elements of traditional rule with modern state structures. Sultan Qaboos' long reign (1970-2020) brought stability through modernization and limited reforms while maintaining centralized control. Oman's moderate oil wealth and strategic location necessitated external support, such as British military assistance during the Dhofar Rebellion (1962-1975). Its political system balances tribal dynamics with symbolic participatory mechanisms like the Majlis al-Shura, a lower house consultative assembly (Barany 2021; Bank et al. 2015).

Qatar exemplifies a rentier state with vast natural gas wealth fueling its economic prosperity and independent foreign policy. Governed as a dynastic monarchy, Qatar's al-Thani family dominates decision-making while leveraging its wealth to project influence regionally through diplomacy, media (e.g., Al Jazeera), and hosting global events. Despite tensions with neighbors, such as the 2017 Saudi-led blockade, Qatar's financial resources have bolstered its resilience (Lambert & Elayah 2023; Barany 2021).

Kuwait combines oil wealth with a relatively vibrant parliamentary system, one that furnishes enduring loyalty from below while constraining abuses of state power from above, making it unique among Gulf monarchies. While the ruling al-Sabah family retains ultimate authority, Kuwait's parliament provides a platform for political participation and debate. However, societal tensions persist, particularly concerning the stateless Bidoon population. Kuwait's balancing act between authoritarian governance and limited political liberalization



underscores its distinctiveness (Abu Sulaib 2020; Yom 2011).

These regimes illustrate varying approaches to legitimacy, governance, and external relations within the broader framework of Arab monarchies. Yemen's fragility contrasts sharply with Oman's stability, Qatar's assertiveness, and Kuwait's hybrid political model.

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Monarchies in the Indo-Pacific

Be always sure to please the Gods
– Japanese saying

The Indo-Pacific was most likely the home of the largest number of historical monarchies before and during the common era. In many Asian countries, the monarchs were often respected political, national or spiritual figures. There are about 30 extant monarchies around the world now, and six Asian monarchies are in the Indo-Pacific, namely Bhutan in South Asia; Brunei, Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand in Southeast Asia; and Japan in East Asia, next to other smaller monarchies in Oceania. Historic accounts of ancient Asian monarchies go back before 3000 BCE, and were mythologized.

Note that the Indo-Pacific has never been a reference frame to study historical monarchies in South, Southeast or East Asia but was used in this encyclopedia as a neutral geographical delineation in juxtaposition to other world regions (this means it does not carry geopolitical connotations in its application here).

CONTEXT Asian history is rich with monarchies, many of which have played key roles in shaping the cultures, economies, and politics of their respective realms. Historical Asian monarchies represented a vast and wide web of regional modes and networks of hierarchical and horizontal relationships around powerful monarchs, of which, within the Indo-Pacific, perhaps the most famous and powerful dynasties were in China, Thailand (Siam) and India. Historical Asian monarchical regimes exploited feudalistic structures, used **religions** for legitimacy and order, built cities and armies, and organized trade. Larger empires collected tributes from neighboring subordinate kingdoms (often protectorates), which received 'protection' and 'trade' from the major empire.

There were myriads of monarchies in the Middle Ages. Many of these became interwoven with Islamic culture over time and reinvented themselves as absolutist rulers with sultans, shahs or rajahs at the helm. Rulers in smaller, lesser institutionalized monarchies could also have titles like *Rajah* or *Sultan*, but exchangeable and/or alongside lower indigenous titles like 'paramount chief' like *Lakan* (in the Philippines) and *Datu* (around the Malay peninsula). As everywhere, many other titles like *Shri* and *Pra-*

bhu were once royal titles that were devalued over time but originally derived from Sanskrit under the previously dominant Indian cultural influence since ancient times.

Some of those local monarchies are preserved until today in India, Indonesia, and Malaysia but differ significantly from (semi-)constitutional to absolutist ones (Brunei) in that they no longer wield sovereign power. Some are purely symbolic, others have been integrated into federal systems and implement policies at sub-national level, with the dynastic monarch equaling the position of a governor. Most do retain their prestige, sometimes even wealth and political influence.

The pathways to constitutional monarchy in (Southeast) Asia blend pre-colonial traditions with modern governance. Thailand transitioned from absolute monarchy to constitutional rule under reform pressures, while Malaysia integrated its traditional rulers into a federal system, rotating the kingship. In former indirectly-governed colonies, Cambodia's monarchy adapted through nationalist leadership and did re-emerge in constitutional form after the revolution. A semi-constitutional monarchic regime appeared in Laos with independence in 1953, but its monarchy was overthrown in the 1975 Laotian Civil War and subsequent communist revolution. The (only surviving) Vietnamese monarchy had ended earlier with the forced abdication of Emperor Bảo Đại on 25 August 1945, during the Việt Minh-led August Revolution, and ended again by referendum despite its short revival in the south (1949-1955) (Anckar 2021; Vatikiotis 2015).

FEATURES Historical Asian monarchies had some unique features that set them apart from monarchies in other parts of the world, such as dynastic succession and the influence of religious doctrines. A first feature was the rather common occurrence of **female rulers**. Amirell (2015) identifies 277 women rulers in the Indian Ocean World between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, representing a minimum estimate. These rulers often governed small, loosely organized political entities such as tribes, chiefdoms, or port cities, engaged in local trade (not long-distance). To compare, Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom ruled over hundreds of millions, while Jumbe Fatimah of Mohéli in the Comoro Islands governed merely 5000 people on a small island. South Sulawesi in Southeast Asia had the highest number of female rulers (105 recorded) due to Bugis traditions that allowed noble women to lead even when male candidates were available. Timor also had a significant number of female rulers (63), largely due to recent historical research. In contrast, coastal India had only one identified queen regnant, and mainland Southeast Asia had two: Shinsawbu of Pegu (1453-1472) and Ang Mei of Cambodia (1834-1840), although the latter was a puppet queen (Amirell 2015).

Many Asian monarchies deployed the concept of the 'divine right to rule' in which the monarch was seen as having been chosen by the gods to rule. This belief helped to reinforce the power and authority of the monarch. The (universal) concept of the 'mandate of heaven' (天命 – *Tiānmìng* in Chinese) was a central belief in many Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Turko-Mongol dynasties, in which the ruler was believed to have been granted the right to rule by the gods based on their moral virtue. If a ruler was believed to have lost the mandate of heaven (meaning the gods had taken it away) the ruler could be legitimately overthrown. (Of course, assessing the loss of heaven was often a *post-factum* activity by historians of the next dynasty).

The Hindu god-king concept (*Devarāja*) declared that the ruler was a reincarnation of a Hindu god from a vast pantheon (commonly *Shiva, Vishnu*, and sometimes *Buddha*). This idea allowed the ruler to demand obedience and respect from their subjects. The idea of a universal monarch *cakravartin* (चक्रवर्तिन् – 'wheel-turning monarch') referred to a vast territorial hegemony, while the *Devarāja* cult referred to local centers where the imagined spiritual powers were accumulated rather than extended (Cribb 2018: 18). The influence of Hinduism, Buddhism and later Islam is notable throughout the Indo-Pacific, mostly in Southeast Asia where they blended most. Note that the spread of Islam had an ambiguous impact on female rule. While Islam is often seen as opposing female leadership, this bias has pre-Islamic roots in the Middle East. No woman exercised sovereign power in the Muslim Middle East during this period. However, in the Indian Ocean World, roughly half of the identified queens were Muslim and ruled over predominantly Muslim populations (Amirell 2015).

Some Southeast Asian monarchies, such as those in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, have a tradition of divine kingship, in which the monarch is considered to be semi-divine and to have a close connection to the gods. With such legitimacy, many of them became absolute monarchies, in which the monarch had complete control over the government and the country. Asian monarchies have been characterized by a highly centralized and bureaucratic system of government, in which the monarch's power was maintained and reinforced through a complex system of government officials and advisers. Ruling dynasties have played crucial roles in shaping the cultures and religions of their respective countries, often serving as patrons of the arts and literature and playing key roles in the development and spread of religion. For instance, in Theravada monarchies such as Cambodia and Thailand, the monarchies took on the role of protector of Buddhism; the Thai concept of *pāramī* refers to a royal virtue and potency, connecting the monarch with a *bodhisattva* (Guillou 2017: 424). Descended traditions of Asian monarchies have spread elements of identity, normative and hermeneutic functions (Fisher Onar 2013: 421).

In the early modern era, Asian monarchies were integrated into the international system as part of a broader 'royal cosmopolitanism' (Fitzpatrick 2021: 210), fostering relationships among monarchs both within the Indo-Pacific region and beyond, including with monarchs from Western colonial metropoles. This dynamic evolved during the colonial period, as imperial powers encroached on their kingdoms but



acknowledged the status of monarchs in colonized territories and accorded them honors and some levels of autonomy to facilitate indirect rule over distant regions. This arrangement endured as long as Asian-Pacific monarchs accepted their precarious position and cooperated with colonial authorities, as seen in cases such as Samoa, Tonga, and Brunei. (Those who resisted usually disappeared).

Historical Asian monarchies may be categorized based on historical-geographical, political and other criteria, but are usually not studied through the lens of 'dictatorships' or 'regimes' (nor are pre-modern monarchies in Europe). Despite their vast differences, sorting criteria would encompass factors such as longevity of rule and dynastic continuity, territorial extent and stability, prosperity and cultural influence. Territorial studies apply qualitative and quantitative research methods that combine linguistics with area historical-geographical empirical data.

REGIONAL VARIATION Monarchies in the Indo-Pacific varied greatly, with powerful centralized empires like the Khmer Empire or Burma's Pagan and Taungoo Dynasties, while Vietnam's Nguyen Dynasty was the last to rule before French colonial influence. In contrast, the Philippines was divided among kingdoms and sultanates until Spanish rule, and the region saw the emergence of city-states like Melaka and Johor, each with distinct political and cultural dynamics shaped by imperial interactions. Below, are some of the most notable monarchies from all over this part of the world with their defining characteristics and some details of their unique pathways into modern times.

In Chinese, 黃帝 *(Huángdì)* was the title held by the mythical 'Yellow Emperor' (or Yellow 'Thearch' since he was considered a deity) in the third millennium BCE. China has a long history of monarchies, starting with the Xia dynasty (2070-1600 BCE) and ending with the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912). The monarchs in China ruled their empires, wielding absolute power over their subjects. There had been monarchs who were harsh and tyrannical as well as benevolent and enlightened. In the case of the former, the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE) (see **legalism**) and the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) are referred to as dictatorial regimes due to their centralized control and suppression of dissent.

Based on the Mandate of Heaven, the Middle Kingdom's imperial regimes constituted complex hierarchies based on virtues, duties and Confucianism (see: **religions**). For instance, the mighty Tang Dynasty (618-907) used ritual rectification orders that delegated influence in social life. Another example is the Hongwu Emperor (Taizu) of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), who led a revolt against the Mongol Yuan dynasty. He invoked the Mandate of Heaven to delegitimize Mongol rule and consolidate his authority (Han & Yan 2021: 29). This celestial mandate also served to obscure his humble origins, providing a divine justification for his rule.

'All-under-Heaven' (天下 – *tiānxià*) referred to a geographical region based on concentric circles of tributary relations with surrounding and more distant kingdoms. The subsequent *'Pax Sinica'* based on hegemonic stability accompanied Chinese historical monarchies until nineteenth century (Fisher Onar 2013: 414). Territorially, the area between the Yellow and Yangzi rivers constituted the regional core of the ruling centers in dynastic Chinese states. The meritocratic Chinese system (Box 1.9) of hiring skilled and educated gentry employed in the complex state administration enabled the emperor to connect in the imperial capital with common subjects. Confucian ideology, knowledge and etiquette had been another source of legitimacy; it was in the emperor's interest to win the support of scholars skilled in the administrative and organizational matters of the empires.

Another significant chapter in the history of Asian and Chinese monarchies involves Mongolia and the rulers of the Mongol Empire (1206-1368), led by Genghis Khan (also Chinggis Khan, born Temüjin) and his descendants. The Mongol heirs governed China under the Yuan dynasty, adopting Chinese ruling traditions while maintaining an identity that encompassed both Mongolians and Han Chinese. The subsequent Ming dynasty marked a return to Chinese classicism.

Historically, Mongolia was governed by hereditary nobles known as *Zasags*, who administered territories organized into leagues composed of numerous banners (хошуу – *khoshuu*). These banners represented the authority and jurisdiction of the ruling nobles across Mongolian lands. By the Qing Dynasty, the scope of Mongolia was perceived either as 'Entourage' – 外藩 – *Wàifān* (outer tribes, indirectly ruled), or 'Directly Ruled' – 内属 – *Nèishǔ* (for Inner Mongolia) (Tachibana 2014: 71). Mongolia was the only region from Qing China that declared and received recognition of independence with the 1911 revolution and abdication of last Chinese Emperor Pu-Yi.

In Tibet, Dharma kings ruled within later absolutist elective monarchies, heavily influenced by Lamaism. The first major centralized monarchy emerged under the Yarlung Dynasty (seventh-ninth centuries), which introduced Buddhism. This Buddhism merged with local shamanistic traditions to form Lamaism or Tibetan Buddhism. The Tibetan Empire (618-877 CE) under Trisong Detsen is considered the most powerful era in the region's history.

Subsequent dynasties, such as the Sakya Dynasty (1260-1354) and the Phagmodrupa Dynasty (1354-1618), further developed Buddhist doctrines. The last secular ruling house, the Gtsang Dynasty (1565-1652), allied with the influential *Karma-pa* (the Red Hat) sect. In contrast, the Yellow Hat sect, supported by Altan Khan, established itself in Lhasa and began conferring the title of Dalai Lama. The Ganden Phodrang rulers, led by the Dalai Lamas, governed a feudalistic and theocratic protectorate under the Qing Dynasty. This **theocracy** ended after the communist invasion of Tibet in 1950 (Aldrich 2020).

The Japanese monarchy dates back to the seventh century BCE, with the first mythical emperor, Emperor Jimmu, who, according to the Chinese-written *Kojiki* chronicles, is said to have descended from the Sun Goddess *Amaterasu*, the highest deity in

Shinto. Following the establishment of the *Yamato Confederation* in the seventh century, the emperor's power and role in society diminished in favor of powerful shoguns. These authoritarian rulers suppressed dissent and maintained strict social order. The monarchy continued until the Meiji Restoration in 1868 when the emperor's role became largely symbolic within a new constitutional monarchy in 1889. During the Shōwa period (see Box 4.2), the infamous Kyoto School of Geopolitics co-developed ideological works that were employed in state propaganda. This included the concept of *Hakkō Ichiu* – literally translated as 'the eight corners of the world united under the imperial household' – as well as the utilization of Pan-Asianism and Tennōism, which positioned the emperor as the central figure dominating the 'eight corners of the world' (Laš & Baar 2014).

In the post-war period after 1945, Japanese emperors played a significant role in shaping Japan's identity during its transition to democracy. Since 2019, Emperor Naruhito, the 126th monarch in Japan's traditional line, has ascended the throne following the abdication of his father, Emperor Akihito. Japan remains the only modern monarchy that uses the title 'Emperor.'

Korea, still divided today on the peninsula in East Asia, has a long history of monarchies. The first mention of a Korean kingdom dates back to the mythical *Gojoseon* Dynasty (2333-108 BCE). Under Chinese influences, the prosperous 'Three Kingdoms Period' (57 BCE – 668 CE) is well-known, characterized by the three ruling centers of *Baekje*, *Goguryeo*, and *Silla*, the latter of which eventually unified the region. Another period of significant development occurred under the *Goryeo (Koryŏ)* Dynasty (918-1392). However, the most influential period was the *Joseon (Chosŏn)* Dynasty, which ruled from 1392 to 1897 until Korea became a Japanese protectorate and was annexed in 1910. Due to its strict social hierarchy and suppression of dissent, the *Joseon* Dynasty is considered rather dictatorial.

Within the three earliest documented Indo-European languages, in Sanskrit, a ruler was labeled as 'Raja', and a great ruler was denoted as 'Maharaja.' India has a long and complex history of monarchies, with plenty of different kingdoms and empires emerging over the centuries (Strnad 2003). Hindu culture and religion reflected in the caste system had effects. Indian monarchies were characterized by centralized power and administration, such as the largest Mauryan Empire (321-185 BCE, with powerful ruler Chandragupta Maurya and his grandson Emperor Ashoka, who instituted strict laws and regulations.

Most powerful monarchs united the territorial belt of the great Indian rivers, and their empires stretched from the western to the eastern shores of Northern India, such as the Gupta Empire in the fifth century and the Harsha Empire in the seventh century CE. The Mughal Empire (1526-1857) and the British Raj (1858-1947) under the rule of the British Crown were two of the recent significant ones. The British set up the institution of the Emperor or Empress of India with a reigning British monarch. The smaller regional monarchies were labeled 'princely states,' with 500-700 Indian regional monarchical rulers not directly under the control of London but hierarchically under the British monarch.

The British rulers in India deployed the *Doctrine of Lapse* to restrict inheritance in the case of the rajas and maharajas, who did not have a male heir, which resulted in the annexation of the heirless state after its ruler's death. This policy was abolished with Queen Victoria's installment as the Empress of India in 1877, while the political resistance and parties slowly stood up against the monarchy, which turned to constitutional changes since India's independence in 1947. Most princely states were integrated successfully into the Indian Union, but a few territories, such as Kashmir, remained disputed in the postcolonial era.

In Sikkim and Nepal, monarchies have engaged in varying degrees of **absolutism**, and monarchs possessed significant power over their polities. The most famous monarchy in Nepal was the Shah dynasty that ruled from Kathmandu from 1768 until 2008 when it was abolished and the country transited to federal democracy. Previously, the dynasty had had full control over the military and judiciary, and was unpopular for its suppression of opposition and strict censorship. **Democratization** began with King Tribhuvan's efforts in the 1950s to reclaim power from the autocratic Rana regime, followed by King Mahendra's establishment of a partyless system in 1961. The process culminated in 2008, after a series of popular movements, a Maoist insurgency, and mass protests, leading to the abolition of the monarchy and the declaration of Nepal as a federal democratic republic.

Bhutan had been a hereditary monarchy under the Wangchuck Dynasty since 1907, which lasted by transforming into a constitutional form in 2008 (Anckar 2021). Here, democratic reforms were initiated by the king himself (saving the dynasty as an institution by surrendering the regime). Before, it was known for its strong Buddhist indoctrination and religious etiquette, exhibiting features of a **theocracy**. With modernity, the Bhutanese monarchy co-implemented a traditional code of social etiquette, *Driglam Namzha*, that recognized the cultural position of the monarch in the transition period ahead since the 1970s (Kikkenborg Christensen 2021).

The sultanate of Brunei Darussalam traces its origins back to the 1360s when its monarch converted to Islam as the Sultan Humammad Syah (Lindsey & Steiner 2016: 554). After its colonization, it stayed in the British orbit as a protectorate for a long time, weary of aggression from neighbors. The current Sultan of Brunei is Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, who has ruled since 1967 and remains one of the longest-reigning monarchs in the world. With its oil revenues, it is one of the Islamic **rentier states**, but unlike the **monarchies in the Arab world,** its socioeconomic outlook is less optimistic.

The Thai monarchy dates back to the thirteenth century, with the current monarchy belonging to the Chakri Dynasty, established in 1782. The monarchy's tradition has its roots in Sukhothai culture,



Box 1.9 Defining Worth – Meritocracy & Loyalty in Dictatorships

Терпи, казак – атаманом станешь!
(Endure, cossack, and you'll be chief)
– Russian saying

The scope and limits of meritocracy under authoritarian rule are gravely understudied and are an emerging field. Most party-based regimes yield evidence that informal connections matter for (male) elite promotions in the *nomenklatura* (Box 1.11). (cf. Garifulina 2024) Often, these informal mechanisms are hidden behind seemingly meritocratic choices. Pang et al. (2018) observed that Chinese communist officials who have held a series of key positions briefly are more likely to rise higher in their careers than other officials, a pattern that is sometimes referred to as 'sprinting with small steps.' In interviews with local cadres, they reveal there is a dual-track system of cadre management: some cadres are preferred, cultivated, and promoted through a fast track that breaks party regulations, while others have to earn their promotions through the regular track.

So, even where an authoritarian system sometimes tries to hide it, the pervasive view is that loyalty trumps competence. However, shared loyalty to the regime does not diminish competition among peers. (Chen & Hong 2021) In contrast, Lee and Schuler (2020) nuance the view that competencies are completely dismissed, and they find that there are no barriers to promoting competent staff (in China) as long as candidates possess technical but not political competencies. Likewise, Gueorguiev and Schuler (2016) find that Chinese officials with a personal following (i.e., popular politicians) are often sidelined for promotion in single-party regimes.

Still, more individual studies are finding cracks in these prevailing theses. Mirić and Pechenkina (2023) find that useful competencies (like preventing or effectively dealing with (labor) protests) are smiled upon by the Politburo (Box 8.4) when deciding promotions. Moreover, Aaskoven and Nyrup (2021) found that in Nazi Germany, performance mattered for (local) elite advancement, but later, competence was supplanted by loyalty once the Nazi regime started WWII. This means that under certain conditions (i.e., when the threat environment is favorable and ruling elites have the resources to monitor and evaluate the performance of cadres), meritocracy matters. Future research will have to untangle these dynamics and account for differences among regime types.

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which laid the foundation for the Siamese empire. The position of the monarch was particularly strong until 1932, when a **coup** set the stage for reforms. However, the monarch's place and power have remained integral to the state through an elaborate **patronage** network, ensuring the monarchy's continued influence in political affairs. Some scholars have described Thailand's model as a 'network monarchy,' with the monarch's power often exerted behind the scenes (Anckar 2021), alongside its traditional ceremonial role linked to Buddhist epistemology. Within this system, acceptable leaders are integrated into the royal network, while self-serving individuals are allegedly politically excluded (Nishizaki 2013: 70).

The Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej, or Rama IX, is considered one of the longest-reigning monarchs in the Indo-Pacific region, having reigned for more than 70 years from 1932 to 2016 (aged 88 years) during a period of profound historical changes and transitions, from the broader national historical context to postcolonial modernism. After his death, his son, King Maha Vajiralongkorn (Rama X), ascended the throne.

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Monarchies in Sub Saharan Africa

When a king has good counselors, his reign is peaceful
– Ashanti proverb

Although formal monarchies have disappeared in many parts of Sub Saharan Africa, their legacy persists in cultural practices and modern political systems. The adaptability and enduring influence of these institutions highlight their significance in shaping the region's historical trajectory. Monarchies were dynamic entities that evolved and continue to leave an imprint on contemporary African societies.

CONTEXT Monarchies in Sub Saharan Africa took diverse forms, reflecting the complexity and adaptability of political systems across the region. A common organizational structure in many kingdoms featured a king supported by a council, as seen in the Asante, Temne, Mende, and Mossi states. These monarchies often exhibited hierarchical systems extending beyond village levels, with layers of authority that included village chiefs, paramount chiefs, and kings. Larger kingdoms were divided into provinces governed by princes with their own councils and assemblies. While this royal council structure was widespread, some kingdoms deviated from the norm. (Ayittey 2006).

For example, the Kingdom of Dahomey (ca. 1600-1904), now in Benin, shared similarities with the Asante kingdom in terms of its founding and expansion but ended up significantly different: Dahomey was marked by a highly centralized and rigid government, emphasizing military efficiency and royal **absolutism** with strict discipline and a clear chain of command. In contrast, the Asante (also Ashanti) empire (1701-1901), now modern-day Ghana, was more decentralized, comprising Metropolitan Asante, Provincial Asante, and vassal states, each with some autonomy in internal affairs. Historians debate whether the Asante kingdom functioned more as a confederacy than a centralized state (Ayittey 2006).

The selection of kings was typically restricted to specific lineages, often those of original settlers or their descendants. However, kingship as a rule was not absolute; rulers were expected to meet specific duties and standards. Failure to bring prosperity, govern according to customary law, or heed counsel could result in deposition (Ayittey 2006).

External forces largely drove the decline and transformation of monarchies in Sub Saharan Africa. Colonialism played a central role by dismantling traditional political structures through the installation of puppet rulers, the exile of kings, and attempts to seize symbols of power such as the Golden Stool of the Asante. Resisting rulers were often defeated militarily, leading to the collapse of many kingdoms.

Despite these disruptions, some monarchies survived or adapted to new realities. Lesotho and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) became British protectorates to halt Afrikaner encroachment. This way, they endured colonialism fairly unscathed: Eswatini remains Africa's last absolute monarchy today (Par-



ket 2023; Ayittey 2006).

In other cases, monarchies transformed under colonial rule and sacrificed sovereignty for survival; for example, the Mossi kingdom of Ouagadougou continued with its king serving as a representative under French administration. In Dahomey, members of the royal family became canton chiefs as part of a modified monarchical structure (Parket 2023; Ayittey 2006).

In the postcolonial era, independence movements aimed at building their political platforms on popular support or elections, so **charisma** or legal-rational **legitimacy**. The vestiges of traditional rule and traditional chiefs, diminished by decades-long collaboration or integrated into colonial systems, were routinely sidelined in the decolonization process and after. (Traditional kinship ties had often been watered down already by (forced) relocations, migration, urbanization and modernization). If traditional rule was not harnessed during liberation struggles, it was often perceived as a backward and rival institution in the eyes of the **single-party regimes** that emerged after independence (Nugent 2012; Dlamini 2019).

In many cases, chiefs were perceived as collaborators of the colonial regime, further fueling tensions with nationalist movements. For example, in Tanganyika, TANU actively campaigned against chiefs, equating them with 'tribalism' and seeking to replace them with party-controlled structures. In Ghana, Nkrumah viewed the Ashanti monarchy as a potential threat to his pan-African vision and his party's political dominance. While some voices sought to abolish chieftaincy outright, others opted for a strategy of **co-option** and control. The introduction of electoral politics in the 1990s has made chieftaincy more salient again in some countries.

Usually, a middle way prevailed: In Nigeria, chiefs were integrated into the modern administrative system, but their powers were severely curtailed, and they were made accountable to political leaders. There were exceptions: South Africa, under the Apartheid regime (Box 4.7), pursued a unique strategy of reinventing chieftaincy as a cornerstone of its segregationist policies. Guinea, under Sékou Touré's socialism, on the other hand, abolished chieftaincy altogether as incompatible with revolutionary ideals.

FEATURES The diversity among Sub Saharan African monarchies is notable. Some were highly centralized and authoritarian, while others were decentralized, with significant power vested in councils and local authorities. Ritual authority played a crucial role in legitimizing royal power; kings were not only political leaders but also spiritual figures responsible for their people's wellbeing. External influences such as the trans-Saharan trade, Atlantic slave trade, and European colonialism significantly shaped both the development and decline of these monarchies.

Africa's history of **female rulers** reflects a nuanced and complex interplay of cultural, political, and social factors that allowed women to access significant positions of power in various contexts. Queen mothers, such as the *Ndlovukati* in Eswatini and those of the Ashanti Kingdom, exemplify this phenomenon. These women held substantial authority as equal co-rulers, participating in governance, presiding over courts, influencing family and women's affairs, and playing key roles in selecting and advising kings. Their positions within royal lineages provided them with institutionalized avenues to wield influence and shape policy (Parket 2023; Nugent 2012). They often influenced decision-making processes and sometimes acted as regents. Notably, the western Indian Ocean region, particularly the Swahili coast and islands of present-day Kenya and Tanzania, had a high concentration of female rulers, with 25 queens regnant, followed by 19 in the Comoro Islands and 16 in Madagascar (Amirell 2015: 449). Additionally, women wielded influence through economic activities, such as market associations in West Africa, although the extent to which this translated into political authority varied across different societies and time periods (Woodacre 2018).

As everywhere, female rule was not without challenges. Cultural norms and societal expectations often blocked women's access to formal positions of power or opposed their claims when they assumed leadership roles. In addition to formal leadership roles, women in African societies often exerted power through economic and social channels.

The incorporation of monarchies into colonial networks in Sub Saharan Africa was a complex process shaped by the differing strategies of European colonial powers, particularly the British and French. The British favored a system of indirect rule, which sought to govern through existing indigenous institutions. This approach involved recognizing and working with traditional rulers, such as chiefs, as intermediaries between the colonial administration and local populations. While this strategy preserved some monarchical structures, it also entailed significant adaptation and manipulation. The British often intervened in matters of **succession**, appointed chiefs where none existed, and redefined their roles to align with colonial administrative needs.

For instance, in northern Nigeria, the British preserved the emirate system, allowing emirs to retain considerable control over their territories while ensuring their compliance with colonial interests. Similarly, in the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana), the British collaborated with the Asantehene and other chiefs but simultaneously sought to control them, leading to resistance and a gradual decline in their authority. In Uganda, the *Buganda Agreement* of 1900 granted significant autonomy to the *Kabaka* (king) and the *Lukiiko* (parliament), reflecting a pragmatic strategy of leveraging powerful monarchies for administrative efficiency (Nugent 2012; Lemarchand 2024).

Despite its apparent preservation of traditional structures, British indirect rule often led to the erosion of monarchical authority. As colonial powers increasingly intervened in local affairs and introduced new administrative structures, traditional rulers found their influence diminished. Chiefs became intermediaries whose legitimacy was undermined

both by colonial manipulation and by their communities' perception of them as agents of foreign rule.

In contrast, the French colonial administration generally favored direct rule, emphasizing centralization and control. Chiefs were treated primarily as instruments of colonial governance rather than partners. They were granted limited autonomy and subjected to strict oversight; they could be appointed, dismissed, or punished for failing to comply with colonial directives. Chiefs served as low-level administrators tasked with collecting taxes, recruiting labor, and enforcing policies, roles that often made them unpopular among their people. In Senegal, for example, the French appointed chiefs to implement policies and maintain order within a centralized administrative framework (Nugent 2012).

Both the British and French approaches reflected pragmatic adaptations to local contexts but, in both cases, fundamentally transformed the roles of traditional rulers. Colonial intervention thus undermined indigenous political systems by manipulating succession processes, imposing new administrative roles on rulers (while taking away older royal prerogatives), and introducing foreign governance structures that disrupted pre-existing balances of power.

African kingship blended spiritual authority, ritual power, and political responsibility, with kings seen as mediators between the earthly and supernatural realms. Their legitimacy was often derived from divine or ancestral connections, and their role was to maintain cosmic balance and ensure their people's wellbeing. Rituals such as royal installations and rainmaking ceremonies reinforced their authority, while symbols like lions, leopards or hippopotamuses emphasized their unique and powerful status as figures both revered and set apart (Parket 2023; Ayittey 2006).

Despite their significant authority, African kings were not absolute rulers in the European sense. Their power was constrained by customary law, councils of elders, and societal expectations. Governance required consultation with advisers and adherence to tradition, and failure to fulfill these obligations could result in deposition or even regicide. Mechanisms such as councils of elders, queen mothers, and institutionalized checks on royal power ensured accountability and limited the potential for tyranny. Administrative systems were often decentralized, with kings delegating authority to provincial governors or chiefs who managed local affairs. However, exceptions existed in highly centralized kingdoms like Dahomey and Kongo (Parket 2023; Ayittey 2006).

The features of African kingship were diverse and evolved over time. Some kingdoms were centralized and hierarchical, while others embraced more decentralized governance with shared power structures. External influences such as Islam, long-distance trade networks, and European colonialism introduced new ideas and practices that reshaped kingship in various ways. Ultimately, African kingship was a dynamic institution rooted in spiritual significance, ritual symbolism, and mechanisms of accountability while remaining adaptable to local traditions and external pressures.

REGIONAL VARIATION Most monarchies (as institutions), weakened by colonial rule, never recovered and remained mere shells of their former glory. Others failed in their attempts to reassert themselves after independence. Still, after decolonization, there were several sovereign monarchies: Ethiopia (never colonized), the former British protectorates of Lesotho and Swaziland, and Burundi (Rwanda's monarchy had fallen right after independence). There were also some federal constellations like in the Emirates in northern Nigeria or the autonomous Buganda kingdom in Uganda.

The Ethiopian monarchy was unique for its unbroken Solomonic dynasty, which ruled from 1270 to 1974, claiming descent from the biblical King Solomon and Queen of Sheba. This lineage provided legitimacy and fostered national unity among Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups. Its ruling ideology, often termed 'African Zionism,' positioned Ethiopia as God's chosen nation, with its monarchs as heirs to the Ark of the Covenant. This ideology, rooted in the *Kebra Nagast* (ክብረ ነገሥት – *kəbrä nägäśt* – the national epic: *The Glory of the Kings*), reinforced divine authority and helped Ethiopia resist external pressures, including Islam and European colonialism. The monarchy also stood out for its centralized administration, detailed in the *Ser'ata Mangest* (a ceremonial constitution of royal rituals), and its close relationship with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which shaped national identity and provided stability (Tafla & Scholler 1976). Unlike many African kingdoms with mobile courts, Ethiopia established permanent capitals, such as Aksum and Gondar, reflecting a settled governance structure (Parket 2023).

Despite these strengths, internal challenges weakened the monarchy. Succession disputes due to the lack of primogeniture destabilized transitions, while regional fragmentation and the rise of powerful nobles eroded centralized control. Sectarian divisions within the church further undermined unity. Externally, conflicts with Islamic sultanates and Italian occupation during 1935-1941 exposed vulnerabilities. Emperor Haile Selassie's modernization efforts in the twentieth century alienated traditional power bases and fueled discontent. These pressures culminated in the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, driven by economic disparities and political repression. The revolution deposed Haile Selassie and ended one of Africa's longest-lasting monarchies (Parket 2023).

The Rwandan and Burundian monarchies shared common pre-colonial origins and were significantly shaped by German and later Belgian colonial policies, which centralized power and exploited existing social hierarchies (rendering them into ethnic identities). Both monarchies were also influenced by the 'Hamitic myth,' a pseudo-scientific (racist) colonial ideology that attributed societal development to supposed migrations of 'Caucasian' peoples, privileging Tutsi elites over Hutu populations. (Nugent 2012; Lemarchand 2024)

Despite these similarities, the two monarchies followed distinct trajectories due to differences in internal dynamics, ethnic relations, and colonial support. In Rwanda, the monarchy became closely



associated with the Tutsi minority, intensifying ethnic divisions and fueling resentment among the Hutu majority. This culminated in the Hutu revolution of 1959-1961, during which the monarchy was overthrown following the electoral victory of the *Parmehutu* party. By contrast, the Burundian monarchy incorporated Hutus into its power structures to a greater extent and leveraged internal rivalries within the Tutsi elite, particularly between the Bezi and Batare lineages. This strategy helped maintain its legitimacy across ethnic lines for a longer period (Lemarchand 2024; Nugent 2012).

Belgian colonial administrators also played differing roles in each case. While Belgian support for Rwanda's monarchy waned as Hutu unrest grew, they continued to back Burundi's monarchy as a stabilizing force amid ethnic tensions. However, this support could not prevent its eventual demise. The Burundian monarchy was abolished in 1966 following a military coup led by Michel Micombero (1940-1983).

The Swazi monarchy is distinguished by its unique dual structure, in which power is shared between the king, or *Ngwenyama* (the lion), and the queen mother, or *Ndlovukati* (the she-elephant). This dual monarchy provided a balance of power and added complexity to Swazi governance, earning admiration from European observers. The monarchy also stood out for its integration of traditional and modern governance. King Sobhuza II, educated in Western systems, played a pivotal role in blending Swazi traditions with modern political frameworks during the decolonization process. His strategic alliances with white settlers and patrimonial control over land allocation (Nugent 2012) allowed the monarchy to consolidate power, unlike many African monarchies that were sidelined or abolished after independence. (Dlamini 2019)

Cultural legitimacy was central to the Swazi monarchy's resilience. By emphasizing its role as the true representative of Swazi people and traditions, it resisted the imposition of Western-style democracy while selectively adopting modern governance elements. Still, with independence King Sobhuza II inherited a constitutional system limiting royal power. In the early 1970s, Sobhuza executed a significant power grab that transformed the political landscape of the country. Dissatisfied with the limitations imposed by the *1968 Independence Constitution*, in a true royal *autogolpe* (self-coup), he unilaterally repealed the constitution, dissolved parliament, and banned all political parties. Declaring that the constitution had failed to ensure good governance and peace, Sobhuza assumed absolute power, ruling by decree and centralizing executive, legislative, and judicial authority in himself. This move marked the end of Swaziland's brief experiment with liberal democracy and ushered in a period of monarchical absolutism. He replaced democratic mechanisms with the *tinkhundla* system in 1978, a structure based on traditional administrative units that allowed limited local participation while ensuring the monarchy's dominance. Under this system, elections were conducted without political parties, further entrenching royal control (Dlamini 2019).

The Lesotho monarchy is unique for its role as a symbol of unity and resistance, shaped by the kingdom's status as an enclave surrounded by South Africa. This geographical position fostered a strong national identity, with the monarchy serving as a safeguard against incorporation into South Africa, particularly after the formation of the *Union of South Africa* in 1909. The monarchy operated within a decentralized chieftaincy system, or 'parallel rule,' where the paramount chief (*Morena e Moholo* – 'Great King') shared power with local chiefs responsible for governance and land allocation. This structure ensured administrative coherence but also created internal competition for power. The early influence of European missionaries, particularly from the *Paris Evangelical Mission Society*, introduced an educated Basotho middle class that shaped political discourse and influenced the monarchy's evolving role in development and independence (Aerni-Flessner 2018).

Historically, the monarchy maintained strong transnational connections due to its proximity to South Africa and the experiences of Basotho migrant laborers. These connections extended to participation in South African political movements like the *African National Congress* (ANC). During the transition to independence, King Moshoeshoe II associated the monarchy with national unity and development, actively seeking international aid and promoting modernization (Aerni-Flessner 2018).

The monarchy's transformation began with Moshoeshoe I's unification of various groups under his rule in the early nineteenth century. Facing Afrikaner expansion, Moshoeshoe I petitioned Britain for protection, leading to Basutoland's annexation as a British colony in 1868. Colonial rule maintained monarchical authority with the *Moholo* as broker and nexus for connecting local chiefs through 'parallel rule,' allowing the British to administer their protectorate 'on the cheap.' After independence in 1966, the monarchy assumed a symbolic role within a parliamentary democracy (Aerni-Flessner 2018).

However, the 1970 coup led by PM Leabua Jonathan and the *Basotho National Party* (BNP) was detrimental to the monarchy. The coup was triggered by the electoral defeat of Jonathan's ruling BNP by the opposition *Basutoland Congress Party* (BCP) in the general election. In response, Jonathan annulled the election results, declared a state of emergency, dissolved parliament, and suspended the constitution. King Moshoeshoe II, who had expressed disapproval of these actions, was stripped of political authority and sent into exile. This self-coup effectively sidelined the monarchy, reducing it to a ceremonial role under Jonathan's increasingly authoritarian regime. The king returned from exile in 1971 but remained largely symbolic, with real power concentrated in Jonathan's hands. The monarchy's diminished role persisted until Jonathan himself was overthrown in a military coup in 1986. Although the monarchy experienced a limited resurgence following Lesotho's return to multi-party democracy in 1993, it remains largely symbolic today, representing cultural heritage and national identity while operating within democratic constraints.

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Neo-Patrimonialism

You can't go around arresting the Thieves' Guild. I mean, we'd be at it all day!
– Sir Terry Pratchett, *Guards! Guards!* (Discworld Series, 1989)

Neo-patrimonial states are a blend of modern bureaucratic-legal (Western model) state systems with some pre-modern, traditionalist forms of rulership. The concept was conceived in the late 1960s as an effort to apply Weberian ideal types to study modern polities and get a conceptual grip on multiple modernities existent in postcolonial and other developing states. The concept emerged in response to **modernization theory** casting socioeconomic development as the only uniform evolutionary route that all societies supposedly follow from traditional societies to modern forms (Ynalvez & Shrum 2015: 150-155). Scholars derived the concept from Max **Weber's** concept of **patrimonialism,** one of the subtypes of traditional **rulership** (domination – *Herrschaft*), but its definitions, delineation, and operationalization have been problematic since its inception. The 'neo-' prefix served to indicate a clear boundary between Weber's pre-modern states and the new modern states in Latin America and those that had emerged with decolonization (1945-1962) in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

Adapted to modern realities, the concept is characterized by its conflicting norms and defined primarily by the hybridity between two logics of rulership (traditional/patrimonial and legal-rational). It is based on the close interaction between patrimonialism (all power relationships are personal relationships) and legal-rational bureaucratic domination. The distinction between the public and the private formally exists and is accepted, even if it is not respected (Bach 2011; Bratton & van de Walle 1994; Erdmann & Engel 2007; Laruelle 2012: 303).

Today, neo-patrimonialism is a heavily criticized concept because of its application to different (overlapping) sociopolitical contexts, its conflation with phenomena like **patronage**, **clientelism,** feudalism (Box 1.14) and **prebendalism**, its theoretical confusion as a system of **legitimacy**, a type of (failed) state, a sociopolitical structure, or distinct regime type.

DEFINITION Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel (2007: 105) provide a comprehensive definition of the concept as a legitimacy system, thereby adhering closer to Weber's original use of patrimonialism: Neo-patrimonialism is a mixture of two co-existing, partly interwoven, types of rulership: namely, patrimonial (a subtype of traditional rulership) and legal-rational bureaucratic domination.

In the original concept (**patrimonialism**), all power relations between the ruler and the ruled are personal relations. The state is the personal property *(Patrimonium)* of the ruler. This 'patron' bestows gifts from public and private resources on followers to secure their loyalty. Patrimonial bureaucratic staff, in the form of enslaved people or bondsmen *(Ministeriale)*, are granted some rights to govern parts of the *Patrimonium* on behalf of the ruler. This necessary exchange limits a ruler's discretion in selecting administrators from among the appropriate classes and staff, thus tend to belong to the group of 'traditional associates' (*Genossen*) like in traditional **rulership** (Erdmann & Engel 2007; von Soest et al. 2011; Van den Bosch 2021a). In neo-patrimonialism, this same personal relationship between ruler and staff persists to a high degree but follows a clientelistic logic of higher complexity involving many brokers (intermediary patrons), linking the political center with the countryside. By mimicking the logic of authoritarian **patronage** politics, neo-patrimonial states are considered to overlap with autocracies, while its extreme (predatory) forms are often equated with personalist rule. (The original Weberian ideal types of rulership do *not* equate with any regime type).

Under neo-patrimonialism, the distinction between the private and the public, at least formally, exists and is accepted, and public reference can be made to this distinction. Here, patrimonial power structures penetrate the legal-rational system of 'modern' stateness, twisting its logic, functions, and output but not taking exclusive control over the legal-rational logic. So, informal politics invade for-



mal institutions. Both are intimately linked to each other in various ways and by varying degrees, and this mix becomes institutionalized informality.

Erdmann & Engel and J.-P. Olivier de Sardan stress the aspect of *insecurity* that characterizes this type of rulership. *"A client needs a patron for protection either to avoid something or to be assisted in gaining something which otherwise would not be obtainable. In short, developing a clientelist network is a means to gain protection and to achieve goals in a situation of societal uncertainty created by public institutions which may behave in ways that are not calculable."* (Erdmann & Engel 2007: 108). In their strive to overcome such insecurity, by operating both on formal and informal levels, state actors actually reproduce the inherent insecurity of their sociopolitical system. Both logics within neo-patrimonialism are considered to be mutually reinforcing (Erdmann & Engel 2007: 105-106).

In neo-patrimonial systems of rulership, elites, bureaucrats, and residents can hypothetically choose to which of the two logics (patrimonial or legal-rational) they want to adhere to achieve their objectives, but in practice the uneven patron-client power relations preclude this, rendering the clientelistic logic pervasive and systematic; even turning it into a distinct political culture, and an effective 'social trap' for residents (Arellano-Gault 2016). Findings on **systemic corruption** have shown that formal state institutions in such systems reduce growth, are unable to provide universal welfare, and actually increase income inequality and poverty. The resulting inequality, in turn, then increases the level of corruption since the *"wealthy have both greater motivation and more opportunity to engage in corruption, whereas the poor are more vulnerable to extortion and less able to monitor and hold the rich and powerful accountable as inequality increases."* (Jong-sung & Khagram 2005: 103; Van den Bosch 2021b: 219-220). In theory, the interests of political and economic elites may sometimes be served better with official legal-rational rules, resulting in their advancement rather than their circumvention (Erdmann & Engel 2007: 105-106).

As a theoretical conception intended to capture a particular system of rulership, neo-patrimonialism has also been stretched to qualify the nature of statehood of various sociopolitical systems of informality or to denote a particular political regime type. These conceptual derivations have been defined in confusing and contradictory ways and operationalized even more poorly. The only aspect shared by these spin-off conceptual applications is their focus on the rent-seeking behavior of political elites and the pervasive clientelism in societies classified as neo-patrimonial. (See 'measurement' and 'methodological issues' for a comprehensive critique of the basic concept and its derivations).

SEE ALSO Derived from Weber's original conceptualization of **patrimonialism** with the aim to classify systems of **rulership** and **legitimacy**, this concept encompasses elements of **patronage**, **systemic corruption**, **kleptocracy**, **clientelism**, **prebendalism**, nepotism (Box 1.1), and is often applied to other world regions under synonyms like cronyism and bossism (both covered in Box 1.10). It has often been (erroneously) equated with **personalist rule**. The same trend has befallen Weber's (related) concept of **sultanism**, which has been rebranded as neo-sultanism. Due to heavy criticism, some scholars have come up with alternative frameworks to analyze the confluence of formal and informal spheres in the exercise of power, like Henry Hale's **patronalism**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The scholarly community is divided about the fate of neo-patrimonialism as an analytical concept – a debate mostly held in African studies – but most of these disagreements boil down to two lines of argumentation: Neo-patrimonialism is obsolete since it has turned into a blunt, harmful, racist paradigm to one-sidedly explain the dysfunction of African states (in particular). Alternatively – more sympathetically – the concept still has analytical value if scholars stick to a clear definition, apply it solely as a system of rulership (and not as a regime type), and find (new) ways to operationalize it by empirically benchmarking different degrees of neo-patrimonialism, thus enabling comparison. The former group thus scolds its tainted track record as an 'overstretched' Eurocentric concept; the latter acknowledges its universal, heuristic value (when applied correctly), admitting it has fostered both good and bad research but provided the theoretical impetus for pushing the frontiers for the study of informal-formal spheres in relation to political power (Erdmann & Engel 2007: 114; deGrassi 2008; Isaacs 2014; Wai 2012: 41; Bach 2011).

ORIGIN Daniel C. Bach (2011: 276-277, 282-289; 2012), Hinnerk Bruhns (2012), and Erdmann & Engel (2007: 97-100) provide detailed overviews of the introduction and evolution of the concept. Theories of patrimonialism had already been applied to Latin America to cover the legacy of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism, tracing contemporary government models (**corporatism**) back to imperial policies (Morse 1964; Sarfatti 1966; Florescano & Gil Sánchez 1976; Uricoechea 1980; Roett 1984; Osiel 1986).

By the late 1960s, Guenther (Günther) Roth (1968), a scholar and translator of Weber, was the first to introduce the latter's concept of patrimonialism to African politics, attempting to replace earlier attempts to capture African nationalist leaders' rule with the Weberian concept of **charismatic rule**. (Once the charisma of the nationalist leaders was routinized after independence, the focus fell on **patronage** distribution, according to G. Hyden (2006: 24)). However, using a pre-modern concept for modern states provoked resistance. Aristide Zolberg (1966) suggested distinguishing between 'traditional' and 'neo-traditional' regimes, and consequently, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (1973: 15) coined the concept of neo-patrimonialism: The 'neo-' prefix served to indicate a clear boundary between Weber's pre-modern states and the 'post-traditional' societies of Latin America, South Asia and the Middle East.

LITERATURE Jean-François Médard (1979) borrowed the concept to explain Cameroon's underdevelopment and lack of institutionalization. Since

then, the concept has become prominent in African studies, popularized with Jean-François Bayart's (1989) work on *'politique du ventre' (politics of the belly)* and other French scholars working with the *Centre d'étude d'Afrique noire* in Bordeaux or by the journal '*Politique africaine*' (created in 1981).

Highly influential were the works of Michael Bratton & Nicholas van de Walle (1994; 1997), who started exploring the link between (shades of) neo-patrimonial rule and the prospects for democratic transition. Patrick Chabal & Jean-Pascal Daloz's book *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (1999) summarized two decades of blurring the concept with African underdevelopment (or rather anti-development) and authoritarian (personalist) rule, illustrating how neo-patrimonialism by then had become not merely a paradigm, but an essentialist African paradigm (Bach 2011: 276-282; deGrassi 2008: 108, 112). A critical reappraisal of the concept emerged together with a reevaluation of the African state.

Besides these Africanists, there is an enormous amount of literature out there on neo-patrimonialism, but some of the scholars who contributed most significantly to its theoretical refinement are S.N. Eisenstadt (1973; 1978), S.N Eisenstadt & L. Roniger (1980), R. Theobald (1982), O. Therkildsen (2005), G. Erdmann & U. Engel (2007), A. deGrassi (2008) A. Pitcher et al. (2009), O. Fisun (2012), Z. Wai (2012), D.C. Bach (2011), F. Guliyev (2011), D.C. Bach & M. Gazebo (2012), C. von Soest (2022), G. Erdmann (2013) and T. Mkandawire (2015). A (non-exhaustive) list of important applications to other regions is provided below. Many of these works have stumbled into one or several methodological pitfalls (listed lower) but continue to be valuable by presenting inquisitive case study findings on hybrid formal-informal structures (in states or their societies).

REGIONAL VARIATION Oscar Oszlak (1986) was the first to introduce neo-patrimonialism to Latin America, soon followed by Karen Remmer (1989). Both authors used 'neo' to indicate the presence of a professional military, technocratic administrative staff, and all the other elements of a comparatively modernized and industrialized society (Remmer 1989: 165; Bach 2011: 283). Before, (neo)-patrimonial tendencies were captured by concepts like *caudillismo* and *caciquismo* in Box 1.10, or their Brazilian counterparts *coronelismo* and *mandonismo*, all referring to local strongmen, their system of (traditional) rulership and their clientelistic networks.

Karsten Bechle (2010) offers a recent evaluation of the concept for this region. Important other works are R. Snyder (1992) on transitions, J. Hartlyn (1994) and Remmer (1999) on the Caribbean, and G. Scherlis (2009) on Argentina.

In the study of East and Southeast Asia, scholars applied such frameworks under the guise of cronyism (also in Box 1.10) to explain viable capitalist development in combination with authoritarian (often even personalist rule), like in Indonesia (Crouch 1979; Liddle 1991), the Philippines (Hutchcroft 1998), Malaysia (Yoshihara 1988; White 2004). The financial crisis of 1997-1998 led to a reevaluation of this 'balanced' co-existence (Bach 2011: 284-286). The rise of China and its economic soft power have also attracted such analysis (Wu 2015) or the reevaluation of colonial legacies in Asia (Goh 2015).

Neo-patrimonial studies of the Middle East and North Africa were almost non-existent and only emerged after the **Arab Spring**. The German scholar Peter Pawelka was one of the few and only to apply the model in the 1980s, first in the form of an elaborate analysis of Egypt's political system (1985) and later to explain autocratic stability in Middle Eastern regimes (Pawelka 2002; Brownlee 2002). R. Brynen (1995) applied it to Palestine.

One hypothesis is that 'Arab exceptionalism' (Box 6.1) is responsible for this scholarly void. André Bank and Thomas Richter (2010: 8) note: "*It is neither sufficiently explored what empirical similarities and differences of neopatrimonialism have emerged in a post-colonial period across Arab regimes, nor does any systematic research exist which points to the changing nature of neopatrimonial rule given the external shocks and internal challenges Arab regimes have been undergoing.*" This would all change with the 'Arab Spring:' Qasemi (2012), Ugur-Cinar (2017), Gray (2018), de Elivara et al. (2018), Demmelhuber et al. (2020), Boucekkine et al. (2020), Bohn & Vollmann (2021).

For communist countries, Weber's earlier works on patrimonial Tsarist Russia were initially extrapolated to Stalinist times and Soviet *nomenklatura* systems (see also Box 1.11). Later, Yoram Gorlizki (2002: 701-702) brought back the focus on the inherent formal-informal duality in Soviet Russia. Ronald Linden (1986) applied the original patrimonial frame to N. Ceaușescu's Romania. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the USSR and especially the ensuing murky privatization processes of national assets in the 1990s kick-started a fresh interest in neo-patrimonial theory in the Former Soviet Union (Fisun 2012), focusing on: Yeltsin's Russia (Slinko et al. 2005), Putin's Russia (Yakovlev & Zhuravskaya 2006; Robinson 2012, Gel'man 2016; Skigin 2020), Ukraine (Fisun 2003; Malygina 2010), Belarus (Hervouet 2013; Frear 2018), Azerbaijan (Lussac 2011), and Transnistria (Owen 2009).

Central Asia with its **clan politics** has received some attention (Ishiyama 2004; Gawrich & Melnykovska 2010; Laruelle 2012; Lewis 2012, Isaacs 2014; Izquierdo-Brichs 2021) with valuable case studies: Kazakhstan (Isaacs 2009; Peyrouse 2012), Kyrgyzstan (Marat 2012), Uzbekistan (Ilkhamov 2007; Markovitz 2012), Turkmenistan (Kunysz 2012), and even post-war (but pre-Taliban) Afghanistan (Hess 2010). Rico Isaacs (2014) finds that initially, scholars focused too much on the informal elements in Central Asian polities and that future research should explore real neo-patrimonial hybridity. Isaacs (2014) provides a critical overview of the earlier use of the concept for Former Soviet Central Asia.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Despite its belated introduction to African politics, this region is where the concept would be applied most and in time evolve into a harmful paradigm where self-explanatory elite rent-seeking behavior, clientelism and super-presidentialism (sometimes mislabeled 'presidentialism' and too often conflated with **personalist**



rule) would become the routine *explanans* (premise) for an increasingly synonymous *explanandum* (research object): the African 'anti-developmental' state. Aaron deGrassi notes that it became a functionalist explanation, where neo-patrimonialism as an institution or cultural characteristic is explained by the function it fulfills rather than based on its historical development. This leaves no room for considering why no alternative arrangements yielding the same effect were adopted (deGrassi 2008: 115-116).

In the 1970s, critiques against 'developmental' and 'dependency' paradigms nudged more scholars to embrace neo-patrimonialism to explain the 'crisis' of the African postcolonial state. Thandika Mkandawire claims that the economic crises of the 1970-1980s (the 'lost decades') and with them, the rise of Afro-pessimism contributed to the diffusion and conflation of the concept: Before, *"in the 1960s when Africa was doing well economically – 5.7% growth rates – and when credible nation-building policies were being pursued, little was said about the cultural barriers to development."* (Hoffman 2018: 434). Because the concept was vague and often ill-defined, scholars often uncritically labeled a whole range of political arrangements as neo-patrimonial state capture. Lacking precise measurement criteria, by the early 1990s, some 40 African states had been branded as such (Bach 2011: 280-281).

Zubairu Wai (2012) provides some of the most scathing criticisms of the concept for African studies: He exposes the problematic logical circularity when scholars posit or infer the cause and effect of state weakness and failure from the same source (rent-seeking behavior of the African political elites). Therkildsen (2005: 12) exposes the blind spot behind that error: *"The neopatrimonialism paradigm mis-specifies or ignores important motivations of political and bureaucratic elites such as nationalism, professional integrity, gaining political following through service provision, public demand for accountability, etc. It also downplays some of the key structural features of poor African countries, for example the deep fiscal stress facing public organisations; distortive tax systems; dependency on a few primary commodities on volatile and distorted export markets; donor influence; etc."*

Pitcher et al. (2009) and Wai (2012) expose the fallacy of applying Weberian ideal types as categorizing explanatory regime types. As a derivative, neo-patrimonialism cannot be used for this purpose: *"ideal-types (…) are not real; and (…) do not correspond to any historical or actually existing or empirically grounded reality."* (Wai 2012: 38). Wai continues to tackle two current approaches of Afro-pessimism, the society-centric approach, highlighting African cultural barriers to development, and the state-centric approach, locating the problem not in society, but in the predatory African state itself (Wai 2012: 32).

Wai's final critical concerns are epistemological, referring to Max Weber's deep Eurocentric, unilinear, teleological way of thinking, where "*African phenomena can only really be understood as mirroring an earlier European history*." (Wai 2012: 33). In contrast, scholars of Latin American neo-patrimonialism (or other regions) never assumed that the state was eroding or would dissolve into **informality** (Bach 2011: 283).

A significant group of scholars thus torpedo the concept's claims of universalism while sympathizers continue to improve and refine it for comparative research. In any case, there is a growing consensus that the concept has some heuristic but no predictive value and that neo-patrimonialism has too many complex, interrelated causal links to other dysfunctional factors for it to be able to predict the development or prospects of **democratization**.

MEASUREMENT The main problems with neo-patrimonialism are all down to its vague definitions (being derived from an ideal type), resulting in difficulties regarding its delineation (analytically separating it from other related concepts) and resulting in trouble with empirically selecting cases (scope of sample cases) (Van den Bosch 2021b). The informal and illegal nature of the research object by itself brings forth many issues for the concept's operationalization.

Delineation Despite its long track record of vague definitions, recurring key defining characteristics of neo-patrimonialism are its hybrid logic of formal and informal encompassing elements of clientelism (patron-client power relations) and patronage politics (the use of public goods for rents and enabling clientelistic relations) (Erdmann & Engel 2007). Too often, neo-patrimonialism has been equated to **personalist rule**, thereby skewing the scale of its conceptual hybridity back toward its patrimonial pole. Its analytical separation from systemic corruption, corporatism, clientelism, patronage, prebendalism, etc., remains blurry in the existing literature. However, even without these pitfalls, the 'neo-' question begs: Where do pre-modern states end and modern states begin? Moreover, can one draw a clear border between the bureaucratic-legal and the patrimonial (traditional) rulership? How does one qualify the nature of neo-patrimonial bureaucracy within the spectrum of these intersecting ideal types?

Scope How do we choose our research object? Does the concept apply only to regime or state structures and institutions? Or to a wider set of social relations in society? (vertical scope). Does the concept overlap solely with authoritarian regimes, or can democracies likewise be neo-patrimonial? (horizontal scope). Weber's original ideal types were neutral in this regard, and legal-bureaucratic rule can equally be applied to some authoritarian systems (Pitcher et al. 2009). While patrimonialism was a 'legitimate' system of rule, can the same be said about neo-patrimonialism? (Hale 2015: 25).

Operationalization This last issue spills over into the question if the concept can be used as a separate regime type (or a merely conflicted mode of legitimacy). Anne Pitcher et al. (2009: 126-127) have pointed out that Weber's ideal types explain legitimacy and thus cannot correspond with regime types, but almost all literature squarely puts neo-patrimonial rule in the realm of authoritarianism, even

if this is a very heterogeneous group. By equating the concept with personalist rule, however, scholars create a mismatch with earlier identified case studies, like the regime of J.E. dos Santos in Angola or R. Mugabe's Zimbabwe (that fit neo-patrimonialism but had more collegial power structures).

With imprecise delineation and a 'catch-all' scope, there is no surprise that a viable operation of the concept has been the most daunting task, especially since the defining aspect of clientelism is difficult to measure and observe. Weber's original characteristics of legal-bureaucratic rule can provide a negative set of benchmarks – to determine how neo-patrimonial bureaucracies fail to meet such criteria (Erdmann & Engel 2007: 108, 110). A rare exception to successful operationalization is C. von Soest et al. (2011) comparing regional variation in tax administrations, establishing clear(er) benchmark indicators. Their article shows that not all indicators matter equally for different world regions. This raises interesting questions on the concept's universalist claim (or maybe just its operationalization) and indicates that actor agency significantly influences outcomes.

CLASSIFICATIONS Sub-classifications of the concept often fail to bring more clarity since they were derived from defining criteria riddled with the methodological issues listed higher.

M. Bratton and N. van de Walle (1994) created a classification of African political regimes and found that four of them can be regarded as varieties of neo-patrimonialism: personal dictatorship, military **oligarchy**, and plebiscitary and competitive one-party systems. They differ on two axes: participation (exclusion or broad mobilization) and pluralism (low or medium competition).

D.C. Bach (2011) elaborates on J.-P. Médard's (2000) proposition to distinguish between 'regulated' and 'predatory' forms of neo-patrimonialism (as two ideal types). The former, based on co-optation and redistribution according to an ethnic-regional logic, is able to promote the expansion of the state to peripheries and foster a (non-violent) culture of mutual accommodation. Jomo Kenyatta (1964-1978) in Kenya and Félix Houphouët-Boigny (1960-1993) in the Ivory Coast are both heralded as good examples. The predatory type corresponds to **sultanism,** indicating a harmful form of extreme **kleptocracy**, with a narrow distribution base, *"where personal rule and resource control reach a paroxysmic level, with a consequent 'failure of institutionalisation (…) and thus of the state.'"* (Médard 1991: 139, cited in Bach 2011: 279). It is important to note that the regulated examples listed by the Médard are actually *not* considered personalist regimes according to B. Geddes et al. (2012), while all the predatory forms fall in this category. These differences can also be explained by existing regime typologies that operate with clear coding criteria.

Post-communist regimes have also been subjected to neo-patrimonial classifications (Kitschelt 2021; Fisun 2012) in order to distinguish which Soviet legacies live on (in modified form) in current realities. They are also distinguished along conceptual axes based on various levels of personalism, institutionalization, and inclusiveness. Oleksandr Fisun (2012: 94) even identifies a type labeled 'neopatrimonial democracy.'

NEW FRONTIERS If neo-patrimonialism is to survive as an analytical concept, it should be applied solely to study the hybrid tension between formal and informal spheres in political regimes. It is not a regime type, one type of state, and certainly not a *'deus ex machina'* explanation to subscribe underdevelopment only to cultural factors. Regarding its potential as a predictive tool, those painful lessons should have been learned by now.

Its different application in the study of various world regions and the fact that no convincing universal insights have been put forth so far should maybe temper the universalist aspirations of such proponents. Maybe it is more helpful to study how neo-patrimonialism emerged and evolved in different states and regions. As a middle-range analytical tool, it can retain its heuristic value by guiding new research, balancing equal attention for the formal and informal.

With their methodological rigidity, von Soest et al. (2011) have illustrated new ways for a successful operationalization of the concept. Also, new concepts have emerged: Henry Hale's (2015) **patronal politics** has made quite a splash in Eurasian studies and has the potential to be applied beyond the post-communist world.

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Box 1.10 Caudillismo, Caciquismo, Cronyism & Bossism

It's not what you know but who you know
– American saying

These four concepts have created methodological havoc as in the past, they have been used synonymously with regime types such as **personalist rule**, **neo-patrimonialism** or practices like **state capture**, **clientelism** and **systemic corruption**. *Caudillismo* and *Caciquismo* came out from the situation in Latin America during the nineteenth century and, therefore, have a weak empirical connection to the present situation (Brooker 2000; Lidén 2011: 5). Similarly, bossism traces back to local US politics from the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

All four go back to specific culturally and historically-bound phenomena, have evolved with time, and have been applied beyond their place of origin before scholars attempted to turn them into distinct political concepts. Table 1.4 provides a comparison of their most common defining features, but keep in mind that all of these terms have been conceptually stretched (sometimes beyond recognition) and ambiguously applied.

CAUDILLISMO The Spanish word *caudillo* (from the Latin *capitellum* (small head) was used to describe the head of irregular forces who ruled a politically distinct territory in Latin America. (De Riz 2015) In the nineteenth century, *caudillismo* refers to the rise of *caudillos*, who originally were powerful landowners who assumed regional governance after the collapse of colonial political institutions. These figures often commanded private militias and competed for control over national power. By the twentieth century, the term *caudillo* included military officers and aspiring politicians, particularly in countries like Mexico. These leaders first built independent power bases at the regional level and, bolstered by large followings, sometimes moved on to grab power in the political center. (Bethell 1994: 383)

Caudillismo here refers to a pre-modern form of personal rule where the ruling elite usually has its background or some connection to military rule: *"The caudillo is now generally thought of as one who used violence or the threat of violence for political ends – whether as a professional officer commanding regular army units, or as a militia officer or civilian-on-horseback leading militia or irregular forces into political battle, or (more broadly) as an essentially civilian leader who engaged in violent repression"* (Bethel 1985: 371) For authoritative treatises of the historical phenomenon, consult: Haigh 1964; Wolf 1956; Chevalier 1962; Wolf & Hansen 1967; De la Peña 1986.

Personal charisma was the transformative feature that propelled them to power in the first place, after which they cemented their position by establishing patron-client relationships. However, this form of charismatic personalist rule remained an unstable form of dictatorship where challengers cyclically competed for power. As theorized in **patronalism** (cf. H. Hale), one should imagine these caudillistic patron-client networks as elaborate pyramids – in which local *caciques* (see below), with their followings, pledged loyalty to regional chieftains, who in turn gave at least temporary and conditional support to *caudillos*, or other political leaders operating at the national level. (Bethel 1985: 373)

The ideological orientation of most *caudillos* can be characterized as pragmatic and largely indifferent

Table 1.5 – Mapping *Caudillismo, Caciquismo,* Cronyism & Bossism

Features	**Caudillismo**	**Caciquismo**	**Cronyism**	**Bossism**
Typical background	Military, landowner, merchant	Local strongman, peasent leader	Politicians, business leaders	Politicians, political parties, state bureaucracy
Scope of rule	National or regional	Local	All levels	Regional or local
Urban vs. Rural	Rural origins	Rural	Urban	Urban
Level of formalization	Weakly institutionalized	Informal	Informal	Institutionalized
Direction or shape of network	Centralizing force	Federalist	Vertical and horizontal	Centralized
Sources of Power	Military, patronage, charisma	Patronage, traditional legitimacy, brokerage	Patronage, clientelism	Patronage, prebendalism, legal-rational legitimacy
Main function	State-formation Patronage	Electoral Fraud Interest formulation	Systemic corruption	Electoral Fraud Patronage
Conceptual core	Regime type	System	Practice	Regime type
Most conceptual resemblance with	(Military) personalist rule	Patron and client (broker) Electoral authoritarianism Ethnic politics	Clientelism Systemic Corruption	Personalist rule Competitive authoritarianism Ethnic politics

Source: Author's own work.

to formal political ideologies or constitutional principles. Unlike the Latin American political intelligentsia, who were concerned with the ideas embodied in laws and constitutions – seeking political respectability both domestically and in the eyes of Europe – *caudillos* were more focused on maintaining their power bases and satisfying the interests of key local constituencies, such as landed oligarchies and merchants. For military officers and regional *caudillos*, politics was often driven by personal reputation, protecting the military as an institution, or representing broader social interests. The concerns of large landowners and merchants were more practical, revolving around land tenure disputes and favorable or predictable commercial regulations, respectively. Therefore, *caudillos* were primarily concerned with maintaining local power structures and securing material advantages for their supporters rather than adhering to any particular political ideology, although there are examples of revolutionary leaders. (Bethell 1985: 369)

CACIQUISMO Caciquismo does not have any military connection but is instead based on a traditional hierarchy where local leaders interlock with each other to create the ruling elite (Linz 2000). The term *cacique* originates from indigenous languages (Arawak) but was adopted by the Spanish *conquistadores* to refer to the leaders of native tribes or, in more stratified Indigenous states, district governors. The Spaniards maintained *caciques* as hereditary chiefs within Indigenous communities, assigning them roles such as minor judges, labor organizers, and tribute collectors. In colonial Mexico, the heads of forced labor gangs were also called *caciques*, while in Peru, they were referred to as *curacas*. Over time, the term was adopted in Spain, where it came to carry an even stronger association with political bossism. (Kern & Dolkart 1973; Britannica 2016)

Caciquismo describes the influence of such local power brokers, who typically emerged from the rural masses or lower middle classes. *Caciques* held local authority in their villages or towns and acted as intermediaries in both political and cultural matters. Unlike *caudillos*, they rarely maintained permanent armed forces but could still mobilize violent uprisings, known as *'jacqueries'* (a peasant revolt against the nobility). During the first half of the twentieth century, *caciques* played a key role in recruiting rural populations for factional disputes between *caudillos*. They also led peasant resistance against taxes, land expropriation, and disruptions to traditional life. Their ability to act as brokers allowed grassroots movements to influence broader political struggles. (Bethell 1994: 383)

In later times, these local strongmen were associated with rallying votes for their patron in the regions they controlled and handling the vote rigging (Lehoucq 2003: 240). It is this function that Matsuzato (2001) aims to capture by applying the term to local powerholders in Tatarstan (in the Russian Federation). Here, local (rural) bosses act as intermediary brokers, bridging the gap between central authorities and local communities. They position themselves within a hierarchical structure spanning the central, regional, and local levels through political exchanges, receiving **patronage** from higher authorities while mobilizing votes during elections at the grassroots.

Mandonismo, from the Portuguese *mandão* (strongman or boss), is closely related to *caciquismo* although it is rather a descriptor, not a political term. It describes the dominance of local leaders who control resources and political power in rural areas through personal authority and patron-client relationships. Scholars like Jose Murilo de Carvalho (1997) argue that mandonismo is Brazil's equivalent of *caciquismo* in Hispano-American contexts.

As defined by Victor Nunes Leal (1948; 1977), *Coronelismo* was specific to Brazil during its First Republic (1889-1930). The term refers both to this time period and to any political system where rural oligarchs (*coronéis*) control local politics through vote manipulation, patronage, and coercion. However, it represents a more institutionalized form of domination compared to *mandonismo* and was integral to Brazil's national state-building process during this period. It represents a strengthening of state power rather than the predominance of the military strongmen, and its bureaucratic drive and increased dependency on state structures actually increased the decline of local mandãos.

CRONYISM Crony capitalism refers to a (capitalist) economic system in which individuals with close ties to political power – often referred to as 'cronies' – secure positions of undue influence over economic policies, allowing them to reap significant personal benefits. Cronyism is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as *"appointment of friends and associates to positions of authority, without proper regard to their qualifications."* (Zudenkova 2015) This system distorts market mechanisms by prioritizing personal relationships over competition and merit. It is the antithesis of merit-based capitalism. (Klein et al. 2022)

One way to look at cronyism is from the perspective of **neo-patrimonialism** and **state capture**. Here, cronyism is equated with a state of **systemic corruption**. For instance, a notable example of 'crony capitalism' in Russia is seen in the privatization process, where insider dealings allowed major state assets, such as oil companies, to be transferred into private hands at drastically undervalued prices. Another instance is the establishment of 'authorized banks,' a select group of commercial banks granted exclusive rights to manage government accounts. These privileges were often exploited; for example, payments could be deliberately delayed, reducing their real value under conditions of high inflation. Additionally, there have been serious allegations of insider trading involving cronies in the Russian government securities market. In the context of Russia, cronyism highlights the informal arrangement that developed between the president and the country's business elite, commonly known as oligarchs. Their tacit agreement implied that if the oligarchs used their economic clout to provide political and financial backing to the president, they would, in turn, be granted the ability to shape laws and regulations in ways that served their own interests. (Hedlund, no date)

Cronyism is mostly studied as an informal practice (cf. **informality**), and its pervasiveness, function and impact correlate differently with definitions of illegality depending on cultural and legal contexts (Khatri et al. 2006; Khatri & Tsang 2016; Pearce 2015). In more modern times, the term 'crony capitalism' was first widely used in the 1980s to describe the economic system under Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship in the Philippines; later, the term bossism was used as well for that regime.

Coyne & Hall (2019) offer a different perspective and argue that cronyism is a feature and not a bug in all political systems: *"There are two reasons, however, why real*



government can never be limited to a role of referee that stands entirely outside of the game it is tasked with overseeing. First, even the minimal protective state requires resources in order to operate. This requirement means that the government must intervene in private economic life to extract resources. In doing so, it shapes and manipulates economic life and creates an environment conducive to cronyism by relying on political power to determine resource transfers and allocations. Second, the minimal protective state must also have discretion to deal with circumstances that are unforeseen at the time it is granted its initial powers." (Coyne & Hall 2019: 400).

BOSSISM Immortalized in two Martin Scorsese movies, *Gangs of New York* (2002) and *The Irishman* (2019), bossism is portrayed as systemically corrupt urban machine politics at the local and state levels in a flawed, pre-WWII US democracy. As a term, 'bossism' refers to an institutionalized political system where a single leader (obviously 'the boss') exercises control over the selection of political party candidates and the distribution of **patronage**, often without regard for the public interest. The power of the boss derives from their ability to unilaterally choose candidates who will win elections, thereby ensuring that elected representatives remain indebted to them. These representatives, in turn, allow the boss to make key policy decisions and distribute government jobs and resources to party loyalists.

Outsiders and rivals inflate their imagined level of personal power. Stave et al. (1988: 294), quoting Lord James Bryce, described a boss as *"dominant among his fellows (…) He dispenses places, rewards the loyal, punishes the mutinous, concocts schemes, negotiates treaties. He generally avoids publicity, preferring the substance to the pomp of power, and is all the more dangerous because he sits, like a spider, hidden in the midst of his web."*

Bosses often wielded significant influence at the local level by combining their role as political party leaders with elected office, but they were never unchallenged. The source of their **legitimacy** is thus partly legal-rational as it is derived from the office they occupy. However, their ascent might not have been democratic (i.e., election rigging); they reinforced their position through control over a local or private security apparatus (local police or thugs). (Geller 1968) Their ability to dole out positions in the civil service resonates with the concept of **prebendalism**, albeit at a lower (local) level.

In the US, the phenomenon is most commonly associated with big cities but has also been prevalent at state and local levels in suburban and rural areas. For instance, Harry Flood Byrd dominated Virginia's *Democratic Party* from the 1920s to the 1940s. Bosses have even played roles in national politics, such as influencing presidential nominations and elections, notably Harry Truman's vice-presidential nomination in 1944 and John F. Kennedy's election in 1960. (DoAH, no date)

The conditions for bossism were particularly ripe between the 1860s and WWII, driven by waves of immigration. Political machines led by bosses provided jobs, favors, and ethnic solidarity to immigrants in exchange for their electoral support. However, Progressive reformers at the turn of the twentieth century attacked these systems for their inefficiency and **corruption**, leading to civil service reforms that weakened bossism. The decline of bossism after WWII is attributed to changes in immigration patterns, demographic shifts in cities, the expansion of federal social welfare programs, and a decrease in voter loyalty to party organizations. The rise of mass media like television and radio also allowed candidates to bypass political machines and communicate directly with voters.

Outside the US, the concept has often been applied to the Philippines. This marks an interesting break with previous frames, which is intentional: *"The use of the term 'boss' reflects both a rejection of accounts stressing the putative sociocultural legacies of Spanish colonial rule (caciquism) and the supposed salience of patron-client relations (clientelism) in the Philippines (…) [emphasizing] the distinctly American colonial-era institutional structures inherited by the postwar Philippine state and stresses the often underestimated and poorly understood role of violence and coercive pressure in shaping economic accumulation, political competition, and social relations in the archipelago."* (Sidel 1999) Before, *caciquismo* was used in the amalgam of 'cacique democracy' (Anderson 1988), although this term has attracted *opprobrium* from (native) scholars.

As presented in Table 1.4, a comparative overview of these four concepts might provide the most clarity as several key distinctions emerge across dimensions, such as their scope, level of formalization, power bases, and relationship to electoral politics. Even with some similarities – such as their informal nature and reliance on **patronage** – they also diverge significantly in terms of their structure and historical context.

Both *caudillismo* and bossism can be easily classified as distinct (historical) regime types, originating at the local level but showing a tendency to expand beyond that. (Note that Linz (2000: 155-157) also classifies *caciquismo* as a traditional regime type.) *Caudillismo* often grows from the regional to capture the national level, whereas bossism tends to remain more localized or regional in its influence but has been applied to political regimes at the state level.

Caudillismo is characterized by military power and personal charisma, often associated with a single leader who consolidates authority through force and personal loyalty. It always involves the establishment of a hierarchical patronal network, where a single 'pyramid' of power dominates the political landscape. The *caudillo's* authority is thus rooted in his ability to command military forces and inspire personal loyalty among followers. In contrast, bossism is more institutionalized due to its reliance on party machines. A boss's power is derived not from military influence *per se* but from holding high office and engaging in forms of political manipulation such as election rigging or patronage. Bossism operates within a vertical patron-client structure, often mediating between different ethnic constituencies in an urban setting. Unlike *caudillismo's* reliance on personal charisma and military might, bossism's strength lies in its ability to control political institutions and manipulate electoral processes.

Caciquismo is a more localized practice rather than a full-fledged regime type. It is deeply rooted in rural settings and involves local strongmen (*caciques*) who act as intermediaries (brokers) between the government and local populations. These leaders represent the interests of specific ethnic or social groups within a federal system composed of similar units. *Caciquismo* has historically been tied to electoral politics, particularly in authoritarian regimes where elections serve more as a performance than a genuine democratic process. The *cacique* acts as a personalist patron within his local domain, exercising significant influence over both local governance and the distribution of resources.

Cronyism, by contrast, is not tied to any specific geographic level – local, regional, or national – and is, in all aspects, more of a practice than a regime type. It refers to the favoritism shown by those in power toward friends or associates, particularly in business or politics. Unlike *caciquismo*, cronyism is not associated with elections but instead connects elites through transactional politics that typically exclude societal non-elite actors and their interests.

There is a clear distinction between the rural and urban origins of these concepts. *Caudillismo* and *caciquismo* both have rural roots, and bossism and cronyism are more closely associated with urban centers and businesses. Bossism thrives in large cities where political machines can manipulate large populations through patronage systems, using the system of urban civil service and resources at their disposal to control voters. Cronyism tends to flourish in environments where elites engage in mutually beneficial transactions that are often centered around urban business or political networks.

All four concepts are forms of informal politics that rely on personal relationships rather than formal institutions. In these systems, power is exercised through networks of loyalty and transactional relationships rather than through established political structures. Bossism merely stands out for its predefined degree of institutionalization (a political **party**). Only *caciquismo* and bossism are linked to **elections** and **ethnic politics**. *Caudillismo* has little connection to electoral politics due to its focus on military leadership rather than democratic processes. Cronyism is similarly (conceptually) disconnected from elections; it operates primarily through elite transactions once a ruler has come to power and does not involve brokering public participation or competition for office through voting mechanisms (although raising campaign money is another matter).

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Box 1.11 Nomenklatura: The Red Bureaucracy

A ruling class that monopolized power and privilege under the guise of serving the people.
– Michael Voslensky, Soviet dissident, *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (1970)

In socialist-type regimes, *nomenklatura* refers to a system of appointing individuals to key administrative positions within the government, economy, and other sectors of society based on their loyalty to the Communist Party or equivalent. In other words, it thus is an institutionalized system of **patronage**. Confusingly, the term also refers to the group of people who occupy these positions, thus as a group label for the political elite that controls significant aspects of governance and decision-making.

The term *nomenklatura* is the Russian term (номенклатура) for nomenclature (a naming system). It has a specific meaning and refers to lists of key positions that needed to be filled by politically reliable individuals in the communist system. Over time, it came to denote both the process of staffing these positions and the group of officials who held them. The original term, nomenclature, is general and absolutely neutral. It just refers to a labeling system or set of rules for naming things in various fields, particularly in science and arts. It is derived from the Latin *nomen* (name) and *calare* (to call), and it deals with sorting objects or concepts according to specific conventions. In biology, for example, nomenclature governs how species are named and classified based on agreed international rules.

The *nomenklatura* system was designed to ensure that power remained centralized within the Communist Party, with appointments made based on political reliability rather than merit or expertise. This system played a crucial role in maintaining the party's control over the state and society by filling important roles with individuals who were politically trustworthy and aligned with party ideology. These officials 'on the list' were part of a privileged class with access to special benefits, such as better housing, healthcare, and education for their families.

What are the exact dynamics of how appointments were distributed? Which positions were up for grabs by what authorities, and how did the system evolve? (i.e., under **personalization** or during Perestroika) While these aspects have acquired some attention in the last decade of the Cold War and right after (Harasymiw 1969; Moses 1981; Miller 1983; Weeks 1987; Rigby 1988; Hill & Löwenhardt 1991; Kryshtanovskaya & White 1996) – many of these questions remain answered in part and are still subject of historical inquiry (Lewin 2003). In addition, scholars aim to gauge its long-term impact from the point of view of **authoritarian legacies** (Snegovaya & Petrov 2022).

The *nomenklatura* system was not limited to the Soviet Union but was also used in other Eastern Bloc and non-European countries under communist rule; for China, consult Burns 1987; 1989; Chan 2004. For comparative works, see: Eyal & Townsley 1995; Dogan & Higly 1998. For individual cases, consult these works: for Poland (Podgorecki 1994; Wasilewski 1995), Romania (Grosescu 2004), Hungary (Szakolczaia & Horváth 1991; Huszár 2005), and Yugoslavia (Obradović 2013; Dyker 2014; Miller 2022). Today, the term has traveled over the world to (non-communist) party-based regimes as well and is used universally to denote the inner sanctum or ruling elites (**ruling coalition**).

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Oligarchy

The tyranny of a prince in an oligarchy is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy
– Montesquieu (1748)

This is oligarchy: a government of the billionaires, by the billionaires, and for the billionaires
– US Senator Bernie Sanders

The concept of oligarchy as a political regime type has evolved significantly over time, both in its meaning and its constitution. Historically, oligarchy refers to a form of governance where power is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or families, often distinguished by wealth, social status, or political influence. This contrasts with more democratic forms of governance where power is distributed more broadly among the population.

ORIGIN In ancient Greece, oligarchies were prevalent in city-states such as Sparta and Athens. These regimes were typically characterized by the rule of a small group of wealthy individuals who held significant power and influence. The term oligarchy itself originates from the Greek ὀλιγαρχία with *olígos* (few) and *árkhein* (to rule) and was used by Aristotle to describe a perverted form of aristocracy, where the rule was by the rich for corrupt and unjust purposes (Gottfried 2019; Ramos 2017; Badie et al. 2011).

Ancient Greek oligarchies actually developed as a response to democracy, not the other way around (cf. Simonton 2017), and were typically characterized by a property requirement for holding office, with institutions malignantly designed to exclude people with low incomes from power.

In the medieval period, oligarchies were often linked to the rise of merchant classes and city-states, where wealthy families or guilds dominated political and economic life. During the colonial era, oligarchies were prevalent in societies where a small group of European settlers or local elites exercised control over the Indigenous population. In the post-communist context, oligarchies emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union, as former state assets were acquired by a small group of individuals who leveraged their newfound wealth to gain political influence (Badie et al. 2011).

SEE ALSO This is one of the oldest regime types since the time of Plato and Aristotle. In contemporary times it can equate with a collegial form of exclusive **electoral authoritarianism**. It is often too exclusive and repressive to be considered competitive authoritarianism, but some **hybrid regimes** have identified some forms of defective democracy as oligarchic. Its older forms are sometimes considered proto-party-based forms of **single-party regimes**. Currently, the term also stands for **state capture** by wealthy elites.

DEFINITION Classical thinkers considered oligarchy as a form of government in which a small minority of people, typically the wealthy, hold and maintain power, often at the expense of the common good. In the archetypal six-fold category this regime type thus was the **corruption** of the 'few.'

Socrates describes oligarchy as a political system where the rich hold power while poorer people are excluded, leading to a society where everyone outside the ruling class lives in poverty. In contrast, democracy is portrayed as a system based on equality and freedom. (For their full classification, see **Plato & Aristotle**).

Aristotle, following Plato's classification in the *Statesman*, categorizes political regimes into six types: kingship, **aristocracy**, and **timocracy** (or *politeia*) are considered good, whereas **tyranny**, oligarchy, and **democracy** are seen as bad, with democracy being the least objectionable among the bad ones. Aristotle notes that the primary distinction between oligarchy and democracy is not the number of rulers but rather that the rule of the rich characterizes oligarchy, while in democracy, power is held by all free citizens (Saxonhouse 2015; Miller 2009).

Aristocracy is ideally governed by the virtuous, but in some instances, wealth or merit determines leadership, as seen in Carthage or Sparta. Oligarchy involves rule by the wealthy and can vary depending on property qualifications; some forms may be hereditary, such as dynastic rule, which is considered a form of tyranny among oligarchies because it upends the collegial features of elite rule. *Politeia* represents a blend of oligarchy and democracy, combining wealth and freedom; if virtue is also present, it resembles aristocracy as governance by the best (Saxonhouse 2015; Miller 2009).

Abu Nasir al-Farabi (*al-Fārābī* – 872-950 CE, 'Alpharabius' in Latin) followed this model in his work *Al-Madina al-Fadila* (*The Virtuous City* or *Ideal State*). In his five types of 'city,' he identifies 'the ignorant city' as characterized by its inhabitants' lack of understanding of true felicity and ignorant rulers pursuing wealth equating to oligarchy (see also: 'Islam' under **religions of the world & statecraft**). Other medieval thinkers, like Engelbert of Admont, also borrowed and adjusted the Aristotelian mode (Blythe 1992), cf. **medieval classifications**.

Throughout history, oligarchies have often been perceived as coercive systems that rely on public obedience or oppression to maintain control. This perception is rooted in the idea that oligarchies prioritize the interests of the ruling few over those of the general populace. Some contemporary scholars have retained this approach, as shown in 'classifications' below, but overall, the interpretation of oligarchy has changed. However, in the literature, the term remained 'underspecified' in the scholarly literature (Leach 2005) and remains one of the most



frequently used but insufficiently theorized terms in the social sciences (Winters 2011: 1).

The modern understanding of oligarchy has been influenced by sociological theories such as Robert Michels (1878-1936), who came up with his 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' (cf. Box 5.4), suggesting that all organizations inevitably become oligarchic as they grow, concentrating power in the hands of a few (Maloy 2023). This theory suggests that true democracy within organizations is unattainable because of the need for efficient leadership and decision-making.

Most observers have been 'off topic' when it comes to treating oligarchy as a regime type: *"Despite the abundance of contemporary writing on the concentration of wealth and power, studies have been mainly concerned with either the (somewhat derivative) problems of inequality and inadequate regulation, or with the implications of the power of the oligarchy to democracy, competition, and national political autonomy. while these issues are pivotal for a comprehensive analysis of oligarchy, they are largely of a secondary nature to the underlying mechanisms of the oligarchy's power basis, the causality of its evolution, and its relationship with other institutions and processes in capitalism."* (Gottfried 2019: 6).

In more recent times, the concept of oligarchy has been applied to various political and economic contexts. For example, after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was often described as an oligarchy due to the concentration of wealth and power among a small group of business magnates. (Its plutocratic (civilian) elites are still called олигархи *(oligarkhi),* but elites from the security forces, law enforcement and military are collectively referred to as силовики – *siloviki*). Similarly, some political scientists argue that certain features of contemporary democracies, like the US, exhibit oligarchic tendencies due to significant economic inequalities that allow elites to influence public policy disproportionately.

In contemporary discussions, oligarchy refers to the exertion of influence and the strategies used to accumulate and maintain wealth and power, even without direct involvement in formal governance structures. This interpretation, of course, thus no long treats oligarchy as a political regime. It merely underscores the systemic ways in which political processes and the broader political economy may cater to the interests of a wealthy minority. This dynamic is often attributed to structural weaknesses in capitalism, challenges inherent to (democratic) systems, and other related factors, even if this wealthy elite does not officially govern. Jeffrey A. Winters (2011), a prominent scholar of oligarchy, defines it as the 'politics of wealth defense' by materially endowed actors.

If regimes can thus become 'oligarchic' (an adjective, not a noun), then one must be able to label this process 'oligarchization,' and its end goal should be the achievement of some pure type of oligarchy. Such an approach thus allows for hybridization. While historically at opposing sides in the typology, democracies can become oligarchic without breaking down and thus function as some sort of defective democracies, for instance, constitutional-oligarchic **hybrid regimes** (Wigell 2008) or becoming a 'domain democracy' (Merkel 2004).

Some scholars argue that oligarchy should be understood not simply as the rule of a specific group of individuals but as an 'informal institution' with its own set of rules, strategies, and dynamics. According to game theory, the mission of this institution is to shield itself from competition while preventing a political backlash that can result in a confiscation of its wealth. In other words, oligarchs influence and manipulate political regimes and protect their power from competitive threats. Second, they help avoid a 'legitimacy crisis,' which could arise from excessive exploitation or short-sighted actions, such as those seen in the US financial sector prior to the 2008 crisis. Thus, while these rules may limit the predatory tendencies of oligarchs, they simultaneously facilitate the preservation and augmentation of their wealth and power (Gottfried 2019).

Interesting is that this 'oligarchization' is not expanded upon for non-democratic politics. In contrast, 'de-oligarchization' exists and is defined as *"eliminating the excessive influence of vested interests in economic, political, and public life"* (cf. Zurabashvili 2022: 1; Minakov 2023). Still, the oligarchization in political regimes could denote two processes on two axes. The increase of 'reserved domains' by vested elites (politically influential but outside the formal power structure) with the aim of co-opting these wealthy elites, granting them favors and positions in exchange for their support, could solidify the regime's control and further entrench oligarchic interests.

Alternatively, oligarchization could be the opposite of **personalization**, a shift from 'one ruler' to 'the few' and thus could denote a move toward collegial rule, either as 'de-personalization' with the specific aim to defend wealth, privileges, and assets from **tyranny** and arbitrary confiscation (protecting property rights); or a move away from **absolutism** in **monarchies**, although property rights are better protected under the latter (Guillén 2018).

From a contemporary perspective, the 'few' who constitute the core of oligarchy can encompass a wide range of groups, including enslavers, landlords, nobility, the wealthy elite, high-ranking officials, or party bureaucrats. Thus, rule by the superrich or *plutocracy* represents just one interpretation of oligarchy, with wealth as the defining factor for influence and decision-making. In contrast, oligarchy can derive power from various sources such as military strength, family ties, or expertise, not just wealth.

Plutocracy is thus a subset of oligarchy, specifically focused on economic elites controlling governance. Currently, the world's richest man (with a net worth of around 439.4 billion USD in early December 2024), Elon Musk has used his financial resources to support political candidates, notably contributing vast sums to Donald Trump's re-election campaign and playing a pivotal role in his electoral success by his ownership of *Twitter/X* to spread **disinformation** and **propaganda**. Musk's actions initially demonstrated how wealth could translate into political power and influence at a regional scale (i.e., his *Starlink* satel-

lites that were used in the Ukrainian war), but it was his purchase of *Twitter*, completed in October 2022, that enabled him to become a global political player.

After Trump was reelected in 2024 for a second term, Musk's wealth shortly peaked to half a trillion (500 billion) USD in late December 2024, well superseding the GDP of over 140 nations. Musk his crucial role and support of Trump has also bought him direct influence in the White House when the latter took office in early 2025. Currently, Musk is a 'special government employee' and direct advisor to president Trump, and he has been tasked by leading the newly formed *Department of Government Efficiency* (DOGE), which has broad authority to reshape federal agencies, despite ongoing concerns about conflicts of interests (as he is still the CEO of several companies) combined with violations of congressional authority and federal laws. His enormous, blunt funding cuts, mass firings of federal employees (**purges**) and active rollback of regulations (by disabling regulatory agencies) are a form of **state capture** and seem to be paving the path for a self-coup by the Trump **ruling coalition**.

In economic terms, oligarchy finds its closest parallel in *oligopoly*, where a small number of dominant players control the market, operating independently and effectively sidelining competitors who cannot challenge them on equal terms. (Badie et al. 2011) While oligarchs are a type of elite, they are distinguished by their vast material wealth and the unique political challenges and capacities that come with it. Elites can hold power based on various resources, such as social status, expertise, or political connections, but oligarchs are defined primarily by their economic dominance (Ramos 2017; Gottfried 2019).

Overall, while the fundamental idea of oligarchy as ruled by a few remains consistent, its conceptualization as a regime type has shifted over time. From ancient city-states to modern nation-states, oligarchies have adapted to different sociopolitical environments, often intertwining with other forms of governance, such as democracy and communism. This evolution reflects broader changes in societal structures and ideologies, where democracy has become a global force, highlighting the persistent tension between concentrated power espousing elite interests and democratic ideals aimed at the common good.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Oligarchy has been a persistent feature of human societies, appearing in various forms throughout history, from ancient Greece to the modern era. Analyzing oligarchy allows us to comprehend this enduring pattern of minority rule and its profound impact on societies over time.

Oligarchic tendencies pose significant threats to democracy and equality, even within ostensibly democratic systems. When a small group of wealthy individuals wields disproportionate power, they can manipulate policies and regulations to serve their own interests, often at the expense of the majority. This dynamic can exacerbate economic inequality as oligarchs skew systems to benefit themselves, resulting in widening gaps between the rich and the poor (Cameron 2020). Furthermore, public trust in democratic institutions may erode as citizens perceive these systems as rigged in favor of the wealthy, undermining faith in democratic processes (Foweraker 2021). Such conditions can also lead to political instability, as social unrest emerges from those excluded from power who seek to challenge the *status quo*.

Oligarchy has proven highly adaptable and takes on different forms depending on the context. Additionally, oligarchy is deeply intertwined with globalization and contemporary capitalism. The rise of globalized capitalism has created new avenues for wealth accumulation, enabling the emergence of powerful transnational oligarchs who operate across borders (Glassman 2021; Cameron 2020; Ramos 2017).

By uncovering the mechanisms through which oligarchic power operates, the study of oligarchy highlights potential threats to democratic values and offers insights into promoting greater political and economic equality. It remains an essential area of inquiry for those invested in safeguarding the health and future of democratic societies.

LITERATURE Several recent overviews of oligarchy have been published in the last decade: Simonton 2017 (for the classical Greek model); Gottfried 2019 (on oligarchization in democracies); Foweraker 2020 (on a comparison of the US and Latin America). Winters (2011) remains a foundational work. Older regional studies are Ramseyer & Rosenbluth 1995 (on Japan), Winters 2012 (on Southeast Asia), and Johnson 1970 (on medieval China). Besides these comparative works, interesting case studies abound: Mendoza et al. (2022) comparing two snapshots of the Philippines in the 1970s and 2020s; Zhu (2022) on contemporary China.

CLASSIFICATIONS Even when seldom defined specifically, oligarchy has never gone out of fashion as an analytical concept. Subclassifications are useful, and below, one finds a selection of the most relevant approaches from the mainstream literature.

Jeffrey A. Winters categorizes oligarchies into four distinct types based on the methods oligarchs use to defend their wealth, particularly their level of personal involvement in coercion and the extent to which their rule is fragmented or collective (Winters 2011).

The first category, (i) *warring oligarchies*, is characterized by oligarchs who are directly armed and personally engaged in violence to protect their wealth. Their rule is highly fragmented and personalist, with examples including Appalachian feuding families and the 'Wild West' cattle barons. In contrast, (ii) *ruling oligarchies* involve oligarchs who still play an active role in defending their wealth and governing but do so collectively rather than individually. This type of oligarchy often operates through institutions controlled by the oligarchs themselves, as seen in the Roman Republic before the rise of emperors, medieval Italian city-states dominated by merchant oligarchs, and Apartheid-era South Africa (Winters 2011). *Sultanistic oligarchies* (iii) represent a system where a single oligarch monopolizes coercive power,



often disarming other oligarchs and relying on personalist rule and patronage networks. The ruler's authority is tied to protecting the collective wealth of the oligarchic class. Historical examples include Roman emperors after the fall of the Republic, as well as modern cases like Haiti and Afghanistan. Finally, *civil oligarchies* (iv) are defined by disarmed oligarchs who do not directly govern but instead defend their wealth through influence over impersonal state institutions. Their focus lies on income defense mechanisms, such as shaping tax policies or regulations. Winters argues that many contemporary democracies, particularly the US, exhibit features of civil oligarchy (Winters 2011).

Moreover, Winters (2011) exotically discerns between 'wild' and 'tamed' oligarchies. Wild oligarchies are marked by instability, violence, and frequent power struggles among oligarchs, often lacking institutionalized mechanisms to resolve conflicts or maintain order. In contrast, tamed oligarchies are more stable and institutionalized, with systems in place to manage conflicts among oligarchs and preserve their collective power. This stability can result from internal self-regulation within the oligarchic group or external pressures exerted by a stronger state or international actors.

Some contemporary scholars identify oligarchic authoritarianism as distinct regime types where a small, wealthy elite is in control. Bratton and van de Walle (1994) developed a typology of African political regimes, in which he identified two oligarchic types: Settler oligarchy (a) and military oligarchy (b).

A *settler oligarchy* (a) is a political system that resembles an exclusionary democracy, emerging in regions where European settlers gained autonomous control of the state, such as parts of Latin America and Africa. These regimes are characterized by the dominant settler group using legal frameworks to exclude ethnic majorities from political participation, typically through restrictive voting rights and emergency legislation. Despite this exclusion, settler oligarchies allow significant political competition within the settler population, making them both exclusionary and internally competitive. South Africa is a prominent example, alongside several other countries in eastern and southern Africa, with a settler colonial legacy (Bratton & van de Walle 1994),

Military oligarchy (b) is one of four variants of **neo-patrimonialism** (personal dictatorship, military oligarchy, plebiscitary one-party systems, and competitive one-party systems). It is a form of exclusionary regime in which elections are suspended, and power is concentrated in a ruling elite, typically a junta or committee, rather than a single leader. While decision-making is collective and may involve civilian advisers, political participation is severely restricted, with bans on parties and civic organizations. These regimes rely on force to maintain control, facing crises of legitimacy due to unmet economic promises and limited public support. Transitions to civilian rule are often managed from above, with weak opposition unable to challenge the regime's timetable. Examples include Ghana under Rawlings and Nigeria under Babangida (Bratton & van de Walle 1994).

Geddes (2003) treats oligarchies as a subtype of **single-party regimes** in their typology and corresponding dataset (**Geddes, Wright & Frantz**). She defines oligarchy as a political system characterized by extremely restricted suffrage and, in some cases, less institutionalized systems where executive power is often seized by force, although elections may still occur following these power seizures. In her framework, the defining feature of oligarchies is not necessarily the method of selecting executives but rather the presence of public and organized elite political competition structured into somewhat stable blocs. This distinguishes oligarchies from despotic regimes, where political competition occurs solely within the ruler's inner circle. Thus, periods are considered oligarchic if elite competition is visible and organized into stable factions rather than being entirely hidden within the ruler's entourage (Geddes 2003).

Kailitz (2024) similarly treats 'electoral oligarchy' as a more exclusive form of 'semidemocracy' (a type of rule without universal (male and female) suffrage) that was designed by elites to capture regimes such as Apartheid-era South Africa, where entire racial groups were excluded from the electoral process.

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Patrimonialism

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown
– Shakespeare, Henry IV

In Max **Weber's** understanding, patrimonialism is (like its more extreme form, **sultanism**) a type of **traditional rule**, more complex in scope than kin-based patriarchal systems, manifested as a personalist political system where a polity is ruled as the personal property of the incumbent, using these to dominate power relations.

This system of rule is characterized by the presence of administrative staff, in contrast to less complex familial systems (without staff) like *primary patriarchalism* (households characterized by (male) hereditary rule) or *gerontocracy* (characterized by rule by elders) and foremost by a leader's dominant power relation *vis-à-vis* this group. (Note that *gerontocracy* can also emerge in non-familial contexts – Box 1.12).

SEE ALSO This subtype of **traditional rule** in Weber's typology of **rulership**, together with its more extreme form (**sultanism**), constitutes the basis for later concepts like **neo-patrimonialism** and **neo-sultanism** and for the study of modern dictatorships. Many of its defining characteristics, like **prebendalism** and personalism, were also operationalized as analytical concepts and played a role in shaping terms like **personalist rule**, **kleptocracy**, and **clientelism**.

DEFINITION In the patrimonial ideal type, all power relations between ruler and ruled are personal relations. The polity is the personal property *(Patrimonium)* of the ruler. This 'patron' bestows gifts from public and private resources on followers to secure their loyalty. The administrative costs of governance are thus either covered directly by the leader from the central treasury or indirectly by granting 'benefices' (e.g., endowments or land estates with support staff as income) or offices (yielding revenues by managing taxation – cf. **prebendalism**) to followers in exchange for their service.

Patrimonial rule is characterized by: (A) the method of selection and background of the inner circle; (B) its patrimonial bureaucracy; and (C) its civil-military relations.

Inner Circle (A) – In Weber's understanding, patrimonialism develops from a patriarchal structure through an extension of the chief's family household (οἶκος – *oikos* – from Old Greek: 'house' 'family' and 'familial property'). This *patriarchalism* retains its traditional source of **legitimacy** ('the natural right to rule'), but the ruler's relation to the staff and the latter's nature are different (Guliyev 2011: 577). Personal relations with the ruler determine which followers are included in the **inner circle**. Unlike other traditional forms of rule, a ruler's discretion is very pronounced in patrimonial regimes and unbridled under sultanism. In the former, the ruler has to take into account traditions, customs or previous arrangements and adhere to the prevalent hierarchy (class, caste, etc.) among his subjects when selecting candidates to assist him in ruling. Under its extreme form, **sultanism**, the leader has full discretion and is no longer bound by tradition when selecting staff.

Patrimonial Bureaucracy (B) – Regarding the nature of the administrative staff in patrimonial systems (b) this group is no longer made up solely of traditional associates (kinsmen, (freed) enslaved people, domestic officials, clients) from the ruler's household, but they are also recruited 'non-patrimonially' from among personal favorites, vassals (owing fealty), and from (specialized) officials that have entered the ruler's service voluntarily (cf. **bureaucracy**). So even when staff may be placed in a seemingly orderly bureaucratic format, they are either unfree officials (enslaved people or dependents) or bondsmen, i.e., the holders of 'benefices' – offices with attached revenues or endowments – which the ruler transfers at his own discretion (Weber 2016: 349, 359).

Note that Weber distinguishes more forms of rents and that granting 'fiefs' (*Lehen* – land estates



that include delegating governing powers, like in feudal systems, may, in time, actually diminish true patrimonial power. Once military lords are given economic governing power over a ruler's estates in reward for their service, their obedience to the ruler can only be contractually enforced, reducing the traditional supremacy of the ruler when fiefs become hereditary and their personal bond *(Verband)* more hierarchical (Poggi 1988: 215-224).

The relationship between patrimonialism and feudalism (Box 1.14) is difficult to assess since Weber revised this topic in later versions (Zabludovski 1989b; Sell 2017). For more on Weber's interpretation of 'feudalism,' see Murvar 1964; Poggi 1988. Note that the applicability of the concept of feudalism to (Western) history itself remains disputed (Reynolds 2012).

A ruler's monopoly on political power, judicial supremacy, and discretion in bestowing (and removing) economic privileges determines the degree of the patrimonial system of rule. *"With full patrimonialism there is a complete separation of the administrator from the means of administration."* (Weber 2016: 364).

While Weber stresses the unequal power relation between a ruler and his staff and the economic logic that flows from this, he does not particularly highlight the patrimonial ruler's incentives to foster division and competition among the staff – a key dynamic that can also be found in **personalist rule** and the study of **coup-proofing**.

"Whenever possible the ruler tried to avoid monopolization of offices by groups that had status by appointing people dependent on him. (…) Administrative functions might be split among officials to prevent any from becoming too powerful. New or special tasks were given to favorites. Officials were appointed only for short terms. The office of military commander was separated from that of the tax collector or tax farmer. Officials were excluded from areas where they had relatives or where they owned land or were natives, and they were continually transferred. Spies and controllers (…) supervised them. Competition was encouraged between provinces and among officials. Competing offices might be created in the same district." (Curtis 2009: 276-277).

Often, members of the 'patrimonial bureaucracy' are granted some rights to govern parts of the *Patrimonium* on behalf of the ruler. In patrimonial systems, such a necessary exchange limits a ruler's discretion in selecting administrators from among the appropriate classes, and thus, the staff tends to belong more to the group of 'traditional associates' *(Genossen)* like in other forms of traditional domination. In its more extreme form, sultanism, the ruler has almost complete discretion in selecting, promoting and firing staff; here, the latter is fully reduced to the level of subjects *(Untertanen)*. Like in other pure types of traditional rulership, a patrimonial administrative staff does not have specifically delineated competencies, a fixed rational hierarchy, a system of regular appointments (and promotions based on merit) or specialist training (as the norm). Also (often) a fixed salary or even payment in money is missing.

Civil-Military Relations (C) – The power relations between ruler and followers also characterize patrimonial rule. In other (simpler) systems like *patriarchalism* or *gerontocracy,* rulers remain dependent on the wish of the members of the extended household to obey them by virtue of tradition. Rulers have no other way to enforce this. In contrast, patrimonial rulers possess their own repressive capacities: Besides some real traditional legitimacy, authority is enforced by administrative staff and military elements (**mercenary** bodyguards and patrimonial (slave) armies, cf. **presidential guards**) tied to the regime by personal ties and rents. Such a personal army was equipped and maintained out of the supplies and revenues belonging to the ruler (Curtis 2009: 281). This monopoly on repression allowed rulers to enforce obedience on other subjects. As this pillar of power is personally linked to the ruler, a separate community of interests coalesces around the ruler, which is opposed to that of its other subjects: *"Through these powers, the ruler extends the scope of grace and favor – of arbitrary rule free of tradition – at the cost of the traditional dependence associated with patriarchy and gerontocracy."* (Weber 2016: 306-361).

In order to keep control over his staff, a ruler needs to ensure the loyalty of his private army and to avoid that, benefices become hereditary, resulting in feudalism and a decentralization of supreme power. Weber still considers feudalism as a traditional form of rulership, but by nature, more oligarchic: *"Feudalism is domination by the few who are skilled in war; patrimonialism is domination by one who requires officials for the exercise of his authority."* (Bendix 1960: 364; Allen 2004: 104). Also, the more this traditional system of rulership tilts toward hierarchical rule, the more personalist power becomes restrained. The formation of a clear hierarchy of administrative staff – in other words, a shift toward legal-bureaucratic rule – restricts a ruler's discretion to select staff, appropriate posts, or retain the monopoly of power since power diffuses when individual staff members can secure the material means of administration in respect to the office they hold, as well as the related power of command to execute their function.

When it comes to survival, patrimonial regimes are thus vulnerable to military defeat or the sudden death (incapacitation) of the leader, which can jeopardize the personal connection between the supreme power holder and its armed forces. The inability to pay (to provide rent and pay his army) could force a patrimonial ruler to grant military commanders offices with taxation privileges, undercutting his power to act as a broker. Preventing staff from building up their power bases is thus a paramount concern in patrimonial polities, but the issue also has a geographical component: Territories near the center of power could be directly administered by the patrimonial bureaucracy. However, outlying provinces were often administered by (carefully) selected governors, who ruled in a patrimonial fashion themselves, exercising strong powers of their own. When servants became too numerous and more organized, they could limit the authority of the ruler by demanding contractual arrangements (Cur-

tis 2009: 274-275).

CLASSIFICATIONS There are two ways of sub-classifying patrimonialism: (A) Along its dimension of legitimacy, where the pure type can be found alongside the subtype of **sultanism** with a diluted traditional legitimacy and more personal discretion for the ruler – cf. Box 1.13 on Kadi Justice. (B) Moreover, according to its organizational dimension, where Weber distinguishes between (a) *patrimonial prebendalism* and (b) *patrimonial feudalism*.

The former (a) is the pure, traditional form, where rulers enlist staff by offering them 'prebends' for their upkeep (cf. **prebendalism**). Prebends are non-hereditary offices providing revenues and can be reassigned according to the ruler's whim or grace. Often, rulers and their retinue travel the *Patrimonium* as an itinerant court to exert better control. The second system (b) creates a stationary order *(ständische Gewaltenteilung)* of fief holders (estates), rendering bondsmen into a landed elite as their fiefs become hereditary, resulting thus in more centrifugal power relations with a capital city (Sells 2017: 321-326; Bevir 2007; Poggi 1988: 215).

Weber revised his classification of patrimonial subtypes in later editions, leading to much confusion. Some scholars follow Weber's early writings, where feudalism equals estate-type patrimonialism. Others base their interpretations on his later versions, where (full) feudalism is considered a different (non-patrimonial) form of traditional rulership. Until today, there is much confusion about how to separate the concepts precisely, but G. Zabludovsky (1989b) and C.E. Sell (2017) expose these inconsistencies.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE It is difficult to overstate Weber's influence on comparative politics. (Anter & Bruhns 2020) His ideal types have influenced scholarly thought and almost all academic writing on the nature of political regimes and legitimacy. Weber's concept of patrimonialism is most significant for the later study of informal dimensions of statehood: **neo-patrimonialism**, based on his study of 'patrimonial bureaucracy' while its aspects of personal power relations have influenced later interpretations of **neo-sultanism** and **personalist rule**.

ORIGIN Weber credits the self-taught Swiss jurist and statesman Karl Ludwig von Haller (1768-1854), who's influential work *Restauration der Staats-Wissenschaft* (published in six volumes in 1816-1834) elaborates on patrimonialism. This major work by Haller (1834), titled in full as: *'Restoration of Political Science: Theory of the state of natural sociability opposed to the chimera of an artificial civil state'* even lent its name to the 'Restoration' period (a reactionary phase against the French Revolution starting at the end of Napoleon's rule in 1815, lasting until the revolutions of 1830). Haller's motive is to refute the idea of the French Revolution being a liberation from illegitimate oppression. He criticizes the ideas behind the **revolution** and especially Jean-Jacques Rousseau's anti-monarchical treatise: *The Social Contract* (*du contrat social* – 1762), which Haller holds responsible for instigating the chaos and anarchy in Europe after 1789 (Kapossy 2017; Kruska 2021).

Haller derives the concept of patrimonialism from the *patrimonium populi* (public or state domains), the so-called princely domains of individual lords in ancient Roman times. Like with other judicial concepts from Roman law, Haller argues, these legal terms were applied erroneously to different circumstances by later scholars, leading to confusion about the natural (legal) order of monarchic rule. Haller thus tackles the legitimacy aspects (as does Weber) and was the first to identify that patrimonialism was a natural extension of the household ruled by a patriarch, thereby giving natural precedence to such private law (over public law). For a nuanced analysis of Haller's writings and the criticism he received, consult Kapossy 2017.

LITERATURE Among the many works covering Max Weber's writing, Iván Szelenyi (2016) provides a useful summary of Weber's defining characteristics of traditional rule (but confuses Weber's stance regarding sultanism). Vatro Murvar (1964) expands on the nature of Weber's 'ideal' or 'pure' type classification, covering traditional rulership in quite some depth. Michael Curtis (2009) is a must-read for a thorough review and critique of patrimonialism. Kieran Allen's (2004) short introduction to Weber provides valuable insights into traditional rulership in general. Carlos Eduardo Sell (2017) is most comprehensive in addressing how the concept evolved during Weber's various redactions of his (own) works.

MEASUREMENT In Weber's words: *"An absolutely ideal typical purely patrimonial state has never existed"* (Weber 2016: 368), and the defining aspects of patrimonialism remain difficult to benchmark: (a) The ruler has traditional claims to power and is largely supported by a traditional elite hierarchy. (b) His relations with his followers are patriarchial personal relations. (c) The regime must possess a 'patrimonial bureaucracy' and a 'patrimonial army', and therefore the ruler must have control over public and private resources to sustain such organizations and uphold his uneven power relation to them.

EXAMPLES Weber himself presents several examples of patrimonialism (stretching back to ancient Egypt, Rome and Byzantium) but compares them in a rather anecdotal and unsystematic way. His examples of pre-modern India, China and Japan as patrimonial systems have attracted much criticism. Many later scholars have undertaken various attempts to reevaluate Weber's original examples empirically. Just to mention a few: For South Asia, N. Abbot (2018) studied the patrimonial-bureaucratic state in the Mughal Empire (1526-1720), tracing the institution of *'Sarkār'* (an elite household with military and administrative appendages). For East Asia, G. Hamilton (1984; 1990), A. Eisenberg (1998), and Junnan Lai (2015) reappraised his take on Qing China (1644-1911); N. Jacobs (1964) covered pre-modern Japan. N. Naderi (1990) criticizes Weber's orientalist approach to Islam and Islamic societies in the pre-modern Middle East. Almost all these reviews point to Weber's



misrepresentation of non-Western cultures, i.e., his understanding of *Kadi* justice – Box 1.13.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES In his treatise of patrimonialism Weber has received various counts of criticism for his Orientalism. He alluded to the racial superiority of the West (with its modern **bureaucracy**) and compared the Occident and Orient on their achieved level of capitalist development (rational vs. irrational). Weber admitted being deeply motivated to find explanations for the cultural disparity he witnessed in the East, where the lack of a feudal aristocracy, independent clergy or entrepreneurial middle class never brought forth modern legal-rational states, like in the West (Murvar 1964: 378). Defenders of Weber argue that he never posited an 'essentialist' position in his writings: While he did consider religion to be a significant factor in explaining legal irrationality, absence of a free market, or lack of autonomous cities in different societies, Weber never considered it the only cause, instead pointing to patrimonialism (Curtis 2009: 297).

Kieran Allen (2004: 104-106) exposes Weber's ruler-centric vision on two accounts: (a) His sexist perspective: In all traditional systems, the patriarchal household is the archetypal center of authority for all (political) relations, and Weber completely blindsides the role and function of women in familial systems of governance, instead accepting patriarchal dominance as natural, primordial and static (existing from time immemorial). (b) His elitist perspective: The peasantry is completely ignored, and his focus is kept firmly on the 'apex of the feudal pyramid.' *"There is no discussion on why the mass of the population obeys the knights and kings. It is assumed that they accept feudal society as legitimate because their landlords do."* (Allen 2004: 106).

REGIONAL VARIATION Latin America is the only continent where patrimonialism has been consistently used as an analytical frame to study regime types. Gina Zabludovsky (1989a) provides an excellent literature overview on the use of the concept in Latin America, where scholars have applied it to *Nueva España* (the Viceroyalty of Spain) and other successor states of Iberian colonialism. She covers the approaches of important English works like Morse 1964; Malloy 1976; and influential works in Spanish by: Semo 1973; Florescano & Gil Sánchez 1976; Paz 1982; Pietschmann 1982. Furthermore, she exposes their weaknesses (the transplantation of 'oriental' concepts for Latin American realities, lack of conceptual clarity and wrong use of ideal types; the absence of clearly demarcated historical periods) resulting from older translations of Weber's *Economy and Society* and unequal access to his other writings (Zabludovsky 1989a: 60-64) Other authors applying the concept are: Sarfatti 1966; Osiel 1986; Oszlak 1986; and specifically, to Brazil: Uricoechea 1980; Roett 1984.

OTHER LANGUAGES Brazil hosts the only academic community where patrimonialism has become a permanent conceptual feature in sociology. Carlos Eduardo Sell (2017) provides a short overview on this Brazilian debate. More can be found in Portuguese: J.M.D. Carvalho (1997) elaborates on the confusion of terms in Latin America. R.G. Campante (2003) tackles the misinterpretation of some of Weber's terms by the renowned Brazilian scholar Raymundo Faoro (1925-2003) in his magnum opus *Os Donos do Poder: Formação do patronato político brasileiro (The Owners of Power: The Formation of Brazilian Political Patronage)* from 1968.

In Russian, historian N.A. Omel'chenko analyzes the 'modernizing' reforms of Russia's court administration by Tsar Peter the Great (1672-1725) using patrimonialism to capture this new bureaucratic system based on personal loyalty, which shifted Russia away from legal-rational rule, rendering its patrimonial bureaucracy ineffective and dependent on political power. (Омельченко 2021)

NEW FRONTIERS Some studies reappraise the concept by applying it solely to monarchies, thus acknowledging its traditional legitimacy roots. D. Woods (2012) criticizes the neo-patrimonial derivative by going back to Weber's original and applying it to study elite relations and royal legitimacy in Swaziland. E. McDonagh (2015) applies patrimonialism to study the monarchical origins of the (Western) welfare state, positing that these emerged from earlier forms of *familial government* and that the family-state perspective is an understudied dimension in state formation studies.

A rare innovative approach is William P. Murphy's (2003) anthropological work on child soldiers (Box 8.5) in western Africa. He applies patrimonialism to analyze the client-patron system of military commanders and child soldiers in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This new approach goes beyond earlier frames that look at child soldiers solely as revolutionary rebels, coerced victims or delinquent opportunists and considers them as 'patrimonial staff' providing both military and administrative services in rebel-captured areas in exchange for protection and prebends, bound by patriarchal personal relations to their 'big man' commanders.

A recent appraisal of patrimonialism regarding the legacies of empires can be found in the special issue (2011) and book (2015) edited by M.M. Charrad & J.P. Adams. In both works, various authors try to untangle patrimonialism, bureaucracy and modernity. These two works offer chapters with a wide geographical coverage of world empires and cases, ranging from Sub Saharan taxation systems to studies of sub-national networks like gangs, mafias and crime rings – applying its analytical lenses of kinship ties, 'local patriarchalism' in institutions, and imperial legacies.

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Box 1.12 Gerontocracy: Old Guards, Feeble Fists

Clearly, ours is an age of gerontocracy. If advancing years meant growing wisdom, today's generation would be more wisely ruled than any of our ancestors.
– Dankwart A. Rustow (1964)

Gerontocracy, at its essence, reflects a system of governance where older individuals hold disproportionate political power. It has been a recurring phenomenon across different historical and political contexts. (The Roman institution 'senate' is related to the Latin word *senex*, meaning 'old man.')

Gerontocracy was definitely the buzzword of the first part of the 2024 US election as an octogenarian, and a septuagenarian dueled it out over who was the most vigorous. Both Joe Biden, at 81, and Donald Trump, at 78, were among the oldest individuals to ever run for and hold the US presidency. This has sparked widespread debate about whether they are too old to continue serving in one of the most demanding jobs in the world. (Ng & Indran 2023) As the election proceeded, and every 'senior moment' was magnified in the press and on social media, pressure mounted on President Biden to drop out of the race (for his second term), which he reluctantly did in favor of his vice president, Kamala Harris.

His initial refusal to withdraw is blamed as one of the main causes why Harris did not win the electoral race (i.e., her campaign was too short, and since there was little time before the elections, her candidature was more imposed by the top leadership than elected by the Democratic Party, etc.). Also, Harris faced significant challenges in her campaign, unable to criticize to the unpopular incumbent President Biden. She struggled to articulate a distinct political vision, instead focusing on arguments against Trump's fitness for office. This strategy backfired as voters grappled with perceptions of rising inflation and economic concerns, which they attributed to the Biden administration – of which Harris remained a part. Trump, benefiting from a incumbency advantage (Box 8.2) and new support from tech billionaires, ultimately secured the electoral victory.

One of the narrower definitions refers to a system where political power is explicitly reserved for older individuals. This form of direct rule by elders is seen in historical examples like ancient Sparta's *Gerousia* (γερουσία – the council of elders), where men over the age of 60 held legislative and judicial authority. (Ng & Indran 2023) Similarly, pre-colonial African age-set societies often conferred leadership roles to elders, reinforcing formalized gerontocratic structures. (Magni-Berton & Panel 2021; 2022)

While the system has been very biased in favor of male elders, there are some counter-examples: In the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (or Iroquois Confederacy), *Clan Mothers*, as part of the matrilineal society, were responsible for selecting male leaders, known as *sachems* or chiefs, to represent their clans in the *Grand Council*. If a chief failed in his duties or acted against the clan's interests, the *Clan Mothers* had the power to 'de-horn' him, effectively removing him from leadership after issuing three warnings. This system ensured that female elders played a central role in maintaining political accountability. (Atkins & Grant 2024)

A broader definition encompasses systems where older individuals exert disproportionate influence over political processes without necessarily holding all leadership positions. This influence can stem from higher voter turnout among older citizens or their stronger engagement in political organizations. In this context, gerontocracy may not be codified but manifests through the over-representation of older individuals in decision-making roles due to their perceived wisdom and experience. This is related to the economic policy preferences of older voters in democracies. As populations age, older voters become a larger proportion of the electorate, prompting governments to prioritize policies that cater to their interests – such as pensions or low inflation – at the expense of policies that might benefit younger generations or foster long-term economic growth. This form of gerontocracy highlights the impact of demographic shifts on policy-making rather than formal political structures. (Berry 2012.; Atella & Carbonari 2017; Atkins & Grant 2024)

The term was first coined in 1828 by French pamphleteer Jean-Jacques Fazy as a critique of the aging French parliament. Since then, it has carried a negative connotation, often used to criticize the over-representation of older politicians who are perceived as resistant to change or disconnected from younger generations' needs.

Historically, gerontocratic systems have appeared across diverse cultures and periods. Besides Sparta's *Gerousia*, in Renaissance Venice, although there were no explicit age-based rules for political office, power was concentrated within older elite families, demonstrating how gerontocratic tendencies can emerge even without formal mechanisms. (Magni-Berton & Panel 2021; 2022).

Pre-colonial African societies also provide examples of gerontocracy through their age-set systems. Members of an age set typically undergo initiation ceremonies together and progress through different stages of life as a cohesive group. The system often dictates specific roles, duties, and privileges that correspond to the group's stage in the life cycle. Among communities like the Samburu in Kenya, elders held considerable authority in decision-making processes. Similarly, Indigenous Amazonian tribes practiced gerontocracy by giving elders central roles in governance. These examples highlight how gerontocracy has been intertwined with social structures and traditions across different regions. (Adebayo 2018)

In kinship-based societies and agrarian societies with lower life expectancies, elderhood was often associated with high status due to the perceived wisdom that comes with age. In these contexts, gerontocracy likely emerged as a natural consequence of societal reverence for experience and knowledge accumulated over time.

For contemporary regimes, gerontocracy differs significantly between democratic and non-democratic polities due to variations in political processes and power

dynamics.

In democracies, scholars examine why voters might prefer older candidates. One common explanation is that older politicians are perceived as more experienced and competent than their younger counterparts. This preference for experience is particularly pronounced during times of crisis when stability is prioritized over innovation. Additionally, older voters tend to participate more actively in elections than younger citizens, leading to an over-representation of their interests in policy-making processes. Additionally, retirees tend to have more homogeneous policy preferences compared with working-age populations whose interests may vary depending on factors like employment status or family responsibilities. (Berry 2012.; Atella & Carbonari 2017; Atkins & Grant 2024).

In contrast, research on autocracies focuses on elite politics rather than voter behavior since elections either do not exist or are heavily manipulated. Scholars investigate how leader **age** affects regime stability and **succession** planning within **ruling coalitions**. In many autocratic regimes (without **term limits**), selecting an older leader can be a strategic move designed to manage succession risks by limiting potential power struggles among elites. By choosing an aging leader with a shorter life expectancy, ruling coalitions can maintain control over succession processes while reducing uncertainty about future leadership transitions. (Magni-Berton & Panel 2017)

The connection between gerontocracy and peace, particularly in autocratic regimes, posits that older leaders may promote stability by naturally limiting their time in power. This concept, known as 'alternation through death,' suggests that the shorter life expectancy of elderly leaders creates incentives for **opposition** groups to wait for a leadership change rather than resort to violence. Drawing on the minimalist theory of democracy – which argues that elections reduce civil conflict by offering peaceful transitions – gerontocracy is seen as a functional equivalent in autocracies where elections are absent or manipulated. Historical examples support this theory: Venice under elderly Doges was an exceptionally stable polity, where a Doge entered office at age 68 on average, compared with 33 for European kings during the same period (Eisner 2011). Also notable are the reduced elite struggles in the USSR after Stalin when a series of seniors took the highest office: Khrushchev at 59 years, Brezhnev at 58, Andropov at 68, and Chernenko at 73 (all heavy smokers). Empirical evidence further indicates that non-democratic regimes led by older dictators experience fewer violent rebellions than their counterparts run by young autocrats. However, this effect is contingent on factors like the type of rebellion and the institutionalization of succession. While gerontocracy can reduce external conflicts, it may also provoke internal power struggles among potential successors and hinder long-term policy planning. (Magni-Berton & Panel 2018)

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Box 1.13 Kadi Justice: A Weberian Prejudice

Max Weber's misrepresentation of 'Kadi justice' has often been borrowed without due reflection. **Weber** argued that a combination of rigidity, arbitrary decision-making, and traditionalism characterized Islamic law. He identified several sources of Islamic law, including the Quran, legal specialists *(faqih)* in Islamic jurisprudence who formed the four major schools of legal jurisprudence (the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools), and what he termed 'Kadi justice,' (a *Kadi* (*Qadi* or *Kazi*) was a judge who adjudicated these forms of law and offered his interpretation if there was no or little legal precedent to fall back on).

Weber borrowed the term 'Kadi justice' from the German scholar Richard Schmidt to describe what he saw as informal, subjective judgments made by judges (kadis) based on ethical or practical valuations rather than formal legal rules. In Weber's view, when individual cases could not be decided by tradition or revelation, Kadi justice came into play. He argued that this form of justice lacked rational rules for decision-making and was marked by arbitrariness and unpredictability. As a result, Weber claimed that in societies where religious courts had jurisdiction over land disputes, economic development – particularly capitalist development – was hindered due to the uncertainty surrounding legal decisions.

However, this interpretation of Kadi justice has been critiqued for oversimplifying and misrepresenting the nature of Islamic legal practices. While Weber emphasized the unpredictability and arbitrariness of Kadi justice, many scholars argue that Islamic jurisprudence was far more nuanced and structured than Weber acknowledged. In reality, Islamic judges often relied on well-established legal principles derived from both the *Quran* and *hadith* and their decisions were shaped by centuries of legal thought developed within the various schools of Islamic law. Moreover, Weber's comparison between Islamic law and Western legal traditions – including his portrayal of canonic law as a model for secular law – can be seen as part of a broader Eurocentric narrative that contrasts 'rational' Western legal systems with 'irrational' non-Western ones. This binary overlooks the sophisticated legal mechanisms present in Islamic societies and fails to account for how Islamic law adapted to local contexts and social needs over time.

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Patronalism (Henry Hale)

The corruption of the best things gives rise to the worst.
– David Hume

God provides, but he needs a nudge.
– Persian proverb

Patronal politics place the **informality** of dictatorships' power politics at the center stage of analysis. Henry Hale developed this theoretical frame based on earlier conceptions of **patronage**, **clientelism** and **neo-patrimonialism**. It mostly concerns the power struggle within regimes, a dictatorship's grip over the state and its resources, the **personalization** of power and the transition when an **incumbent** becomes a lame duck (see Box 3.14).

DEFINITION Patronal politics can be defined as a network of political actors with a pyramidal hierarchy of chiefs (patrons) and subordinates (clients). This network provides the exchanges of goods, services and, in the case of politics, political functions and protection (cf. **patronage**). Higher-positioned patrons dole out rewards in exchange for their clients' loyalty but can dismiss them as a punishment depending on the actual situation in power politics. This setting often creates sub-patronal systems of high-positioned officers (in the state), economic oligarchs, tycoons or social authorities (sub-patrons). They create their own power pyramids that can compete with each other for access to the supreme leader (president, dictator, director) or, generally, any higher-positioned patron. Henry Hale (2015: 10) calls this a *competing-pyramid system*.

Patronal politics are highly informal and personalized; the patron-client networks are usually acquainted with each other or, at least, connected

through the mediators within the network (Hale 2015: 9). Patronal politics emerge in both democratic and authoritarian regimes. In the latter case, the institutions and formal political systems are weakened by a high level of informality that opens the way for patronal politics. The patron-client network implicates hierarchical relations and is usually performed from 'behind-the-curtain' politics. A patron can influence a group of people, such as classmates, family, clans, tribes, or oligarchs or through informal relations within political parties or others using their power and available resources.

SEE ALSO This theoretical framework differs from categorical ways of **classifying political regimes and rulers** because it does not aim to subdivide political regimes into certain types but rather identifies the baseline (reciprocal) dynamics for all political regimes, even democracies. As shown below, the concept shares similarities with **patrimonialism**, **neo-patrimonialism**, **systemic corruption, informality, nepotism** and **clientelism**. It is mostly applied to Eurasia and has been used to untangle various elite dynamics behind **color revolutions**.

ORIGIN Patronal politics is derived from different disciplines and concepts of informality. The research on informal politics (Helmke & Levitsky 2006), patronage or patrimonialism usually refers to Max Weber's *Herrschaft* (**rulership**) and the concept of the state's **traditional rule** and authority of the state, i.e., **patrimonialism** (Weber 2019). In the 1970s to the 1980s the concept of **neo-patrimonialism** developed from Weber's patrimonial state (Eisenstadt 1973). The concept became crucial to interpreting African postcolonial politics in the 1980s and 1990s (Bratton & van de Walle 1997) and was also adapted to the post-Soviet states after the fall of the Soviet Union (Laruelle 2012). In parallel, the concept of 'corporatism' in politics was discussed in Latin America (Camp 1998). The concept of **clientelism** became one of the crucial 'brotherhood' approaches to patronal politics studied by many authors and applied to different regions and states (Przeworski 1991; Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Stokes 2011). Finally, Henry Hale widened the term clientelism to include top-level politics, integrated its basic premises and laid the foundation for patronal politics theory (Hale 2015).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The more hierarchical a structure and the tighter the relations remain in the power pyramid, the more such a political entity requires vertical informal relations based on patron-client networks. The closed authoritarian systems are often based on centralized **personalist rule** that creates one top pyramid encompassing all spheres of the particular country's political and/or economic system. The lower *pyramids* are limited in their scale and power, as demonstrated in the cases of Russia after 2022, Turkmenistan, North Korea, and others. However, in many societies, including democratic ones, horizontal patronal relations (i.e., between different patrons and their groups) are relatively common.

In dictatorships, it is the head of the regime posing and imagining himself or herself as the principal patron, while most of the other elites are merely clients who can create their own (sub-)patronal systems. However, their dismissal by the top level of patronal politics can lead to the collapse of the whole 'little' patronal pyramid. Such 'divide-and-rule' politics in dictatorships create the necessity for loyalty to secure the position of the highest 'patron' (Van den Bosch 2021a: 10-12, Acemoglu 2004). The dismissal of the top patrons (presidents, dictators, monarchs) usually takes place through unrest from below the patron-client pyramid (if repressive organs fail to contain it), from outside actors (external intervention, a clash of several groups) or from within the narrow circle of leader's entourage (**coups**). Henry Hale defines patronal politics as *"a social equilibrium in which individuals organise their political and economic pursuits primarily around the personalised exchange of concrete rewards and punishment through chains of actual acquaintance, and not primarily around abstract, impersonal principles such as ideological belief or categorisations."* (Hale 2015: 10).

After creating the patron-client network of mutual benefits, the group, the patron or the leader is highly interested in conserving their positions. Such networked societal groups are vitally concerned with maintaining the status quo they created. In this way, the patron (politician, informal leader, chief) receives support from their clients in exchange for providing the expected services and goods to their clients (Acemoglu et al. 2014: 361). The benefits may include jobs, opportunities to gain personal income, bribes, help with local problems, assistance to relatives, etc. On the other hand, the patron should also be able to control eventual disobedient or dissatisfied clients through explicit or implicit threats (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007: 281). The strength and efficiency of patronalistic networks thus depend on the self-fulfilling prophecy of group expectations, by which members *believe* that (i) patrons continue to have access to valuable *resources* for rewarding loyal members; (ii) patrons have the power to *enforce* punishment selectively on disloyal members, and (iii) patrons can *monitor* clients and sub-patrons (Hale 2015: 20-22, 31).

CLASSIFICATION The complex research of post-communist political systems pursued by Magyar & Madlovics (2020: 628) divides such authoritarian regimes into three principal categories based on the character of its decision-making process and (a) informal patronal, (b) bureaucratic patronal, and (c) non-patronal. They also distinguish between 'hard' and 'soft' patronal autocracies, providing Russia and Hungary, respectively, as examples of both types. In addition, they also introduce the term 'patronal democracy' conceptually located in between liberal democracy and patronal autocracy (Magyar & Madlovics 2020: 21, 64-67).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Patronalism shows that societies need not be treated as static, and those networks excluded from patron-client relations might set up competitive groups to challenge the existing



order. A clash between existing networks and such challengers depends on the existing patrons' ability to keep their dominant position (often using connections within state authorities or repressive organs or by entering a coalition with other patron-client networks with aligning interests) to retain power.

Henry Hale (2015: 19-20) also points to the vicious circle of **systemic corruption** and nepotism (1.1) that encompasses the whole society *("if you are corrupted, I also have the right to be corrupted"*). It creates a mutually dependent nexus of relations within the society for which the inclusiveness into more robust patronal politics is more important and profitable, although members of the network can realize the ineffectiveness of such mutual dependency and bribe systems. System breakdown is a long-term process (Hale 2017: 31) in which several factors should be fulfilled, including the political reform-oriented will (legal as well as informal), societal changes (widespread support to reduce corruption), and eventually outside pressure or inducements (e.g., the perspective to enter attractive organizations – EU, NATO, etc.).

Patronalism thus lends itself to studying the internal dynamics of authoritarian regimes and focuses on their commonalities (their patronage politics), whereas other categorical ways of **classifying political regimes & rulers** usually aim to contrast cases and expose their differences. Politics in any regime is often complex and multifaceted, combining a mix of institutions and formal and informal practices that do not neatly fit together under a single or clearly delineated regime type (Junisbai & Junisbai 2019: 4). Regime classifications are static, gain empirical validity only after regimes have entered their consolidation phase, and are applied to study regime behavior at the top **executive** level, either domestically (*vis-à-vis* other societal actors) or internationally (*vis-à-vis* other states) (Van den Bosch 2021b). Patronalism has a broader scope and captures processes: Patronal networks go beyond the executive unit in states and can cross country lines. Still, the theory foremost serves to explain domestic power struggles within polities and renders this framework exceptionally well suited to analyze the process of regime emergence, consolidation or collapse.

IMPACT ON POLICY Patronal politics in autocracies where elections still play some role emerge via the election process and keep going by mustering the resources between election cycles to be re-elected again. These practices include the involvement of administrative resources (Афанасьев 1997) and financial and social capital in the form of incentives and other benefits to satisfy clients that are counted on to keep the system together (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007). Patronal politics in harsh and informal authoritarian regimes are also significantly determined by the composition of the **selectorate** and the leader's selection process. The mutual dependence of the leader and their supporters, clients or entourage in collegial authoritarian regimes or the one-sided dependency of these selectorate groups on the leader's decisions and caprices in **personalist rule** can be observed as a cornerstone of a regime's patronal politics.

LITERATURE & REGIONAL VARIATION The recent literature on patronalism is mostly based on several important books that were mostly focused on patronalism in the Eurasian (post-Soviet, ex-Soviet) area. Hale (2015) provided the fundamental definition and patronal politics based on the former Soviet Union countries. Bálint Magyar and Bálint Madlovics (2020) expand the analysis of patronalism and ambiguous transformation from **totalitarianism** on the whole post-communist bloc from Central Europe to China. The concept has been picked up in the Russian language (e.g., Рогов 2017; Уяма 2021), but the critical assessment of the post-Soviet area (and particularly Russia) encountered a sometimes-exaggerated critical response in Russian academia (Летняков 2020; Расторгуев 2023).

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Personalist Rule

Cuncta ferit, dum cuncta timet
(He strikes everything, for he fears everything)
– Claudius Claudianus (ca. 370 CE – ca. 410 CE)

Oderint, dum metuant
(Let them hate me, so long as they fear me)
– Lucius Accius (170 BCE – ca. 86 BCE), *Atreus.*
(Often wrongly attributed to the tyrant Caligula, who liked the motto)

A personalist regime, or one-man rule, is a particularly vindictive form of autocracy where power is concentrated in the hands of one person or a small elite. These dictators hold such a dominant position that they are often seen as the embodiment of their regimes.

In 1988, personalist dictatorships accounted for 28 percent of the world's authoritarian regimes. By 2010, this figure had risen to 52 percent, establishing personalist dictatorship as the most prevalent form of authoritarianism. Similarly, the average level of personalism in dictatorships increased from 0.39 between 1946 and 1989 to 0.47 from 1990 to 2010. These significant increases demonstrate that personalist dictatorship is becoming more widespread, regardless of the measurement criteria used (Frantz 2024).

SEE ALSO Personalism has many faces: Not only is it the dictatorship type we identify most with tyrants, despots and strongmen – often notorious faces we recognize – but in the last thirty years, personalism, as a phenomenon, has been tackled from a myriad of angles (grouped here into four categories: I–V). This entry accounts for two of such approaches (I & II); others (III & IV) can be found under other entries.

Regime type (I) As early as **Plato & Aristotle**, personalist rule or its equivalent has been identified and delineated as a specific type of rule. Initially considered a **corruption** of righteous government, earlier concepts of **tyranny** and **despotism** do capture many (but not all) of personalism's defining features. However, the term personalism is a contemporary invention of the post-monarchical world, while tyrants and despots of pre-modern times were either rogue monarchs or usurpers aiming to install their own dynasties. This shift in defining personalist-tyrannical rule in non-monarchical **authoritarianism** started with J.J. Linz and his original conceptualization of **neo-sultanism**.

Dimension (II) A 'characteristic' or 'regime trait' that can be present in all **political regime** types, that can 'ebb and flow' within regimes as leaders attain absolute power, consolidate their regime and manage crises and **successions**.

Practice (III) An informal way of governing based on loyalty and personal ties, 'personalism' can be equated with Max **Weber**'s **patrimonialism** (or **sultanism)** and its contemporary, non-monarchical counterpart **neo-patrimonialism** as a governing style. Such systems of political **informality** are studied through different frameworks: **patronage**, **clientelism**, and **systemic corruption**.

Process (IV) The set of actions required to obtain personalist power within a regime – to capture this approach, a separate entry has been devoted to **personalization**. Scholarship on this exact process is relatively new and has coalesced around two focus points: (i) the personalization within political parties in democratic and electoral settings, a process often coinciding with **populism**, and (ii) the personalization of (already fully) authoritarian regimes (incumbent takeovers, either incremental or through *autogolpes* or self-**coups**). Both are forms of **autocratization**. The former (i) plays out the realm of 'executive aggrandizement' and is associated with democratic erosion; the latter (ii) is a specific process taking place in the **ruling coalition** of dictatorships in parallel to the larger trend of 'sultanization.'

Note that this four-fold approach is not the only way to map personalism. For instance, Guliyev (2011) interprets personalism through three levels: (a) ruler-level, (b) statist, and (c) as an institution-less polity, ordering these from 'thin' to 'thick' definitions (or from those with a few characteristics to



multi-faceted definitions).

Often, the concepts 'personalist rule,' 'personalism,' and 'personalization' are used interchangeably. As a purist, one can propose to clean up the technical nomenclature by reserving 'personalist rule' for the *regime type* (I) and for cases where the *practice* (III) is prevalent at the polity level. 'Personalist regimes' can denote those cases close enough to the ideal type or meet the categorical criteria, thus behaving as a distinct *regime type* (I). 'Personalism' then denotes the change in ruler-elite relations as an ongoing *practice* (III) within various political systems that drives the *process* (IV) of 'personalization.'

The **personalization** *process* (IV) itself has different stages, depending on the starting point of a (future) political leader. These correspond to three levels of analysis: (a) *within* political parties (still in democratic settings) and (b) in an autocratic but still collegial regime. Note that both 'a' and 'b' fall under **autocratization** but are located in different stages. Finally, (c) as a personalist regime taking over a whole polity (infesting non-regime institutions with systemic corruption, a process, for lack of a better word, that can be labeled 'sultanization').

These dictators are invariably called despots, tyrants and strongmen, although 'strongman' is often associated with a ruler's military background. Autocrat is also often reserved for those more unconstrained rulers. Monocrat also exists, but it is an older term (Gilissen 1970) that is occasionally dug up (e.g. Musella 2022). 'Big man rule' is an oriental moniker reserved for Africa. For *caudillismo* and *caciquismo*, see Box 1.10.

As a cherry on the cake for purists, Lioy (2023: 826) offers some more distinctions: The adjective *personal* refers to something 'related to an individual,' thus a 'personal (political) party' refers to a political organization associated with a specific individual. Likewise, the suffix '-ist' in 'personalist' denotes the 'state of being personal,' whereas the suffix '-ize' in 'personalized' signifies the act of making something personal, suggesting that the leader adapts or transforms the party (similar to how something is customized).

ORIGIN While it is unclear who first invented the term, the origin of personalism is obviously a logical continuation by those scholars familiar with definitions of **neo-patrimonialism**, developed by Guenther (Günther) Roth (1968), Aristide Zolberg (1966) and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (1973), who coaxed the study of **patronage** and **clientelism** into the mainstream. They went beyond the question '*Who* rules?' and asked '*How* do they rule?' to capture its different nature. Later, R.H. Jackson and C.G. Rosberg (1982) – familiar with, but departing from Weber's original nomenclature – likely popularized the term with their seminal work *Personal Rule in Black Africa*. Because it was consistently adopted by S. Huntington, P. Brooker and B. Geddes, the term elbowed many older concepts out of the mainstream after 2000.

DEFINITION As stated above, this entry focuses on personalist rule as a *regime type* (I) and as a *dimension* of regimes (II). The third approach, as a *practice* (III), is covered by various other entries. The *process* of power acquisition itself (IV) is discussed separately under the entry: **personalization**.

While **neo-patrimonialism** was either a practice or a form of rulership, personalism was foremost considered a *regime type* (I): Samuel P. Huntington (1991: 111) categorizes 'personal dictatorships' as a type of nondemocratic regime distinct from one-party systems and military regimes. He describes personal dictatorships as a 'diverse group' where *"the individual leader is the source of authority and power depends on access to, closeness to, dependence on, and support from the leader."* His definition highlights the importance of personal loyalty and access to the leader, rather than institutions, as the basis for power.

Brooker (1995) examines the transformation of political regimes from organizational rule by parties or the military to personal rule by individual leaders. He uses the framework of the principal-agent relationship, a concept from the new institutionalism in economics and political science, to analyze this shift. In this context, the regime's leadership initially acts as an agent for the ruling organization, such as a **party** or **junta**. However, over time, this relationship often reverses. The agent – originally serving the organization – becomes a personal ruler, turning the organization into an agent serving their interests. This shift signifies not just a breakdown but a reversal of the original hierarchical relationship between the organization and its leader (Brooker 1995: 9-10). This analysis reflects the influence of new institutionalism, which emphasizes the role of institutions and structures in shaping political behavior and outcomes (Brooker 2014: 31). The principal-agent model is particularly relevant here as it highlights issues of control and authority within political organizations.

Following Huntington (but abandoning **Linz's** classification), Barbara Geddes and her colleagues Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz (GWF) define personalist regimes as a subtype of **authoritarianism** where the leader has concentrated power at the expense of their closest supporters. They emphasize that the dictator has personal discretion and control over key levers of power. They identify personalist regimes as a residual category, differentiated from other dictatorships based on their low degree of institutionalization. Personalist regimes are those without strong military-based or party-based leadership (and they are not monarchies). Their institutions are weak and offer little constraint on the ruler's power (Geddes 1999; Geddes et al. 2014; 2018). Note that amalgams are possible, as presented lower in 'classifications' and also in the discussion of the typology by **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** (GWF).

After 2010, an important shift came to the understanding of personalism. Paul Brooker (2000: 37) was among the first to propose that the existence of personal rule is *"not confined to any particular variety, whether party or military, totalitarian or authoritarian, rightist or leftist. The presence of personal rule is usually viewed as being only a secondary or supplementary feature of a regime."* **Hadenius & Teorell** (2007) built upon this when deciding to construct a typology that omitted personalism altogether. Instrumental were

M. **Svolik**'s insights to extrapolate personalism as an abstract scale in his continuous classification of autocracies (Svolik 2009; 2012). This was soon reintegrated into the GWF dataset (Geddes et al. 2018) as the '*latent measure of personalism*' (LMP). Since then, personalism has been considered to be a *dimension* (II) of political regimes (Gandhi et al. 2014; Van den Bosch 2015; Gandhi & Sumner 2020).

Van den Bosch (2015; 2021) explains how personalism can simultaneously be a characteristic and a regime type. He argues that the characteristic is present in (almost) all regime types, but once leader dominance reaches a particular threshold (see below), this alters regime structure and behavior to such a degree that it allows us to study these various forms of one-man rule as a distinct type.

For Van den Bosch (2021), an established personalist regime is characterized by rule from a small group closely tied to the dictator through personal connections. The **inner circle** extends this network via **patronage** and **clientelism**, drawing from kin, co-ethnic groups, interest groups, and loyal followers (cf. **selectorate theory**). Depending on the need for support and its origins (rebel group, ruling party, or military), the 'selectorate' size can vary and be adjusted by the dictator. This network operates under informal rules with a *façade* of formal norms. Power is concentrated in the executive, supported by subjugated government branches, with minimal checks and balances. The dictator controls **repression** tools and **patronage**, which is crucial for regime stability. **Succession** is uncertain but informally regulated by the winning coalition dominated by the dictator. **Elections**, if held, are neither free nor fair, with political power not derived from an electorate. The regime is exclusive, with a narrow support base closed to most of the population (Van den Bosch 2021: 19). This definition captures both the essence and the variety of personalist regimes. Of course, personalist subtypes matter too and are distinct, as shown in 'classifications' below.

Alexander Baturo (et al. 2024) take a different approach to tackle (and map) the heterogeneity of personalist cases. Reaching back to the original literature (**Weber**), he argues that personalist regimes are defined by (a) 'personalism' and (b) 'patrimonialism' as two (partly overlapping) characteristics: He views 'personalism' (a) as a one-man rule, where the leader has a high concentration of power and makes decisions unopposed. **Patrimonialism** (b), on the other hand, encompasses weak institutions, the prevalence of **clientelism** in governance, and the state increasingly resembling the ruler's patrimony. Baturo suggests that personalist regimes can be distinguished from other dictatorships by this combination of personalism and patrimonialism. Both personalism and patrimonialism are scales, with the former (a) the level of power concentration and personalist micro-management dependent on leader characteristics (work ethic, **age & health**, personal **background,** prior career, education and **psychological profile**) and the latter (b) the level of de-institutionalization as a result of dysfunction and **corruption** (Baturo et al. 2024: 45-49).

Baturo's two-pronged approach neatly captures the essence of personalist regimes and separates two realms that have caused the most confusion for this concept (as they did as well for **neo-patrimonialism** and **neo-sultanism**): Personalism (a) is the manifestation of the intra-regime process of personalization, confined to the internal power dynamics of the inner circle. Patrimonialism (b), as a process, is the encroachment of such a regime on 'the public,' rendering it personal. This is the process of expanding **systemic corruption** through patronal networks, weakening and subverting state institutions and establishing a sole dominant pyramid or so-called *vertikal'* (cf. H. Hale's **patronalism**). For lack of a better word, this second process could be called the 'sultanization' of the polity (cf. **sultanism & neo-sultanism**). In a novel approach, Van den Bosch (2024b) also conceptually separates the processes of 'personalization' and 'neo-sultanization' but devises a new 'measure of tyranny' to capture salient thresholds of these interrelated processes.

Most authors acknowledge the significant diversity among personalist regimes, which stems partly from their origins and partly from the individual leader's characteristics and psychological profile. Others have focused on their shared features with monarchic rule: Brooker (2000) argues that 'presidential monarchies' share many similarities with 'traditional monarchies' and merges them both under personal systems. Lidén (2013) and Gill (2021) propose a similar approach. Both forms of governance revolve around a single leader who wields power independently of ruling parties, much like traditional monarchs. The similarities extend to the use of rituals, symbols, and the leader's perception of ruling the country for life. Even **succession** patterns look similar at first glance and have created quite some confusion (Brooker 2000).

For this reason, I believe this entry would benefit from a short but in-depth comparison between personalist rule and **monarchies,** as presented in Table 1.6. The first main key distinction between monarchies and personalist regimes lies in the role of institutions. Monarchies typically operate within a framework of established rules and institutions that legitimize their authority and provide for stable succession. Personalist regimes, as explained in this entry, are established by a weakening of institutions and de-institutionalization. Monarchies use legal-rational institutions to harness and cultivate traditional authority. While during the creation of a dynasty, a ruler (often a charismatic founding leader or conqueror) initially relies on personal ties to select his staff (i.e., traditional associates – *Genossen*), this reliance later shifts to tutelary bodies where inner circle positions can become hereditary, supported by other royal institutions that tie various elites (according to rank and title) to the center of power. While these institutions restrain rulers, they also stabilize kingly rulership and cultivate royal legitimacy, providing stability and predictability for elites and subjects.

The second key distinction refers to 'who' rules – a question too often answered for both types in



Table 1.6 – Comparing Personalist & Monarchic Rule

Type	**Personalist Rule**	**Monarchic Rule**
Leadership	One-man rule Invariable male	Dynastic rule Mostly male but with important roles for women
Institutions	Informal, weak and adaptable	Formal, strong and resilient to change
Separation of powers	No (on paper only)	Formally, consultation is required
Arbitrary rule	Yes	In case of absolutism
Maiestas (dignity)	Presidential, personality cult	Sacredness of kingship
Potestas (legal authority)	*De facto* executive power	Legislative, executive and often judiciary power
Auctoritas (personal influence)	Sometimes charismatic	Moral and/or charismatic authority
Imperium (control)	*De facto* control over civilian government Personal control over the military	Formal, in/direct control over civilian government Formal, in/direct control over the military
Legitimatio (right to rule)		
- External legitimacy:	Disputed	Rather yes
- Bound by traditional rule:	No	Yes
- Bound by legal-rational rule:	No	Often
- Sources of legitimacy:	Force, patronage Sometimes charisma	Tradition, custom, patronage Sometimes charisma
Origins	Can emerge in any regime type, even democracy	Institutionalizes a legacy of previous traditional rule
Time to establish	Within the lifespan of one ruler	Once a ruler establishes a dynasty
Succession methods	- Hereditary (most visible) - Non-hereditary (most common)	- Male primogeniture (most common) - Designation, election, etc.
Exit options	- Bad options (forced exile, jail, etc.)	- Abdication - Accept a symbolic function (i.e. constitutional monarchy) - Bad options (forced exile, jail, etc.)

Source: Author's own work.

the third person singular. However, power in **monarchies** lies with **dynasties**: Even if they often were short-lived patronal networks (cf. **patronalism**) that exaggerated their permanence and tradition (Duindam 2015: 74), these consisted of a loose group of (somewhat experienced) individuals, with shifting alliances, often related to one another through blood or marriage, that coalesced around a ruler and would re-group around a successor, albeit in a (slightly) different constellation; but committed to uphold continuity, nonetheless.

Third, regarding **succession**, personalist regimes actually draw the short straw. By dismantling institutions, they also remove the safeguards for orderly power transfers. As a type, they rarely survive the death of the ruler, and hereditary succession is actually not the dominant pattern of succession in such regimes (Brossier in Baturo et al. 2024). Still, party-personalist hybrids with a functional ruling party tend to perform notably better in this regard – see also 'classifications' below for examples. Without institutions or legitimacy, the **exit options & leader fates** of personalist dictators are much less attractive.

MEASUREMENT Many typologies identifying personalist regimes have now updated their categorical sorting criteria to account for scales of personalism. Below I present the most common ones that treat personalist rule both as a *regime type* (I) and a *dimension* (II). Other classifications that conceptualize **personalization** foremost as a *process* (IV) are described under that entry.

Geddes, Wright & Frantz (2018: 79-80, codebook:

2) identify eight specific criteria (a-h) for personalism, which together make up the *latent measure of personalism* (LMP). The more criteria are met by a regime, the more personalist it is. The authors have no specific cut-off point when treating it as a dimension. (Note: the older, original categorical criteria (12 items) can be found in Geddes 2003: 227).

The first metric, *high office (a)*, pertains that access depends on personal loyalty to the regime leader. Three metrics focus on a leader's control over the party: (b) whether he founded it *(create new party)*, whether (c) the party's executive committee is non-existent or merely endorses the regime leader's decisions (*rubber stamp party*), and whether (d) the regime leader manages appointments to the politburo *(party exec committee)*.

The remaining four metrics relate to control over the military and coup-proofing: (e) whether the ruler can dismiss commanding officers *(military purge)* and (f) whether he can fill security institutions with loyalists from his trusted circle *(military promotion)*. Additionally, they assess (g) whether the leader establishes a parallel security force *(paramilitary)* and (h) if he controls the security apparatus *(security apparatus)*.

Each of these eight criteria can be answered with a yes (1) or no (0), allowing for a scale from 0 to 8. This LPM scale is also expressed as percentages ranging from 0 percent to 100 percent, available per country year in the GWF database (2018).

Van den Bosch (2021: 10-12; 2024b: 571-572) builds on M. **Svolik** (2009; 2012) to measure personalism by examining the transformation of the relationship between a ruler and their inner circle during the **personalization** process. Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's nomenclature, Van den Bosch (2015: 16) describes this shift as one from a 'proletariat' to a 'precariat' status, where inner circle members lose their collective agency to collaborate and challenge the ruler. As a result, they become politically weakened and divided, competing among themselves.

Before personalism peaks, inner circles can act collectively to check a ruler's power, potentially removing the latter through mechanisms like voting them out of the politburo or through a palace **coup**. However, as personalism intensifies, rulers implement divide-and-rule tactics, replacing key figures with loyalists selected according to ethnic, familial, or personal ties rather than for their competence. This strategy dilutes group unity and fosters competition for favor and patronage. Increasingly, loyalty and subservience to the leader translate into wealth and influence, and this allows followers to establish their own networks (as brokers or smaller patrons).

The exact threshold is when a ruling coalition is no longer able to oust or veto the dictator (or credibly threaten the latter with such actions). This is the moment when a personalizing regime (a contested dictatorship) transforms into a personalist regime (an established dictatorship) (Svolik 2012: 61; Van den Bosch 2021: 10-13; Baturo et al. 2024: 34). This is the turning point; after which regime behavior alters, and ruling becomes arbitrary. Next follows the consolidation phase, where state institutions are subverted to match this new political order (cf. **personalization**). The trend is not reversible during a dictator's lifetime, according to M. Svolik (2019: 63), although even established regimes can experience shocks that force them to (temporarily) lose some of their dominance. **Succession**, in turn, often results in de-personalization, but the mode, timing and a regime's experience with previous power transfers are key variables in the process. (For patterns of de-personalization, see: Van den Bosch 2024a.).

Of course, there are other approaches: To capture the relevant traits of personalist regimes, Baturo (et al. 2024: 46) identifies seven (a-g) key attributes, outlining whether each attribute is primarily related to personalism (A), patrimonialism (B), or both (A & B).

(a) *One-man rule* (A) refers to a leader's dominance in policymaking and appointments, holding more power than individual actors or entire groups like the military or Politburo. In extreme cases, the ruler wields more authority than all others combined, with no temporal limits and the ability to dismiss anyone, exerting strong control over security services.

(b) *Personalized decision-making* (primarily A) refers to the leader's degree of power concentration. Some leaders prefer to make decisions alone, while others delegate more, acting only as a final adjudicator.

(c) *Personal rule and de-institutionalization* (A & B) reflect the weakening of political institutions. In extreme cases, formal institutions hold no real power, and personalist rulers wield authority without holding official leadership positions.

(d) *Legitimation* (primarily A) may rely on **ideology**, tradition, or performance, but strong leader-centered legitimation fosters a **personality cult**. (e) **Clientelism** and **patronage** (B) involve the ruler's network penetrating state institutions, with loyalty directed to the person, not the officeholder. Under (f) *personal patrimony* (primarily B), the state is treated as the leader's personal property, leading to rampant corruption and deep client infiltration. Finally, the last metric is their tendency for (g) *dynasticism* and **succession** (B & A).

LITERATURE The most comprehensive contemporary works on personalist rule are the works of Geddes and her colleagues (Geddes et al. 2014; 2018), the edited works of Baturo et al. (2024), Lindstaedt & Van den Bosch (2024) also contain dedicated chapters and precious case studies.

Van den Bosch (2021) models their transitions and prospects for **democratization** (see below under 'key significance') by creating a middle-range theory to capture personalist behavior. The behavioral characteristics of one-man rule that make them stand apart from collegial regimes are their far-reaching measures of **coup-proofing**, a potential for unbridled **repression**, optimal capabilities for **gatekeeping** (cf. **linkage & leverage theory**), and their tendency for **hoarding**. All these actions have consequences that cumulate over time and affect transitions.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Personalism in dictatorships leads to two significant consequences. First, it dete-



riorates the information environment, as leaders surrounded by sycophantic elites receive distorted feedback. This results in a perpetual state of uncertainty and paranoia, with leaders often misjudging threats to their rule. Such environments can lead to misguided decisions, as seen in Stalin's Soviet Union, where paranoia led to extreme measures like promoting a head chef to a general due to fear of poisoning (Frantz & Ezrow 2011; Frantz 2024).

Second, the concentration of power in personalist regimes eliminates accountability mechanisms, allowing leaders to make erratic and unwise policy decisions, often based on the leader's whims, leading to unpredictable and variable outcomes (Weeks 2012; Decalo 1985; Frantz 2024).

It is well documented that the personalist regime's distinct ways are notably different from their collegial authoritarian counterparts. This is manifested in their behavior at the domestic and international level:

Repression Coercian is typically more severe than in other authoritarian regimes due to the lack of institutional constraints on the leader's power. The leader's control over security forces enables targeted repression against political opponents and dissenters, ensuring regime stability through fear and intimidation (Davenport 2007).

Conflict Personalist regimes are prone to internal and external conflicts. Internally, the concentration of power can lead to factionalism and instability as potential rivals vie for influence. (Gurses & Mason 2010; Roessler 2011) Externally, personalist leaders may engage in aggressive foreign policies (even start wars) to distract from domestic issues or consolidate power, increasing the likelihood of international conflicts. (Peceny & Beer 2003; Weeks 2012; Chiozza & Goemans 2011)

A recent paper by Yu Bin Kim (2024) investigates the link between nuclear latency – the state of having the capability to develop **nuclear weapons** without actually possessing them – and international conflict initiation, highlighting discrepancies in previous research. It argues that latent nuclear states with personalist authoritarian regimes are more likely to initiate conflicts than those with democratic or collegial authoritarian regimes. This suggests that the degree of personalism influences the relationship between nuclear latency and conflict.

Development Many studies show how personalist rule affects development. State resources are used for personal gain, leading to inefficient governance and economic stagnation (Chang & Golden 2010). **Corruption** becomes systemic as the leader uses patronage networks to maintain loyalty, diverting resources away from public goods and development projects. More **systematic corruption** undermines state capacity (Li & Wright 2023) and even the misappropriation of **foreign aid** (the more personalist, the more growth decreases), cf. Wright (2010).

Transitions Regime changes from personalist regimes are often tumultuous due to the lack of established conflict-solving or succession mechanisms. The leader's death or **ouster** can create a power vacuum, leading to instability or violent struggles for control. **Exit options** are limited, as the regime's survival is closely tied to the leader's continued dominance, and strong institutions are absent (Wright & Escribà-Folch 2012).

Lee (2014) explores how the military's response is crucial in determining the outcome of mass protests against authoritarian regimes. It delves into why some militaries defect and side with protesters, leading to regime change, while others suppress uprisings to maintain autocratic rule. The central argument is that personalism creates conditions that increase the likelihood of military defection. In this zero-sum environment, military elites compete for the dictator's favor, resulting in winners and losers. Those who are sidelined or perceive themselves as losing out may become disaffected and more likely to defect during crises. The emergence of mass protests provides an opportunity for these disaffected officers to align with civilian opposition groups or other elements seeking regime change, as they see it as a chance to improve their position or secure a better future. Additionally, the lack of institutionalized power-sharing mechanisms in such regimes exacerbates these tensions (as it narrows the range of **exit options**) and thus increases the likelihood of military defections when faced with popular uprisings (Lee 2014).

Van den Bosch (2021) models **transitions** from personalist rule and finds that it is the combination of (ultimately inevitable) violent anti-regime contestation with hollowed-out state institutions that divert pathways toward civil war. The longer an **authoritarian legacy** is personalist, the more likely the successor regime will be personalist as well. Democratic transitions are possible but rare. An under-explored dimension is that international **gatekeeping** (e.g., **black knights** and foreign patrons), often boosted by **resource curses,** allows personalist dictators to consolidate their rule, stretching their reign and weakening the states they rule, thereby lowering the probability for (consolidated) democratic change. Abramson and Rivera (2016) find that rulers with long tenures are more successful when it comes to **succession**.

REGIONAL VARIATION There are a plethora of individual case studies (and too tedious to list exhaustively). Therefore, I only mention comparative works per world region that explicitly analyze personalist regimes or the most recent works for selected cases. Consult the respective 'regional variation' sections of **patrimonialism**, **neo-patrimonialism** and **sultanism & neo-sultanism** for case studies using such frames.

Latin America For a general overview: Lewis 2006; for the (infamous) historical Caribbean cases: Lindstaedt (in Baturo et al. 2024). Consult: Loxton & Levitsky 2018 (on personalist legacies); Resmini & Abbott 2024 (on leftist legacies regarding personalist party-building). For the personalist hybrid sphinx that is Paraguay, see: Roett & Sacks 2019. On the Cuban case and its successions: Centeno 2017; Gonzalez et al. 2004; Hofmann (in Batura et al. 2024). On Chávez'

Table 1.7 – Four Types of Personal Rule according to Jackson & Rosberg (1982)

Type	**Prince**	**Autocrat**	**Prophet**	**Tyrant**
Description	Machiavellian strategist	Absolutist commander	Ideological reformer	Impulsive mafiosi
Power comes from	- tradition - patronage	- dominance - patronage	- ideology - religion	- oppression - fear
Goal	Stay in power	Stay in power	Achieve mission	Arbitrary use of power
Role of ideology	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak
Source of legitimacy (M. Weber)	Traditional-personal rule	None	Charismatic rule	None

Source: Author's own work based on: Jackson & Rosberg 1982: 73-83; Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 218-219.

Venezuela: Schneemayer 2019; Kestler & Latouche 2022; Arana Araya (in Baturo et al. 2024).

Sub Saharan Africa Older comparative works are Jackson & Rosberg 1982; 2018; Decalo 1985; 1986; Hughes & May 1988 (for Cold War cases). For today's Africa, read: Opalo 2011 (**ethnic politics**); Roessler 2011; Khisa 2016; Osei & Wigmore-Sheperd 2024 (on institutional dynamics); Baker 2002; Osei et al. 2020; Hartmann 2022 (on eroding **term limits**); Van den Bosch 2021; Hassan 2022 (on post-Cold War transitions); Battera 2023; Brossier (in Baturo et al. 2024) (on **succession** patterns); Dulani & Tengatenga 2020 (on **legitimacy** and political culture).

Some notable case studies are Osei & Bruhn 2024 (on contemporary Tanzania); Haynes 2002 (for Ghana's democratic transition around 2000); Ogbazghi 2011 (on the understudied case of Eritrea); Osei 2018 (on Togo's succession).

MENA For a comparison of cases before the Arab Spring: Brownlee 2005; for international context and **gatekeeping** frames, see: Ezrow 2015. The case of Turkey under Erdoğan is an evergreen: Lancaster 2014; Över & Tuncer-Ebetürk 2022; Öztürk & Reilly 2024. On Egypt and Syria: Hinnebusch 2021; 2024; on Syria's **succession**: Büchs 2009; Stacher 2011; on Libya: Magdy Kamel (in Baturo et al. 2024).

Eurasia For communist cases: Gill (in Baturo et al. 2024). For Russia, consult Graham & Haberman 2021; Burkhardt 2021; Baturo & Elkink 2021 (on the personalization of Vladimir Putin's regime); for Belarus: Frear in Baturo et al. 2024. On Central Asian cases: Anceschi 2021; (in Baturo et al. 2024); Isaacs 2020; Nanovsky & Knox 2024, and specifically: Horák 2022; Peyrouse (in Lindstaedt & Van den Bosch 2024) on Turkmenistan and its latest succession.

Indo-Pacific For a comparison on personalist pathways: Van den Bosch 2023. On Cambodia (a case hard to classify) see: Morgenbesser 2018; Loughlin 2021. For the poster child of contemporary dynastic tyranny, North Korea, recent works are: Song & Wright 2018; Dukalskis (in Lindstaedt & Van den Bosch 2024); Woo 2024.

CLASSIFICATIONS While other typologies, besides those mentioned, also include personalist regimes (e.g., **Kailitz** 2013), there are actually few breakdowns of personalist rule into subtypes, and hybrids are understudied.

Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant Jackson and Rosberg (1982) developed four subtypes of personal rule to capture variation in Sub Saharan Africa (but not exclusively). All four are ideal types, shown in Table 1.7, and personalist rulers can gravitate to more than one type at a time, but also change trajectory over time, which makes it very difficult to classify cases undisputed. Still, the classification did contribute by highlighting various manifestations of personalist leaders and their styles.

The *Prince* (i) is an astute ruler who balances power among oligarchs and loyal clients, promoting 'politician politics' by encouraging competition for favor without allowing any one person to emerge as a serious threat. This flexible rule accommodates different political actors but risks losing control if clients gain too much independence.

The *Autocrat* (ii) dominates the state and ruling apparatus entirely, treating the country as his personal estate. Unlike the Prince, the Autocrat tolerates no shared power and eliminates rivals, reducing politics to subordination and administration. His rule resembles absolute monarchy, relying on the ruler's strength of will and control over the government.

The *Prophet* (iii) is driven by ideology, seeking to reshape society according to a visionary goal, often socialist. This type of leader views their mission as the only justification for rule, steering the state toward ideological ends. While charismatic, Prophets often struggle with limited resources and may face downfall if their vision fails to materialize.

The *Tyrant* (iv) represents the most extreme form of personal rule, where power is exercised without legal or moral constraints. Tyrannical rulers govern through fear, brutality, and arbitrary decisions, relying on violence and personal rewards to maintain control. Tyranny is characterized by instability and insecurity, as it often emerges when other forms of rule deteriorate into chaos.



Subtypes & Hybrids Within the group of regular personalist regimes (pure types as identified in the GWF dataset), Van den Bosch (2021: 250-251) distinguishes between rulers with a civilian and a military background. The author discovered that **coup-proofing** strategies differ between military and civilian despots, regardless of uniform. Military leaders, due to their experience, understand the army's inner workings, secure loyalty from within, and use secret services or presidential guards to maintain control (e.g., Bozizé in the CAR). Although no global comparative research exists, military-personalist leaders may be expected to be more successful at preventing and surviving coups than civilian leaders. In contrast, civilian personalist dictators, distrustful of the military, often engage more in weakening the army's capabilities, setting up **paramilitaries** or hiring **mercenaries** for protection.

Regarding the real hybrids, as identified by GWF, they tend to be quite stable. There are three types: (a) military-personalist, (b) single-party-personalist and those rare double hybrids: (c) military-single-party-personalist.

The military-personalist hybrids (a) behave just like other personalist regimes, but here, the army has remained an intact, cohesive force with the dictator drawn from these uniformed ranks. In contrast to regular personalist regimes, these hybrid military tyrants do not drive wedges between army factions to achieve more control over them. Similar to regular personalist rulers with a military background, these regimes also create militias or **death squads**, but for fighting rebels, not for coup-proofing purposes. Strangely enough, these hybrids (a) also exhibit more peaceful transitions when faced with massive protests and democratizing pressure, as seen in Pakistan, Myanmar, and Thailand. In line with Lee (2014), loyal but intact military structures may thus facilitate negotiated transitions, leading to elections within a competitive authoritarian framework, but often reversed later. Similarly, in Sub Saharan Africa, dictators like André Kolingba (CAR) and Ali Kountché (Niger) retreated under pressure when their international support waned (Van den Bosch 2021: 268).

Similarly, many established single-party-personalist hybrids (b) possess the institutional advantage (a functioning authoritarian party), making it possible to tie elites to new leaders over different generations: Afghanistan (1972-1992), Cuba (1959-), Eritrea (1993-), Gabon (1960-), North Korea (1948-), Liberia (1944-1980), Romania (1945-1989), Turkmenistan (1991-), Uzbekistan (1991-) These regimes all had at least one successful **succession** (Van den Bosch 2021: 284-285). Frantz and Kendall-Taylor (2017) find that even though personalist dictators often establish parties to counter immediate threats to their power from elites – especially the military – this strategy also promotes peaceful mass mobilization and a realignment of elite networks. These dynamics, in turn, increase the chances for **democratization**.

Finally, double hybrids, single-party-military-personalist (c), like Egypt (1952-2011), Indonesia (1966-1999), Paraguay (1954-1993) or Syria (1963-2024) remain rare but have extraordinary lifespans, while facing surprisingly few coups once they are consolidated.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Personalism has often been equated with **sultanism & neo-sultanism**, **patrimonialism** or **neo-patrimonialism** with total disregard for the different trajectories of these related but different concepts (each one traveling with its own methodological baggage and conceptual stretch marks). Personalism has issues, of course, as shown here:

Operationalization While personalism is conceptualized and delineated rather well, classifying cases is still not always easy. As Geddes (1999) herself points out, the distinction between personalist and military rule is not always clear-cut. A leader with a military background, or one who wears a uniform, may still operate as an individual leader, which would warrant their classification as personalist. However, there are instances where the distinction remains ambiguous (Lidén 2013).

A *regime type* (I) personalism covers a diverse group. This can be explained by their different points of origin and the variation of the leader's personality and capability, which – as the dominant figure in the regime – has a direct influence on the functioning and behavior of each regime.

The trouble of dealing with a concept that is both a *regime type* (I) and a *dimension* (II) is that the exact cut-off point is not universally accepted. In any case, this threshold is also hard to measure, as scholars have little reliable information about the inner circle dynamics. The second issue is the overlap between the *process* (IV) of 'personalization' (increasing personalism) and 'sultanization' (the increasing corrupt control over the polity).

Static biases As a regime type, there is no way of accounting for fluctuation rates of personalism throughout a regime's lifespan. This is as true for regimes classified as personalist as for collegial regimes that have personalist episodes, like the Communist Party in the USSR under Lenin and Stalin, the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong, or even Lê Duẩn in Vietnam. Once a regime is classified, it remains in that category until it breaks down and a new regime replaces it. Increasing personalization or de-personalization (e.g., after **succession**) is registered, even if this can significantly alter regime behavior. For instance, Rwanda, after Paul Kagame's takeover in 1994, was initially classified as a party-military hybrid by GWF (in 2013); currently, it is a personalist regime. Cuba has been strongly personalist since Fidel Castro's revolution in 1959, but after two power transfers, the regime has significantly de-personalized.

Another dimension of the 'static' bias can be found when one looks in the reverse direction toward the international realm. While this criticism applies to most state-centric regime typologies, their categories do not include international networks. For personalist regimes, international financial and business networks matter a great deal, especially in

their consolidation phase, when they rely on offshore **hoarding** to secure funds for **patronage**. **Patronalism** by H. Hale is a useful complementary frame in this regard.

Another issue is the actual size of polities: Veenendaal (2020) finds that smaller states are affected differently by informality and personalization, which generally do not translate into political volatility or government collapses. In fact, in many small states, informality allows political leaders to obtain vast powers that they could never have acquired on the basis of formal institutions alone.

Amalgam divergence When dealing with amalgams from the GWF typology, different authors use a different relational hierarchy of types in order to re-sort hybrids under one clear category. Usually military features trump civilian features (and thus also monarchies), and such hybrids are thus routinely folded under military rule. However, personalist hybrids are classified differently, according to the author. For instance, Escribà-Folch and Wright (2015) place 'military-personalist' and 'party-personalist' hybrids under regular military and party rule, respectively. Van den Bosch (2021) classifies both hybrids under personalism, as shown above in 'classifications.'

Reductionist bias Personalization is sometimes appropriated as a *proxy for non-institutionalism*. In many research designs, pure personalism is often considered the opposite (extreme) end of a continuous scale of institutionalist personalization. Such **continuous measures** of formal-informal rule (foremost for Large-N studies) rank 'personalism' toward the latter end because of their weak or nonexistent institutions. Such lack of constraints allows leaders to rule by decree and bypass or modify institutions at will. Note that such a one-sided interpretation is reductionist – even as it can be a useful proxy – and glosses over the various functions of hollowed-out institutions in dictatorships (beside their inability to constrain the policy-maker). Nor does this proxy capture the nature of the relation between a personalist ruler and his **inner circle** or his claims to rulership (**legitimacy**) – all important factors when studying their emergence, threat perception and related behavior or transitions.

Absolutist bias This bias concerns the misconception that leaders hold absolute power, which is often overstated. This bias arises from several factors: First, there is a belief that leaders make all critical decisions alone (and never delegate), overlooking the roles of informal networks and advisers. Second, the focus on a leader's personality (**psychological profile**) can obscure the influence of other actors and institutions (as well as the prevailing political culture). Third, **propaganda,** media control, and a **personality cult** reinforce the image of an all-powerful leader. Additionally, opaque decision-making processes make it hard to assess true power dynamics. Despite these perceptions, true 'one-man rule' is unattainable in complex polities as leaders are forced to rely on others and cannot control all aspects of governance. Even weak institutions shape power distribution and expectations, and patrimonial networks create a system of dependence influencing decisions. A leader's power can fluctuate based on internal and societal factors. Thus, while personalist leaders have significant power, assuming absolute control overlooks the complex interplay of influences in these regimes (Baturo & Elkink 2021; Anceschi in Baturo et al. 2024).

Fragility bias Scholars tend to overemphasize these regimes' inherent weaknesses, primarily due to the concentration of power in a single leader and their tendency for de-institutionalization. When taken too far, one may have the perception that such regimes are inherently unstable and vulnerable to sudden collapse, particularly during leadership transitions or crises. However, this view oversimplifies the complex dynamics within personalist regimes and overlooks their potential resilience. Personalist regimes can demonstrate significant adaptability due to their reliance on informal networks and personalized power structures, which can reduce susceptibility to elite divisions and enhance flexibility in policymaking (Baturo et al. 2024). Minimal institutional constraints enable swift and unexpected decision-making, which effects can only be known with time but do make these regimes adaptable in a fast-changing world.

Second, the methodological focus on regime transitions often neglects the gradual processes of personalization and de-personalization that occur over time, leading to misconceptions about sudden fragility. Arguably, leaders are most vulnerable during intermediate personalization phases (at the start of their consolidation phases) and during their first **succession** experiences, which empirically explain the long lifespans once rulers survive these moments. Thus, the fragility of personalist regimes is not an intrinsic characteristic but rather contingent upon various factors, including leadership strategies, societal grievances, and international pressures. A nuanced understanding requires examining both the vulnerabilities and strengths that these regimes exhibit in different contexts (Hess 2016).

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Political Regimes

The most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways.
– Alexis de Tocqueville

The differentiation between state, regime, and government is a foundational issue in political science, reflecting distinct layers of political organization and authority. Over the past five decades, the distinction between state and regime has become widely accepted, offering a clearer understanding of their respective roles and permanence.

Note that there also exists the concept of an 'international regime,' which refers to a set of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which the expectations of international actors converge in a specific area of international relations, guiding and structuring interactions among these actors.

The concept of the state is one of the oldest in political science, with its definitions repeatedly refined over time. While regimes have been implicitly recognized since Aristotle's time, they only began to be treated as autonomous objects of analysis in the 1970s. Despite their widespread acceptance, until recently, few works have systematically compared definitions of regimes to improve conceptual clarity, although currently, the field seems to have reached a consensus in this regard.

A *state* is considered a permanent entity and is often regarded as the most significant actor in international politics. States are characterized by their control over a specific territory and the authority to use force within that territory. This territorial and authoritative control makes states enduring structures in the political landscape. (There are different interpretations about how to define states and whether the Weberian archetype can and should be applied universally, but such 'inter-state' discussions are beyond the scope of this book).

In contrast, a *political regime* refers to the set of formal and informal rules, norms, and decision-making procedures that dictate how power is accessed, exercised, and transferred within a state or *"the set of rules, norms, or institutions that determine how the government is constituted, how it is organized, and how major decision are made."* (Clark et al. 2018: 145).

Unlike a state, a regime can change without the state itself disappearing. For instance, a **coup** may result in a shift from a democratic regime to an authoritarian one without altering the state's existence. The term 'regime' is often used interchangeably with 'system of governance,' political system, powerholders, ruling elites, etc. (Boese 2019).

A *government* represents the group of individuals who hold positions of authority within a regime at any given time (foremost in the **executive** branch). Governments can change through **elections**, appointments, or coups, yet the regime and state may remain unchanged.

To conceptualize their relationship, one might think of the state as the hardware (the physical and institutional structure), the regime as the operating system (the rules of the game), and the government as the user (the individuals currently in control) (Bendel et al. 2002: 263).

Distinguishing between states and regimes has been a central point of contention between the fields of comparative politics (CP) and International Relations (IR), particularly in the study of authoritarian regimes. IR traditionally examines states as unitary actors in the global system, often downplaying internal regime characteristics unless they directly affect international behavior, although the discipline is also divided in this regard: Realist theories in IR have historically emphasized material capabilities like military power and economic resources over regime types, but liberal and constructivist perspectives have increasingly recognized that domestic regime characteristics shape states' **foreign policy** behavior and their interactions with international norms and institutions, as shown in the section **international relations**.

This clash of values between CP and IR plays out in comparative authoritarianism with CP exploring internal differences emphasizing domestic factors such as institutional structures, political actors, and socioeconomic conditions. Scholars in this field seek to understand how dictatorships function, how they maintain power and the processes that lead to regime change or democratization. CP tends to focus on case studies or cross-national comparisons to identify patterns and variations in authoritarian rule, often employing a detailed examination of specific countries or regions to draw broader theoretical insights (Landman 2002).

IR approaches the study of dictatorships primarily through the lens of state behavior in the international system. IR scholars are interested in how dictatorships interact with other states, participate in international organizations (cf. **authoritarian regionalism**), and are influenced by global norms and pressures. The field traditionally emphasizes material power variables such as military capability and economic strength while considering how regime type might affect a state's foreign policy behavior. (Landman 2002)

Distinguishing between regimes and governments is also crucial when studying political phenomena because the nature of a regime significantly impacts policies, economic performance, and political stability. Moreover, governments can be altered while the regime stays the same. This is particularly the case for authoritarian regimes (cf. **executives**), but even in democracies, subsequent **winning coalitions** with a different composition of political parties and movements are highly likely to distribute government posts reflecting the current power balance.

The definition of a political regime has evolved significantly over time, reflecting shifts in theoretical approaches and empirical needs in political science. Initially, the concept was heavily influenced by classical political philosophy, as seen in Plato's cycli-

cal theory of regime change outlined in *The Republic*. Plato's focus on the sequential transformation of regimes (**aristocracy** to **timocracy**, **oligarchy**, **democracy**, and **despotism**) emphasized the moral and philosophical characteristics of governance rather than its institutional or procedural dimensions (Skaaning 2006).

Modern conceptualizations began to emerge with the rise of comparative politics and democratization studies. Early definitions often conflated regimes with **ruling coalitions** or governments. For instance, some scholars defined regimes as alliances of dominant ideological, economic, and military actors or as sequences of governments controlled by a specific social group. These actor-centric perspectives largely ignored the role of institutions and rules in structuring political behavior (Skaaning 2006; Munck 1996). This reductionist view led to significant analytical limitations, such as the inability to distinguish between different institutional arrangements under similar actor constellations or to analyze the interplay between actors and institutional frameworks.

In response to these limitations, scholars developed more nuanced definitions that emphasized the institutional dimensions of regimes. A pivotal shift occurred with the recognition that regimes are best understood as sets of formal and informal rules that structure political power. These rules determine who holds power, how power is acquired, and how it is exercised and constrained both vertically (between rulers and ruled) and horizontally (among branches of government). This institutional perspective allowed for a clearer distinction between regimes, states, and governments: while governments are transient entities operating within a regime's framework, regimes themselves are more enduring structures that define the rules of political engagement within a state (Skaaning 2006).

The inclusion of informal institutions marked another significant development (**informality**). Scholars like Helmke and Levitsky highlighted that many outcomes in political systems are shaped by informal rules that operate alongside or even in contradiction to formal laws. This broader conceptualization addressed discrepancies between official regulations and actual practices, particularly in contexts where formal institutions were weak or ineffective (Munck 1996; Skaaning 2006).

To further refine the study of regimes, researchers introduced multidimensional frameworks. These frameworks disaggregate regimes into procedural (rules), behavioral (actor compliance), and attitudinal (normative acceptance) dimensions (Munck 1996). Additionally, typologies were developed to classify regimes based on their defining attributes, such as access to power, constraints on power, and the character of rulers. These typologies enabled scholars to differentiate between regime types (e.g., democracies vs. authoritarian systems) and subtypes (e.g., presidential vs. parliamentary democracies), providing a more granular understanding of political systems (Skaaning 2006; Munck 1996). Various approaches exist for classifying regimes and dictatorships. These are listed in the section **classifications & typologies.**

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Power

Power is eaten whole
– Congolese proverb

In the words of Steven Lukes (2005), power 'is an essentially contested concept.' The meaning, origins and effects of power remain disputed, even if the concept is essential to anyone interested in politics, particularly in the fields or disciplines of political science (PS), political theory (PT) and International Relations (IR). For Hans Morgenthau (1960), one of IR's more prominent founders, without power, *"a theory of politics, international or domestic, would be altogether impossible, for without it we could not distinguish between political and non-political facts, nor could we bring at least a measure of systematic order to the political sphere"* Likewise, PS's object of study is bound to the meaning of politics, which is in turn defined through the concept of power: *"'Politics' might best be characterized as the constrained use of social power."* (Goodin & Klingemann 1996).

Given how pervasive the concept of power is to ordinary language, not to mention to other fields of inquiry (even the natural sciences), it is no cause for



wonder that it is difficult to pin down, conceptualize, and apply. However, making sense of power is necessary if one is to capture a facet of the human experience, such as whether a person can act or cannot, whether people dominate or are dominated by others, and how individuals belong to an association in the first place. All such experiences, among others, are often based on a concept of power. Nevertheless, such is the diversity of those experiences – not to mention their ubiquity – that PS, IR and PT have all been mired by debates as to the meaning, origins and effects of power. These discussions are only compounded by the fact that power has also been reduced – or otherwise related – to other concepts, such as domination, violence and authority. It also remains controversial whether power can be exercised by an individual as opposed to an impersonal systemic arrangement, such as a social structure. Were that not enough, power, as an English word, has also relied on other languages – such as Latin (*potentia, potestas*), French (*pouvoir, puissance*) and German (*Macht*) – to make sense of its semantics, thus prompting a rich – often multilingual – discussion as to its everyday meaning, and whether it is best understood as a plurality of ideas as opposed to a single, essential concept.

SEE ALSO The study of **political regimes** is mostly preoccupied with: Who holds power? How do they rule? And why do they rule? This entry delves deeper into the concept that makes all this possible. It forms a trinity with **soft power** and **sharp power** which both have their separate entries.

DEFINITION Defining power implies addressing the many scholarly debates as to its meaning. One compelling definition is to see it as *"a person's condition of having available possibilities for effective action, while representing these possibilities as such."* (Parietti 2022). In line with Peter Morriss (2002), Guido Parietti (2022) takes power to be a disposition or condition. Power is not an object or thing; rather the condition according to which action is possible at all. Parietti's (2022) definition is not consensual in PS, PT, nor IR, mainly because most other understandings of power tend to underscore 'power over' someone or some group in contrast to 'power to' act in the first place.

Parietti (2022: 41) nevertheless argues that 'power to,' as a condition, is logically prior to 'power over,' which is not to say that the latter is of no importance to politics: *"From a conceptual perspective, there is only one overarching notion of power, which is always a "power to", regardless of its being over someone or with someone, or of its normative significance in any given case. This is neither an empirical nor a philosophical contention, but rather a humble grammatical one: if your power over/with/from-whatever-source-you-want is not power to do (or to abstain from doing) something, the power to achieve something, then it is not power at all."* (Parietti 2022: 41).

Taking power to be a condition avoids conceptual conundrums that reduce it to specific objects, such as material capacities. This is not to say that certain capacities do not enlarge the possibilities of action of any one person, but that power need always be about a given potentiality. Actors hold power precisely when they are able to decide upon certain possible courses of action, the outcomes of which are largely unpredictable (Arendt 1958). These possibilities can nevertheless be represented, such that actors are aware of which actions they can exercise or not, in view of the culture within which they are embedded. Hence, power is not so much associated with capacities or potentialities than with the range of social and cultural possibilities that constitute action from the outset.

To take an example, Parietti (2022: 95-96) refers to the case of the war in Vietnam and the capacities which the US government had at its disposal: *"A familiar example is the Vietnam war. We know that the United States (…) had enough firepower (…) to kill everyone there many times over. What the United States did not have, arguably, was the power to win that war, in no small part because they did not have the power/pouvoir to deploy all their causative powers/puissances [capacities or potentialities]. Those arguing that what was lacking was merely the willpower missed the point because the collective willingness to do 'whatever it takes' cannot itself be summoned 'at will' by anyone, not even the most competent leaders one could imagine."*

Taking power to be a condition – dependent on a relationship between possibilities and representable outcomes – suggests that power springs not so much from objects or material capacities as from implied social relations that allow people to act in one way or another. In the end, a military general may detain all the material capacities or potentialities at their disposal and yet be powerless to act. Put differently, the general can only act within a certain social context, which is always 'representable' to that authority.

All the same, not all notions of power, especially those derived from the English language, are as comprehensive to the effect of addressing the underlying social context. In this regard, the notion of power usually encompasses that which allows people to hold 'power over' others. For Thomas Hobbes, power is the *"present means, to obtain some future apparent Good. And is either Originall, or Instrumentall."* (Hobbes 2017). By original, Hobbes means that it is power that stems from natural capacities, such as strength or nobility, whereas it is instrumental in that it derives from capacities that are obtained throughout one's life, as often can be the case of reputation and/or wealth. This more restricted definition of power captures the underlying capacities that allow people to hold "power over" others. Another more renowned definition is Robert Dahl's (1957) claim that *"A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do."* This concept points to the usual effects of power, insomuch as it shows that it is a specific type of relationship that prompts an action against another. Nevertheless, Dahl's notion of power could easily be replaced by the notion of 'influence,' which is precisely what he subsequently does in his seminal 1961 work, *Who Governs*? (Dahl 2005).

That said, the idea that power is related to compelling people to do what they are potentially unwilling to do has inspired more comprehensive definitions.

Steven Lukes (2005) splits power according to three dimensions, as per his key 1974 contribution, *Power: A Radical View*. He claims that power need not be actively enacted by a person since it is often veiled up to the point of preventing people from acting in ways of which they had not been aware. This relates to Lukes's third dimension of power, which is impersonal and thus structurally based. In this case, power is experienced when certain issues are otherwise foreclosed from politics. Though perhaps more comprehensive, Lukes's definition focuses almost exclusively on the situations in which one has 'power over' someone as opposed to 'power to' act in the first place (Parietti 2022).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Power is a core concept in social science. Regardless of disciplinary boundaries, be it sociology or PS, most social theories cannot avoid applying or defining the concept of power. Even economics, which has traditionally not addressed the concept of power, cannot fully avoid its effects.

At any rate, in spite of the divisions among the social sciences, power is central to PS and IR. After all, PS and IR have traditionally been defined as disciplines or fields of inquiry because they study power and its effects. In the case of IR, for instance, differing conceptions of Power among its more renowned thinkers opened up different research agendas (Mearsheimer 2001; Carr 2001; Barnett & Duvall 2005; Guzzini 2013b). Whether power is materially based, socially constructed or the product of concealed structures of domination, each IR theory has engaged with many issues and political regimes precisely because they differ on how power can and should be theorized. Likewise, key scholarly debates in PS have also been prompted by disagreements as to the nature of power, its effects and how to locate it empirically (Dahl 2005; 1957; Lukes 2005; Goodin & Klingemann 1996).

ORIGIN As the concept of power pertains to a specific type of political condition, more so than a social object or material thing, its origin is difficult to pin down, even more so because it depends on how it has been traditionally defined. According to Robert Dahl (1957), and as already aforementioned, power is what allows A to *"get B to do something that B would not otherwise do."* Hence, for Dahl, power's effects exist universally across time and space. Hence, as power is intricately connected to politics, Dahl's conception also presumes politics to be a perennial feature of the human condition since power is to be found everywhere and at all times. However, for other thinkers, such as Hannah Arendt (2005), a broad conception of power is simply untenable for the reason that it presumes that *"politics has existed in all times and everywhere and that men live communally in any historical or civilizing sense."* Suffice it to say that Arendt considers power, much like politics, to be a specific – historically contingent – condition. For Arendt, power originates from a spatial-temporal setting outside the realm of necessity. The latter forces humans and their communities to labor systematically to fulfill their biological functions, such as farming in a field so that food is produced to satiate hunger. For Arendt, it makes no sense to speak of power in such conditions. Rather, power presupposes a degree of freedom from necessity – as within a *polis* or city – that allows humans to have possibilities to act such that they are not entirely bounded by necessity.

All in all, the origin of power depends ultimately on how it is conceptualized. For some, power has accompanied humans ever since they came into existence; for others, it arises solely from a specific spatial-temporal condition.

As for the etymological origins of the concept of power, it derives from the Norman French verb *pouer,* meaning 'to be able.' The Norman French word stems, in turn, from the Latin *'potential,'* which is also related to the verb *potere,* that is, 'to be able.' In this sense, the notion of power has traditionally been associated with modal verbs, thereby denoting the condition currently understood as the 'power to' as opposed to the 'power over' (Parietti 2022). All the same, the Anglo-Saxon word 'power' has also been translated with recourse to words from other languages, such as the Latin *'potestas,'* which denoted a specific political office in ancient Rome. Whether or not power is derived from *potentia* or *potestas*, if not both, has been the object of intellectual debate (Altini 2010).

LITERATURE Most modern attempts at defining the concept of power spring from PS. In this sense, most debates on its meaning begin with Robert Dahl's 1957 conception of power. Scholars subsequently questioned his interpretation, leading to a broader debate within American PS as to the meanings of power. Lukes (2005) takes note of those debates, proposing three dimensions of power, thus seeking to encapsulate the varied subjective and objective ways in and through which power can be experienced.

Besides PS, IR has a long tradition of dealing with the concept of power. In fact, many of the so-called classical debates in the discipline, between so-called realists and idealists (also known as liberals or utopians), stem from whether power and its effects were conceptually brought into consideration or simply neglected (Carr 2001). In this respect, realists in IR are traditionally conceived as staunch proponents of the concept of power (Morgenthau 1960; Mearsheimer 2001; 2004). In any case, the debates in IR also have to do with how best to deal with the notion of power, namely on whether it can be reduced to a material capacity, also known as **hard power**, or whether it also depends on ideas and speech, such as **soft power** (Barnett & Duvall 2005; Nye 2004; 2021). IR scholarship, mainly through Joseph Nye's (2004) contribution, began subsequently referring to 'soft power' to denote modes of interaction that were not always reduced to force or coercion. Furthermore, as IR embraced the post-modern turn, alternative conceptions of power relating to Marxism and Foucault's approach to language came to be considered, so much so that contemporary scholarship routinely refers to more than one empirical manifestation of power (Barnett & Duvall 2005).

For a deeper engagement with the notion of power and its relationship to PS and IR, see Steven Lukes'



(2005) extensive work on the three dimensions of power, *Power: A Radical View*. For a distinctive approach centered on 'power to' and the political dimensions of power, Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* provides perhaps one of the more engaging, phenomenological understandings thereof. For a comprehensive view of how power has traditionally been deployed in the field of IR, see Hans Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* and Stefano Guzzini's *Power, realism, and constructivism* (Guzzini 2013a; Morgenthau 1960; Arendt 1970; 1958).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The overarching methodological issue with which studies of power must deal pertains to ontology. Depending on whether power is conceived as a contingent social condition or else as a trans-historical phenomenon, scholars apply very different methods to very distinct social situations.

Beyond ontology, major methodological debates in PS have been promoted on the basis of how power is manifested in practice. In this regard, PS, not unlike IR, has generally been focused on the issue of 'power over' more so than 'power to.' As a result, the methodological issues relate to how to analyze powers (or potentialities) that are deployed in and by political communities. In this regard, methodologies diverge on whether self-conscious actors employ those powers or whether they are concealed by specific social objects or structures that impose themselves upon a given group of people (Lukes 2005).

Moreover, focusing exclusively on the notion of 'power over' others – or domination – may subsequently render power synonymous with other concepts such as violence and coercion.

MEASUREMENT As per the methodological issues, the challenges related to measuring the concept of power stem from two features: agential vs. structural manifestations and material vs. ideational potentialities.

Agential vs. structure manifestations Provided power is considered to be a condition that specific groups of people exercise, the measurement of both its condition and effects implies studying whether publicly announced wishes were subsequently accepted and followed by others. Structural manifestations of power do not necessarily require agency to be exercised. Such manifestations of power are thus more difficult to measure. Scholars can focus on how certain issues are not open to public discussion; otherwise, they can also demonstrate how certain structures harm people who remain unfamiliar with the degree to which they are powerless.

Material vs. ideational potentialities Since PS and IR have traditionally conceived of power as either a material or ideational potentiality/capacity, power may be split into a variety of categories. In this regard, IR scholars and policymakers often refer to soft and hard power (Nye 2021). PS, by contrast, addresses several facets of power, such as symbolic power, economic power, structural power, and those potentialities that allow actors to hold 'power over' others, as in to compel or to dominate others (Lukes 2005).

IMPACT ON POLICY As a specific condition, as opposed to an object, power has no discernible impact on policy. Rather, it is precisely the grounds upon which policy is formulated (Parietti 2022). The same does not follow, however, for notions of 'power over' such as specific capacities or potentialities. In this case, different conceptions may open horizons for specific policymakers who were perhaps unfamiliar with how to exercise influence over others. For example, the idea that governments and people are open to being persuaded by soft power as opposed to fearing hard power has contributed to growing investment in propaganda and public diplomacy across sundry actors in the international arena, with one of the most notable examples being the People's Republic of China since the early twenty-first century (Voon & Xu 2020; Lai & Lu 2012).

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Prebendalism

Flies will never leave the shop of a sweet maker.
– Persian proverb

Democratic politics and prebendal politics are two sides of the same coin in Nigeria: each can be turned over to reveal the other.
– Richard Joseph (1987)

Max Weber's understanding of prebendalism is integral to his broader typology of **rulership**, particularly within the framework of **traditional rule**. Prebendalism, as **Weber** conceptualized it, refers to a system in which the ruler grants *benefices* – nonhereditary rights to land or allowances in kind – to members of the administrative staff in exchange for their services. These prebends are personal grants from the ruler and are revocable at will, distinguishing them from feudal arrangements where rights and privileges are often hereditary and based on contractual relationships.

Weber's use of the term 'prebend' originates from its ecclesiastical roots, denoting allowances or support provided to clergy, but he extends it to describe secular administrative arrangements. In a prebendal system, officials are maintained through prebends rather than salaries, and their authority is tied to their loyalty to the ruler rather than impersonal legal norms. This system is characterized by its reliance on traditional legitimacy and the ruler's discretion, with prebends serving as a form of compensation (**patronage**) that reinforces personal dependency and loyalty (Curtis 2009; Lemke Bakker 2007).

Weber argues that prebendal and feudal forms of patrimonialism often oscillate, depending on the ruler's capacity to centralize authority. When rulers maintain a highly centralized system of governance, they can resist the centrifugal forces that characterize feudal systems, where power tends to become more diffused among local lords. In such feudal arrangements, the ruler's domain may shrink geographically but can remain substantial in influence. A key mechanism for maintaining the centripetal force in prebendal systems is the ruler's active presence throughout their territory, often achieved by traveling with their retinue to assert authority and reinforce loyalty (Lemke Bakker 2007). The more patrimonialism relies on feudal practices involving reciprocal obligations between lords and vassals, the more it shifts away from its ideal type toward collegial rule: the *Patrimonium* becomes fragmented, and power diffuses. Feudalism (as shown in Box 1.14) is, of course, a much richer albeit contested concept.

Prebendalism is the preferred form of **rents** for pre-modern **personalist rule** as it is more precarious than feudalism because it lacks hereditary security and depends entirely on the ruler's favor (Bruhns 2012; Szelenyi 2016). Weber links prebendalism foremost with **sultanism** and distinguishes the latter from **patrimonialism** in that it is much more extreme, centralized, personalized, no longer bound by traditional custom, and thus not reliant on feudalism. In patrimonial systems, administrative staff may appropriate certain powers or resources but remain under the ruler's overarching control.

Within Weber's framework, prebendalism represents a 'premodern' bureaucratic arrangement where officials' positions are not institutionalized but are instead contingent on their relationship with the ruler. This system hinders the development of rational-legal rule because it perpetuates arbitrariness and personal discretion in governance. Prebendal arrangements were common in various historical contexts, particularly in societies where centralized authority sought to maintain control over administrative functions without ceding hereditary rights or creating autonomous power bases (Curtis 2009; Lemke Bakker 2007).

Few scholars have used the label prebendalism before the 1980s. (An exception is Kim (1970), who applied it to Korean history.) Furthermore, few scholars use it today outside treatises of Weber's works. However, the label prebendalism has really stuck with case studies on Nigeria, particularly by native scholars, even to this day. It is quite clear that Richard Joseph's (1987) publication *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria. The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* is responsible. Although Joseph was criticized for his statist approach to prebendalism and the 'essentialist' nature of African **ethnic politics**, his coverage of the Nigerian Second Republic was done in great depth.

Joseph (1983: 1987) argued that existing frameworks like patron-client relations, class analysis, and ethnicity were insufficient to capture the nature of state power in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Drawing on Weber, his concept of prebendalism refers to a system where public offices are allocated and exploited as personal benefices by officeholders, but this practice is legitimized by political norms that frame it not merely as individual greed but in service to specific societal groups (kinship or ethnic ties).

In his words: *"a prebendal system will be seen not only as one in which the offices of the state are allocated and then exploited as benefices by the office-holders but also as one where such a practice is legitimated by a set of political norms according to which the appropriation of such offices is not just an act of individual greed or ambition but concurrently the satisfaction of the short-term objectives of a subset of the general population."* (Joseph 1987: 67).

Joseph highlights a shared expectation across social classes – *bourgeois*, *petit-bourgeois*, and plebeian – that competition for public resources will be conducted along ethnic and sectional lines (**ethnic politics**). This system intertwines morality and pol-



itics, presenting a fundamental dilemma that underpins Africa's developmental challenges. By normalizing the appropriation of state offices for private and group benefits, prebendalism perpetuates systemic inefficiencies and obstructs equitable governance (Oloruntoba & Falola 2018).

For Joseph (1987), prebendalism and **clientelism** are interdependent and reinforce each other in political systems. To secure and retain clients, it is necessary to acquire a prebendal office, which provides access to state resources. Conversely, to ensure a reasonable chance of obtaining such an office for oneself or one's kin, it is essential to cultivate a network of clients. This reciprocal relationship creates a cycle where prebendal positions are used to distribute resources and favors, solidifying the loyalty of clients, while the support of these clients enhances the likelihood of securing or maintaining prebendal offices (Joseph 1983; 1987).

So, while prebendalism has almost disappeared from the mainstream, it remains strong as a permanent (self-appropriated) label for Nigerian neo-patrimonial exceptionalism all the way to its fourth republic (cf. Demarest 2021). Of course, interesting perspectives have emerged: Pratten (2013) highlights an under-explored dimension of Joseph's concept, namely that prebendalism is inherently linked to insecurity and uncertainty (as per Weber's logic of prebends). This fosters a context where the perception of vulnerability and unpredictability permeates both material and political life. This insecurity affects not only those excluded from access to critical resources but also those temporarily in control, as their positions remain precarious and subject to the ruler's discretion, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion, anxiety, and further instability (Pratten 2013). This approach resonates with 'time horizons' (in Box 5.5).

Gallego and Wantchekon (2017) reintegrated the concept back into a spectrum of various forms of **systemic corruption**. For them prebendalism represents an extreme form of **patronage** where public resources are allocated to clients, but with significant differences in how these resources are exploited. Unlike conventional patronage, where some level of public service delivery – albeit inefficient – is expected from brokers, prebendalism involves the outright extraction of public resources by clients for personal enrichment, leaving little benefit for the community (cf. **kleptocracy**). In this system, the patron loses substantial control over public offices, which are used almost exclusively for the personal gain of the client, undermining professional civil service and leading to appointments based on political favors rather than merit.

The prevalence of prebendalism is influenced by the strength of the rule of law, institutional frameworks, and state capacity; weaker systems allow patronage to devolve into prebendalism. Rather than viewing these concepts as binary opposites, they can be understood on a continuum, with prebendalism representing the most corrupt end of the spectrum. For example, appointing a strategic broker to a senior customs office might reflect patronage, but allowing that broker to manipulate taxes for personal gain exemplifies prebendalism. This distinction underscores why institutions in developed countries are better equipped to prevent patron-client relations from escalating into such corrupt practices (Gallego & Wantchekon 2017).

While this is an elegant way to reframe the concept and prolong its conceptual shelf-life, it pulls prebends completely out of their Weberian shell: Sultanistic rulers do not lose control over their *Patrimonium*: They 'own the state to rule them all, and through prebends bind them.'

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Box 1.14 Feudalism: Who Owns the Land Owns the Law

The petty thief is imprisoned but the big thief becomes a feudal lord.
– Zhuang Zhou (Zhuangzi), Chinese Daoist Thinker (ca. 369 – ca. 286 BCE)

Feudalism is a socio-political system that structured society in medieval Europe roughly between the ninth and fifteenth centuries. It was based on a hierarchical relationship between landholders (lords) and those who worked or fought for them (vassals and serfs). The essence of feudalism lies in the exchange of land for service, particularly military service, which created a network of obligations and loyalties that shaped both governance and social order.

The word 'fief' comes from the Latin *feudum* (also *feodum*), and the term probably has Germanic roots. The practice of awarding land for services (rendered) is older, and in late Roman times, such a gift of land was called a *precarium.* By the eighth century it was referred to as a *beneficium*, to be replaced in turn by *feudum* after the ninth century.

At its core, feudalism was a decentralized system where political power was fragmented among various local lords rather than concentrated in a central authority. Lords granted land to vassals in exchange for military and other services, while indentured peasants (serfs) worked the land in return for protection. This system created a rigid social hierarchy with the king at the top, followed by nobles and knights, with peasants at the bottom.

Several key features characterized feudalism. First, it operated within a land-based economy where land was the primary source of wealth and power. Second, it established a hierarchical structure in which society was organized into distinct classes – kings, nobles, knights, and peasants – each with specific roles and obligations. Third, it relied on reciprocal obligations: lords provided protection and land to vassals in exchange for military service or labor. Fourth, political authority was decentralized among local lords rather than centralized in a single ruler. Finally, *manorialism* accompanied feudalism as an economic system where peasants worked on estates (manors) owned by lords.

The concept of feudalism has been the subject of extensive historical debate. Scholars have disagreed on its origins, nature, and applicability outside of Europe. Some historians argue that feudalism emerged as a response to external threats such as Viking invasions or the collapse of centralized Roman authority. For instance, Otto Brunner (1992) attributed its rise to Arab invasions and technological innovations like the stirrup, which facilitated cavalry-based warfare. Others, like Marc Bloch (1961), emphasized the social relationships that developed during this period, particularly the bonds of interdependence between lords and vassals. However, Bloch has been criticized for downplaying the coercive nature of these relationships.

Traditionally, feudalism has been viewed as a uniquely European phenomenon. François Louis Ganshof's classic definition from *Qu'est-ce que la féodalité?* (1944) focuses on Western Europe's legal and military obligations between lords and vassals. However, some historians have extended the concept to other regions with similar hierarchical structures. Feudal-like systems have been identified in Japan under the shogunate, medieval Ethiopia during the Zagwe dynasty, and even parts of India under Mughal rule. However, applying the term feudalism outside Europe has been controversial. Critics argue that it risks oversimplifying complex social systems by forcing them into a European framework.

Scholars have also debated how feudalism evolved or declined over time. Robert Brenner (1976) focused on political power dynamics to explain regional differences in how feudalism developed or disintegrated. He argued that in Western Europe, state power coexisted with feudal structures, allowing peasants to retain certain rights even under pressure from lords. In contrast, Eastern Europe saw weaker state power and more oppressive forms of serfdom. Henri Pirenne (1937) emphasized economic factors like trade and urbanization as key drivers in transitioning away from feudal structures.

Scholars like Susan Reynolds have argued that the Ganshofian model of feudalism (Ganshof 1944; 1964) was largely a construct of post-medieval legal scholars who based their ideas on twelfth-century legal texts rather than on the actual social structures of earlier periods. Reynolds, in her seminal work *Fiefs and Vassals* (1994), contended that neither vassalage nor fiefs were as central to early medieval warrior society as previously believed. Instead, these institutions developed later, influenced by bureaucratic and legal changes in the twelfth century. This view turns the traditional understanding of feudalism upside down by suggesting that much of what historians have labeled as 'feudal' was a later development imposed retroactively on earlier periods. (Bagge et al. 2011: 1-2)

Another element in the debate is Jean-Pierre Poly and Eric Bournazel's (1980) concept of a 'feudal mutation' (or transformation), which posits a violent crisis in early eleventh-century France that led to the breakdown of Carolingian structures and the rise of local lords (*castellans*) who controlled fortified castles. This model became influential in French historiography but is challenged by Barthélemy (in Bagge et al. 2011: 57-75), who argues that historians had misinterpreted changes in medieval charters as evidence of social upheaval when they were merely changes in legal forms. (Bagge et al. 2011:1-2)

Feudalism provides important insights into political regimes and their evolution over time. It highlights how political power can be fragmented across multiple actors rather than centralized in one ruler or institution. This decentralization is particularly relevant when contrasted to later periods labeled the 'age of **absolutism**.'

In some regions, remnants of feudal structures persisted well into modern times. For example, Russia's serfdom system lasted until 1861, while elements of manorial control lingered in Central Europe until the nineteenth century. Understanding these legacies helps explain how historical patterns of elite control and consultation continue to shape contemporary political



regimes.

Feudal lords maintained control through **patronage** – granting land or privileges to their vassals in exchange for loyalty. Even in such forms of **traditional rule** (cf. Max **Weber**), hereditary practices (of titles and offices) at all levels forced rulers into routine (re-)negotiations with their lesser lords, especially right after ascending the throne or when their **legitimacy** was otherwise challenged. This observation made Weber analytically separate feudalism from **prebendalism** and so distinguish between different types of **patrimonialism**.

Since wealth was tied up in land, **succession** practices evolved towards primogeniture (Box 5.10) to halt the division of familial wealth with every inheritance. With multiple children and only one main heir, sovereigns started granting 'appanages' to their younger children (especially sons) not in line for the throne to ensure they could maintain a lifestyle befitting their status. The term is derived from the Medieval Latin *appanare*, meaning 'to provide with bread.'

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Rents

The difference between doing a good job and doing a lousy job is driven by how many people a leader has to keep happy.
– Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook* (2012)

In economics, rent is traditionally defined as income derived from the ownership of a resource or asset that is fixed or limited in supply, such as land, natural resources, or monopolistic privileges. This form of income is distinct from wages or profits earned through productive activities, as it arises from the mere possession of a resource rather than through active participation in the production of goods or services. Political rents, however, extend beyond this economic definition and play a crucial role in political economy and development studies.

Political rents refer to unearned income or profits that are generated not through market competition or entrepreneurial efforts but through control over scarce resources, monopolies, or special privileges often granted by the state. Unlike economic rent, which is tied to naturally limited resources like land or minerals, political rents are primarily the result of institutional arrangements and political power. These rents are typically associated with non-productive activities that allow certain individuals or groups to gain wealth by leveraging access to political connections, regulatory advantages, or state-granted monopolies.

Within frames of **patronage** and **clientelism**, rents are a critical resource to structure elite power relations in the **ruling coalition** (see also **winning coalition** in the frame of **selectorate theory**). They are the main currency in regime behaviors like **co-optation** and **hoarding**. Its effects at the top political level are synonymous with **systemic corruption**.

One key form of political rent is resource-based rent, which is particularly prevalent in resource-rich economies. In such contexts, governments or elites derive significant income from natural resources like oil or minerals without needing to develop other productive sectors of the economy. This reliance on resource-based rents can lead to what is known as the **resource curse**, where economies become overly dependent on natural resources and fail to diversify into other industries. The result is often economic stagnation and vulnerability to external shocks.

Another form of political rent is state-granted monopolies, licenses, or regulations that allow individuals or entities to charge higher prices than would be possible under competitive market conditions. At times, rulers appoint allies to positions so that they can profit from the spoils of office (i.e., **prebendalism**). These rents are common in non-democratic regimes or highly centralized states where political elites can extract wealth by controlling access to lucrative markets. This type of **rent-seeking** behavior often leads to inefficiencies and stifles innovation because it discourages competition and instead rewards those with political connections rather than those who contribute productively to the economy.

The pursuit of these rents gives rise to rent-seeking behavior, where individuals or groups actively

seek to acquire or maintain access to these unearned sources of income. Rent-seeking can take many forms, including lobbying, corruption, or other means of influencing policy decisions in favor of those who seek to benefit from state-granted privileges. This behavior diverts resources away from productive activities and fosters inefficiencies within the economy. Rather than investing in innovation or improving productivity, rent-seekers focus on securing their privileged position within the political system.

At its extreme, rent-seeking behavior can lead to **state capture**, where powerful interest groups exert disproportionate influence over state institutions and decision-making processes. In such cases, the state becomes an instrument for distributing rents rather than serving broader public interests, as shown through frameworks of **patrimonialism** and **neo-patrimonialism**. This upholds autocracy or undermines democratic governance and exacerbates inequality by concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few. In extreme cases, they become known as **kleptocracies** when their ruling regimes become so predatory that economic **development** is notably affected.

Finally, **rentier states** are those whose economies rely heavily on rents derived from natural resources or other forms of unearned income rather than from productive sectors like manufacturing or services. In these states, governments often prioritize maintaining control over resource flows rather than fostering economic diversification. As a result, rentier states may experience weak institutions, limited accountability, and a lack of incentives for economic reform.

Political rents represent a critical concept in understanding how unearned income shapes both economic development and political power structures. By examining the dynamics of rent-seeking behavior, state capture, and rentier states, we can better grasp how certain economies become trapped in cycles of inefficiency and inequality driven by access to scarce resources and political privileges rather than productive activity.

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Resource Curse

Ten years from now, twenty years from now, you will see; oil will bring us ruin. Oil is the Devil's excrement.
– Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonzo, Venezuelan Minister for Energy (1975)

How is it possible that countries with high **rents** from natural resources have lower economic growth? This is the first puzzle that the study of 'resource curses' tries to explain. Since the early 1990s, there have been heated debates on whether the resource curse was real or not, with much digging into the empirical evidence and scrutinizing the causalities (Wright & Czelusta 2004; Lederman & Maloney 2007; Dunning 2008; Lederman et al. 2008; Crownson 2010; Di John 2010). After 2000 the mainstream discussion switched to institutions and governance with a separate branch gauging if resource abundance leads to conflict.

ORIGIN Much of the development and democratization literature has been focusing on the 'resource curse' since the 1950s. (Ross 1999) Richard M. Auty invented the concept itself in 1993 (Auty 1993), and it usually affects developing states with a dependency on their oil wealth and mineral abundance. The 'curse' element of his thesis refers to the puzzling correlation between the presence of natural resources in developing nations and these states' slow growth rates and susceptibility to conflict. This 'resource curse' thesis received a boost when D.J. Sachs and M.A. Warner concluded that resource-rich governments gravely underperformed between 1970-1989 because of their trade policy closure designed to counter the employment-diminishing effects of so-called 'Dutch disease.' (Sachs & Warner 1995) – see Box 1.15.

DEFINITION Since the 'resource curse' is actually a hypothesis it does not have a standardized definition. Originally, it solely posits a causal relation between the high rents from resource abundance available to power-holders and underwhelming economic performance. **Rents** are defined as the *"surplus revenue after deducting all production costs including a risk related return on investment"* (Auty 2019: 2). Such rents can also come from **foreign aid** or income gathered from services rendered, like renting army bases, cf. Djibouti (Brass 2008)

The phenomenon has also been named the 'paradox of plenty' (T.L. Karl), 'natural resource trap' (P. Collier), and the 'oil curse' (M. Ross). (Karl 1997; Collier 2007; Ross 2012 cited in: Guliyev 2014: ii) In his later publications, R.M. Auty (2019) has rebranded the phenomenon a 'rent curse' to account for the complexity of the issue, but also because not all rents responsible for dysfunctional development and the deterioration of governance derive from resource wealth.

As the debate evolved to break open the black box of the state and include institutions (Acemoglu et al. 2001) the hypothesis was broadened to differentiate among political regime types to explain the variation in performance. The more exclusive the insti-



tutions, the more severe the effects of the resource curse. Today, scholars criticize the linear causality between resource rents and political-economic performance, and acknowledge the complexity of these relations: the impact of rents from other sources, macroeconomic trends, etc. (Auty 2019: 4-5).

SEE ALSO The concept is closely related to 'rentierism' and the aspects of **neo-patrimonialism** that consider **state capture** and **rent-seeking**. When it comes to measuring the level of dependence and rentierism, consult the section 'measurement under **rentier states**. Prolonged management of high-income resource wealth to stabilize authoritarian regimes is associated with rentier states like the oil **monarchies in the Arab world**. In contrast, their unsustainable variant with 'predatory rule' or **kleptocracy** is most pronounced under **personalist rule** and **sultanism & neo-sultanism**. **Rebel regimes** and **warlords** are also known to sustain themselves from **rents** from alluvial resources, and the latter often impede peace processes in order to continue to profit from such revenues.

LITERATURE The literature on this topic spans over several decades and is enormous. Some recent comprehensive overviews are: Ross 2018; Mansoob Murshed 2018; Auty & Furlonge 2019; Smith & Waldner 2021.

The study of resource curses has been a central topic for development studies for decades, and as its scope extended to include the study of political regimes and conflict studies, it has not lost its relevance. However, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, supported by more detailed Large-N data and in-depth case studies, has reduced the significance of the resource abundance *an Sich* to make way for a more nuanced treatment of 'rents' of all kinds, also abandoning the original hypothesis' linear and deterministic assumptions.

The scholarship can be roughly divided into three major strands: (i) the original focus on the negative link between high resource rents and economic growth, (ii) the link with authoritarianism, and (iii) the posited causality with civil war and conflict.

Scholarship addressing the link with economic growth (i) mostly covers the mechanics of high rents and its effects, such as 'rentierism' and the 'Dutch disease' (see Box 1.15) and volatile revenue. The focus is on sectoral imbalance and the disincentive of entrepreneurship. Research after 2000 goes much further than these economic mechanics, taking into account political factors as well, especially the policymaking accompanying the initial resource boom and this rent-seeking.

By the early 2000s, institutional failure and authoritarianism (ii) became the new focus once researchers discovered how point-source (concentrated) resources (see Table 1.8) impede governance quality and democracy and, in turn, growth (e.g., Mavrotas et al. 2011; Zulfan Tadjoeddin 2012). The works of Michael Ross were the main impetus to disseminate this approach into the mainstream (Ross 1999; 2001; 2003; 2012; 2015). The jump to conflict studies (iii), which developed in parallel, is a logical outcome. Here, resource rents become a causal factor in explaining conflict dynamics (Ross 2006), often analyzed in greed vs. grievance frames (e.g., Mansoob Murshed & Zulfan Tadjoeddin 2009).

CLASSIFICATIONS It is essential to differentiate between the characteristics of natural resources, as they play a significant role in the dynamics of various types of resource curse. Scholars such as Varisco (2010), Le Billon (2008), Ross (2015), and McLaughlin Mitchell & Thies (2012) identify key attributes influencing resource-related conflicts: *lootability, concentration, proximity* to centers of power, *obstructability, renewability, mode of production*, and *legality* of trade.

Lootable resources, such as timber, alluvial diamonds, gold, gemstones, and drugs like coca or opium poppy, are relatively accessible due to low extraction costs. They can be harvested through artisanal methods and traded in legal or black markets by private actors or small groups. In contrast, non-lootable resources – including oil, natural gas, kimberlite diamonds, and minerals like bauxite or copper – require expensive extraction technology, often necessitating substantial investment by states or multinational corporations.

Lootability is closely linked to *concentration*. Mines and oil fields are concentrated at specific points, making them easier to control, whereas resources like alluvial diamonds or timber are spread over larger, harder-to-regulate areas. *Proximity* to administrative capitals further affects control; resources located far from the political center are costlier to manage and more vulnerable to exploitation by non-state actors. *Obstructability,* or the ease of blocking transportation routes, often overlaps with proximity, as distant point-sources provide opportunities for armed groups to disrupt exports and challenge state authority.

Other characteristics also influence resource dynamics. *Renewability* determines stakes: non-renewable resources like oil and minerals tend to provoke higher contestation than renewable ones, such as timber or drugs. The *mode of production* – whether a resource is extracted (e.g., minerals) or cultivated (e.g., opium) – and its *legal* trade status further shape its impact.

As shown in Table 1.8, these factors create a spectrum of control: 'non-lootable, proximate, and concentrated' resources are easier for governments to manage, while 'lootable, distant, and diffuse' resources are highly attractive to non-state actors or competing states, making them hotspots for conflict.

Among the three major literature strands on the resource course mentioned earlier (i-iii), the scope of this entry focuses on the study of resource curses and authoritarianism (ii). Within this sub-stream of the larger debate, and inspired by Le Billon (2008) and C.T. Call (2011), this entry organizes this substream of the larger debate into three parts: a 'legitimacy curse' (A) a 'capacity curse' (B) and a 'security curse' (C) (Van den Bosch 2021: 115-125).

Legitimacy curse (A) The legitimacy curse highlights how resource wealth undermines democratic accountability and reinforces authoritarianism

Table 1.8 – Resources & Observed effects

Resource	Features	Observed Effects
Oil (& gas)	CONCENTRATED NON-LOOTABLE (especially offshore) Rents are (extremely) **high**.	- Known to strengthen personalization and rentierism since rents can maintain elaborate coercive apparatuses. - Increases gatekeeping (leverage) capabilities of regimes to avert foreign pressure. - Regimes have funds for warfare (e.g. Petro-aggression). - Distant, onshore deposits tend to encourage secession. - Distant, offshore deposits can trigger international disputes.
Kimberlite* diamonds, bauxite, gold, copper, uranium etc.	CONCENTRATED LESS LOOTABLE Rents are **medium-high**: prices are volatile. Resources are costly to extract but easier to control.	- The effects are less pronounced in strengthening personalist rule or maintaining large security apparatuses. - Distant deposits tend to encourage secession.
Alluvial minerals and gemstones, timber, etc.	DIFFUSE LOOTABLE Rents are **low-medium**: labor-intensive to extract and costly to control.	- Rent seeking fosters unaccountable predatory rule as rents are too low to boost state capacity (public services, etc.). - Can finance rebellions and facilitate rebel recruitment. - Attracts foreign predation. - Create initiatives to maintain conflict.

* Kimberlite or 'primary' diamonds are geographically concentrated in underground pipes and generally involve substantial capital intensities in production, provide high barriers to entry for private actors but high rents for states. (Dunning 2008: 6) The name 'Kimberlite' derived from the famous Kimberley mines in the Northern Cape Province (South Africa), also known as 'the big hole.'
Source: Author's own work based on: Van den Bosch 2021

(**autocratization**). Evidence suggests that oil wealth primarily helps autocratic regimes stay in power rather than eroding or subverting existing democracies (Smith & Waldner 2021). The negative effects of resource wealth on democracy may be conditional on factors such as inequality and institutional quality (Ross 2018).

Personalist regimes, which concentrate power in the hands of a single leader, are particularly prone to this dynamic (Guliyev 2014). Oil wealth, for instance, allows rulers to reduce their reliance on taxation, severing the link between citizens and the state ('no taxation without representation') (Narh 2023). Instead of fostering inclusive governance, these regimes use resource rents to fund patronage networks, suppress opposition, and maintain loyalty through corruption and repression. This creates a politically passive population reliant on state handouts but excluded from decision-making processes (Ross 2000; 2013; 2018; Smith & Waldner 2021; Bannon & Collier 2003, Van den Bosch 2021).

Examples include Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and Paul Biya in Cameroon. Additionally, resource rents reduce external democratizing pressures by diminishing reliance on **foreign aid** or loans, insulating regimes from international accountability. This **gatekeeping** function is evident in cases like Gabon and Cameroon, where oil wealth enabled rulers to resist domestic and foreign pressures for reform.

Capacity curse (B) The capacity curse focuses on how resource dependence erodes state capacity and exacerbates grievances. Resource wealth often leads to uneven development and economic distortions (e.g., the Dutch disease in Box 1.15), increasing inequality and fostering perceptions of injustice among marginalized groups. The sudden influx of oil wealth can lead to over-rapid spending and investments that the domestic economy cannot effectively absorb. (Ross 2018) This can fuel inflation, distort the real exchange rate, and create imbalances in the economy (Mansoob Murshed 2023).

For instance, oil revenues often benefit elites while excluding other societal groups from economic gains. Weak institutions fail to mediate these grievances or manage resource wealth effectively, leading to elite infighting, declining public services, and environmental degradation. Oil-dependent governments may fail to develop robust **bureaucracies** capable of effectively managing public resources and addressing societal challenges. (Bannon & Collier 2003).

Both Nigeria and Venezuela are good examples of how oil rents have reduced state capacity as a result of **systemic corruption** and inequality-driven unrest. (Auty & Furlonge 2019). In fragile states, diffuse resources like alluvial diamonds or timber are difficult to control, creating opportunities for predatory behavior by state agents or private actors. Such dynamics weaken the state's monopoly on violence and its ability to address grievances effectively.



Security curse (C) The security curse examines how resource wealth fuels violent conflict. Resources provide financial incentives for rebellion (greed) or exacerbate grievances that motivate insurgency.

The unequal distribution of resource wealth often marginalizes communities in resource-rich regions, leaving them excluded from the benefits of extraction activities. Weak institutions that fail to manage resource revenues transparently and equitably can deepen social and economic inequalities, further fueling tensions and increasing the likelihood of conflict. This exclusion is compounded by the environmental degradation caused by resource exploitation, which disproportionately impacts local populations. Additionally, competition over limited resources such as land, water, and minerals can intensify grievances and escalate tensions, particularly when these resources are critical to sustaining local livelihoods, potentially triggering violent conflicts (Narh 2023).

Rebel groups easily exploit lootable resources like diamonds or timber to fund armed conflicts, as seen in Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Meanwhile, point-source resources like (onshore) oil deposits can trigger secessionist movements (e.g., South Sudan) or coups due to their concentrated value. Oil-rich regimes may also use rents to bolster military spending (**coup-proofing**), reducing the likelihood of successful coups but increasing repression. Additionally, resource wealth attracts foreign predation or intervention, further destabilizing conflict-prone regions.

Basedau & Lay (2009) find that this propensity for conflict varies and that windfall revenues, like from oil or gas, may stabilize some regimes if clientelism is not too pervasive, i.e., **monarchies in the Arab world**. Colgan (2013) suggests that revolutionary oil states are more war-prone.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The relationship between resource curses and regime types is multifaceted, with significant evidence indicating that resource wealth, especially from oil, tends to impede democratization and reinforce authoritarian regimes. This dynamic is particularly pronounced in regimes with weak institutions. Oil wealth has a particularly strong effect in entrenching authoritarian rule compared to other natural resources. This is largely due to the concentrated nature of oil revenues, which typically flow directly to the state and are easier for governments to control. However, the impact of resource wealth on governance is not deterministic but contingent on the quality of a country's institutions (Auty & Furlonge 2019; Bannon & Collier 2003; Guliyev 2014).

Countries with strong, producer-friendly institutions – regardless of regime type – are better equipped to manage resource wealth effectively. Such institutions promote transparency, accountability, and a stable environment for investment, reducing risks of **rent-seeking** and **corruption** while fostering economic development and improved governance.

Democratic regimes may have some advantages in mitigating the negative effects of resource wealth due to their more inclusive decision-making processes and stronger accountability mechanisms. Parliamentary systems, in particular, may be more resilient in preventing resource wealth from being captured by special interests compared to presidential systems. Nonetheless, even democracies are not immune to the resource curse if they lack robust institutional checks and balances, effective anti-corruption measures, or long-term development strategies (Kim & Lee 2018).

In autocratic regimes, the type of autocracy also influences how resource wealth shapes political outcomes. Research suggests that oil wealth is especially beneficial for the survival of **personalist rule** and **military regimes** compared to other forms of autocracy. These regimes tend to be highly centralized and rely heavily on **patronage** and **repression** to maintain power, making resource rents particularly valuable for their stability (Ross 2018; Mansoob Murshed 2023).

It is also important to recognize that the relationship between resource curses and regime types is not static. While resource wealth often bolsters authoritarianism initially, it can also contribute to instability and regime change over time. Mismanagement or a decline in resource revenues can lead to economic hardship, social unrest, and challenges to the legitimacy of ruling regimes – whether democratic or authoritarian – potentially triggering political transitions or upheavals. Thus, the effects of resource wealth on regime types are shaped by a combination of institutional quality, regime characteristics, and long-term economic management strategies.

The case of Timor-Leste illustrates that there is no path dependency and that agency matters. The country has defied the resource curse by establishing the *Petroleum Fund* to prudently manage its oil revenues, ensuring economic stability and intergenerational equity. It strengthened institutions through transparency initiatives like *Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative* (EITI), diversified its economy into agriculture and tourism, and invested in education and health to build human capital. Political stability since independence has further enabled effective governance. These strategies have allowed Timor-Leste to leverage its natural resources for sustainable development rather than succumbing to the challenges typically associated with resource wealth. (Schmoll & Swenson 2024)

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Box 1.15 Dutch Disease

The greatest wealth is health.
– Virgil

Coined by *Time* magazine (1977) to describe the experience of the Netherlands after the country discovered and exported natural gas from the North Sea in 1959, the term, in purely economic terms, denotes the paradox of a negative fallout resulting from a major boon in foreign earnings. The 'Dutch disease theory,' or the exact economic mechanism behind the phenomenon, was designated by Corden and Neary (1982).

Such rent windfalls can come from natural resource exports, foreign income (e.g. the Panama or Suez Canal tolls), foreign direct investment (FDI) (Lartey 2011), remittances (Acosta et al. 2009), and can even result from foreign aid influx (Rajan & Subramanian 2011; Fielding & Gibson 2013). (For the case of FDI in Columbia, see Botta et al. 2016.)

Smaller open economies, particularly developing countries with fragile agriculture and industry sectors, are most vulnerable to the Dutch disease. The main effects of the phenomenon are listed below, but even these are deducted from a theoretical economic model and based on some core assumptions and thus not always grounded in empirical evidence. Kojo (2015) offers a comprehensive overview of some of the myths and assumptions regarding the Dutch disease.

In the short term, any such spike in foreign earnings (stimulating imports) contributes to an overvalued national currency, depressing the regular export industry (because of the reduced-price competitiveness of national goods).

In the middle term, domestic level investments and services become less attractive in those sectors that compete with foreign markets, especially agriculture and industry, which leads to unemployment and de-investment.

In the longer term, and this is particularly true of dictatorships, the pitfall of the Dutch disease refers mostly to structural de-industrialization or de-agriculturalization as a result of the large inflow of foreign currencies from natural resource exports. These factors weaken the economy's other productive sectors, until skills and experience in these sectors are permanently lost, resulting in even more rent-dependency and **rent-seeking** behavior. This can lead to widespread uneven development, poverty, corruption and institutional problems (Zulfan Tadjoeddin 2012: 112).

R. M. Auty describes the dynamic of a high rent-cycle in detail as follows:

"High rent deflects political and economic agents into rent capture and distribution at the expense of wealth creation because the benefits of rent redistribution are both substantial and immediate, whereas the benefits of wealth creation accrue through the long term and may be captured by successors. This triggers a negative economic circle because it boosts the fraction of rent cycled through patronage channels rather than markets, which reduces investment efficiency so that GDP growth slows even if the rent sustains high investment. A prolonged reliance on primary exports also skips the labour-intensive industrialisation phase of the low-rent model so that surplus rural labour persists and feeds income inequality. Wary of urban unrest, governments deploy rent to create employment that markets will not support, typically by protecting infant industry and over-extending the bureaucracy. (…) Finally, the high-rent negative social circle is rooted in the rise in income inequality explained above. The resulting social tension is exacerbated when faltering GDP growth necessitates rent rationing." (Auty 2009: 34-35)

In dictatorship studies, the Dutch disease is thus intrinsically linked to the **resource curse** and is the typical result of unresponsive **rent-seeking** elites that ignore the warning signs of economic distress, thus plunging their populations into poverty, all the while enriching themselves.

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Ruling Coalition & Inner Circle

The three most important characteristics of a coalition are: (1) Loyalty; (2) Loyalty; (3) Loyalty.
– Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook* (2012)

The study of ruling coalitions and inner circles in comparative authoritarianism is essential for understanding how dictators maintain power within their organizations, gather information, navigate succession, and shape power dynamics within authoritarian regimes.

DEFINITION A 'ruling coalition' in a dictatorship is a group of elites who support the **incumbent** and are crucial for maintaining the regime's stability. This coalition typically includes individuals holding key positions within the government, military, and potentially other influential sectors. Paraphrasing Sean Yom (cited in Buehler & Ayari 2018: 1): elites retained in coalitions complain not *if* but *how* autocrats should reign.

While the terms 'inner circle' and 'ruling coalition' are sometimes used interchangeably, they represent distinct concepts crucial to understanding power dynamics in dictatorships. The inner circle refers to a smaller, more exclusive group of individuals who are particularly close to the dictator and enjoy a high degree of trust and influence. The inner circle is thus a more informal subset of the larger ruling coalition.

"As always under Stalin, Politburo membership and team membership were closely related but not identical categories. Stalin stuck to his old habits of gathering an inner circle – 'the Five,' 'the Seven,' and so on – that included only a chosen group from the Politburo. This offended the newcomer [Sergei] Syrtsov, and he complained that Kuibyshev, Rudzutak, and Kalinin, as well as himself, were excluded from inner-circle consulta-

tions. He called it 'factionalism,' but that's probably not the most accurate way of seeing it: the 'in' faction could change, so it was basically a way of Stalin exerting control via the power of inclusion/exclusion over his associates." (Fitzpatrick 2015: 72)

The basis of membership also differs; inner circle membership is primarily driven by personal ties and trust (cf. **family**) while ruling coalition membership balances loyalty and competence. Functionally, the inner circle acts as a close advisory body, whereas the ruling coalition is responsible for the regime's overall stability and functioning. So, the key differences between these concepts include size and exclusivity. The inner circle, in a way, represents the dictator's own faction within the ruling coalition and is the main vehicle through which control is exerted.

SEE ALSO The ruling coalition in a **political regime** is often used synonymously with the term **winning coalition**, which is one of several interlinked groupings of (elite) actors in regimes as described in **selectorate theory**. Such ruling networks are also analyzed through frameworks such as **clan politics** and 'pyramids' cf. **patronalism**. The inner circle then links the organization of power with **informality** and personalism, like the inclusion of a ruler's **family** members in the apex of power.

LITERATURE Membership in the ruling coalition is based on a combination of loyalty, competence, and strategic considerations, as dictators seek to balance the need for loyal supporters with the need for capable individuals to govern effectively. The primary function of the ruling coalition is to ensure the regime's stability by implementing policies, suppressing dissent, and preventing challenges to the dictator's authority (Geddes et al. 2018).

There is striking variation in the duration autocrats retain elites within their ruling coalitions. Among the elites who served as ministers in Tunisia's authoritarian regimes (1957-2011), 14 percent remained in office for over a decade, 41 percent for more than five years, and 19 percent for less than one year. Some, like Minister Lassaad Ben Osman (in government: 1969-1988), held their positions for over 20 years as core coalition members, while others, such as Mohamed Snoussi (Justice Minister, 1969-1970) and Noureddine Hached (Minister of Labor, 1985-1986), were dismissed within less than a year as tertiary coalition members (Buehler & Ayari 2018).

The composition of a ruling coalition is thus dynamic, as dictators strategically manage these groups through tactics such as purges, appointments, and promotions to ensure loyalty and prevent challenges to their authority. This dynamic nature of the relationship between the dictator and the ruling coalition is characterized by both cooperation and potential conflict (Geddes et al. 2018; Bakir 2023; Mahdavi & Ishiyama 2020). The **longevity, stability & resilience** of a dictatorship are closely tied to the dictator's ability to manage the ruling coalition effectively (Gandhi & Przeworski 2007).

Affinity and shared background matter. Whereas Tunisia's Habib Bourguiba (reign: 1957-1987) retained former elites as ministers due to biographical similarities, capacity to represent influential social groups, and competence, its second autocrat (Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, reign: 1987-2011) did not. He became more likely to dismiss types of elites retained under the first autocrat, purging his coalition of ministers perceived to be potential insider threats due to their favored status under his predecessor (Buehler & Ayari 2018).

The concept of 'coup constraint' is central to understanding the relationship between the dictator and the ruling coalition (Mahdavi & Ishiyama 2020). The ruling coalition's capacity to launch a coup (or credible threat thereof), along with the potentially fatal costs associated with it, keeps rulers up at night (when most coups occur) and clouds their mood during the day. This dilemma of authoritarian power-sharing (Svolik 2012) is one of the core issues of autocratic rule and foremost plays out in the ruling coalition, as explained in detail in the **personalization** entry. The power balance between the ruler and the ruling coalition, divided into different (usually fluid) factions, significantly influences the dictator's decision-making process regarding power-sharing and personalization.

Svolik (2012) finds that all regimes without procedures have an inherent drive to personalize. Rulers' insecurity by enabling potential usurpers to share power with them drives leaders to embark upon a range of actions to reduce ruling coalitions' ability and willingness. Leaders usurp the power to make appointments, alter promotion rules and command structures, take control of existing institutions, take control over patronage networks (**hoarding**), create parallel organizations (**coup-proofing**), or eliminate rivals (**purges**). Initially, this is a dangerous process, as any power moves might trigger a reaction (a coup, in the worst case). After a certain threshold, the unity, capacity and audacity of the ruling coalition are so eroded that coups are no longer credible. This is the threshold after which a regime is transformed into **personalist rule** (Svolik 2012; Timoneda et al. 2024).

Still, a highly disloyal coalition may necessitate dictators to use aggressive personalization tactics to strengthen their grip on power. Conversely, a loyal coalition allows for more gradual personalization and potentially greater regime stability (Gandhi & Przeworski 2007; Timoneda et al. 2024). The constitution of ruling coalitions thus changes over time, especially during regime consolidation phases after power takeovers (Bokobza et al. 2022), after failed coup attempts (Easton & Siverson 2018), and when a planned **succession** is nearing (Goldring et al. 2024).

For example, in the Soviet Union under Stalin, the ruling coalition consisted of members of the Politburo (Box 8.4) who held significant influence within the party and state apparatus. Lenin was its natural leader (charisma), but Stalin strategically managed this coalition through appointments, **purges**, and institutional reforms to consolidate his power (Khlevniuk 2009; Fitzpatrick 2015).

Similarly, in North Korea under Kim Jong-Il (reign: 1994-2011), the ruling coalition initially centered around military elites. To prepare for his succession,



Kim Jong-Il strategically empowered party elites outside his inner circle to create a power base for his successor, Kim Jong-Un (Goldring et al. 2024).

In contrast, membership in the inner sanctum is routinely based on personal relationships, shared experiences, and perceived loyalty, which can be familial, ethnic, or rooted in shared ideology. The inner circle serves as the dictator's primary advisory body, providing counsel on critical decisions and shaping the regime's overall direction. Importantly, the inner circle may not always align with formal positions of power, as dictators might rely on a select group of advisers outside official government or party structures.

Dictators build trust with their inner cliques through strategies that foster loyalty, reduce fear, and ensure control. A key method is nurturing mutual trust by signaling faith in advisers' indispensability. For example, Stalin granted his generals more autonomy and halted purges during WWII, encouraging open dialogue to gain their professional opinions. Such actions create a sense of security, prompting advisers to speak candidly without fearing immediate repercussions, though long-term trust remains precarious (Honig & Zimskind 2017).

Another approach is appointing loyalists who have proven their dedication through past actions. In Jordan, King Hussein trusted General Habes al-Majali after he attempted to protect his grandfather, King Abdullah I during a visit of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1951 (but Majali's advice was ignored and Adbullah was killed). In Egypt, Mubarak relied on General Omar Suleiman, who saved him from an **assassination** attempt. These shared crises strengthen personal bonds, making advisers feel valued and less likely to betray (Honig & Zimskind 2017).

Dictators also use ethnic or societal ties to generate trust. Shared backgrounds foster a sense of solidarity and mutual survival. Stalin trusted Lavrentiy Beria, a fellow Georgian, while Bashar al-Assad relied on Alawite officials amid Syria's sectarian conflict. This dynamic discourages betrayal, as the group's survival is tied to the dictator's (cf. 'ethnic stacking' in **coup-proofing**. (Honig & Zimskind 2017).

Finally, leaders often select advisers who cannot pose a credible threat due to minority status. For instance, in Iraq, Saddam Hussein relied on Tariq Aziz, a Christian, and King Hussein in Jordan appointed an Armenian to lead the Royal Court. These individuals, unable to rally majority support, are perceived as less likely to usurp power, making them trusted confidants. Through these measures, dictators balance their need for advice with the imperative of maintaining control (Honig & Zimskind 2017).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The inner circle is a ruler's own loyal faction. Dictators leverage their inner circle to exert control over the broader ruling coalition, ensuring regime stability and maintaining their grip on power. The inner circle acts as a conduit for the dictator's will, communicating directives, implementing policies, and enforcing loyalty within the ruling coalition (eyes and ears). This centralized control through a trusted group allows the dictator to maintain a firm grasp on decision-making processes, even when formal institutions or procedures suggest a more distributed power structure.

Strategic appointments within the ruling coalition often originate from the inner circle. Dictators carefully select individuals for key positions, prioritizing loyalty and alignment with their objectives. This practice ensures that individuals occupying important roles within the ruling coalition are beholden to the dictator and less likely to challenge their authority.

Historical examples of such strategic plotting include elite families in early Joseon Korea arranging marriages to solidify power and create a hereditary line of control within the ruling class (Hong et al. 2021). Similarly, dictators may manipulate the composition of their ruling coalition to prepare for succession by strategically empowering individuals likely to support their chosen heir (Goldring et al. 2024).

The inner circle also plays a critical role in managing information and shaping the narrative within the ruling coalition. Dictators may limit the free exchange of ideas and information within the broader ruling coalition, relying instead on their inner circle to filter and control information flow (Bakir 2023). This control helps maintain unity and prevents dissenting voices from undermining the dictator's authority.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Researchers employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine these groups. Quantitative analyses utilize datasets on elite appointments, cabinet duration, co-occurrences at public events, and biographical information to identify patterns and test hypotheses related to coalition management, power consolidation, and the impact of personal loyalty on regime stability. Good examples are Mahdavi & Ishiyama 2020 (on North Korea) and Buehler & Ayari 2018 (on Tunisia). Others use game theory to explore the relationship between rulers and key elites: Francois et al. 2014.

Qualitative studies draw on historical records, memoirs, and interviews to provide in-depth analyses of specific cases, offering rich contextual insights into the motivations, strategies, and decision-making processes of dictators and their inner circle members, like many biographies of Stalin and his transformation of the Politburo show: Khlevniuk 2008; Fitzpatrick 2015; Belova & Gregory 2002 and Box 8.4. For other examples, consult Raimundo et al. 2009 (Portugal under Salazar) and Pinto 2002 (including other fascist regimes).

Scholars often focus on informal networks (**informality**) and personal relationships within the ruling coalition and inner circle, recognizing that formal institutions may not accurately reflect the distribution of power in dictatorships, although understanding their interplay is crucial, as shown by the interactions of inner circle and ruling coalition to enable **personalization** and **succession**.

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Sharp Power

All warfare is based on deception
– Sun Tzu (孙子 – *Sūnzǐ*, 771-256 BCE), Chinese Strategist and Philosopher

Sharp power foremost encapsulates the various means by which non-liberal states gain influence or preponderance over other liberal democratic states. The concept is meant to underscore the alleged rise of illiberal practices in international politics and the extent to which liberal democracy is vulnerable to **propaganda**, **disinformation**, or **censorship** as it interacts with non-liberal regimes. The concept differs, therefore, from the notion of **soft power**, which usually denotes the ability to gain influence by means other than coercion. However, sharp power is also distinct from hard power insofar as the latter corresponds to the uses – or potential uses – of force for the sake of securing a preferred outcome.

DEFINITION While there is no precise definition of the concept, sharp power points to how non-democracies gain influence *vis-à-vis* their democratic counterparts without resorting to brute force or political persuasion. It is considered a sharp – as opposed to soft or hard – form of power because of how non-democracies are able to puncture the target state by taking advantage of the freedom of information within most liberal democratic regimes.

In the words of Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig (2017: 13): *"Authoritarian influence efforts are 'sharp' in the sense that they pierce, penetrate, or perforate the information environments in the targeted countries. In the ruthless new competition that is under way between autocratic and democratic states, the repressive regimes' 'sharp power' techniques should be seen as the tip of their dagger – or indeed their syringe. These regimes are not necessarily seeking to 'win hearts and minds,' the common frame of reference for 'soft power' efforts, but they are surely seeking to manage their target audiences by manipulating or poisoning the information that reaches them."*

Precisely because of how such regimes make use of the freedoms that do not otherwise exist in their own countries, sharp power is related to, albeit distinct from, **soft power**. The latter is often defined as: *"It is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced"* (Nye 2004b: x).

SEE ALSO Joseph Nye's work on **soft power** has its own entry, as well as **power** as a meta-concept. Closely linked are the entries on **censorship**, but especially **disinformation** and **propaganda**.

ORIGINS The concept was introduced by Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig in 2017 in a publi-



cation for the *National Endowment for Democracy*. As non-liberal democracies became ever more preponderant and influential in the international liberal order, particularly as Russia and China acquired more wealth and rose to prominence, the notion of sharp power was conceptualized. It was applied to make sense of how such states, with illiberal regimes, often acquire influence via instruments that appear to be fair, impartial and non-coercive but which, in actuality, rely on misinformation, indirect pressure, propaganda and censorship (Walker 2018).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The concept was propounded in the policymaking world to account for democratic resilience in the face of an apparent rise in global authoritarianism (see above). Were it only to be taken as a warning, the concept need not be operationalized. Caution is nevertheless necessary when applying it to practice, and several issues arise.

First, sharp power relies on a rigid distinction between democratic and authoritarian regimes. On top of the problems related to defining each of those categories, insofar as they remain disputed in political science and political theory, sharp power belies a range of (hybrid) regimes. To that end, where does liberal democracy end and authoritarianism begin so that the concept can be applied, and what is to be said about states that are located somewhere in between that spectrum? (cf. **hybrid regimes**).

Second, the question of whether democracies do not seek to obtain influence by means other than persuasion, as soft power would seem to suggest, is not thoroughly conceptualized nor empirically demonstrated. It requires further inquiry.

Third, whether the reasons for penetrating the information systems of liberal democracies stem from the nature of the regime, as opposed to wealth requires additional clarification. Put differently, powerful, wealthy states often seek to influence and undermine other states by all sorts of means, including liberal democracies. Hence, is it the nature of the regime that is prompting those practices or the capabilities and threats they face? (cf. **regime promotion**).

Fourth, the concept is difficult to distinguish from **soft power**. While the latter arises from persuasion and admiration, more so than coercion or manipulation, isolating the source of one type of power over another is methodologically difficult to operationalize. While certain forms of **propaganda** may eventually shape the opinions of individuals, authoritarian regimes may be a source of admiration. Their culture, history, as well as social and economic achievements can also penetrate liberal democratic societies. Hence, it is difficult to distinguish which effect – admiration or manipulation – is shaping their influence among the public of particular democracies.

Fifth, it is also unclear whether the concept exaggerates how influence is acquired. While open societies may be more vulnerable to multiple sources of information, including **disinformation**, it is precisely because they are open that they are likely to be scrutinized or undercut. This is to say that domestic political cultures and economic practices may also have an impact in shaping how audiences receive information and whether they are more likely to accept certain types of information over others.

IMPACT ON POLICY As the United States and the European Union increasingly discussed the presence and interference of Russia and China in their domestic affairs, such as during the 2016 presidential election in Washington D.C., the idea was to demonstrate why and how authoritarians manipulate civil liberties to their own advantage. The concept has been important in the policy world as a means of supporting democratic resilience. Currently, the concept seems to retain relevance and is in the process of being developed: Cole 2018; Shao 2019; Walker et al. 2020; Walker 2022.

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Single-Party Regimes

However [political parties] may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people
– George Washington, *Farewell Address* (1796)

Under democracy one party always devotes its chief energies to trying to prove that the other party is unfit to rule – and both commonly succeed, and are right
– H.L. Mencken

Single-party regimes are political systems where one party holds a dominant, unchallenged position of authority, wielding substantial political control over decision- and policymaking processes, as well as over elites and society at large. While their authority often rests on an apparatus of coercion, these regimes typically also seek to secure and maintain power through other mechanisms that mitigate potential rebellion or discontent through co-optation, patronage and propaganda. The result is an intricate web of repression of dissent, mobilization of loyalty, and strategic use of institutions aimed at fending off potential threats to the regime's survival. The balance between these numerous mechanisms employed and the institutional arrangements upon which they are based vary between regimes as well as within regimes as they respond to changing regional or international conjunctures. Their success and single-party regimes' ultimate longevity differ considerably and often unpredictably (Kalyvas 1999).

In reality, political systems range along a continuum from archetypal single-party systems to archetypal multi-party systems (cf. **parties**), and many states' particular institutional arrangements do not conform sharply with one or the other (Robertson 2004). At one end of the spectrum, we find single-party regimes with a complete prohibition on other parties and suppression of opposition, such as in China. Somewhat further on the spectrum, we find hegemonic party systems, where other parties are allowed to compete but have very little chance of winning a plurality or majority of seats, such as in Mozambique after 1994. Even further, we have dominant party regimes, with free, competitive parties but a skewed playing field. Nevertheless, even in those countries seemingly dominated by just one party and placed under the overarching umbrella of 'single-party regimes,' the nature and basis of that party's authority and control vary widely. This diversity highlights the fluid and diverse landscape of party systems across different political settings, as well as their contextual and historical specificity.

SEE ALSO Civilian rule, embodied in its archetypal single-party regimes is one of the conceptual blueprints of **authoritarianism** alongside **military regimes**, **monarchies** and **personalist rule**. Its survival strategies vary as party-based rule is tilted more toward 'closed' regimes (**autocracy**) often with a guiding ideology (**totalitarianism**) or toward 'open' forms like **electoral authoritarianism**, **competitive authoritarianism** and **hybrid regimes**, which hide behind democratic *façades*.

DEFINITION In single-party regimes, one party controls access to and dominates political office, as well as the state apparatus at all its levels. Despite significant variation, these regimes share considerable features that justify the distinctive nature of their rule and the emergence of a specific typology to describe it. Barbara Geddes (1999) originally classified single-party regimes as regimes where power was concentrated in the hands of a single party that exercised complete control over policy. In contrast to personalist or military regimes, single-party regimes exhibit higher degrees of institutionalization, with members of the party actively involved in discussions about policy and legislation. Because there are so many veto players (Box 6.6) involved in policymaking, this slows down the process of making decisions, leading to much more stable foreign and domestic policy output, which in turn creates predictability (Ezrow & Frantz 2011). As noted in the section on **personalist rule**, amalgams are possible, as there are many variations, such as single-party-personalist rule, single-party-military rule, and single-party-military-personalist rule.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Single-party dictatorships tend to be the longest-lasting form of autocracy because, in contrast to military regimes, the factions and fissures that occur in single-party regimes are common but not destabilizing. Party elites prefer to resolve differences rather than engage in behavior that could upend the regime (Geddes 1999). Single-party regimes are also resilient because they have institutional channels for handling succession (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz 2016). Internal party elections are held which helps to manage these leadership transitions.

Power concentration The ruling party accumulates significant power, centralizing decision-making and dominating all aspects of governance while minimizing scrutiny. Policies and laws are conceived, approved and implemented by the ruling party without significant input from other actors. Formal state structures may be sidelined in favor of the party's elite, where authority truly lies.

Coercion & suppressed opposition Coercion ensures the regime's monopoly on power. Alternative voices are limited or actively suppressed to silence dissent and enforce loyalty. Peaceful protesters and critics of the regime are often met with harsh crackdowns and legal persecution. Citizens are monitored and



surveilled, and opponents and critics are frequently imprisoned or 'disappeared,' creating a climate of fear to deter discord (cf. **repression**).

Weakened checks-and-balances Safeguards like an independent **judiciary**, free press, and strong **civil society** are undermined, allowing unchecked party control and the maintenance of policies designed to keep the ruling party in power.

Narrative control & media restrictions Independent and critical media outlets are tightly controlled and face censorship, harassment, and even closure, severely limiting public discourse and restraining alternative views of the ruling party itself or of their claimed achievements. Single-party dominance is often justified by ambitious and long-term goals, presenting the ruling party as the vanguard of societal transformation, prioritizing ideological coherence and national unity over dissent and pluralism.

Indoctrination Revolutionary or developmental narratives, which serve to legitimize the party's monopoly on power, are typically presented as essential for national unity or progress. Re-education camps and other forms of **indoctrination** may also play a role in preventing and punishing dissent and the exertion of dominance over citizens. Officials are strict enforcers of the party line, and deviation can have severe consequences.

Party ubiquity The party occupies the entire space connecting and is the sole mediator between citizens and the state. It maintains a close interaction with the masses, who need to be converted into supporters or followers of the party's political project. Party cells are hence omnipresent, working not only to foster political mobilization but also as a tool to disseminate **propaganda**, enforce **censorship**, manage dissent and incentivize conformity and loyalty toward the regime.

Co-optation & patronage Single-party regimes are not sustained by brute force alone; they thrive by weaving themselves into the social fabric, distributing **patronage**, co-opting elites (**co-optation**), and creating institutions that legitimize their rule in the eyes of the governed. The ruling party serves as a platform for patronage and wealth accumulation for political elites. State resources and opportunities are distributed through clientelist networks (**clientelism**), which favor the party elite in order to secure loyalty, cement one-party control and marginalize opponents.

Challenges of dissent & legitimating tools Challenges such as economic crises, public discontent, and demands for accountability pose risks to single-party regimes. Some regimes have collapsed under these pressures, while others have weathered them through strategic reforms or repression. Leaders' ability to navigate internal and external pressures determines the survival or transformation of these regimes. Single-party regimes have often accommodated selective economic and political liberalization, such as elections and other forms of controlled popular participation, while manipulating them to respond to popular challenges and ensure the ruling party's continued dominance – for instance, by rigging electoral processes.

The **longevity, stability & resilience** of single-party regimes in an evolving global order is reliant on their capacity to adapt to internal and external circumstances and demands. A unique form of governance, the single-party regime blends authoritarian control with selective democratic elements that serve the ultimate goal of maintaining power.

ORIGIN While authoritarian regimes have existed throughout history, authoritarianism in pre-modern times typically did not involve political parties. In the modern era, however, single-party systems emerged as the dominant form of authoritarian governance, just as multi-party systems became the hallmark of democracies (Huntington & Moore 1970: 509).

Single-party regimes have emerged or been instituted at various times and places over the past 100 years, each rooted in its specific historical, social, and ideological context. Their appearance often coincides with periods of profound political upheaval and societal transformation, where a concentration of power may be seen as a legitimate response to ensure stability and ideological coherence in the face of political, social, economic or cultural challenges to the traditional order. The establishment of single-party rule has also been justified as a means of efficiently addressing pressing needs and aspirations, such as post-war recovery, state-building, national unity and economic development.

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of three waves of single-party regimes. The first began during WWI, driven by the collapse of empires and the propagation of revolutionary ideologies. The Russian Revolution of 1917 marked a pivotal moment, with the Bolshevik seizure of power and the subsequent establishment of the Soviet Union under the Communist Party becoming the model for single-party rule based on Marxist-Leninist ideology.

A second wave amidst the economic and social turmoil of the interwar period saw the rise of fascist and militaristic single-party states. In Italy, Benito Mussolini's Fascist Party came to power in 1922, creating a fascist regime that sought to control not only politics but also culture, economics, and the media. Similarly, Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party took power in Germany in 1933, ushering in a brutal fascist regime characterized by extreme nationalism, racial ideology, and aggressive territorial expansion.

In the post-WWII era, the Cold War rivalry between the US and the USSR spurred a third wave, marked by the global proliferation of single-party regimes. Both sides provided significant foreign aid and military support to personalist, military and single-party regimes. Superpower backing was often at the cost of democracy and political plurality, even assisting with coups to overthrow and replace democratically elected governments and regimes that did not align with their ideological and strategic interests. Communist parties, inspired by the Soviet model, established single-party states in countries such as North Korea (1948), China (1949) and Cuba

(1959). Meanwhile, in Latin America, the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* (PRI) in Mexico (1929-2000) enjoyed some US backing.

In Africa and Asia, between the 1950s and the 1970s, many postcolonial nations adopted single-party regimes under charismatic leaders. These leaders took over from colonial powers and drew their legitimacy from their protagonism in the political movements leading to independence, such as was the case in Mozambique, Angola and Tanzania, in Africa and Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam in Asia. While most of the single-party regimes in Africa evolved into personalist or single-party dictatorships, the single-party regimes in Asia remained strongly institutionalized and under civilian control.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, single-party regimes had become a defining feature of global politics. However, as the century drew to a close, the global bipolar order dissolved, and the triumph of liberal democracies – and concomitant multi-party regimes – undermined the one-party option. Externally, therefore, the ideological shift away from authoritarianism, combined with economic and political pressure from Western countries, undercut the **legitimacy** of excluding other parties from participating in national politics or contesting power. Internally, single-party regimes' claims of efficiency and stability were already under challenge. Relying often on patronage networks and funneling wealth and resources to party elites, single-party regimes encouraged favoritism and the marginalization of minorities, which, in turn, exacerbated social divisions. Unchecked **corruption** and mismanagement also stalled economic growth and development. As these regimes faced economic crises, including mounting debt and falling commodity prices, public support waned. Grassroots movements and pro-democracy protests, backed by regional and international pressure, challenged the legitimacy of authoritarian rule as demands for political reforms and multi-party elections intensified. Eventually, throughout the 1990s, many of these regimes gave way to democratization or collapsed. For instance, in Eastern European countries like Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia (soon to become the Czech Republic and Slovakia), the fall of communist regimes paved the way for the creation of multi-party democracies. In Africa, many countries held multi-party elections for the first time. By the end of the decade, single-party regimes had significantly diminished in global influence.

Yet, the legacy of single-party rule has persisted in various forms. Adapting to new political landscapes, these regimes managed to survive and evolve, often blending authoritarianism with democratic elements, such as regular elections. In some countries, like Mozambique under FRELIMO or Angola under the MPLA, former single parties now contest periodic elections but remain in power and continue to dominate the political scene. Additionally, the global rise of populism and nationalism has led some multi-party regimes to adopt characteristics of single-party rule. In Turkey, for instance, Recep Erdoğan, through his *Justice and Development Party* (AKP), has gradually dismantled democratic institutions and checks on power while repressing **opposition**. Though Turkey is not technically a single-party regime, Erdoğan's growing concentration of power has undermined the country's multi-party democracy. The persistence of single-party regimes in countries like China also highlights the complex global balance between democracy and authoritarianism in the modern age. That the twenty-first century has not seen the complete eradication of authoritarianism suggests this form of governance remains resilient and adaptive to new technological, economic, and geopolitical realities (Geddes 2003; Levitsky & Way 2010; Ezrow & Frantz 2011).

CLASSIFICATIONS The diversity of single-party regimes, each with its specific nature, underscores the need to look at the historical context out of which each has arisen. Nonetheless, looking at such regimes over the past century, one can classify them according to three broad types of single-party regime: *ideological*, including communist (A), fascist (B) and postcolonial states (C) and *non-ideological:* personalist (D); and patrimonial (E). These are broad categories, and the characteristics of a specific regime may correspond to more than one possible classification, for example, with regimes in which strong party ideology goes hand-in-hand with a concentration of power in an individual leader.

Communist states (A) For much of the twentieth century, many of the single-party regimes were communist states, from the Soviet Union and its central and eastern European satellites to Cuba or China. In these examples, the party provides the ideological foundation of the state (**communism** or **socialism**), leading it in a transition to a better society. In this revolutionary process, the interests of the party are juxtaposed with those of the bourgeois state representing capital and the capitalist class; power needs to be concentrated to both further the ideological project and prevent counterrevolution. The first single-party regime in modern times is generally considered to be the Bolshevik regime established after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Its Politburo leadership structure (Box 8.4), justified as in the dictatorship of the proletariat (Box 1.3), was widely copied. The *Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (CPSU) became the model for other communist single-party states and marked a significant departure from earlier authoritarian systems by institutionalizing ideological and party-based rule as central to its governance. Differences in ideology were inevitable over time, cf. Box 4.9 on 'Fifty Shades of Socialism.'

Fascist states (B) In the interwar period and through WWII, a number of fascist single-party regimes took power (cf. **fascism**), such as those in Germany, Italy, Spain or Portugal. These were characterized by a very extreme form of nationalism, anti-communism, and the centralization of power in not only a single party but typically an individual dictator. In particular, in the cases of Germany and Italy, totalitarian control featured prominently, with the single party regime permeating every sphere of



society, including the economy, education, and the media (**totalitarianism**). National pride (**ultra-nationalism** and **racism**), militarism, and territorial expansion were hallmarks of these regimes. Nevertheless, in contrast with communist regimes, fascist parties were often less central to the exercise of state power, control over the coercive apparatus of the state resting more directly with individual leaders. In Portugal, for instance, the *National Union* was always relatively weak, with power and strength lying directly with dictator António Salazar, while in Germany, the Nazi Party was instrumental to Hitler's rise but quickly became less significant in mediating state power or connecting citizens to government.

Postcolonial states (C) Following the end of WWII, single-party regimes were increasingly found in the periphery of the international system in postcolonial, developing states. Leaders of newly independent countries often justified a monopoly on political power in the name of national unity, the necessary means to suppress polarizing political forces, abate ethnic divisions and create a superseding national identity in societies marked by the violent and divisive legacies of colonial rule. In these cases, single-party regimes emerged as vehicles for national unity and state-building in the postcolonial era, when political fragmentation threatened stability. They claimed to represent nationalist ideologies – as well as often a form of African socialism (cf. Box 4.9), as in Tanzania under Nyerere – legitimized by their role in the struggle for independence and claiming to embody the aspirations of the newly sovereign state. Many parties promoted their ideologies as central to the nation's identity, emphasizing unity and development as central goals.

Personalist single-party regimes (D) These regimes are centered around a single leader who exercises significant control over the party and the state (cf. **personalization**). The leader often holds supreme power and uses the party as a vehicle to maintain control. Many single-party states, in fact, have evolved into **personality cults** orbiting around a single-party leader, cultivating an image of the party/leader as the indispensable savior of the nation. Examples include North Korea under first Kim Il-Sung and later Kim Jong-Il and now Kim Jong-Un, Syria's Ba'ath Party under Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad, Cuba under Fidel Castro, and Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko (cf. Box 1.7).

Patrimonial states (E) These regimes are based on patronage networks, where the ruling party provides economic, political, or social benefits to supporters in exchange for political loyalty. They typically focus on maintaining power through alliances with elites and patron-client relationships. **Patronage** networks, headed by a dominant patron (usually the ruler), shape, in turn, both formal and informal political institutions. While these regimes may allow elections and rest on formal constitutions, such institutions often serve as mechanisms to manage elite expectations and channel dissent rather than ensure democratic accountability (Hale 2015). Political stability in these regimes, therefore, relies heavily on the strength and cohesion of the patronage networks.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES A single-party regime is a concept applied to a myriad of different contexts and is often employed to describe a range of overlapping phenomena theorized in the political science literature, such as autocracy, hybridity or patronage, potentially leading to theoretical misunderstandings. It is often used interchangeably with 'one-party' regimes or even 'party-state.' Moreover, single-party 'rule' or single-party 'system' is conflated with regime (Kalyvas 1999). The concept also overlaps with some analyses of 'hegemonic parties' in countries that hold elections in contexts labeled as **competitive authoritarianism**.

Analyzing single-party regimes presents, therefore, several methodological challenges, particularly due to their overlap with other non-democratic systems of government, with which they share many characteristics, hindering the ability to isolate the unique features of single-party rule. These categories often blur together, complicating efforts to define and differentiate single-party regimes consistently. Attempts to distinguish single-party regimes from hegemonic-party systems illustrate these analytical difficulties. Some single-party regimes prohibit opposition parties outright, while hegemonic-party systems allow limited political competition, albeit ensuring the dominance of the ruling party. However, this distinction becomes ambiguous in cases where **elections** are manipulated to the extent that opposition parties are technically allowed, but only insofar as they do not pose a real threat to the dominant party's survival. The same difficulty is presented with cases labeled as competitive authoritarian regimes, where elections do exist but are systematically unfair to the opposition, and might reasonably be considered little more than a tool of legitimation of the single party. The classification of such cases is fraught with difficulty, often relying on subjective evaluations of, say, the extent of electoral manipulation and constraint. (These distinctions are explained in greater detail in ruling **parties**).

Even once particular characteristics associated with a single-party regime are identified, such as political dominance, opposition exclusion, and institutional control, evaluating their level or extent poses a further methodological challenge. Qualitative measures resting on subjective judgments are disputed, while quantitative indicators, such as vote shares or party membership, may not fully capture the true level of popular support, given the specific context of authoritarian practices that penalize dissent.

IMPACT ON POLICY Political control and centralized decision-making are two salient features of single-party regimes that directly shape policy. Nevertheless, the extent to which a regime's single-party nature may impact policy varies considerably, depending on its level of institutionalization, the specific domestic and international contexts within which it operates, and the ideological orientation of

the party in power and its commitment to achieving predefined goals. Moreover, it is important to distinguish between self-serving claims made by those defending this particular model of governance and the significant variation in outcomes found in states adopting it.

Efficiency A particularly prevalent claim is that of efficiency – the so-called 'authoritarian advantage.' Government performance, it is argued, benefits greatly from a single party's ability to both make swift decisions and commit to long-term strategies. The centralized nature of power rids the decision-making process of dissent, opposition and blockage, freeing the hands of those in charge to set long-term and large-scale goals, allocate the necessary resources, and pursue them unhindered by the delays and forced compromises often seen in multi-party systems.

Critical areas, such as infrastructure development, industrial policy or bold economic reforms, are said to profit, in particular, from this type of regime. China's rapid modernization and its ambitious *Belt and Road Initiative*, for instance, have been hailed as owing much to the country's centralized governance model. However, this claimed policy efficiency often comes at the expense of oversight and accountability, which, in turn, potentially leads to corruption and mismanagement. Moreover, the lack of alternative viewpoints – which ensures ideological purity – can restrict the emergence of new ideas or the contestation of poorly conceived policies, further reducing incentives for single-party leaders to be responsive to their citizen's evolving needs. A stagnant policy environment, which deteriorates public institutions and dulls society's aspirations for social transformation, may, thus, be a longer-term effect of this type of rule.

Ultimately, single-party regimes can limit or block, as much as they facilitate, structural change. Additionally, even where potential efficiency gains enable significant projects, the lack of political contestation can have nefarious consequences. State-led mega projects often steamroll over workers' rights or environmental protections in the absence of constituencies able to influence policymaking or even, where single-party rule is combined with entrenched authoritarianism, publicly defend them. The lack of a democratic check on power leaves considerable space for prioritizing party (or personal) interests and security over society's needs. That this model of policy efficiency is necessarily in the best interest of the nation under a single-party regime is, therefore, an assumption that needs to be thoroughly and constantly scrutinized.

Stability Single-party regimes often emphasize political stability as a key benefit of their governance model. The strong-party/strongman approach can be particularly appealing when contrasted with a picture of chaotic governance, deriving from multi-party contexts and fragile coalition arrangements' prone to short-term and very limited understandings and commitments. That appeal is all the stronger in times of political, economic, and social upheaval or uncertainty. These parties and leaders inevitably position themselves as embodying decisiveness and unity in leading a country toward the realization of its national aspirations. Suppressing dissent and divergent voices, however, is most often not a sign that political fragmentation has been resolved. On the contrary, stability, in such cases, is maintained through repression of existing and genuine pluralism, which ultimately can exacerbate, rather than resolve, underlying societal tensions. Indeed, when cracks in a regime's control begin to surface – the result, for instance, of intra-party squabbles or tensions wrought by economic crisis – stability tends to unravel quickly.

Representation & inclusivity In single-party regimes representation is often limited or merely symbolic. Political participation is tightly controlled, with opposition parties either banned or heavily co-opted. While these regimes may claim to represent the collective will of citizens, particularly through mechanisms like consultative assemblies or nominal elections, genuine representation is lacking. As already noted, the absence of a diverse and fully representative range of political views and voices means that government policies often prioritize the controlling party's interests rather than addressing those of the broader population. With criticism and opposition suppressed, robust discussions on policy issues are substantially limited.

Moreover, because single-party regimes' continuing political power does not rest on securing a broad electoral mandate, they often end up marginalizing considerable sectors of society representing, for example, particular ethnic, class or other groups, further undermining the representation of society as a whole in their governance. In short, with power concentrated within a narrow political elite, single-party regimes are typically not characterized by inclusivity. Marginalized groups often struggle to have their voices heard or their interests represented in policymaking. While some regimes introduce limited reforms, such as the promotion of cross-ethnic unity (**ethnic politics**) or gender representation (**gender equality**), these efforts are usually superficial and serve to reinforce the regime's legitimacy rather than foster genuine inclusivity.

Legitimacy Single-party regimes seek to derive legitimacy from their ability to maintain order, promote economic growth, and present themselves as guarantors of national unity. By controlling the political narrative and suppressing or eliminating opposition, these regimes often foster an image of constancy and competence. For example, in countries like China and Vietnam, economic success and poverty reduction have bolstered public perceptions of legitimacy. However, this legitimacy comes at the expense of popular participation in policymaking. Rooted in performance rather than democratic consent, such legitimacy remains vulnerable and may quickly erode, especially during economic downturns or crises of governance.



NEW FRONTIERS Samuel Huntington (1991) once observed that every wave of democratization (Box 6.3) has been followed by a 'reverse wave,' characterized by a worldwide decline in democratic governance. A common inquiry of the twenty-first century has, therefore, been whether another such 'reverse wave' is occurring. Those analyses that answer yes typically point as evidence of democratic reversal to the prevalence of single-party regimes, especially where they have replaced supposedly multi-party systems of governance.

Highlighting significant cases where authoritarian regimes have solidified power, such as in Nicaragua, Russia, Turkey, and Venezuela, or where illiberal elected leaders have undermined core democratic norms and principles from within, as in Brazil (under Bolsonaro), Hungary (under Orbán), India (under Modi), and the US (under Trump), some authors identify a worrying pattern of democratic backsliding (Diamond 2015; Bermeo 2016; Foa & Mounk 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018; Mainwaring & Bizzarro 2019; Haggard & Kaufman 2021). With a view to assessing why some democracies survive and others fall, they explore the various dimensions of democratic erosion – including economic stress, political polarization, populism, institutional decay, and international influences.

Moreover, they point to an ongoing process of re-legitimization of single-party regimes, which have adapted strategically to shifting domestic and international pressures. On the one hand, the apparent need for concentration of political power and decision-making to tackle national crises and bolster economic performance has been central to consolidating domestic support through claims that this model is crucial for stability, pragmatic governance, and long-term development, as in the cases of the Malaysia or Vietnam. On the other, changing international dynamics have further reinforced the legitimacy of single-party regimes, with a weakening global push for democratization giving space for more autocratic governance to gain acceptability as an alternative model. The rise of authoritarian powers like China has created a counter-narrative to liberal democracy, allowing single-party regimes (in their various formats) not only to endure but to thrive as a significant force in global politics today.

With varying degrees of pessimism regarding the future of world democracy, some authors tend to frame their findings as a worldwide phenomenon across many regions, ultimately signaling a global trend (Lührmann & Lindberg 2019; Alizada et al. 2021). Others, like Brownlee & Miao (2022), however, contest this assertion of 'an anti-democratic *Zeitgeist,*' emphasizing the resilience of democratic institutions, pointing to the fact that those instances showcased in the literature, despite high-profile, are relatively few, and warning "against an evidence-resistant 'tyrannophobia' that treats every bumptious and overweening executive as the next Mussolini." Others caution against the failings of paradigms – be it that of democratic transition (Carothers 2002, cf. Box 5.3 on 'transitology') or democratic backsliding (Cianetti & Hanley 2021) – or the turn from overly optimistic to overly pessimistic verdicts (Levitsky & Way 2015), questioning the idea of linear progress implicit in some such assessments. However, what these authors and their research have in common is underscoring the fragile nature of democracy, pointing to the coexistence of democratic elements with autocratic practices. This work suggests the need for a more nuanced view of democracy and autocracy, single-party and multi-party regimes, that takes into account complex realities on the ground.

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Soft Power

Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas?
– Joseph Stalin

Soft power is essential for understanding dictatorships as it reveals how these regimes sustain control and influence without relying solely on coercion. By utilizing attraction and persuasion, authoritarian leaders can project an image of legitimacy both domestically and internationally, reducing the need for overt repression. This is particularly significant in managing global perceptions, where regimes engage in strategies like 'sportswashing' to distract from human rights abuses and enhance their international standing. Hosting major events such as the Olympics or World Cup allows dictatorships to create a positive image while deflecting criticism.

DEFINITION Soft power is a non-tangible resource and a non-forceful type of influence on other political subjects. Joseph Nye (2011: 20-21) defines soft power as *"the ability to affect others through co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes."*

Power as capability refers to resources operationalized into foreign policy instruments available to be used by a state. This is a resource definition of power (Nye 2011a: 12). *"Getting from resources to behavioural outcomes is a crucial intervening variable,"* estimates Nye (2011a.) and calls this *power conversion*. Therefore, the second aspect of power is no longer the static possession of resources and instruments to act but rather the very application of these instruments in relation to other actors in international politics – power as an influence.

The 'soft' in power as capability Soft power relates to both aspects of power: as a state property (capability) and as an effect of a state's actions (influence). Its connection lies in the nature of capability or influence, contrasting with 'hard' capabilities and influences. The term 'soft' refers to the types of capabilities possessed and developed by a foreign policy actor and the types of influence it exerts in the international community. Resources are classified into material, semi-material, and human resources (Hill 2003), while foreign policy instruments include diplomacy, culture, economic, and military tools (Brighi & Hill 2012; Hill 2016). Although not universally classified, these tools are consistently categorized as soft or hard power instruments.

Hard resources include natural resources like minerals, oil, and arable land. Soft resources derive primarily from human activity, such as scientific knowledge, political systems, societal values, civil society openness, education, and cultural products. Intermediate resources include historical interpretations, productivity, competitiveness, and media ownership. Military instruments are traditionally seen as hard power capabilities but can also encompass soft power through technological development and scientific knowledge. Similarly, the 'Made in Italy' brand reflects both hard power in industrial capability and soft power in marketing Italy's positive image through its goods, values, and culture.

The 'soft' in power as influence Power as influence can be understood along a continuum of soft and hard strategies used by states in the international community. Hard power is defined as *"the ability to get preferred outcomes through coercion and payment,"* while soft power is *"the ability to get preferred outcomes through the co-optive means of agenda-setting, persuasion, and attraction"* (Nye 2011a: 16). Hill (2016: 147) describes these as two ends of the spectrum: hard power involves compelling other actors through force and deterrence, while soft power involves swaying decisions through persuasion and deference.

ORIGIN The concept of soft power was introduced to contrast with 'hard' power, yet it has evolved to complement it. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., in his 1990 book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, initially defined hard power as a state's coercive influence based on military and economic capabilities. In contrast, soft power refers to influence derived from culture, political and social values, and diplomacy. Through these means, a state can alter others' preferences to achieve its own goals by being attractive. The key innovation of soft power is its inclusion of non-material elements, such as values and ideas, allowing a state to set a moral example and be perceived as appealing by others (Nye 1990).

SEE ALSO Soft power, a concept relatively new to International Relations (IR) since the 1990s, is context-dependent, manifesting in **foreign policy** through culture, propaganda, public relations, and



diplomacy. It has been studied from an interdisciplinary perspective but lacks systematic scholarly analysis, with *The Routledge Handbook of Soft Power* (2017) being a notable exception. While the 'soft' aspect is less explored, the **power** component is well-researched in PS and foreign policy analysis (FPA), where it is a central concept. There is no comprehensive analysis of soft power use by dictatorships, which often spread **ideology** through **propaganda** or public diplomacy. As Box 1.16 shows, even a state as isolated and closed-off as North Korea can have soft power. Soft power contrasts with hard power, and together they form 'smart power,' as defined by Nye. In November 2017, the concept of **sharp power** emerged in *Foreign Affairs*, describing authoritarian regimes' aggressive and subversive tactics in democratic countries (**disinformation**). Unlike soft power, sharp power involves manipulation but is not the opposite.

Consequently, this discussion begins with a conceptualization of power, distinguishing between 'power as capability' (primarily addressed in FPA) and 'power as influence' (a focus of IR). Soft power has since evolved into an interdisciplinary field of scholarship. It is most simply defined as *"a cultural artefact that represents a body of thought associated with resources invested in attraction-power and strategies for using such resources to further actors' interests"* (Chitty 2017a: 1).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Critical scholars of soft power often highlight its underdevelopment and insufficient theorization (Chitty 2017a). This is attributed to two main factors: (a) the eclectic academic approaches linking soft power to culture, **propaganda**, influence, hegemony, **charisma**, and public diplomacy, and (b) the tendency of foreign policy practitioners to exploit the concept's vagueness. Its ambiguity allows for imprecise measurement of effects and facilitates instrumental interpretations that justify its application while securing funding for competitive communication of national interests.

In summary, power as influence encompasses two extremes: coercion and persuasion or attraction. Soft power manifests in two ways. First, it appears in direct relations through agenda-setting in international institutions and persuasion or deference in negotiations. Second, it involves non-action by the foreign policy actor, as it depends on the perceptions of others. As Nye (2011a: 19) notes, *"Since attraction depends upon the minds of the perceiver, the subject's perceptions play a significant role in whether given resources produce hard or soft power behavior.'"*

LITERATURE Both IR and FPA study how states behave toward each other via their **foreign policy**. FPA focuses on **power** as a property of a state and thus relates to it as a means to rule the country (to have power) or even as a position of the ruler itself (to be in power). From this perspective, power is an intrinsic quality of the state itself and is projected outside of the state's borders via its foreign policy means; ontologically, this is an actor-specific theory perspective of FPA (Hudson 2007). Conversely, IR as a discipline studies the nature of the international political system and focuses on the structural view of the distribution of power at this level of analysis. Thus, only the results of state behaviors make up its *explanandum*, not primarily the origin of state influence. This applies a more actor-general theorization (Hudson 2007).

Nye (2011a: 11) defines a state's power as *"the ability to affect others to produce preferred outcomes."* Holsti (1995) recognized that power has a somewhat static element of *capability* (i.e., the 'ability to affect' with Nye) and a relational element that is exercised via behavior, called *influence* (production of outcomes by Nye). This has been taken as a convention by other researchers of states' foreign policy (e.g., Brighi & Hill 2012; Hill 2016).

MEASUREMENT A specific measurement of soft power capabilities was developed by McClory (2019) due to its increasing relevance in the absence of major international wars following the Cold War. *The Soft Power Index* comprises six sub-indices: culture, enterprise, digital, government, education, and engagement. The culture sub-index includes metrics for 'high' culture, such as visual arts, and 'pop' culture, like music and film. It also considers international tourist arrivals, music industry exports, and international sporting success. The education sub-index evaluates the number of international students, the quality of universities, and academic output (McClory 2019: 28).

The engagement sub-index measures a country's diplomatic presence through the number of embassies or high commissions abroad, membership in multilateral organizations, and contributions to overseas **foreign aid**. The enterprise sub-index assesses the attractiveness of a country's economic model by examining factors such as ease of doing business, corruption levels, and innovation capacity. The digital sub-index captures a country's technological embrace, digital connectivity, and use of digital diplomacy via social media platforms. Lastly, the government sub-index evaluates political values, public institutions, and policy outcomes using metrics on individual freedoms, human rights, human development, societal violence, and government effectiveness (McClory 2019: 28).

EXAMPLES Autocratic leaders such as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin have historically sought to project an aura of invincibility to attract followers, a tactic also adopted by some leaders in southeastern Europe. This strategy aligns with Joseph Nye's concept of co-optive power, where the indirect use of force can create awe and attraction, functioning as a form of soft power. In contrast, when force is used directly for coercion, it represents the 'first face of power,' which focuses on direct control (Nye 2011b). This approach is also evident in small states with dictatorial regimes that pursue nuclear weapons. These regimes seek nuclear capabilities not only for deterrence but also to enhance regional influence and global prestige. Nye (2011b) cites North Korea and Iran as examples where nuclear capabilities are pursued partly for their soft power potential.

Another example of soft power employed by

authoritarian regimes is 'sportswashing' (see also: **spectacle politics**), where autocrats use sports mega-events to improve their tarnished human rights reputations on the global stage. As Boykoff (2022: 343) explains, *"With global leaders traveling to sports mega-events like the Olympics and soccer World Cup, where they engage in grin-and-grip photo opportunities with other global powerbrokers and sport barons, the result can be a sporty halo effect for the host nation and its political leadership."* Notably, sportswashing is not exclusive to authoritarian regimes and can also occur in putative democracies.

Contemporary examples of soft power application by autocratic or semi-democratic regimes include strategic communication efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Chinese leader Xi Jinping engaged in 'mask diplomacy' (Kowalski 2021), while Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić employed 'vaccine diplomacy' (Bechev 2021).

IMPACT ON POLICY A conceptual decoupling of soft power into passive and active capabilities reveals that every country, regardless of its government or regime, possesses elements of passive capability, such as cultural heritage. For instance, Egypt's pyramids and antiquities exert attraction regardless of its political system (Chitty 2017b: 23). However, soft power derived from historical objects or narratives can be re-politicized by contemporary rulers or **civil society** actors. A distinction exists between cultural entrepreneurs, who enhance community solidarity from a republican virtue perspective, and political brokers, who manipulate social and political realms for their purposes (Chitty 2017b: 23-24). An example of manipulation is Saddam Hussein's use of narratives to delegitimize UN **sanctions** on Iraq (Nye 2011b).

In southeast Europe, increasingly authoritarian states politicize historical narratives related to national identity. This is similar to the rise of authoritarianism in the Western Balkans through nationalist rhetoric in the media and foreign influence (Bieber 2020), i.e., **black knights** manipulating international ties (cf. **linkage & leverage theory**). In dictatorships, civil society is restricted, allowing regimes to create or rediscover heritage-based narratives. Ethno-nationalist discourse often exemplifies this process. Chitty (2017a: 27-28) notes that constructive government dialogue with citizens enhances soft power through good governance and reduces corruption. However, dictatorships typically lack this positive internal (I-soft) and external (E-soft) power due to unattractive policies.

In crises requiring effective leadership, strategic communication may become more attractive, particularly among allies. Direct communication between leaders can be more effective than state-generated messages. Thus, a dictator's domestic rule might be secondary to their role in addressing international crises.

Nye (2011b: 84) suggests that when governments focus on promoting democracy, human rights, and freedom, soft power often surpasses hard power. While this may seem irrelevant for dictatorships, it is crucial for promoting specific **ideologies**.

NEW FRONTIERS Kivimäki (2014) argued that the Cold War's bipolar context, within which the concept of soft power was developed, tied it to co-optation and the willingness to accept US political hegemony. Nye's (1990) definition has been criticized for promoting American or 'Western' ideals, such as freedom and democracy (cf. (**democracy promotion**). In response, Chinese scholars sought to counter this narrative by emphasizing the relevance of China's soft power. Efforts were made to incorporate Chinese-specific dimensions into the concept, leading to a debate on 'soft power with Chinese characteristics' and attempts to expand the framework to include other country-specific aspects.

Recent studies on Chinese soft power continue to highlight influence, attractiveness, favorable outcomes, and achieving goals through non-coercive means as core elements, but with distinct substantive features, such as 'Confucian values' and 'harmony among states' (Li 2009; Blanchard & Lu 2012; Lai & Lu 2012). Additionally, research has extended to other authoritarian regimes, particularly within BRICS nations. Scholars such as Gallarotti & Chatin (2016) and Stuenkel (2016) have examined how these regimes adapt and apply soft power strategies within their specific political and cultural contexts.

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Box 1.16 North Korean Bronze Statue Building in Africa

Peace secured by slavish submission is not peace.
– Kim Il-Sung

The construction of enormous bronze statues in Africa by North Korean artisans started in the early Cold War period as a part of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s Third World diplomacy against South Korean international state recognition efforts. It included establishing diplomatic ties with liberated African nations and their authoritarian leaders, within which the building of monuments and bronze statues served as diplomatic gifts and anti-imperial propaganda, next to limited but effective military assistance (e.g., training presidential guards and intelligence services). After the Cold War, the bronze statue building transformed into one of the DPRK's **sanctions** and embargo evasion techniques in order to accumulate foreign currency and spread the regime's **soft power** in African countries. The bronze statues were built by the regime's *Mansudae Art Studio's Project Overseas*. This reflected the broader context of Soviet-Chinese-American competition over geopolitical influence in the Global South.

Since the outbreak of the Cold War, new countries were gradually emerging on a political map as a result of the global decolonization process and ongoing liberation campaigns in Latin America, Asia and Africa. With the Korean War (1950-1953) and the division of the Korean Peninsula along the 38th parallel, the Stalinist-like regime of the DPRK sought diplomatic support from like-minded countries for recognition. DPRK's 'free exports' of statues to the liberated African countries were part of a diplomatic strategy within international competition between the two Koreas and, thus, between the communist and the democratic camps in the context of the Cold War. (Che 2018)

Seoul and Pyongyang vied for international recognition as the sole government of the Korean peninsula from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s. One diplomatic battleground for this 'inter-Korean' competition was Africa, the site of a number of newly independent nations that were rising in diplomatic importance as member states in the United Nations (UN). (Young 2015) Kim Il-Sung wanted African support at the UN to drive the US military forces out of Korea (Onejoon Che in Kućma 2022). Thus, the fact that the US had military camps in South Korea while there was no Soviet army in North Korea was likely a reason for DPRK's initial instrumental support of African countries.

The DPRK supported Africans suffering under the racist policies of Apartheid (Box 4.7) and similar regimes in Africa (**racism**). African and anti-apartheid revolutionists in the 1960s formed an important foundation for North Korea's African policy. DPRK used this policy to demonstrate a willingness to fight on behalf of those suffering under imperial pressure (Choi & Jeong 2017: 334). African leaders viewed the DPRK as a better alternative to large communist powers like the People's Republic of China (PRC) or the USSR. The North Korean brand of development had attracted mostly right-wing African leaders admiring the DPRK's military's guerrilla tactics and the Kim family's **personality cult** (Young 2015: 101).

After the Bandung (Asia-Africa) Conference in 1955, which addressed the needs of the newly-liberated or independent decolonized countries, Africa emerged as the key destination for North Korean diplomacy, where the choice of export articles such as military expertise and monumental architectonic gifts originated. The DPRK provided scholarships for African students, military assistance, expertise for constructing functional buildings, political residences, and bronze statues. In the past decades, monuments honoring the independence leaders and celebrating the African Renaissance were erected in a number of African countries (Kućma 2022). Many of them were built by North Korean workers who offered cheap labor (Onejoon Che in Kućma 2022).

The bronze statues in Africa were built in the North Korean socialist realist style derived from Soviet socialist realism that mingled with the Korean tradition of the *Mansudae Art Studio*, established in 1959. Perhaps the largest art factory in the world, the *Mansudae* is composed of 14 creative groups including the specialization on bronze sculptures. (Onejoon Che in Samudzi, 2022) *Mansudae* was involved in constructing over 170 monuments and 3800 bronze statues in the DPRK (Che 2018), including famous monumental bronze statues of Kim Il-Sung in 1972 and Kim Jong-Il in 2011 within the Mansudae Grande Monument. (Gabriel 2021) A designated division, the *Mansudae Overseas Projects* became the key export factory.

Mansudae has served the Kim family for decades, producing state **propaganda** posters, paintings, statues and monuments based on aesthetics of self-reliance and features of unification based on the state ideology *7*, guided by the 'great leaders' of the North Korean state. The companies within the *Mansudae Overseas Project Group* (Che 2018) sent migrant workers and artists to Africa to build bronze statues and accumulate foreign currency for the Kim family. The US Treasury Department sanctioned *Mansudae Overseas Projects* in 2016, prohibiting UN member states from directly or indirectly acquiring statues from North Korean individuals and entities and avoiding doing business with Pyongyang directly (The Sentry, 2021: 6; Salisbury 2021: 204). Mansudae's foreign missions have been a key revenue stream for North Korea's regime.

Shine Choi (2021) explains *Juche* ideology not only as a means of legitimization of the 'Hermit kingdom' but also as a sphere to understand the international positioning of the DPRK. By means of the 'Grand Monument' in Pyongyang, Choi proposes to see the *Juche* ideological features as a "visual-textual process," in which the monumentality represents the social positioning of the nation via the monumental politics, in which the monuments are approved narratives of the regime. (Choi 2021: 436) Oneejon Che sees the DPRK's relationship with Africa as the pragmatic export of *Juche*, based on the principles of political and military independence and economic autonomy. *Juche* architecture, as Supreme Leader and amateur architectural theorist Kim Jong-Il wrote in 1991 in a treatise on the subject, systematizes the relationship between society and the Workers' Party (Samudzi 2022).

Totalitarian architecture emerged in the early twentieth century and was, from the start, closely associated with totalitarian regimes such as the USSR. Symbolizing the power and authority of the state, its grandiose monumentality reflects the **personality cults** and **totalitarian legacies**. The idea that architecture can be used as a propagandistic tool to reinforce the values and ideals of the regime in power is central to architectural theory. An urban landscape imposed with control and order by totalitarian architecture should inspire awe and respect for the state or other functions such as 'the culture of memory,' including the memory of mass crimes (Niezen 2018) and the struggle for identity after colonization.

Under **totalitarianism,** architecture and art are used as tools for **propaganda** promoting the **ideology** of the ruling regime. Such a regime thus dominates all aspects of society, including arts and architecture. To emphasize the power and authority of the regime, North Korean bronze statues are typically large and imposing. This monumentality is achieved by using huge proportions and exaggerated features, such as outsized heads and hands. Totalitarian art tends to simplify complex concepts and ideas into digestible symbols. Simple, easily recognizable symbols of power and authority, such as military uniforms, flags, and weapons, are being implemented in the North Korean bronze statues in Africa.

Troensegaard (2016: 4) examines the origins of the word 'monument', which comes from the Latin word *momentum*, which means the memory of something, particularly of a person's act or deeds that endure. Such a monument thus has a "commemorative value." Wood and Terry (2016) delved into responses of North Korean art in juxtaposition to the totalist power of the regime. Based on a personal visit to Pyongyang's Mansudae Grand Monument, they observed the bronze statue of the 'Dear Leaders,' referring to Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il. They contemplated aspects of *Juche* ideology of self-reliance and unification, while acts of posing next to the bronze statues and bowing are a "*choreographed performative that pulls subjects into a specific ideographic vocabulary*" (Wood & Terry 2016: 511). People as subjects are also products of the ideology, considered to be "concrete measurements" in the DPRK. (Wood & Terry 2016: 506; 511)

There are numerous *Mansudae*-built bronze statues in different African countries. The *Three Dikgosi* Monument in Gaborone was erected in 2005 as a commemoration of the post-independence unitary state. The three *Dikgosi* or chiefs symbolize the pivotal role of three tribal chiefs – Khama III, Sebele I, and Bathoen I – in the country's path to independence. These chiefs traveled to Britain in 1895 to successfully petition against the incorporation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate into Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company, ensuring that Botswana remained under direct British rule rather than being absorbed into what would become apartheid South Africa.

In addition to its sculpture workshop in Windhoek, *Mansudae* had extensive experience designing southern Africa: Harare's Heroes' Acres (commemorating Rhodesia's Bush War) and Windhoek's Freedom Park's statue depicting Namibia's founding president (Sam Nujoma, holding a copy of the Namibian Constitution), as well as a Nelson Mandela's statue at a Johannesburg shopping center, among others. (Parsons 2006: 680)

Perhaps the most famous North Korean bronze statue is the *African Renaissance Monument* (in French, *Monument de la Renaissance Africaine*) in Senegal. Senegal is the country with the tallest (North Korean) bronze statue in Africa. It was opened in Oukham, Dakar, on the outskirts to the public in 2010 at the ceremonial unveiling by President Abdoulaye Wade. Despite some controversies, this gigantesque representation of a family (man, wife, boy), with liberal use of nudity in a Muslim country, with a boy pointing towards the future, has become a symbol of decolonization and rejuvenation of African nations. It is a reminder of the ways in which commemorative landscapes can be used for foreign interference and to exercise soft power. (The Contested Histories Initiative, 2021: 10) However, the bronze statues as diplomatic gifts by the DPRK unveil a more complicated North Korean engagement on the African continent.

In Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, Robert Gabriel Mugabe established his political foundations thanks to North Korea's contribution to the liberation of the country. (Choi & Jeong 2017) The *Juche Idea Study Centre* was established at the University of Zimbabwe in 1981 by the revolutionary and politician Mugabe as a follow-up to a Kim-Mugabe meeting in Pyongyang the year before. The Cold War provided a complex political environment for both Kim Jong-Il and Robert Mugabe. The latter found Kim's "methods of governance" useful in his quest to dominate Zimbabwe's political sphere (Choi & Jeong 2017: 330) and borrowed from Kim's *Juche* ('self-reliance').

Over a hundred North Korean military advisers were sent to Zimbabwe, and some firearms were offered as partial aid. DPRK's military specialists trained the new brigade of the *Zimbabwe National Army* (Choi & Jeong 2017: 340) and instructed 3,500 members of Mugabe's elite military unit, the infamous Fifth Brigade. (Young, 2015: 102). Mugabe sought military help from North Korea for his political party, the *Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front* (ZANU-PF), to brutally crush political opposition and later massacre over 20,000 civilians.

One particular monument, erected in 2010, the bronze statue of Mugabe's former fellow revolutionary Joshua Nkomo (ZAPU), was ill-received and eventually not placed in its intended position in Harare in 2011 due to controversies related to North Korean involve-



ment in the repression of ZAPU (by the Fifth Brigade) and other symbolic slights directed at ZAPU. (Voanews, 2010) Joshua Mqabuko Nyongolo Nkomo (1917-1999) was a revolutionary leader fighting for independence with his movement (ZAPU). He became a political opponent of Mugabe after the Gukurahundi conflict in 1983 until 1987 when he joined Mugube's regime and served as vice president (a ceremonial position) until he died in 1999.

Namibia is another African country that implemented DPRK's monumentalism. Marschall (2006: 173) refers to a "socialist style of memorialization" that has been present in African countries, such as Namibia.

Replacing the controversial German colonial-era *Reiterdenkmal* equestrian statue in front of the Independence Memorial Museum, the bronze statue erected in 2014 depicts the first Namibian President Sam Nujoma. It is considered to be an expression of a "*state-sanctioned narrative of national identity*" (Niezen 2018: 555). Some features of the monument are perceived to be more Asian than African, or rather North Korean, which is a critique aimed at covering Namibian creativity with non-Namibian expressions (Baas 2022: 61). In the context of African liberation movements, Stonehouse (2018) refers to the politics of memorialization in Namibia, on how the *South-West African People's Organization* (SWAPO) had used North Korean arts as sources of legitimization of the present regime that evolved from a liberation movement into a dominant political party in a multi-party democracy.

The Independence Memorial Museum was constructed in the style of North Korean monumentalism, designed and built by North Koreans. Through this architectural approach, SWAPO sought to reinforce its "master narrative of liberation history" by adopting North Korean modes of memorialization, which emphasize authority and cohesion as key cultural elements (Stonehouse 2018: 19, 29, 54).

Rather than representing a dramatic break from the past, these newer memorials added layers of aesthetics and meaning to Windhoek's urban memory landscape. This transition moved from the political aesthetics of German colonialism to the Stalinist socialist realism of North Korean design, which now underpins Namibian nationalist memory politics (Zuern 2017).

The UN has imposed **sanctions** on North Korea following its nuclear weapons tests, prompting Pyongyang to develop various methods to evade these restrictions. One such method thus involves the export of bronze statues, a strategy aimed at generating hard currency for the Kim regime, as detailed in Mallory's RAND report (2021). In Africa, nearly all countries maintain diplomatic ties with the DPRK, and Mallory (2021: 7) categorizes these relationships based on the extent of DPRK's sanction evasion activities. These include arms supply in 13 African nations, military technology proliferation (including missile, nuclear, and chemical technologies) in 13 countries, and construction projects in 14 nations (The Sentry, 2021: 6).

The bronze statues built by North Korea in Africa exemplify totalitarian architectural and artistic principles. They emphasize monumentality, propaganda, simplification, and centralized control. These statues are meticulously designed to align with the regime's standards and convey specific political messages. They symbolize solidarity between DPRK and the host African nations while showcasing Pyongyang's global influence. Additionally, they reflect revolutionary ideals and underscore a shared authoritarian ethos across continents.

How to cite:

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State Capture

As long as politics is the shadow of big business, the attenuation of the shadow will not change the substance.
– John Dewey, American philosopher

State capture is a concept used in political science (PS), economics, and related disciplines in order to describe the penetration, privatization, or appropriation of a state by economic or political actors.

DEFINITION The definitions of state capture differ in terms of (a) whether state capture is a form of grand or **systemic corruption**, or a distinct phenomenon (network), or (b) which actors are involved in penetrating or capturing the state. One of the first definitions of state capture described this phenomenon as a form of grand corruption based on *"the efforts of firms to shape the laws, policies, and regulations of the state to their own advantage by providing illicit private gains to public officials."* (Hellman & Kaufmann 2001: 31). A relatively similar definition, which, however, does not specify which type of actors are involved, was provided by David-Barrett (2021: 4), who defined state capture as *"a type of systematic corruption whereby narrow interest groups take control of the institutions and processes that make public policy, excluding other parts of the public whose interests those institutions are supposed to serve."* Other definitions do not perceive state capture as a form of grand corruption, such as Grzymala-Busse (2008: 640), who defined state capture as *"the appropriation of state resources by political actors for their own ends: either private or political benefit."* Arguing that in the case of state capture, both public and private actors are involved, Fazekas and Tóth (2016: 320) define state capture broadly as a *"distinct network structure in which corrupt actors cluster around parts of the state allowing them to act collectively in pursuance of their private goals to the detriment of the public good."*

SEE ALSO Several concepts used in PS refer to patterns similar to state capture. Although there is no consensus in the literature on relations between these concepts, with some degree of simplification, **neo-patrimonialism** can be understood as a more general term than state capture, more associated with **informality** as such, while **clientelism**, **rent-seeking**, **systemic corruption**, and **prebendalism** constitute components of state capture.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Although the concept of state capture has been used in different geographical contexts, such as Tunisia (Rijkers et al. 2017), South Africa (Chipkin & Swilling 2018; Dassah 2018), Mexico (Guerrero 2010), Greece (Trantidis & Tsagkroni 2017), or the USA (Hertel-Fernandez 2019), it has been mostly applied in studies on informal politics in post-communist countries from Russia and post-Soviet states (Iwasaki & Suzuki 2007; Kopeček 2016; Tudoroiu 2015; Yakovlev 2006) to countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Fazekas & Tóth 2016; Klíma 2019) and the Balkans (Keil 2018; Vachudova 2019). According to Bach (2011: 288), the concept of state capture denotes the in principle neo-patrimonial patterns in post-communist countries, where these patterns are closely connected with *"[t]he accumulation of economic power in the hands of the so-called oligarchs [and] a massive transfer of state assets into private hands, with the result of a weakening of the institutional and normative environments inherited from the Communist era."* The regional usage of the concept of state capture stems from the fact that the *Business Environment and Enterprise Survey* (BEEPS), on the basis of which the concept of state capture was developed, has been conducted in several rounds (since 1999) in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EBRD 2023).

ORIGIN The term state capture originated within the theories of public choice, public interest and regulation. Since the 1970s, political scientists and economists have begun to point out that while regulation of some industries should be *"instituted primarily for the protection and benefit of the public at large,"* in fact, the regulation is frequently actively sought by relatively small groups to obtain regulation beneficial for them (Stigler 1971: 3). This pattern of behavior was later termed as capture (e.g., regulatory capture, captured economy), and its perpetrators as captors (Bardhan & Mookherjee 2000; Kalt & Zupan 1984; Laffont & Tirole 1991). The present-day usage of the concept of state capture, however, dates back to the early 2000s and is closely connected with studies of political and economic transition and the BEEPS survey, realized by the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In a series of working papers and articles analyzing the results of the 1999 round of the BEEPS, Hellmann, Jones, Kaufmann, and Schankerman conceptualized state capture as a form of grand corruption through which economic actors manipulate state policies or shape the emerging rules of the game (Hellman & Kaufmann 2001; Hellman et al. 2000; 2000; 2003; Hellman & Schankerman 2000). However, later works have treated state capture as a phenomenon of its own (informal network or system) and focused not only on the privatization of the state by companies or 'oligarchs' but also by politicians themselves (Grzymala-Busse 2008; Wedel 2003).

LITERATURE The original concept of state capture is provided by Hellman et al. (2003), and different conceptualizations were offered by Wedel (2003), Grzymala-Busse (2008), and Fazekas & Tóth (2016). A critical account of avenues of future research on state capture is provided by Pavlović (2022). Larger empirical monographs on particular cases of state capture, which also contain critical discussion of the concept, are offered by Hertel-Fernandez (2019), Klíma (2019), Chipkin & Swiling (2018), and Leitner & Meissner (2016). A growing body of literature also



looks at political party state capture and its impact on elections (Canen et al. 2023; Innes 2014; Klíma 2019; Pavlović 2022).

CLASSIFICATIONS Most of the classifications of the phenomena of state capture are based on the scope and degree to which the corrupting actors penetrate the organs of the state. For example, Wedel (2003: 433, 437) differentiated between the partially appropriated stated and the clan-state, *"which is characterized by a much higher degree of penetration of state bodies and authorities than a partially appropriated state."* In the partially appropriated state, *"informal groups (…) take over from the state, or privatize, certain functions, [… they] work with relevant state authorities or what is left of them, but the group as such is not synonymous with the authorities."* In the clan-state, members of informal groups *"actually occupy positions in the executive branch"* and the state and the informal group (so-called clan) become almost synonymous (cf. **neo-patrimonialism**, **sultanism & neo-sultanism**). Wedel's approach has been further developed by Fazekas & Tóth (2016), who discuss the relation between corruption and state capture. They differentiate between corruption-free state (corruption is rare), corruption without state capture (corruption is frequent, but random, without being organized into clusters of corrupt organizations), partially appropriated state (some public organizations lose all of their institutional autonomy, while the capture can be only local), and fully captured state (all public institutions lose their autonomy, and the capture is rather 'global,' i.e., state-wide). Canen et al. (2023) differentiate between direct forms of capture (firms control bureaucrats directly) and indirect forms of capture (firms control bureaucrats through elected officials).

A different approach is taken by Grzymala-Busse (2008), who perceives state capture as a phenomenon existing in extractive regimes (cf. **kleptocracy**) and builds her typology on the combination of two binary variables – the presence of rent distribution (cf. **rent-seeking, rentier states**) and the presence of competition between groups. The result of this model is four types of state capture: (i) clientelism (competition is present, rent is distributed), (ii) predation (no competition, no rent distribution), (iii) fusion of party and state (no competition, but rent is distributed), and (iv) exploitation (competition is present, rent is not distributed).

MEASUREMENT The *State Capture Index*, developed by Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann (Hellman & Kaufmann 2001; Hellman et al. 2003), stood at the very birth of the concept of state capture and was based on the data from the BEEPS survey conducted in 1999. The index was based on *"'firms' reporting that their businesses are directly and significantly affected by private payments made to public officials to influence decision making in one or more of the following six institutions: parliament, the executive apparatus, the criminal courts, the civil courts, the central bank, and political parties."* (Hellman & Kaufmann 2001: 32). On the basis of this index, the authors differentiate between high-capture and low-capture economies. Fazekas & Tóth (2016) developed a method for measuring state capture on the basis of public procurement data from Hungary. It is based on the combination of network analysis and their own proxy indicator of corruption (called the CRI), which *"represents the probability of particularistic contract award and delivery in public procurement."* (Fazekas & Tóth 2016: 326). In the case of Benin, Canen et al. (2023) developed the *Direct Capture Index*, which is based on data collected by interviews, which are then quantified.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Studies of state capture are typically based on data originating from one or more sources; these include fieldwork (mostly interviews), public databases (e.g., procurement), larger international surveys (e.g., the BEEPS), leaked data (e.g., Wikileaks, Panama Papers), and investigative journalism. In this regard, rigorous triangulation, a critical approach to secondary data, and consideration of ethical and safety aspects of research are of crucial importance. Although several indices measuring state capture have been developed, their usage is mostly limited to a few studies, and therefore, comparing the scale of state capture between more cases is complicated. Also, the regional focus of the concept limits its potential for larger comparisons.

EXAMPLES A shining example of state capture in a flawed democracy, which was also closely followed by the media, is the case of the Gupta family, which moved from Uttar Pradesh, India, to South Africa, where they became one of the greatest and most influential economic players. Thanks to their close contacts with South African President Jacob Zuma, the Gupta family was frequently described as a shadow government (Chipkin & Swilling 2018; Myburgh 2017; Pauw 2017).

Another well-documented example of state capture in an authoritarian regime is Azerbaijan under Ilham Aliyev, where the Aliyev-Pashayev ruling family became almost synonymous with the state. While the Pasha Holding openly controls large shares of Azerbaijan's economy, the ruling family also controls the oil extraction via the state-own SOCAR company and the *State Oil Fund* (SOFAZ). The money from state budget (and the SOFAZ in particular) are frequently spent on large construction projects, which are realized by companies secretly owned by members of the ruling family. The structure of this system was largely uncovered thanks to Wikileaks, the Panama Papers, and the systematic work of several investigative journalists; some of them, such as Khadija Ismayilova, faced persecution from Azerbaijani authorities (Kopeček 2016; Safiev 2016).

IMPACT ON POLICY State capture has a serious impact on fair distribution of public goods (Canen et al. 2023; David-Barrett 2021) and on performance of transition economies (Iwasaki & Suzuki 2007; Jensen 2002; Tudoroiu 2015). In particular, state capture plays a negative role in development assistance and democratic consolidation (Richter & Wunsch 2020) and in turn supports democratic backsliding and the rise of authoritarianism (Keil 2018).

OTHER LANGUAGES The concept of state capture comes from English, and its usage in non-English literature remains limited. However, in several Central and East European languages, such as in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, the concept (translated as *zarobljavanje države*) is used in empirical case studies with a typical focus on political party state capture (Pejić & Stojanović Gajić 2018; Pešić 2007; Račić 2021).

NEW FRONTIERS Unlike other similar concepts, state capture is relatively well conceptualized and several existing indices of state capture prove that it can be also relatively easily operationalized and measured. However, there is a need to systematically use the already developed indices of state capture in more case studies and, therefore, enable systematic comparison of this phenomenon. A growing number of studies applying the concept of state capture on cases from different regions could be a good sign in this regard.

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Sultanism & Neo-Sultanism

If the cockroach wants to rule over the chicken, then it must hire the fox as a bodyguard.
– Sierra Leonean proverb

In Max Weber's theoretical framework of **rulership**, 'sultanism' is a more extreme form (a subtype) of **patrimonialism** associated most with **despotism**. Both forms fall under the umbrella of traditional rulership but are manifested as more elaborate personalist political systems with administrative staff. Sultanism is a pre-modern legitimacy system characterized by barely restrained leadership, dependent on its armed forces, with a leader derived from, but no longer beholden to, tradition or a customary elite hierarchy (class, caste, etc.).

The related term, 'neo-sultanism' – often confusingly just referred to as 'sultanism' (even by its creator) – is a concept derived from **neo-patrimonialism**, coined by Spanish sociologist Juan José Linz (Storch de Gracia, 1926-2013) to study a system of supreme power without restraint in modern(izing) political systems, maintained not by tradition, ideology or charisma, but solely through a mixture of fear and rewards.

Despite the significant differences in definition between both concepts or in their application and impact on scholarship, both are often confused and are thus treated here alongside one another in this entry. To avoid misunderstandings, the original Weberian form of rulership is exclusively referred to as 'sultanism,' and the Linzean regime type as 'neo-sultanism.'

Moreover, unlike Linz and his colleagues, we refer to such leaders as 'neo-sultanistic' rulers or leaders. The term 'sultan' (originally from the Aramaic *'šulṭānā'* meaning 'power, dominion' and used as a title by Muslim sovereigns since the eleventh century) is reserved solely for the supreme powerholder of a sultanate, a (pre-modern) monarchic system, now usually Islamic, but with pre-Islamic, Sassanid (Iranian) roots – thus fully espousing traditional legitimacy.

DEFINITION Weberian sultanism shares all the main characteristics of its 'pure' type, **patrimonialism**: (a) In scope, it is a more complex form of traditional rulership that extends political power beyond the household of the ruler and thus encompasses staff (the 'patrimonial bureaucracy') and the means to enforce such rule (direct control over a 'patrimonial army'). (b) The bond *(Verband)* between rulers and bondsmen is based on personal relations. (c) The ruler has a traditional claim to power.

The differences with patrimonialism are found in (a) the level of discretion the ruler possesses in selecting staff and hence the composition of the latter group; (b) the ruler's utmost reliance on 'prebends' (non-hereditary offices providing revenues) to reward loyalty and service; (c) the resulting lack of traditional restraints on a ruler's decision-making.

The shift from patrimonialism to sultanism is reflected in the relationship of the ruler toward its staff. In less complex traditional legitimacy systems, the staff is made up solely of traditional associates *(Genossen),* retaining their respective rights (see below). Under patrimonialism the ruler has quite some discretion in recruiting staff 'extra-patrimonially' by selecting preferred bondsmen and vassals into his personalist patronage system. Sultanism skews this relationship even further, with rulers able to pick personal (loyal) favorites and fully dominate the relationship with their staff, reducing the latter's position to 'subjects' (*Untertanen*), rendering them fully dependent on a ruler's arbitrary discretions.

So, like in other traditional systems of rulership, staff owe their ruler personal allegiance (and are not duty-bound to the offices they hold), but the ruler's disproportionate power over individual staff members upends their ability to enforce their traditional rights, their *'Genossenrecht'* – that a ruler's policies must be substantively exercised in the interest of his followers, his traditional associates (*Genossen*). Under sultanism, the staff serves at the whim of the leader, and their future depends on remaining in the leader's good graces. They cannot counter a ruler's policy decisions because their political positions (their offices or 'prebends') are insecure and may be taken away by the ruler at any time for any reason.

Weber found patrimonialism to be the ideal type of despotic power and its sultanistic subtype to be more unstable due to the tensions between the class of traditional ruling elites and the handpicked favorites of the ruler, displacing them in the highest offices. Also, with pure reliance on a personal 'patrimonial army,' sultanistic rulers were actually more exposed to violent overthrow if this relation soured. Difficulties might arise in the event of a ruler's death or after military defeat. Fiscal arbitrariness was also a risk factor for regime survival. (Curtis 2009: 271-272, 281, 283)

Juan J. Linz, inspired by Guenther (Günther) Roth (1968), also drew on Weber's writings of traditional rulership when he dusted off the latter's concept of sultanism in 1975 to identify a particular form of 'modern' autocratic rule that differs from totalitarian regimes and regular authoritarian regimes. Neo-sultanism applies to non-traditional rulership (in the same way that **neo-patrimonialism** does) by capturing the hybridity between two logics of rulership (traditional/sultanistic and legal-rational) in contemporary regimes. Like Weber's sultanism, neo-sultanism is an extreme subtype of its respective 'pure type.' Analogically, it was devised by Linz to be applied as an ideal type (Chehabi & Linz 1998: 6, 9). However, unlike these deceiving parallels, it is important to stress that neo-sultanism is an ideal type to classify political regimes, while sultanism is an ideal type to classify forms of **rulership** (systems of **legitimacy**) – see lower: 'measurement' and 'methodological issues.'

Using a Weberian lens, neo-patrimonialism and neo-sultanism both operate in between tradi-

tional and legal-rational systems of rulership – the fusion of private and public – but neo-sultanism, in particular, is characterized by the absence of any traditional legitimacy and hollowing out the legal-bureaucratic logic of its political system with unconstrained, arbitrary rulings. Operating behind a constitutional *façade*, without ideology, impersonal mission, charisma, or historical claims to power, pure-type neo-sultanistic rulers actually find themselves devoid of any form of legitimacy, hence their absolute reliance on **patronage politics** and their personally-controlled security apparatus. This also explains their tendency to develop **personality cults** and make claims to **charismatic rulership**.

As a regime ideal type, *"no empirical reality fully matches all characteristics [and] it would be preferable to talk about "[neo-]sultanistic tendencies," indicating a development in the direction of the ideal-typical [neo-] sultanistic regime"* (Chehabi & Linz 1998: 9). In this regard, the pure type concept is categorically demarcated in juxtaposition to Linz's other regime types (along four dimensions) and in relation to neo-patrimonialism (by degree of (lack of) restraint on the ruler) (Gilbert & Mohseni 2011: 282-283; Guliyev 2011). Neo-sultanism utterly differs from totalitarianism by the absence of ideology and its weakness in mobilizing its population, but it shares many aspects of the latter's unrestrained leadership, going even further (since it is not even bound by ideology). Linz contrasts neo-sultanistic with authoritarian regimes by their very narrow support base and their lack of strong or autonomous (military or party) institutions (Linz 2000; Chehabi & Linz 1998).

J. Linz and A. Stepan (1996) provide a full comparative overview of modern regime ideal types (cf. **Linz & Stepan**) that characterizes neo-sultanism along four dimensions (pluralism, ideology, mobilization, and leadership). To summarize, under pure type neo-sultanism, the law does not protect against the unrestrained exercise of power by the leader. Limited ***pluralism*** may exist, but regime insiders, opposition figures and civil society elements can be equally targeted by despotic intervention. Rule is exercised without an elaborate or guiding ***ideology***, with a highly arbitrary manipulation of symbols. Without strong institutions or impersonal missions, ***mobilization*** of social forces is very low, without permanent organization, but can, on occasion, be manipulated for ceremonial purposes by applying coercive and clientelistic methods. ***Leadership*** is exercised without any (legal-rational) checks and balances and directly controls the security apparatus (Linz & Stepan 1996: 44-45, 51-54).

With a larger literature at his disposal, C.M. Davidson (2021: 72-73) summarizes neo-sultanism's defining characteristics as follows: (a) consolidated **personalist rule**; (b) establishing dominant patronage networks; (c) personal control over the military and security services, sometimes creating private paramilitaries; (d) eroding or sidelining the power of judicial and political institutions; (e) a tendency to establish dynasties; (f) adapt to the opportunistic manipulation of current ideologies, but never be bound by them; (g) cultivating specific aspects of traditional and religious culture (for nation-building purposes and legitimacy); (h) creating **personality cults** as charismatic *façades*.

Neo-sultanism's key defining elements taken from Weber's sultanism are (i) unrestrained personal rulership, (ii) direct control over the armed forces (the 'patrimonial army') and (iii) its 'patrimonial bureaucracy' (see: **patrimonialism**) resulting in states with a high fusion of private and public, with low levels of institutionalization. Such regimes have strong dynastic tendencies, and staff is drafted from kin, friends, business associates or from the security apparatus. All these relations are personal ones, with no professional career paths that are organized or bound by legal-rational norms. Staff is bound only by loyalty to the neo-sultanistic leader, not by any duty to the office they hold (Linz 2000; Linz & Stepan 1996; Chehabi & Linz 1998).

SEE ALSO Derived from **patrimonialism** and **neo-patrimonialism**, respectively, Weber's sultanism occupies a unique position in his theory of **rulership** aimed to capture **despotism**, while Linz's neo-sultanism has greatly influenced and contributed to the study of **personalist rule** and its related concepts of **patronage politics**, **systemic corruption**, **kleptocracy**, **clientelism**, **prebendalism**, and nepotism (Box 1.1).

ORIGIN Sultanism was based on Weber's (mis-) understanding of the Abbasid (751-1258) and Ottoman (1299-1922) empires, where sultans were deemed to be unfettered despots, wielding supreme judicial authority (cf. Box 1.13 on: Kadi justice), dependent on their personal military forces: the Janissary or Mamluk (slave) armies (see **presidential guards**) (Curtis 2009: 271). Subsequent scholarship (İnalcık 1992; Gerber 1994; Imber 2002; Arslantaş 2019) has exposed Weber's misinterpretations of Ottoman rule.

In the words of Metin Heper: *"[The Ottoman state] showed strong signs of the 'Rechtstaat:' the system required all in the bureaucratic center, including the Sultan, to respect absolutely its rulers and traditions. 'Like pages, [young male servants] the Sultan himself studied with tutors on certain days of the week. He had meticulously to observe ceremony, customary usage determining even the words he had to use on certain occasions.'"* (Heper 1985: 26, cited in Gerber 1994: 129).

The legitimacy of Ottoman sultans was always supported by tradition and bound by law, reliant on elaborate bureaucratic structures and stable property rights. (For a detailed review of the nature of Ottoman property rights, see Boucoyannis 2021; Arslantaş 2019). Therefore, Weber's term 'sultanism' is a bit of a misnomer and has been criticized for being 'orientalist' – see also 'methodological issues' below.

The model for neo-sultanism was borne out of Juan J. Linz's encounters with Jesús de Galíndez (Suárez) (1915-1956), a Spanish exile of the Franco regime, Basque nationalist, and professor of international law, who was abducted by the Trujillo regime from New York, where he had fled to in 1946 after turning into a dissident of the Dominican dictatorship in the early 1940s, where he had been teaching law. Once



in the US, his scathing magazine articles, pamphlets and PhD dissertation for Columbia University, *La era de Trujillo: un estudio casuístico de dictadura hispanoamericana* (de Galíndez 1956), published posthumously, exposing the inner workings of the Trujillo regime, made him a target for abduction, torture and extra-judicial killing. This bold, illegal rendition by the Trujillo regime led Linz to borrow Weber's concept of sultanism to capture extreme leader discretion in political regimes. Trujillo became the archetype of neo-sultanistic dictatorships. (Chehabi & Linz 1998: 4-5; Time Magazine 1956).

EXAMPLES Being such an extreme form of patrimonialism, few examples actually come close to Weber's sultanistic ideal type. One close example would be the Russian *'pomest'e system'* ('military fief system' or местничество – *'mestnichestvo'* in Russian); a system established after the subjugation of the traditional elites by the Muscovite princes (later the tsars) including the expropriation of their nobility property rights; a process starting under Ivan III (reign: 1462-1505) and abolished in 1682. This system of land tenure turned vassal princes and 'boyars' (noblemen) into servicemen (помещики – *'pomeshchiki'*) by designating them estates staffed with serfs (холопы – *'kholopy'*) and semi-free indentured peasants (смерды – *'smerdy'*) for their upkeep. Such landholdings were temporary leases (in theory) and could only be used in order to meet their military or administrative obligations to the ruler (and not for gathering taxes or sub-letting like in feudal systems). 'Combat serfs' (боевые холопы – *'boevye kholopy'*) together with the lowly gentry ('boyar scions' or дети боярские – *'deti boyarskie'*) were enrolled into the military retinue of these subordinate tenants, and constituted a large part of the ruler's 'landed army' (поместное войско – *'pomestnoe voĭsko'*) (Szelenyi 2016: 13-15; Van den Bosch 2021a: 395; Hosking 2001: 93-96).

The prime examples of neo-sultanism were the Cold War Caribbean dictatorships (the Trujillos in the Dominican Republic, Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, the Somoza family in Nicaragua, the Duvaliers in Haiti, Marcos in the Philippines and the Pahlavi shahs in Iran). Around the same time frame, many African dictatorships were identified as neo-sultanistic: Foremost Joseph-Désiré Mobutu in Zaire (see Box 1.7), Idi Amin in Uganda, Macías Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, Jean-Bédel Bokassa in Central Africa; and at times Sani Abacha in Nigeria (Chehabi & Linz 1998; Bach 2011: 279). All cases stood out by their **systemic corruption** and fearsome security apparatus, cf. **presidential guards**.

Note that Linz and his colleagues considered neo-sultanistic regimes to be temporary phenomena, unlikely to be established in advanced industrial societies, but rather compatible with agrarian export economies, where its isolated, uneducated, passive rural masses can more easily be subjugated through a system of fear and rewards (Linz 2000: 153).

LITERATURE Farid Guliyev (2011) disentangles how sultanism and neo-sultanism relate to other concepts. Gilbert & Mohseni (2011) provide a useful visualization of how neo-sultanism relates to Linz's other types. The original and updated work *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* by Linz (1975; 2000) and later expansions on neo-sultanism with his colleagues, especially Houchang Chehabi (Linz & Stepan 1996; Chehabi & Linz 1998) constitute the main canon. A very comprehensive overview of both terms and their literature is provided by Christopher Davidson (2021).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Unlike patrimonialism, Weber's original term was initially forgotten until Linz exhumed it. Without a doubt, their concepts have contributed enormously to the study of **personalist rule** and contemporary **despotism**. Note that *"Linz's revival of the idea of [neo-]sultanism in 1975 occurred at the very instant when authoritarianism had reached its peak and was beginning to ebb"* (Young 1999), and therefore many of his archetypes became outdated in the decade after his seminal work. Problems with conceptual delineation and matching the idiosyncratic neo-sultanistic ideal type to real-life cases impeded the systematic comparison of regimes (Lidén 2013: 53; Snyder & Mahoney 1999: 117; Hadenius & Teorell 2007: 144). Most works borrowing the frame are single-country case studies.

Linz and his colleagues observed various factors that enabled neo-sultanistic rule and have furthered study in these areas: Their reliance on natural resource wealth made such regimes often compatible with **resource curses,** and scholars should not ignore geopolitical contexts nor the "interests in 'order' of foreign investors that have always established 'business' relations with the ruler." (Linz 2000: 154). Moreover, they witnessed common psychological patterns in neo-sultanistic rulers' personalities (cf. **leader personality**) (Chehabi & Linz 1998: 37). Foremost, Linz et al. documented the obstacles to democratic transition and consolidation from this regime type (Linz & Stepan 1996: 55-65; 70-71; Chehabi & Linz 1998: 37-41, 45-81).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES & MEASUREMENT Linz and his colleagues admit that Weber's use of the term 'sultanism' itself is a misnomer – see also: 'origin' higher – and that their adaptation should be called 'neo-sultanism' but they refuse to abandon or alter the term (Chehabi & Linz 1998: 6-7). For critiques on Weber's Orientalism, ruler-centric vision or sexist (patriarchal) perspective, see: 'methodological issues' under **neo-patrimonialism**.

Note that Weber nor Linz never specified the exact process of 'sultanization,' which is the source of its issues with 'operationalization' (see below). In contrast, works on the mechanics of **personalization** are currently being developed. When accounting for (neo-)sultanism's broader scope blurring a form of rulership and an ideal regime type, one can posit that sultanization refers to the interrelated processes by which a ruler obtains undisputed dominance over his **inner circle** (agenda-setting, vetoes and appointments), erodes the restraints of legal-rational or traditional rule and establishes personal control over the state's coercive apparatus and economic assets,

thus providing him with the levers, loyal staff, means and unchallenged position to manipulate, dominate and privatize the whole polity.

The cut-off point between sultanism and patrimonialism was never precisely marked by Weber, who revised his works several times, altering the relation between these concepts over time. Therefore, it is impossible to state when exactly prebendal, discretionary patrimonialism actually becomes sultanistic or to what level traditional legitimacy should be diluted for the former to transform into the latter ideal type.

Sultanism's inherent roots in **traditional rule** make it problematic to correctly apply the term to contemporary cases that are not monarchies. Conceptually – as shown in Table 1.9 – sultanism is closer to **absolutism** and **despotism** (both **monarchies**). These systems of governance are 'legal' even if policymaking is 'arbitrary' because rulers are not bound by the laws of men. Sultanism is, of course, extreme and (like absolutism) rather an ideal type than a regime type.

Neo-sultanism clearly corresponds to **tyranny** (which is also not exclusively used for monarchic rule). These political systems are unbound by any laws, and rulers are fully unrestrained. Nevertheless, unlike tyranny, which suffered from conceptual dilution over time, neo-sultanism has bigger methodological troubles.

Neo-sultanism suffers from similar ailments regarding delineation and operationalization as its pure type (also consult: 'measurement' under **neo-patrimonialism** for comparison). For these reasons, it is almost always exclusively used by scholars today as a theoretical reference for single-country case studies and not for comparing neo-sultanistic regimes with each other.

Delineation The main issue with neo-sultanism is that it is an ideal type to classify political regimes, derived from Weber's older ideal type to classify forms of **rulership**. This regime type is contrasted to democracy, totalitarianism, (post-totalitarianism) and authoritarianism along four dimensions (pluralism, ideology, mobilization, and leadership), but Linz never developed a hierarchy of its core defining elements, so comparing cases without such benchmarks becomes troublesome. Which neo-sultanistic tendencies in regimes bring them closest to the ideal type? Was Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania less neo-sultanistic (because it still espoused a guiding ideology) than Alfredo Stroessner's Paraguay (retaining a more autonomous ruling party)?

By identifying neo-sultanistic tendencies in various regimes (without a clear hierarchy or benchmarks for each tendency), it already becomes difficult to sort autocratic regimes into Linz's main classification, but this picture gets even more complicated when taking into account that neo-sultanistic regimes are evolutionary, and thus came out of other forms of rule.

The analytical separation from its 'pure type' also remains unclear: Where does neo-patrimonial rule end, and neo-sultanism start? How narrow must a leader's support base become before it can be considered neo-sultanistic? Moreover, the 'neo-' prefix begs the question: Where do pre-modern states end and modern states begin?

Operationalization Linz's neo-sultanism, together with **totalitarianism** and **authoritarianism,** are, in essence, three subtypes of a non-electoral archetype. When applying his frame from 1975 to contemporary regimes with **elections** – which boomed in the 1990s – Linz's distinguishing features for classification became inadequate (Gilbert & Mohseni 2011: 279, 284). This leaves very few recent real-life cases that actually match his ideal type, either leading to conceptual stretching by scholars to make them fit or rendering Linz's typology unattractive for operationalization (Van den Bosch 2021b: 17-18).

Table 1.9 – (Neo-)Sultanism & Related Concepts

	Sultanism	Neo-Sultanism	Absolutism	Despotism*	Tyranny
Arbitrary rule	Yes	Yes	At times	At times	Yes
Legitimate or not	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Main sources of Power	Force, custom, tradition	Force	Law, custom, tradition	Law, custom, tradition	Force
Private army	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Polity is the 'Patrimonium'	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Bound by traditional rule	No	No	Yes	Somewhat	No
Bound by legal-rational rule	No	No	Yes	No	No
Bound by the laws of men	No	No	No	No	No
Bound by divine law	No	No	Yes	Somewhat	No

* In its original meaning, before it was fully equated with tyranny.
Source: Author's own work.



REGIONAL VARIATION As mentioned higher, most contemporary studies focus on single case studies and their transitions. Some despotic regimes have been picked out repeatedly: Aleksandr G. Lukashenko's Belarus (Eke & Kuzio 2000; Rouda 2012); the Aliyev dynasty in Azerbaijan (Guliyev 2005); Saparmurat A. Niyazov's Turkmenistan (Kunysz 2012; in Czech: Kurian 2007; in Spanish: Ramas 2017); Alfredo Stroessner's Paraguay (Riquelme 1994; in Spanish: Nickson 2020); Equatorial Guinea (Peterson 2022); and Muammar Gaddafi's Libya (Geha & Volpi 2016).

Some of Linz's original examples continue to get some attention: Trujillo in the Dominican Republic (Turits 2003); Nicaragua (in Spanish: Baltodano 2020); the Philippines and Indonesia (Thompson & Cullinane 1995; Fukuoka 2015; Krüger 2016); and Iran (Ganji 2005; Ansari 2013).

OTHER LANGUAGES The Czech Republic, in particular Charles University, has a proud tradition of applying Linzean typologies to various case studies, but there is no evidence that the concept of neo-sultanism developed differently in different language zones.

NEW FRONTIERS Currently, Christopher M. Davidson (2021) is likely the only scholar who has surveyed the literature, specifically on sultanism and neo-sultanism, thoroughly, with the aim of gauging the prevailing theoretical frame in relation to contemporary cases.

While ignoring the contrast between Weber's sultanism and Linz's non-traditional counterpart, he rather blurs their literature and focuses on the shared characteristics of both terms. His goal is to take a closer look at the drift of authority structures in Saudi Arabia and the UAE over time, and the increased discretionary consolidation of power in these states compared to other Gulf monarchies.

Davidson launched the subtype of 'advanced sultanism' – a hybrid personalist regime type, combining its patronage logic with populist economic reforms and social transformations, underpinning ruling strategies aimed at adaptation, survival and longevity, characteristics that were never before attributed to the original concepts of sultanism and neo-sultanism (Piscatori 2021).

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Systemic Corruption

Corrupt politicians make the other ten percent look bad.
– Henry Kissinger, American politician

I usually accept bribes from both sides so that tainted money can never influence my decision.
– Francis Bacon, English philosopher

Systemic corruption is a type of **corruption**, which is endemic and institutionalized; in countries stricken by systemic corruption, corruption is not the exception to the rule, but rather the rule or norm itself.

DEFINITION Defining systemic corruption is not possible without defining or at least conceptualizing corruption as such. Legalist definitions reduce corruption to practices "prohibited by laws established by the government" or to "illegal actions concerning public officials." These kinds of definitions are useful for Large-N comparative studies; however, corruption is then reduced to a few most visible (and therefore measurable) practices, such as bribery or fraud (Vergara 2020: 13-14). A widespread, although somewhat broad, definition popularized by *Transparency International* is that corruption is the abuse or misuse of entrusted power for private gains. Similarly, Nye (1967: 419) defined corruption as a *"behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because or private-regarding [...] pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence."* The problem with these kinds of definitions is not only their broadness, but also their problematic operationalization. For example, Scott (1972: 3) argues that while corruption "involves a deviation from certain standards of behaviour," it is not clear "what criteria shall we use to establish those standards." Similarly, Kurer (2015: 34) argues that the main problem in this regard dwells in how to operationalize 'misuse' or its equivalents. Therefore, those definitions that aim at operationalizing corruption typically focus on one of the following issues – violation of legal norms, harming of public interest, and perception of corruption by public opinion. Inevitably, each of these approaches has its advantages and disadvantages, which are clearly summarized by Kurer (2015) and Gardiner (2017).

Another problem closely connected to the definition of corruption is the debate about the universality or relativity of the concept of corruption. As demonstrated by a number of studies, at a certain level of abstraction, corruption is a cross-cultural concept understandable around the globe; as summarized by Persson et al. (2013: 455), *"there in fact seems to be decisive moral disapproval of corruption in the majority of countries, including the most corrupt ones."* However, there is a disagreement among scholars on whether cultural differences "explain or excuse acts of corruption" (Larmour 2012: 155). While, for example, Alatas (1968) sees Western cultural relativism regarding corruption as naive, others, such as Heidenheimer (2017) or Larmour (2012), point out that cultural context is useful in understanding which actions people perceive as corrupt.

Heywood (2017: 2) claims that the problem is not the absence of a widely accepted definition that would operationalize corruption but the corruption itself; he rather asks "why corruption occurs and what needs to be done to prevent it." In this regard, Heywood (2017: 5) suggests that we should "move away from an undifferentiated conception of corruption" and calls for a typologization of corruption and operationalization of types of corruption, including systemic corruption.

Recently, the academic debate on systemic corruption concentrated on its conceptualization. A voluminous body of literature has conceptualized corruption, including systemic corruption, as based on the principal-agent relation. This perception stems from the economic theory and *"looks at ways*



of designing incentives to induce agents to act in ways that are optimal for those employing or directing them (their principals), when the agent's behaviour cannot be directly observed." (Philp 2015: 18). A seminal definition of corruption using the principal-agent theory was provided by Klitgaard (1988: 24), who defines corruption as behavior which *"occurs when an agent betrays the principal's interests in pursuit of her own."*

A number of authors have taken issue with the conceptualization of systemic corruption as a principal-agent problem (e.g., Grødeland et al. 1998; Karklins 2005; Mungiu-Pippidi 2006; Persson et al. 2013; 2019; Rothstein 2018) and have proposed that the collective action theory offers a better conceptual framework. As explained by Persson et al. (2013: 450), in countries with systemic corruption, *"we cannot assume the existence of 'principled principals' willing to hold corrupt officials accountable as suggested by the principal-agent framework,"* even for the 'principals,' Persson et al. continue, *"corruption is the expected behaviour [and] at least the short-term benefits are likely to outweigh the costs."*

The collective action framework of systemic corruption has been criticized by Marquette & Peiffer (2018: 500), who argue that we should aim more at functions that corruption serves and that *"corruption is the means through which many solve real problems that have deep social, structural, economic, and political roots."* The discussion between two groups of scholars advocating different conceptual frameworks for systemic corruption has become somewhat heated, as apparent from the articles published in the Scholarly Exchange section of the journal *Governance* (Marquette & Peiffer 2018; Persson et al. 2019). For a dispassionate discussion on conceptualizing systemic corruption, see Heywood (2017).

SEE ALSO While **corruption** includes many more phenomena, several concepts used in political science refer to patterns similar to systemic corruption, such as **state capture** (sometimes perceived as a form of systemic corruption), or **clientelism**, **patronage**, **rent-seeking**, and **prebendalism,** which are phenomena (informal institutions or practices, cf. **informality**) typical for countries stricken with systemic corruption.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The concept of systemic corruption is useful for studying countries where corruption is not an exceptional behavior, but rather a general pattern of behavior that is systemic and institutionalized. There have been three main avenues of research on systemic corruption. The first (i) one focuses on the very concept of systemic corruption throughout history and its negative impact on democratic government (Vergara 2020; 2021; Cuèllar & Stephenson 2022). The second (ii) one aims at investigating systemic corruption in modern democracies (Rhodes 1997; Saint-Martin 2015; Langr 2018), and the third (iii) and the largest one studies non-democratic or hybrid regimes of the Global South or from the post-Soviet area, where the concept of systemic corruption has been studied in the context of democratic and economic transition or economic development (Stefes 2008; Znoj 2007). An important debate has occurred in terms of fighting systemic corruption on the basis of its conceptualization, i.e., the problem of collective action, function, or principal-agent relations (Marquette & Peiffer 2018; Persson et al. 2013).

ORIGIN The concept of corruption is as old as the state and government (Klitgaard 1988: 7). Several authors provide us with concise accounts of the history of corruption from antiquity to modern times, such as Noonan (1984), van Klaveren (2017), Brioschi (2017), or Vergara (2020: 15-25). According to Noonan (1984: 13-14), whose book with the simple title *Bribes* is a seminal work in this regard, the concept of corruption or bribery was already known in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. When looking for historical conceptions of corruption, Western literature typically turns to ancient Greece, where corruption was known under the term *phthora* (φθορά). Interestingly, the usage of the concept of *phthora* was very modern because it did not refer to something inherently illegal but rather to the destruction, decay, or degeneration of constitutional principles.

The beginnings of modern research on corruption, however, date to the 1950s and 1960s and were closely connected to the process of decolonization and the dominating modernization paradigm in economics and political science. Therefore, from the very beginning, modern studies on corruption have centered on developing countries (Scott 1972: 9). Simultaneously, there was a definitional and conceptual debate among several camps of scholars on the nature, role, and effects of corruption. While some authors perceived corruption as something inherently immoral, others offered the 'grease the wheel' hypothesis, claiming that corruption can have positive effects on the economy, followed by the 'sand the wheel' hypothesis, claiming very much the opposite (for a concise account on these debates, see, e.g., Méon & Sekkat (2005) or Nur-tegin & Jakee (2020). Only in the last decade of the twentieth century a growing number of authors began to investigate corruption in democratic and developed countries. This fact, however, does not mean that the focus on developing, transitional, or non-democratic countries would grow weaker in corruption studies.

While Wallis (2006) convincingly shows that the notion of systemic corruption dates back in history to ancient Greece and has also constantly appeared in British and American political practice, the pioneering academic accounts on systemic corruption date back to the 1970s (Caiden & Caiden 1977; Dobel 1978). The body of literature on systemic corruption began to grow only at the turn of the twentieth and the twenty-first century (Johnston 1998; Persson et al. 2013; Stefes 2007).

LITERATURE A good overview of research on corruption, including systemic corruption, is provided in larger volumes edited by Heidenheimer & Johnston (2017), Heywood (2015), and Mendilow & Peleg (2014). The most influential works on systemic corruption include Persson et al. (2013), Johnston (1998), and Marquette & Peiffer (2018), which provide an important conceptual debate.

CLASSIFICATIONS As noted by Bussell (2015: 24), *"the empirical literature, in practice, largely ignores variation in corruption, typically analyzing only one example of corrupt behavior without categorizing it as a particular form of corruption."* There are several ways of how to typologize **corruption**. The literature on corruption frequently operates with binary typologies, such as 'petty' and 'grand' corruption, 'need' and 'greed' corruption, or 'individual' and 'systemic' corruption. In contrast, these typologies are universal and also useful in structuring the research field (cf. Heywood 2017: 5), and they still produce relatively large and diverse categories with limited analytical potential. In this regard, Bussell (2015: 35) argues that *"[r]ather than attempting to fit one typological schema onto all efforts to analyze corruption, we are better served by explicitly identifying the character of corruption that is relevant to our analytic goals and then working within that conceptual definition and, if necessary, suitable typology."*

In terms of systemic corruption, there have been a few attempts at typologies serving analytical goals. For example, Karklins (2002) identified three types of post-communist corruption – i.e., (a) low-level administrative corruption, (b) self-serving asset stripping by officials, and (c) '**state capture**' by corrupt networks. While low-level corruption can have an *ad hoc* character, the higher hierarchical levels of post-communist corruption clearly have a systemic nature. In his study on systemic corruption in Armenia and Georgia, Stefes (2008) differentiates between centralized and decentralized systemic corruption and claims that political leaders prefer the former type to the latter, as it enables them to control better potential rivals. In a Large-N study on corrupt states, Darden (2008) offered three types of informal mechanisms of administrative control: state-benign, state-weakening, and state-strengthening graft. He convincingly shows that while random corruption behavior *"neither enhances nor undermines loyalty in the administrative hierarchy of the state"* (Darden 2008: 41), i.e., is state-benign, there are systemic patterns of corrupted behavior which either weaken the state or, in turn, strengthen it. Systemic corruption weakens the state if agents break rules that their principals expect them to follow. On the contrary, Darden shows that in a number of relatively strong states, systemic corruption is used in order to reinforce administrative hierarchies and provide the basis for loyalty and obedience of state officials. If (almost) everyone is corrupt, but corruption is illegal, it is relatively easy for principals to control corrupted officials-agents, as demonstrated, e.g., by Kopeček (2016) in the case of Azerbaijan.

MEASUREMENT Recently, the composite indices have become widely used tools for measuring corruption at the level of individual states. These include the popular *Corruption Perception Index* developed by *Transparency International*, the *Control of Corruption Indicator developed* by the World Bank, the *Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey* (BEEPS), sponsored by the World Bank and the *European Bank for Reconstruction and Development*, and the *Global Corruption Index* developed by the *Global Risk Profile*. In particular, it is the BEEPS, which can be useful for measuring systemic corruption, as it differentiates several forms of corruption. A critical assessment of composite corruption indices was provided by e.g. Søreide (2006) and Stefes (2007). Indirectly, systemic corruption can be measured using a network analysis (Fazekas & Tóth 2016) or by a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (Langr 2018). See also **state capture** and its section on 'measurement.'

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The main methodological issue in researching corruption, and systemic corruption in particular, is that corruption is, by its nature, a hard-to-observe phenomenon. Large-N studies have to rely on highly aggregated data, which are typically based on corruption perception. On the contrary, small-n and single case studies mostly rely on abduction as a type of inference, providing the best explanation of the hidden phenomenon on the basis of known facts. Another problematic aspect of research on corruption is that while understanding which practices or actions are corrupt is based on local cultural context, the voluminous part of the literature on corruption is based on Western assumptions about the state, free market, and economic development, and these Western assumptions are then applied to non-Western societies, which Western scholars or practitioners typically see as most corrupt (cf. Persson et al. 2013: 455-456; Philp 2015: 23).

EXAMPLES Stefes (2008) offers a useful comparison of Armenia and Georgia after the break-up of the Soviet Union; in these countries, systemic corruption manifested itself in different ways. While Armenia has been an example of a centralized model of systemic corruption, which enabled its political leaders to consolidate their control over the state, Georgia has been an example of a decentralized model of systemic corruption, which led to the disintegration of the state apparatus and its rebuilding after the Rose Revolution.

IMPACT ON POLICY Fighting corruption is a *Leitmotif* of many political programs. However, fighting systemic corruption is a difficult task given its nature and the frequent involvement of leading political figures; furthermore, unsuccessful anti-corruption policy *"renders voters extremely cynical and threatens to subvert public trust in emerging democracies"* (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006: 82). There are, however, diverging views on anti-corruption policies. For example, in a volume edited by Mungiu-Pippidi and Johnston (2017), several cases of successful anti-corruption strategies and transitions to good governance are analyzed using the 'virtuous circle' approach, i.e., a chain of events that reinforces itself through a feedback loop resulting in a continuous process of improvement. On the other hand, Rothstein (2011: 246) advocates the indirect 'big bang' approach and claims that *"targeting corruption directly is probably not going to lead to change if it is not accompanied by an 'indirect' strategy in which many, if not most, other*



public institutions are changed from adhering to particularistic practices to universalism and impartiality."

NEW FRONTIERS Besides the conceptualization debate on systemic corruption, the main avenue of research on systemic corruption should aim at studying successful cases of fighting corruption or the origins of strong institutions preventing states from being systemically corrupted (cf. Persson et al. 2013: 466).

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Technocracy

Often the perception is that the elected politicians have already failed, by being corrupt or not capable of decisive economic action.
– Anna Killick (2023)

Technocracy is a multifaceted concept that can be understood as a regime type (A), an ideology (B), and a political strategy (C). Foremost, it is considered an authoritarian tendency in democracies, but broadly across regime types, it is actually a specific type of governance, the result of a regime's policy choices in the field of economics, welfare, environmentalism, privatization, etc. (agenda-setting and expert-input in policy-making).

One of the key reasons for its renewed attention today is the argument that technocracy should be regarded as a major driving force behind the global rise of populist movements (Rummens 2017).

DEFINITION As a *regime type* (A), technocracy contrasts with **populism** and party democracy by emphasizing governance through scientific or technical expertise. It is defined as a 'tendency within (democratic) governance to increasingly rely on experts for decision-making, based on their knowledge of the common good.' This approach stands in opposition to liberal **democracy**, which derives political legitimacy from popular will and democratic processes (Bickerton & Accetti 2017).

Technocracy is further divided into 'old' and 'new' forms: the former is associated with bureaucratic structures of the welfare state where experts held significant influence, and the latter is characterized by governance networks that transcend traditional bureaucratic boundaries, often operating on global or regional levels (Rummens 2023).

As an *ideology* (B), technocracy is considered 'thin' because it lacks the comprehensive worldview typical of ideologies like liberalism or socialism. (For this reason, this entry is not located under **ideologies & worldviews**).

Technocracy also functions as a *political strategy* (C) within democratic systems. This strategy involves adopting a 'technocratic style,' characterized by an emphasis on 'good governance' rhetoric and delegating policy decisions to experts while maintaining accountability to democratic institutions. This style has gained traction in contemporary politics, possibly due to factors like the mediatization of politics and voter volatility. However, while it can operate within democratic boundaries, there is a risk that it may contribute to the 'hollowing out' of democracy by undermining the responsiveness of political institutions.

SEE ALSO Technocracy is thus contrasted with **populism** but at the same time framed as democratic backsliding (**autocratization**) due to the move away from party politics. As a narrative and source of **legitimacy**, it is associated with **military regimes** and **bureaucratic authoritarianism**.

Overall, technocracy's complexity lies in its evolution and internal contradictions, as well as its interactions with other political forces. It requires a critical understanding of its claims and an awareness of potential tensions between expertise and democratic values. Consult Bertsou & Caramani (2020) on how to measure the concept in democratic systems.

ORIGINS The term was first coined by the American engineer William Henry Smyth in 1919, who introduced the term in an article titled *Technocracy: Ways and Means to Gain Industrial Democracy*, published in the journal *Industrial Management* (Esmark 2020). Thorstein Veblen popularized the term soon after. (Stabile 1987)

During much of the twentieth century, it aligned with Keynesian welfarism, which prioritized economic growth and equitable distribution. More recently, it has shifted toward neo-liberalism, emphasizing market-based solutions and competition across society. Technocrats typically avoid explicit ideological stances, presenting themselves as neutral experts driven by scientific knowledge (Rummens 2023).

Technocracy centers on the belief that expert knowledge is the primary source of legitimate political authority, often sidelining popular will or democratic processes. Historically, it has functioned within broader ideological frameworks.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE One key aspect is the role of technocracy in legitimation strategies. Authoritarian regimes often seek to enhance their **legitimacy** by demonstrating competence and effectiveness in addressing complex issues. Technocracy, with its focus on expert-driven solutions, provides a means for these regimes to project an image of rationality and efficiency (C). By showcasing technical achievements, authoritarian leaders can mitigate public discontent and strengthen their grip on power.

Furthermore, the **co-option** of expertise is a critical strategy employed by authoritarian leaders. By strategically appointing loyalists to key positions or manipulating scientific data to support predetermined agendas, these regimes can legitimize their decisions and policies. Analyzing these dynamics helps reveal the mechanisms through which authoritarian regimes maintain control and shape public perception.

Technocracy also contrasts with **populism**, offering a divergent approach to political legitimacy. While technocrats derive authority from their expertise, populists appeal directly to 'the people' and often position themselves against elites, including technocrats. Understanding how these forces interact within specific regimes can provide deeper insights into the tensions and power struggles that shape political landscapes. For instance, a populist leader might initially criticize technocratic institutions but later embrace them to fulfill promises of



economic prosperity or national security.

Additionally, technocracy highlights the tensions between political leadership and **bureaucracy**, particularly under populist authoritarian regimes. Leaders often seek to assert control over bureaucracies, viewing them as obstacles or potential sources of opposition. Analyzing these tensions provides insights into the resilience or vulnerability of institutions under authoritarian rule (Rockman 2019).

From the perspective of **autocratization**, Friedman (2019) emphasizes that democracy's legitimacy does not depend on its ability to produce optimal policies but rather on its capacity to resist domination, uphold equality, and express collective will. By separating democracy and technocracy, Friedman cautions against undermining democratic legitimacy based on criticisms of public ignorance or perceived irrationality, the shared arguments of libertarians and authoritarians alike.

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Theocracy

No one expects the Spanish Inquisition!
– Monty Python's Flying Circus, *The Spanish Inquisition* (1970)

Theocracy as a regime type can be defined in multiple ways, leading to potential confusion. At its simplest, theocracy is understood as the 'rule by God.' However, since divine beings do not directly govern worldly affairs, theocracy is typically interpreted as rule by clergy (equating it with *hierocracy* – 'clerical rule') or a self-appointed group claiming to govern by divine mandate (Ferrero 2013).

A broader and more analytical definition of theocracy describes it as a political system whose **legitimacy** is derived from a supernatural source. This perspective distinguishes theocracy from other regime types based on the origin of their ruling power rather than the specific individuals in power (Potz 2020).

This broader definition is particularly useful for political analysis as it applies to both historical and contemporary regimes, including Muslim states that may not be *hierocracies* – where religious and secular leadership are indistinguishable. This understanding clarifies that even when religious and secular offices are separate, a government can still be classified as a theocracy if its legitimacy is rooted in a supernatural source, regardless of whether its leaders are clergy (Potz 2020).

Houston (2021) contrasts theocracy with *anthropocracy* to explore governance modes and their religious relationships. Theocracy involves divine authority, with human rulers acting as intermediaries between the deity and people, characterized by divine power delegation through religious institutions. In contrast, the 'rule of humans' derives legitimacy from people rather than the supernatural. The latter often incorporates religious elements to legitimize human rule, using religion to support human authority rather than divine rule, but to do so, they need to reverse the organizing values of theocracy by emphasizing human sovereignty while utilizing religious institutions to reinforce this sovereignty (Houston 2021).

The source of legitimacy serves as a criterion for classifying political systems. Traditional **classifications & typologies** are based on how leaders are chosen and the extent of political control over individuals. However, these categories are not mutually exclusive, leading to classification challenges for regimes like illiberal democracies. This issue is particularly pronounced for theocracies, which may be misclassified as authoritarian or totalitarian based solely on their level of oppression. Some theocracies might employ democratic succession procedures, such as elections.

For this reason, Maciej Potz (2020) considers religion to be the source of legitimacy (in analogy with tradition – patrimonial regimes; knowledge – meritocratic regimes; popular will – contractual regimes, no legitimacy – despotic regimes). **Weber's** theory of **rulership** applies as well: While the Catholic Church is a theocratic organization, it derives authority from **traditional rule** (apostolic succession), rational-legal rules (codified laws), and, historically, **charisma** (Potz 2020).

The operation of theocratic regimes is multifaceted and can be understood through various frame-

works: The *transactional perspective* views the relationship between rulers and the ruled as an exchange of goods and services. In theocratic regimes, religious functionaries provide legitimacy to secular rulers, who, in return, offer material support and social status to these functionaries. This exchange underscores the political power of religion, even in non-theocratic settings. However, theocracies introduce an additional layer to this dynamic: religious functionaries and allied secular rulers engage in an *unequal exchange* with the faithful. The religious goods offered, particularly 'intercession' and 'ultimate salvation,' are deemed invaluable (priceless), leading the faithful to reciprocate with 'submission' to the rulers. This distinct exchange differentiates theocracies from other regimes influenced by religion, where legitimacy does not stem from religious authority (Salmon in Ferrero & Wintrobe 2009).

Theocracies possess a unique advantage in generating loyalty through religious belief, which enhances their power relative to other dictatorships with similar resources. Consequently, theocracies often operate with smaller budgets (through religious restrictions on some economic spheres) but wield significant power (Ferrero & Wintrobe 2009). This model suggests that theocracies tend to be more repressive than other forms of dictatorship, utilizing religious institutions to enforce control. Historical examples include Calvin's use of religious authority in Geneva and the Papal States' reliance on 'the Inquisition' (Padovano & Wintrobe 2012; 2013). Note that *Inquisitio* properly referred to a judicial process of the ecclesiastical courts of the Catholic Church, not any organization.

M. Ferrero and R. Wintrobe (2009) organize theocratic regimes according to his rational-choice theory (cf. **Wintrobe**). They note that for some subtypes, especially totalitarian theocracies, control over information flow is critical for how they operate. Methods include **censorship**, **propaganda**, and religious education (**indoctrination**) to maintain ideological conformity and limit exposure to alternative ideas.

Interestingly, Ferrero and Wintrobe (2009) state that religions can be classified as behavior-based or doctrine-based, influencing their relationship with theocracy and suppression. *Behavior-based religions*, like Islam, Judaism, and Protestantism, focus on public behavior and societal norms, making them more vulnerable to suppression by rulers who can alter societal practices, such as outlawing polygamy or unveiling women. These religions often intertwine with public governance, facilitating their alignment with theocratic structures. *Doctrine-based religions*, like Catholicism and Orthodoxy, emphasize internal beliefs and rituals conducted behind closed doors, enabling survival under hostile conditions. Suppressing such religions requires targeting practices directly, which historically proved challenging. Consequently, Catholic theocracies were rare and often arose under specific conditions, such as the Papal states or colonial missionary efforts.

Political institutions in theocracies also play a crucial role in their operation. Like any political system, they require mechanisms for leader selection, lawmaking, and law enforcement. The source of legitimacy influences these mechanisms. **Succession** procedures vary widely; leaders may be divinely chosen (Israel) or selected by religious elites (Papal state) or democratic processes believed to reflect divine will. Legal systems may rely on religious law or a blend of religious and secular laws, with church institutions enforcing these laws. Consult Hirschl (2021) on theocracy's historical background and additional examples and Hirschl (2010) on constitutional theocracy.

An example of an election would be the seventeenth-century Puritan colonies in New England, illustrating how classifying regimes by their source of legitimacy enhances our understanding of theocracies. Although Puritans used democratic procedures to elect their governor, they believed his authority was divinely sanctioned rather than derived from the electorate's will. This demonstrates how a transactional perspective can further elucidate theocratic relationships. In this view, relationships between religious functionaries, secular rulers, and citizens are seen as exchanges of goods and services. Religious functionaries grant legitimacy to secular rulers in exchange for material benefits and social status (Potz 2020).

Iran and Saudi Arabia represent two distinct models of modern theocracy, each with unique characteristics and complexities (cf. **Islamic States**). Iran's political system is described as an electoral theocracy, a hybrid regime combining elements of democracy within an authoritarian framework. This system is characterized by the coexistence of divine and popular sovereignty, with ultimate authority vested in jurists. Despite the ruling clergy's influence, Iran holds regular **elections**, which have occasionally led to unexpected outcomes and power shifts, such as Hassan Rouhani's victory. These elections serve to legitimize the regime while highlighting tensions between theocratic and democratic principles. However, Iran lacks a stable multi-party system, and its press is tightly controlled, often leading to manipulated electoral processes (Ghobadzadeh & Zubaidah Rahim 2016).

In contrast, Saudi Arabia's governance is described as a 'theo-monarchy' rather than a straightforward theocracy. The Saudi constitution and legal system are grounded in Islamic principles, yet there exists a *de facto* separation between religion and politics. This system features a power-sharing arrangement between religious scholars (the *Ulamā*) and rulers (the *Umarā* cf. emir/amir). Historically, the *Ulama* legitimized the ruler's authority through religious interpretation. Over time, they have been integrated into the state apparatus, influencing legislation and endorsing political decisions. Despite their influence, the *Ulama* do not operate as an autonomous power center but collaborate with the monarchy to validate decisions that may conflict with Islamic law (Al-Atawneh 2009).

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Timocracy

If honor were profitable, everybody would be honorable.
– Thomas More

Timocracy (τιμοκρατία, *timokratia*) is a term for an aristocratic or oligarchic constitution employed almost exclusively by Plato (in the *Republic*) and Aristotle (in the *Nicomachaean Ethics*), cf. **Plato & Aristotle**. Both authors use the term in different senses based on different understandings of the etymology of the word. Timocracy, needless to say, was not a concept commonly used in general Greek political theory or practice.

In Plato's *Republic*, timocracy is the best of Plato's corrupt constitutions (followed by **oligarchy**, **democracy** and **tyranny**), into which the ideal state, ruled by philosopher kings, will decline in turn. The successive degeneration of the ideal *Callipolis* through these four stages prepares for the climax of the dialogue: the comparison of the 'Just City' with the worst possible kind of constitution, that of tyranny. By this means, the superiority of justice over injustice is demonstrated.

Plato defines timocracy as the 'constitution that loves victory and loves honor' (τὸν φιλόνικόν τε καὶ φιλότιμον, 8.545a. 2-3). This state is 'according to the form of the Spartan constitution' (8.545a3), but it is not defined as an **aristocracy** (which is the term used for the ideal state, as 'the rule of the best') nor an oligarchy (here the state into which timocracy declines, which is the rule of the rich who lack virtue). For Plato, the term timocracy is derived from the Greek word τιμή (*timē*), which is regularly translated as 'honor,' 'respect' or 'value.' The Platonic timocrats are midway between the Platonic 'aristocrats' and 'oligarchs:' They concern themselves only with fighting and martial glory and do not dabble in money-making, but they also have no interest in virtue gained from the study of philosophy, unlike the Platonic 'aristocrats' or philosopher kings (8.547c-548a).

Aristotle, in the *Nicomachaean Ethics,* uses the term *timocracy* in a notably distinct fashion. Aristotle here outlines a tripartite categorization of constitutions into kingship, aristocracy and timocratic government (τιμοκρατική, *timokratikē*, 1160a.34). This last constitution is a kind of popular government, but one that includes property valuations or qualifications for office, in Greek *timēmata* (ἀπὸ τιμημάτων, 1160a.33). The more usual term for this moderate form of popular government, and the one employed in the *Politics*, is *Politeia*. The corrupt equivalent of timocracy/'Politeia' in Aristotle's six-part schema of constitutions is democracy. As an example of timocracy, Aristotle may have in mind the settlement made at Athens in around 594 BCE by Solon, which involved four property qualifications to determine eligibility for political office but which was arguably nonetheless a precursor to the later classical Athenian democracy.

A further distinct concept of timocracy is provided by Ronald **Wintrobe** (1998). He explicitly borrows the term from Plato, but his understanding of its meaning is slightly different (Wintrobe 1998: 14-15). For Wintrobe, timocracy is not an aristocratic constitution but rather an autocracy that aims to inspire high levels of loyalty in its subjects through relatively low levels of repression. Historical examples offered of such forms of timocracy include the Roman Antonine emperors: a relatively benign regime that was later transformed into a tyranny by the emperor Commodus (177-192 CE).

How to cite:

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Box 1.17 Caesaropapism: The Best of Two Worlds?

I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and State.
– Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), US President.

No emperor has power over the things which belong to God.
– John Chrysostom (398-404 CE), Patriarch of Constantinople

Caesaropapism refers to a political system where the secular ruler (often an emperor or king) holds supreme authority over both state and religious matters, effectively combining political and religious power. The term is most commonly associated with the Byzantine Empire, where emperors exercised significant control over the Eastern Orthodox Church, appointing patriarchs, presiding over church councils, and issuing ecclesiastical edicts. In this system, the head of state often acted as the protector and manager of the church, though not necessarily its spiritual leader. The concept contrasts with **theocracy**, where religious institutions dominate political authority.

The importance of caesaropapism in comparative politics lies in its illustration of how different political systems manage the relationship between religion and state power. Caesaropapism provides a model for understanding how secular rulers can exert control over religious institutions to consolidate power and legitimize their rule, as seen in historical examples like Byzantium, Russia under Peter the Great, and even Henry VIII's England after the Reformation.

The term was likely coined by Justus Henning Böhmer (1674-1749), a Protestant canonist who made significant contributions to the history of Catholic canon law. He used the term in his work on Protestant canon law to describe a system where secular rulers exercised authority over ecclesiastical matters. However, it was later popularized and further developed by sociologist Max **Weber** (1864-1920), who described caesaropapism as the complete subordination of religious authority to secular power. (Arifi 2017)

The roots of caesaropapism can be traced back to the (Eastern) Roman Empire, particularly after Emperor Constantine I's conversion to Christianity in the early fourth century. Constantine played a crucial role in shaping the relationship between the church and state by convening councils, such as the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE), and involving himself in theological disputes. Although he did not claim doctrinal authority, his influence over church matters set a precedent for future emperors. (Downey 1968; Geanakoplos 1965)

By the time of Emperor Justinian I (527-565 CE), caesaropapism had turned into **theocracy**. Justinian saw himself as both a political and religious leader responsible for maintaining unity within the empire through control over both secular and spiritual matters. He presided over church councils, appointed bishops, and even issued religious edicts. This close integration of imperial and ecclesiastical power is encapsulated in Justinian's vision of a harmonious relationship between the *imperium* (state) and *sacerdotium* (church), referred to as *symphonia* (συμφωνία – 'accord'). (Downey 1968; Geanakoplos 1965)

The concept of caesaropapism was later adopted by the Russian Tsars, especially after Ivan IV (the Terrible) assumed the title of tsar in 1547. Ivan subordinated the Russian Orthodox Church to his rule, using it as an instrument of state power. This trend continued under Peter the Great in 1721, who abolished the *Patriarchate of Moscow* and replaced it with a government-controlled body called the *Most Holy Synod*, effectively turning the church into a department of the state. (Toumanoff 1946; Runciman 1957) Both cases are also good examples of **patrimonialism**.

While caesaropapism is most closely associated with Eastern Christianity, similar concepts appeared in Western Europe. For example, during the English Reformation under Henry VIII, the king declared himself Supreme Head of the Church of England, effectively merging royal and ecclesiastical power.

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Totalitarianism

Мы живем, под собою не чуя страны,
Наши речи за десять шагов не слышны,
А где хватит на полразговорца,
Там припомнят кремлёвского горца.
(We live, not feeling the country beneath us,
Our speech inaudible ten steps away,
But where they're up to half a conversation,
They'll speak of the Kremlin mountain man.)
– Osip Mandel'shtam, *We Live, Not Feeling* (1933)

The opening of the poem above captures the feeling of insignificance of the individual under totalitarian rule where all opposition is repressed and aspects of life are controlled by the state. Totalitarianism is a commonly-used term with many meanings and is controversial, both scholarly and politically. It is a kind of 'devil term' (Weaver 1985) that is variously misused. It evokes aspects of centralized power (not pluralism), autocracy, and demands complete subservience to the state.

DEFINITION Totalitarianism can be understood in different ways. Scholars often split the concept into two strains of thought: Roger Scruton (1998) distinguishes two applications of the term: as a system of government and as an ideology that serves it. The Polish philosopher Ryszard Legutko (2006) similarly presents two theories of totalitarianism: The first being political with totalitarianism as a system, and the second being anthropological involving the 'human soul.' These are completely different perspectives of understanding the concept. In contemporary political science (PS), totalitarianism is most often understood as a type of political system. It is considered one of the archetypes of **dictatorship** or, in other words, a specific way of governing a non-democracy. Consult the entry on **authoritarianism** to get an overview of how these concepts differ in the typology of **Linz & Stepan**.

The first academic attempt to define it as a regime can be found under the entry *State* in the *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences* from 1934. With a critical look at the development of theories on totalitarianism, one can distinguish three generations of scholars: The first – the founding one – appeared in the 1930s and 1940s and included Raymond Aron, Ernst Fraenkel, Franz L. Neumann, Sigmund Neumann, and Victor Serge. **Aron** (1951) mentioned the difference between totalitarian regimes and historical dictatorships. He pointed out that, unlike the old dictatorships, totalitarian regimes are ideological (**ideocracies**), and he called totalitarian ideology a secular religion (*religion séculaire*). Fraenkel (1941) emphasized its characteristics of terror and leadership. F. Neumann (1942) noticed the regime's attempt to dominate its entire society completely. S. Neumann (1942) captured totalitarian regimes as one-party systems, ideological, based on leader veneration and permanently politically mobilizing society. Through his analysis of the Soviet Union, Serge (1937) defined the 'totalitarian state' as a regime in which the bureaucratic caste monopolized everything, not only politics but also economics and culture. In this way, totalitarianism controlled the whole human.

S. Neumann came closest to the definitions of the second – classical – generation. The most influential authors here were Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzeziński, who published the first edition of their famous book *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* in 1956, highlighting the notorious 'six-point syndrome' (Schapiro 1978) of a totalitarian regime: (a) totalitarian ideology, (b) one ruling party, (c) a system of terrorist control of society, (d) monopolistic control of mass communication, (e) monopolistic control of armed power, (f) monopolistic control of the economy (Friedrich & Brzezinski 1962: 9-10). This six-point catalog is still accepted today as the basis of research on totalitarianism, even though it has been criticized.

Hannah Arendt (1951) chose a slightly different approach. She did not view the totalitarian regime exclusively as a system. According to her, the key thing is ideology and the state's effort to penetrate the everyday life of society. Rulers are not content with merely exercising power but want to transform society and create a new human. They wield mass ideological **indoctrination** and state terror (Box 3.13) for this purpose. For this to be possible, two conditions must exist: (a) Society is run by a single political party headed by a deified leader who is the bearer of ideology and terror. (b) Society has a mass character, causing the isolation of people and uprooting them from traditional social structures.

The classic generation of scholars was followed by a third generation, whose best-known representatives include Raymond Aron (again), Juan J. Linz, Giovanni Sartori and Leonard Schapiro. Linz (2000) defined three main conditions of totalitarianism: (i) The existence of a single center of power (not necessarily internally homogeneous), (ii) ideology governing society, and (iii) massive political mobilization of society. Aron (1965, 1996), together with Sartori (1987, 1995), speak of an ideology elevated to the position of the only official truth, this ideology becoming a secular religion (Aron) or a political religion (Sartori) to save humanity. In contrast, both authors do not place so much emphasis on terror as a key feature of totalitarianism. Sartori (1987) argues that, in general, terror, permanent **purges**, and extermination camps are all pre-routine characteristics of the establish-

ment phase of a totalitarian regime. Once the regime stabilizes, which is determined by its routinization, the physical terror will subside, but this does not change the totalitarian nature of the regime. Finally, according to Schapiro (1978), a totalitarian regime is based on five contours and three pillars. These contours are: (a) leader, (b) subjugation of the legal order, (c) control over private morality, d) ongoing mobilization, and (e) mass legitimacy. The pillars are (A) ideology, (B) party, and (C) state administration.

As one can see, each of the listed scholars identified a new aspect while agreeing with others on some aspects and rejecting other defining characteristics. The basic principles remain essentially the same, and to summarize this all, we can thus define a totalitarian regime as follows: (i) Totalitarian regimes arise in mass societies, which distort them so that the individual becomes an isolated element, uprooted from all traditional social structures. (ii) There is a **single party** that is the center of both political (state) power and all other aspects of life (a *monistic* center of power cf. Linz 2000: 70). The party controls all social functions; there can be nothing outside of it. The party is usually headed by a deified leader, whose quasi-divine attributes can have various confessional sources (cf. **personality cults**). The totalitarian regime declares its unequivocal anti-religion, but it is a gnostic type of religion, or at least it uses many religious elements as a means of its legitimacy. (iii) Society is completely subordinated to an ideology that supposedly explains all social reality and lays out a plan for action. Based on this foundation, the party rules, upholding a messianic narrative about itself and its mission. The **ideology** with an absolute character provides an absolute justification for all the means used to achieve the set goals. (iv) A totalitarian regime is an activist regime. It demands the active participation of citizens to survive. Society is politically mobilized, and everything is politicized. All aspects of life, including the economy, culture, sports, and even people's private lives, are judged politically (ideologically). (v) Society is controlled by state terror, which does not always have to take the form of direct physical violence; it can be psychological. (vi) Totalitarian regimes have creative ambitions. Through ideology and terror, they want to create a new type of human, freed from old attachments (Balík & Kubát 2015).

SEE ALSO Totalitarianism as an archetype is closely related to concepts such as **dictatorship** and **authoritarianism**. Its usual creation through **revolution** and ensuing **revolutionary legacy** affect regime performance. As an **ideocracy**, its preoccupation with **ideology** can merge with either **fascism** or **communism**. Its leadership veneration relates to **personality cults** and **personalist rule**. Some scholars erroneously draw parallels to **sultanism & neo-Sultanism**, but in the regime typology of **Linz & Stepan,** totalitarianism is considered a distinct type.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Totalitarianism is one of the most important concepts in the social sciences. Regardless of its controversies, modern research on dictatorships is inconceivable without it. The concept of totalitarianism, in various ways, influenced entire generations, not only political scientists but also historians, political sociologists and others. Its conceptualization in the 1930s provided the impetus to develop new regime classifications, and their incarnation under Stalin and Hitler rendered the twentieth century the age of totalitarianism.

ORIGIN The linguistic basis of the term *totalitarianism* is Latin. It is derived from the word *totus* (in medieval Latin *totalis*), which means 'all' or 'total.' Later, this expression, in various modifications, became a common part of Italian and is, therefore, not a linguistic novelty. However, its use in a political sense is recent.

It is believed that the term *totalitarian* was 'invented' by the fascist political theorist Giovanni Gentile. Gentile, indeed was one of the main promoters of the word, but he was not its originator. Gentile only changed its connotation from negative to positive. Italian anti-fascist journalists who criticized the fascist regime were the first to use the term totalitarian. Probably the very first author who used this word in polemics with fascists was the journalist Giovanni Amendola. On 12 May 1923, Amendola called Mussolini's government a 'totalitarian system' in *Il Mondo* magazine. The noun *totalitarianism* appeared in a political context on the pages of *La Rivoluzione Liberale* on 2 January 1929 in an article by Lelio Basso (under the pseudonym Promento Filodemo). Giovanni Gentile took the term totalitarian from his ideological enemies and reversed its meaning. He influenced Mussolini, who himself started using this word and popularized it in Italy at the time (Balík & Kubát 2015).

In the Anglo-Saxon world, the terms *totalitarianan* and *totalitarianism* spread thanks to Italian anti-fascist emigrants. In 1926, Luigi Sturzo's well-known book *Italy and Fascismo* was published, in which he often used both terms, of course, in a negative sense. Since the 1920s, the words 'totalitarian' and 'totalitarianism' have gradually spread across Europe and entered dictionaries and encyclopedias. This happened for the first time in 1934 when it appeared under the entry *State* in the *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*.

The issue of the origin of totalitarianism can also be understood empirically. The question is when and where it appeared. There are two approaches here. The first (primordial) approach claims that totalitarianism is an eternal phenomenon; it is a part of human nature, and therefore, it has existed since ancient times. This opinion is held by political philosophers such as Karl R. Popper (1945) or Jakob L. Talmon (1952). In contrast, comparative political scientists who understand totalitarianism as a type of political system hold a modernistic point of view and claim that modern non-democratic regimes differ in their nature (structure) and way of functioning from the political regimes of, for example, ancient Sparta, Calvin's Geneva, or Jacobin France (cf. **modernization theory**). Arguments for this approach relate to the rise of state power and control mechanisms (regarding repression, information, etc.) and are contained in the above-mentioned definitions.



In this context, it should be noted that fascist Italy, which gave the world the words totalitarian and totalitarianism, is far from being considered totalitarian by scholars. According to Giovanni Sartori (1987: 193): *"(…) no Italian who lived the experience of fascism has ever written a scholarly book taking fascism seriously as a totalitarianism. (…) To Mussolini, the 'total state' sounded impressive, important; and the label 'totalitarian state' appealed to his vanity and rhetoric. (…) Fascism, in Italy, was a clear-cut case of authoritarian dictatorship-far more than a 'simple dictatorship' but far less than a totalitarian state."*

LITERATURE There is a vast literature on totalitarianism that can be classified in various ways. It is noteworthy that the main works on totalitarianism are written by those who had personal or family experience with this type of dictatorship. In other words, they witnessed totalitarianism with their own eyes: e.g., Arendt, **Aron**, Brzeziński, **Linz & Stepan**, **Sartori** and others. Furthermore, the works on totalitarianism come from different geographical and cultural environments (Anglo-Saxon, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, etc.), and one cannot find one predominant 'center' in this literature.

Totalitarianism's presence in works is usually dedicated to the phenomenon or is part of a broader analysis of dictatorships of various types. It appears in comparative perspective (juxtaposed to democracy) and empirical-analytical works of a more political theoretical nature. As an archetype, it is also included in various 'standard' handbooks and textbooks.

Totalitarianism – in contrast to other modern forms of **authoritarianism** – has the recurrent subject of artistic treatment, primarily in novels but also in film and music. There is even a special literary genre called dystopia or anti-utopia depicting an ideal totalitarian world. The most famous representatives of this genre include Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid's Tale*), Ray Bradbury (*Fahrenheit 451*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*), Jack London (*The Iron Heel*), George Orwell (*1984*) and Yevgeny Zamyatin (*We* – in Russian: *Мы* – *'My'*).

In addition to fiction, one finds its treatise in memoirs of people persecuted by totalitarian regimes, whose works are not only documentaries but are also of high artistic, literary quality, and even analytical value. We can mention here Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn (1973) or Gustaw Herling-Grudziński (1951). Several publicists and intellectuals also addressed the topic. Typical examples are the French left-wing novelist and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature and critic of Stalinism, André Gide (1936) or the Czech admirer of Stalinism and victim of Nazism, Julius Fučík (1932).

An example of a dystopian film that is not based on a book is *Equilibrium* from 2002, written and directed by Kurt Wimmer. In music, for example, the famous trash metal band *Megadeth* often deals with similar topics.

REGIONAL VARIATION Totalitarianism is a maximalist concept, and as such, identifying regional variants is challenging. The regime is either totalitarian or it is not. On the other hand, totalitarianism indeed appeared in very different countries and contexts, prompting the question if 'national totalitarianism' exists. This problem was analyzed by the French political scientist Jean Leca (1984). If we say that totalitarianism occurred under completely different conditions, then we expose ourselves to the objection that we are placing under one label multiple cases that might have nothing in common at all. According to Leca, this problem can be solved in two ways. First, we primarily identify the 'conditions for emergence' that enable or facilitate the creation of a totalitarian regime. Here, we can distinguish between endogenous and exogenous totalitarian regimes. Endogenous totalitarian regimes will arise locally, while exogenous totalitarian regimes are either imposed or arise through imitation. Second, we define the so-called 'totalitarian syndrome' in the sense of a general summary of its features, which are monism, ideocracy or theocracy, revolutionism and state control.

The totalitarian syndrome does not differ in principle from mainstream definitions of totalitarianism, as shown above. We thus return to the introductory remark that maximalist requirements for totalitarianism mean that a regime is either totalitarian or another type of dictatorship. This leads to two conclusions. First, totalitarian regimes are rare (see 'measurement'). Second, it is difficult to create typologies of totalitarian regimes (see 'classifications').

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Giovanni **Sartori** (1987, 1995) considers totalitarianism as one of the ends of an imaginary axis, the other end of which is democracy. So, they are Weberian ideal types, ideal constructions, and systemic visions that do not occur in practice. Between them is the space where all the existing political systems – democratic and non-democratic – move. It means that we cannot expect any political regime to be purely totalitarian. We thus have one ideal totalitarianism and specific regimes that they are getting closer (or, on the contrary, move away from) to ideal totalitarianism. So, there is a difference between ideal, theoretical *totalitarianism* and a concrete *totalitarian regime*.

In practice, however, the terms totalitarianism and totalitarian regime are used simultaneously and interchangeably. As a political system, a totalitarian regime is defined according to its definable characteristics (listed higher). Such an approach is established in PS, and essentially, all relevant definitions of totalitarianism or totalitarian regimes follow this logic. This approach has been criticized by claims, among other things, that totalitarianism understood in this way is always a static model that does not take into account its emergence, development and demise of totalitarianism (Sartori 1993; Soper 1985).

MEASUREMENT Classifying cases of totalitarianism is an ambiguous endeavor. Due to the maximalist requirements for totalitarian regimes, it is sometimes difficult to tell which regime is really an established totalitarian regime and which one aspires to become one but fails to do so. Furthermore, there is no universally accepted list of totalitarian regimes

in the PS literature. However, the assumption is that totalitarian regimes are rare, and if they do appear, they are rather short-lived. Totalitarian regimes usually include: some stages of development in the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Mao Zedong's China, Pol Pot's Kampuchea, and North Korea, which is also an exception to the rule that totalitarian regimes are not durable. Among European communist countries, Enver Hoxha's Albania and Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania are mentioned (Balík & Kubát 2015). However, there are also opinions that one should consider Iran under the rule of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1979-1989) or the (first) Taliban rule in Afghanistan (1997-2001) as totalitarian regimes (Merkel 1999). Some even argue that Eritrea is another modern-day example of 'silent totalitarianism' (Saad 2018; Walker 2022), with its revolutionary legacy, single party, state-controlled media, mass repression, and forced military conscription *de facto,* resulting in mass slavery (Tronvoll & Mekonnen 2014).

The classification of different cases can be discussed endlessly. For example, there is a large debate about how to rank the communist countries of Eastern Europe from 1948-1989. Were they totalitarian, or was it some other type of dictatorship? This debate triggered new (and competing) typologies that included totalitarian regimes, cf. **Linz & Stepan** or **Kailitz**.

CLASSIFICATIONS Classifying totalitarian regimes into subtypes is very problematic. There are very few such attempts and thus far, have not been very convincing. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the main theorists of the concept did not attempt to classify them (due to their maximalist approach). Nevertheless, some classifications exist: Below, there are two typologies with classical subtypes (where differentiating attributes are added to the core concept) and one with radial subtypes (where distinguishing characteristics are already contained in the root concept but stressed differently or with some diminished).

Wolfgang Uwe Friedrich (1997) distinguished three types based on the criterion of the presence of terror. According to him, there are: a) terrorist totalitarian regimes, b) bureaucratic totalitarian regimes and c) theocratic totalitarian regimes. The first group (a) includes Lenin's and Stalin's Soviet Union, Mao Zedong's China, North Korea, Pol Pot's Kampuchea, Ceaușescu's Romania, Hoxha's Albania, a brief period (1937-1938) in Spain before Franco's rule, and the German Third Reich. These are countries where terror is the main way to control society. The second group (b) includes the communist regimes of the Eastern Bloc after Stalin's death and China after Mao's death. They are regimes where the ruling bureaucracy is identical to the party structure or works under its control. The regime does not work rationally but subordinates everything to ideology. The third group (c) includes countries dominated by an Islamist ideology like Khomeini's Iran (cf. **Islamic States**). Such an Islamist ideology is then considered a theistic variant of historicist ideologies such as Nazi and communist doctrines (cf. **ideocracy** vs. **theocracy**).

Another classification of totalitarian regimes is the contribution of Wolfgang Merkel (1999). Merkel first distinguishes between totalitarian and authoritarian variants of Nazism and communism. The boundary is the form of the powerholder – either it is a (A) *Parteidiktatur* (party-dominated dictatorship) or a (B) *Führerdiktatur* (leader-dominated dictatorship). The totalitarian variant is the second (B), while the other (A) is the authoritarian variant. Merkel further distinguishes three basic types of totalitarian regimes: a) communist totalitarian regimes, b) fascist totalitarian regimes and c) theocratic totalitarian regimes. Examples have already been mentioned. The first group (a) consists of the USSR (1929-1953; so, excluding the Lenin era), China (1949-1976), Kampuchea (1975-1979), North Korea (since 1945), Albania (1945-1985), and others. The second group (b) consists only of the German Third Reich (1938-1945). Note that fascist Italy does not belong here. The third group (c) consists primarily of Iran (1879-1989) and Taliban rule in Afghanistan (1997-2001). They are Islamic states that draw on a fundamentalist interpretation of religion. However, this is not a purely religious regime but a government of people who have instrumentalized religion as an ideology.

An interesting discussion concerns the position of the communist countries of Eastern Europe in the years 1948-1989 (see 'measurement'). Were these countries totalitarian or not, and if so, to which extent? This is where derivative types (radial subtypes) related to totalitarianism appear, like: pre-totalitarian regime, post-totalitarian regime, quasi-totalitarian regime, etc.

The most well-known terms are (a) pre-totalitarian and (b) post-totalitarian regimes because they are part of Linz's (2000) well-known typology of authoritarian regimes. While both types originally fell under authoritarian regimes, **Linz & Stepan** (1996) later extracted the post-totalitarian regime from this typology and made it a separate type of dictatorship. A *pre-totalitarian regime* (a) wants to become totalitarian, but its progress toward this goal is hindered for various reasons. These are the totalitarian projects in the countries of Central Eastern Europe in the years 1944-1948. Alternatively, it can be a case of 'interrupted' totalitarianism, which, for some reason, misses some of its core attributes. In such a case, it is 'defective totalitarianism,' and an example would be the Soviet Union during the period of the New Economic Policy (1921-1924).

The *post-totalitarian regime* (b) is characterized by a greater degree of societal 'pluralism' than in its totalitarian root concept. Unlike authoritarianism, however, we do not find any 'limited political pluralism' here: A single party still fulfills the role of the leading force of political life. The leaders of the regime are still the same as the originally revolutionary parties, but they tend to govern more bureaucratically and technocratically than charismatically. The refined leading ideology fulfills the function of a 'holy book' (Box 1.18), but the rulers increasingly consider it a utopia, and society no longer believes in it. The regime is mobilizing society but with far less intensity than before. Participation in rituals is still generally obligatory, but it no longer has an enthusi-



astic character. In short, the regime shows signs of totalitarianism, but to a large extent, only formally (Linz & Stepan 1996).

According to Linz, post-totalitarianism came in various variants. In general, it can be said that it denotes the regimes of Eastern Europe roughly from the middle of the 1950s to the end of the 1980s. Linz labels regimes of the period of the late 1940s and early 1950s as quasi-totalitarian. Other communist regimes are consultative authoritarianism (Poland after March 1968), quasi-pluralistic authoritarianism (USSR 1954-1964), democratizing and pluralistic authoritarianism (Czechoslovakia in 1968), and anarchic authoritarianism (China during the Cultural Revolution).

The term *quasi-totalitarian* regime was also used by Gordon Skilling (1970), relating to socialist Czechoslovakia. It is a regime that is not fully totalitarian. It is close to it but not reaching it. It is an apparent or approximate totalitarian regime. It wants to be totalitarian, but for some reason, it does not succeed, so it settles for its incomplete variant. This is a case of some Eastern European regimes that aspired to become totalitarian and were usually much closer to totalitarianism than to authoritarianism (Novák 2007).

There are more terminological equivalents of quasi-totalitarianism. For example, Guy Hermet (1990) used the term 'soft totalitarianism' (*totalitarisme mou* in French), and Jacques Rupnik (1988) spoke of a "so-called 'totalitarian' system" or referred to a "system's totalitarian tendencies." Eckhard Jesse (1994) used the neologism 'autholitarian dictatorship' (*autolitäre Diktatur*) to express that, according to him, Honecker's German Democratic Republic was a combination of *autho*-ritarianism and tota-*litarianism*.

In the end, one of the authors of the term post-totalitarian regime was Václav Havel, who introduced it in his famous essay *The Power of the Powerless* in 1978. According to him, the Czechoslovak regime of his time was post-totalitarian because it had become purely ritualistic or routine. Havel used Linz's term 'post-totalitarian' intuitively and unconsciously, not in the context of current scholarly discussions – at least Havel does not refer to these – stating that during his writing, a better term simply did not occur to him (Havel 1990).

EXAMPLES One of the few communist cases of true totalitarianism was actually Albania. It was also the only Eastern European communist country to retain a 'classic' Stalinist constitutional system modeled on the 1936 USSR constitution throughout the whole communist period. After the war, in February 1946, the Communist Party of Albania (from 1948 the 'Party of Labor of Albania' – *Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë*) and its leader, Enver Hoxha, declared that a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of workers and peasants led by the Communist Party had been established. After initial intra-party power struggles, Hoxha definitively consolidated his personalist rule in 1948. An anti-communist opposition never formed in Albania; it was active only abroad.

Albania soon nationalized industry, collectivized farms, and subjugated the church. The peak of totalitarian rule came in 1965 when Hoxha announced the so-called permanent 'revolutionization.' Its task was to mobilize society to support the party and its leader. The result was total control of society, including people's private lives. The party eliminated private property, abolished all churches (declaring Albania the first atheist state in the world in 1967), and fully controlled education, science, culture, and the media. Society was heavily militarized (e.g., a program to build a million bunkers was announced).

The party terrorized everyone (through the *Sigurimi* secret police) without exception: ordinary people as well as purges in the party, state, and military apparatus. Top officials were sentenced to death and executed. According to the criminal code, even children from the age of twelve could be given death penalties for conspiracy against the state and sabotage. Resorting to kin punishments, also family members of those convicted were targeted for repression. Acts like not renouncing one's religion, not showing up for elections, a 'bourgeois' way of dressing, listening to foreign radio stations and (later) watching foreign television, participating in illegal religious ceremonies, etc. were all punishable offenses. Citizens were not allowed to travel abroad; their mobility was restricted even within Albania.

The constitutional development of the country was simple. Albania had two constitutions, 1946 and 1976, which differed only ideologically, not institutionally. The basis of the state was the People's Assembly, elected in general but non-competitive elections, which covered all state branches (legislative and executive). The People's Assembly elected a presidium (headed by a chairman), which had all state powers when the assembly was not in session. Alongside this hierarchical structure, the Council of Ministers operated as the highest administrative institution. This constitutional system was only formal because all the power was held by the Party of Labor of Albania and its leader, Enver Hoxha (Fevziu 2017; Woodcock 2016; Zavalani 2015).

IMPACT ON POLICY Totalitarianism is like a revolution. Totalitarian power grows beyond all standards of normal politics (Buchheim 1962). In its consequences, it leads to complete not only political, but also economic, social, and cultural transformations of such societies. This results primarily from its ideological essence because totalitarian ideology aims to create not only a new country and society but also a new human.

Totalitarian regimes have greatly influenced world politics and have structurally reshaped countries' internal and international (world) views. Despite the divide between Nazi and communist totalitarianism and their contrasting national and racial goals versus internationalist aspirations, the latter was also much more focused on economic and social transformation (Brooker 2000). However, they were very similar in their ideology-driven expansionism – their desire to convince, control and subjugate other areas, countries, and nations. This inevitably led to 'criminal' policies (Brooker 2000), primarily wars, but accompanied by other phenomena, such as (many forms of) genocide (Lemkin 1943), GULAG-

style prison systems, widespread ecological disaster, and cultural onslaught (Box 1.19).

This has enormously impacted international relations. The experience of totalitarianism and war triggered the integration process in Western Europe and led to the creation of the United Nations and the modern concept of **human rights** (Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Given totalitarianism's holistic impact on society, it also affects society's 'non-political' spheres. A typical example would be art (e.g., socialist realism) or, for example, their megalomanic architecture (sacral or propagandistic), which are full of symbolism and monumentality (Ward 2015), often entwined with **personalist cults**. Furthermore, these architectural remnants are still very much present in the urban landscapes touched by totalitarian overlords. However, the true **totalitarian legacies** can run much deeper and become stable elements of political cultures in such societies and political systems.

NEW FRONTIERS The concept of totalitarianism is historical today. The only old-fashioned totalitarian example remaining is North Korea. As a result, the phenomenon is not being re-conceptualized at present. Various 'new' or 'innovated' forms of dictatorships appear in the world (Brooker 2014), but none take the form of totalitarianism. It is a question for further research to what extent such regimes as, for example, contemporary Russia with its nationalist ideology or China with its modern methods of mass surveillance, correspond to at least some characteristics of twentieth-century totalitarianism.

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Box 1.18 Holy Books: The Ideological Foundations of Ego & Ideocracy

We must fight against revisionism with all our might because it is a betrayal of Marxism-Leninism.
– Enver Hoxha, *Reflections on China* (1979)

The term 'holy book' in authoritarian regimes typically refers to the publications, visual arts, and other artifacts that construct the image of dictatorships and their leaders. Chronicles, songs, and other forms of oral traditions historically served as the primary tools for legitimizing rulers. With the spread of literacy and the advent of printed and electronic media, dictators were able to craft a positive image and disseminate **propaganda** across their territories. In recent years, the digitalization of authoritarian ideologies through internet visual arts or mobile phone applications has become another powerful tool for penetrating society, especially in contexts where internet usage is restricted or monopolized. The modern internet era has shifted the focus from traditional 'holy books' to sets of 'holy texts' – shorter, more straightforward content designed for quick consumption by the public.

The more centralized and personalized a given dictatorship, the more likely their writings become dogmatic and propagated. Such dictators do not entertain alternative opinions, as the typical hierarchical structure of **personalist rule** is supportive of far-reaching sycophancy (cf. Box 6.5) toward and around the leader. In turn, such rulers consider themselves as the most suitable candidates for their highest positions, which have to be legitimized by any means, including the writing of books. (For a selection of their alternative artistic outlets, see Box 3.5)

The books allegedly written by or about dictators can have different functions. In most cases – as shown in Table 1.10 – they serve as a political, economic or social program that leaked into most dictatorships' domestic and foreign policy spheres. Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf (My Struggle)* or Muammar al-Qaddafi's *Green Book* (الكتاب الأخضر – *al-Kitāb al-Aḫḍar*) were considered their respective visions of how the state should be managed and what kind of foreign policy is desired. In some cases, like the previous examples and also Saparmurat Niyazov's AKA *Türkmenbaşy* ('Father of all Turkmen') *Ruhnama (Book of the Soul)*, and – in part – the *Little Red Book* of Mao Zedong and Kim Il-Sung's *Seonjip* (Selected Works) or *Jeojakjip* (Collected Writings), these works illustrate and determine the whole philosophical system and state-ideology or, at least, aim to create a kind of guiding ideological system that becomes obligatory throughout the territory they control.

In extreme scenarios, books not only serve as the foundation for ideological contexts or to legitimize the rule of certain dictators, but their function extends even further. For example, Niyazov's *Ruhnama* in Turkmenistan and Kim Il-Sung's writings in North Korea were designed to act as spiritual guides for their respective citizens. Studying these texts became mandatory and was essential for career advancement and navigating everyday life under the regime. Exams based on the *Ruhnama* or Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book* became an obligatory part of daily life, with their content enforced in routine activities. The pocket-sized edition of Mao's *Little Red Book* exemplifies this, as it was intended to be a concise, portable companion that citizens could carry with them at all times.

Contrarily, several 'holy books' – or their collection as in the case of Lenin's or Ho Chi Minh's multiple volumes – are, however, extremely sophisticated and/or vast that they need to be simplified and popularized before dissemination. Although Iran's Khomeini's *Valayat-e faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist)* is a relatively tiny book, the scientific (theological) language (including long parts written in Arabic) is hardly promotable in its original form and was simplified to be understandable for the general public. Lenin's collections consist of about fifty volumes, depending on the edition (Ленин 1972; Lenin 1976), so the simplified version or 'quotation books' were created for access by the general public. Mao Zedong's *Little Red Book*, the collection of the leader's quotations and principal ideas, belongs to the same category for squeezing the ruling philosophy (Maoism in this case) into simple postulates available to everybody.

At the same time, not all dictators or ideologists of authoritarian regimes tend to publish their ideas as a single 'holy book.' Instead, most written books from and about dictators start with the collection of their speeches and photos, and eventually, their propaganda uses other visual arts tools. Although the collections of speeches do not pretend to be one single and centralized 'holy book' that everybody must prove their knowledge about, they could be an authoritative source for spreading a kind of ideology. As such, these books could become a required part of the educational and **indoctrination** process and, consequently, at different levels of daily life. For example, students, academics and other local researchers should obligatorily dedicate a certain percentage of their respective publications to quotes from these ideological writings. In some cases, this leads to absurd situations if these requirements are mandatory, for example, in the exact natural sciences such as mathematics, geology, biology, etc. (Social scientists could be in a better position, although they are obliged to link and adapt their texts almost exclusively to the regime's ideological context.)

Concerning the authorship of holy books, **propaganda** shows the presidents tirelessly working on their books in their free time, during their holidays, and thinking about their respective nations. Most of the books or collections of speeches are written by regime insiders surrounding these dictators, like their advisers or prominent pro-regime scholars.

The activity of book writing is not predetermined by the character of the regimes nor the level of authoritarianism. Somehow, moderate authoritarian leaders can be involved in writing the books (such as Kazakhstan). At the same time, some repressive dictators – such as Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay, Teodoro Obiang Nguema in Equatorial Guinea, Mobutu Sese Seko in Congo, or, to

Table 1.10 – A Selection of Famous Ideological Writings of Dictators

Ruler	State (period)	Holy Book	Type / aim
Kim Il-Sung (1946-1989)	North Korea	*Seonjip* and *Jeojakjip*	Collection of texts Foundation for the *Juche* ideology
Ayyatollah Khomeini (1979-1989)	Iran	*Velayat-e faqih*	Theological treatise Foundation for the Iranian political system
Vladimir I. Ulyanov (Lenin) (1917-1924)	Russia/USSR	Collection of works	Books, articles Foundation of the Soviet philosophical and political system
Adolf Hitler (1933-1945)	Germany	*Mein Kampf*	Program book of the Nazi regime
Ho Chi Minh (1945-1969)	Vietnam	*Collection of Works*	Articles and collection of speeches, Proclaimed as the foundation of Vietnam's system of values and politics
Mao Zedong (1949-1976)	China	*Little Red Book*	Concise and brief program book for state ideology (Maoism)
Muammar al-Qaddafi (1969-2011)	Libya	*Green Book*	Foundation for political system of *jamahiriya*
Saparmyrat Niyazov 'Türkmenbaşy' (1986-2006)	Turkmenistan	*Ruhnama*	Spiritual book, collection of moral code and historiography of Turkmenistan
Xi Jinping (2012-)	China	*Xi Jinping Thoughts*	Part of Chinese Communist Party 'constitution' The ideology of the 'Chinese Dream'

Source: Author's own work.

some extent, Vladimir Putin in Russia – prefer other tools for promoting their ideology. They limit themselves to policy statements and articles that do not evolve into a comprehensive ideological system. The decision to create or refrain from creating a 'holy book' or other forms of 'sacralization' through ideological texts lies with both the dictator and their sycophantic inner circle. This choice is influenced by the dictator's background and beliefs, the nature of the regime, and the composition of the ruling elites. Dictators are often motivated by ambitions to establish an ideological or programmatic framework for the regimes they lead or by personal desires to be recognized as grand writers. The political elite typically supports the promotion of such writings to either gain or maintain favor with the leader, particularly in the ideological sphere.

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Box 1.19 Genocide

Aequat omnes cinis
(Ashes level all)
– Seneca

Genocide is closely connected to mass killings based on religion, race, and ethnicity. Genocide is a total social practice that affects all aspects of group life (Moses 2009: 13); it is a campaign of mass extermination that targets entire groups, but the term has also been used to refer to massacres that target all members of a particular group in a given area (Lieberman 2010: 45-46; see also Shaw 2007).

The massacres of Elamites and Babylonians by Assyrians (900-700 BCE), the Roman sacking of Carthage (146 BCE) during the Third Punic War, the systemic extermination of native Americans during colonization, the Zhunghar annihilation by the Qing dynasty (1755-1758) – although the practice goes back centuries, genocide has been initially defined only during the WWII by Raphael Lemkin, who crafted a framework to describe the abhorrent mass killings of Jews in Poland by Nazis. Since the adoption of the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* in 1951 by the United Nations, the legal definition of genocide has been more precise, but scholarly debates about its usage and the history of mass and intended killings, have been very lively, especially in the light of the inflatory use of the term.

Lemkin described genocide as follows: *"Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and the colonization of the area by the oppressor's nationals"* (Lemkin 1944: 79). In 1946 Lemkin wrote that genocide is *"the criminal intent to destroy or cripple permanently a human group"* (Lemkin 1947: 147).

The UN Convention defines genocide as *"any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."* Crucially, Lemkin's definition and the UN convention recognize the trans-historic moment in the act of genocide. However, as Robins (2010) wrote, the UN Genocide Convention has been set up on a judicial and legal basis in order to punish the perpetrators of such crimes.

Mass murders and the organized killing of people have a longer history than the use of the term genocide (Kiernan 2007; Levene & Roberts 1999). However, it has also been used to explain historical mass killings. Scholars have looked back to ancient and medieval times and identified some genocidal practices (see: van Wees 2010; Scales 2007; Fraser 2010). Many times, colonial repression and the mass murders in Latin and North America have been used as cases of genocidal policies (Stannard 1993; Robins 2010; MacDonald 2023), the mass murders in Africa during the colonial times (Schaller 2010), while notorious twentieth-century examples include the Armenian genocide (1915-1917), the Holocaust (שואה – *Shoah* in Hebrew), the Biafran, Rwandan and Burundian cases; the Yugoslav secession wars and the genocide in Srebrenica (Mann 2005; Simon 2023). Sometimes, those who rebelled against colonial exploitation and mass murders engaged themselves in retributive genocidal killings (Robins 2002; 2005)

Scholars have differentiated between different types of genocides: retributive, institutional, utilitarian, monopolistic, developmental, despotic, optimal, progressive, reactionary, hegemonic, etc. (Du Preez 1994; Smith 2000; Jonassohn & Chalk 1990; 2000; Fein 1993; Van den Bosch 2024). Although often regarded as external to modernity, the analyses of Frankfurt School members, such as Adorno and Horkheimer (2016), alongside other critical theorists like Arendt (1965) and Bauman (1989), have argued that genocide – particularly the Holocaust *(Shoah)* – is inherently linked to the instrumental rationality and technological advancement of modernity. Bauman claimed that *"in the last resort – the choice of physical extermination as the right means to the task of Entfernung was a product of routine bureaucratic procedures: (…) budget balancing, universal rule application. To make the point sharper still – the choice was an effect of the earnest effort to find rational solutions to successive 'problems,' as they arose in the changing circumstances. (…)"* (Bauman 1989: 17).

The reasons for the occurrence of genocides and mass killings are typically attributed to several factors: deep divisions within society, such as ethnic or religious conflicts (Kuper 1986); wars, revolutions, and severe crises, which can provoke mass killings either due to a search for scapegoats or because political elites exploit these crises to achieve their goals and consolidate power (Staub 1989; Mazian 1990; Melson 1992; Shaw 2003).

Scholarly research has increasingly focused on the connections between **totalitarianism**, **authoritarianism**, **personalist rule**, and genocide. It is often argued that democratic governments, by their nature, do not kill their citizens and that the restraint on government power reduces the likelihood of aggressive and destructive behavior (Rummel 1994). Within this framework, genocides have typically been associated with totalitarian or authoritarian/personalist regimes. Horowitz (1976: 36) famously asserted that *"Genocide is the operational handmaiden of a particular social system, the totalitarian system."* Similarly, Rummel (1994) argued that absolute power is the critical factor behind 'democides' – a broader term encompassing various forms of mass killings, including genocide. Van der Maat (2024) builds on this thesis, linking mass killings and genocides to authoritarian regimes and intra-elite rivalries. Supporting this, Straus (2010: 74) observed, *"Like the idea that deep divisions and enmity between groups is a wellspring for genocide, the idea that genocide is more likely in dictatorial states has a certain common-sense resonance. It seems intuitive mass killing would be more likely where power is concentrated among the few and where citizens do not enjoy broad democratic rights."*

Despite this widely held belief that democracies do not commit genocides, scholars such as Michael Mann and Mark Levene have demonstrated that democracies can also perpetrate mass killings, ethnic cleansing, and genocides (Mann 2005; Levene 2005). Leopold II of Belgium (reign: 1865-1909), a constitutional monarch of a democracy, bears personal responsibility for the genocidal predatory system in the Congo Free State (now DRC). He also set up outsourcing 'concessions' to corporate multinationals in extractive industries (mining and rubber) without oversight. Scholars do disagree on the level of 'intent to destroy' (since these enterprises needed the forced labor) and thus if Leopold's 'red rubber regime' meets all (legal) defining criteria of the term genocide.

Valentino (2004) emphasized that democratic governments may engage in mass killings abroad or support authoritarian regimes responsible for such actions. Krain (1997) challenged the automatic correlation between concentrated power and state-sponsored mass killings, suggesting that other factors play a role. Mann (2005) offered a nuanced perspective, arguing that newly democratizing states are more likely to commit ethnic cleansing than stable authoritarian regimes. Levene went further, asserting that *"British colonial and American tendency to genocide [occurred] in notable tandem with the evolution of these states toward liberal, even democratic credentials"* (Levene, 2005: 112).

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Traditional Rule (Weber)

The law showed what man ought to be. Christ showed what man is, and what God is.
– William Paton Mackay (1839-1885), Scottish doctor and Presbyterian minister

Max Weber's concept of traditional rule, rooted in the sanctity of long-standing customs and practices, finds a natural connection between **monarchies** and institutionalized religion. Traditional authority legitimizes power through inherited status (**dynasties**) and adherence to established norms, often intertwined with religious doctrines. Historically, institutionalized religion played a crucial role in reinforcing traditional rule by providing divine justification for power structure as expanded upon in **religions of the world & statecraft.** For instance, the 'divine right of kings' framed monarchs as chosen by God, making obedience a religious duty. Similarly, patriarchal authority within households was often justified through religious teachings that emphasized male dominance as divinely ordained.

Weber observed that in societies with enduring empires, such as Imperial China or medieval Europe, the fusion of religious and secular power reinforced traditionalism. Religious institutions not only sanctified rulers but also shaped societal norms, discouraging dissent and maintaining hierarchical structures. This intertwining of religious and secular authority created a stable social order but often impeded rationalization and modernization. Traditional authority's reliance on inherited customs contrasted sharply with the legal-rational rule that underpins modern bureaucratic states and market economies, a more advanced political order, **Weber** believed.

Weber's framework can be extended to analyze **ideologies** as mechanisms for legitimizing power in ways analogous to traditional rule. Like traditions, several ideologies provide coherent belief systems that justify and sustain existing power structures. For an overview, consult the individual entries in the section on **ideologies & worldviews**. For example, patriarchal ideologies (e.g., **fascism**) have historically mirrored traditional authority by legitimizing male dominance within families and society at large. Similarly, **nationalism** invokes historical narratives or cultural traditions to legitimize political power, framing the nation-state as a continuation of an ancestral legacy.

Certain political ideologies also function like traditional beliefs in upholding specific hierarchies or social orders. For instance, like caste systems, class-based ideologies rely on entrenched beliefs about social stratification, akin to how traditional authority depends on the sanctity of inherited customs. In both cases, legitimacy stems from shared beliefs in the inherent rightness of specific structures or leaders.

As described in the overview of his classification, **Weber** identified three subtypes of traditional rule. *Patriarchalism* represents its simplest form, found in familial systems like households ruled by male elders or *gerontocracies* (cf. Box 1.12). Authority here rests with elders or males seen as custodians of sacred traditions, relying on voluntary compliance rather than administrative staff. As societies grew more complex, **patrimonialism** emerged, characterized by rulers treating the state as an extension of their household, with loyalty-based administration. In extreme cases, this evolved into **sultanism**, marked by centralized and arbitrary power. Finally, estate-type rule or feudalism (1.14) involved decentralized authority, where nobles controlled resources in exchange for loyalty and military service, creating reciprocal obligations but limiting economic freedom (Weber 2019).

For a deeper exploration of Max Weber's intellectual contributions to analyzing (authoritarian) leadership, consult his concept of **charismatic rule,** which explores the sources of charisma, its routinization, transformative power and later interpretations.

Traditional rule is illustrated in detail in its original and post-Weberian subtypes, including **patrimonialism**, **neo-patrimonialism**, **sultanism & neo-sultanism**. These frameworks have been particularly influential in comparative authoritarian studies, offering insights into **personalist rule** and **hybrid regimes**. (Weber's legal-rational rule is not treated as a standalone topic in this encyclopedia; however, it is addressed within discussions on **bureaucracies** and **bureaucratic authoritarianism**.)

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Trust (Political Trust)

Trust is good, but control is better
– Attributed to Vladimir Lenin

Доверяй, но проверяй
(Trust but verify)
– Russian saying

Trust is like blood pressure. It's silent, vital to good health, and if abused it can be deadly
– Frank Sonnenberg

The study of political trust in authoritarian regimes highlights the importance of context-specific factors such as elite power dynamics, state-society relations, and the role of coercion versus voluntary compliance. Unlike democracies, where political trust is often linked to institutional performance and civic engagement, in authoritarian regimes it is more closely tied to regime survival strategies and the manipulation of public perception. Political trust in dictatorships functions differently than in democracies – it is often manufactured or conditional and serves as a critical instrument for maintaining regime stability. However, its fragility underscores the inherent challenges faced by such regimes in sustaining long-term legitimacy.

DEFINITION Political trust generally refers to citizens' confidence in political institutions and procedures and/or in past performance. Political trust means that citizens believe that the government is both competent and committed to acting in the interest of its citizens (Levi & Stoker 2000: 476; Miller 1974; Mishler & Rose 1997; 2001; Shi 2001; 2014).

Political trust is sometimes confused with interpersonal trust. Interpersonal trust, or social trust, constitutes the extent to which individuals trust other individuals in society beyond their family ties. It supports the establishment of strong community bonds and helps societal institutions function. Societies with low levels of trust cannot take people for their word and might be more likely to rely on family members to do things (such as in business and politics) rather than a more qualified stranger. Social trust is also necessary to foster cooperation and resolve collective action problems. It reinforces voluntary participation and helps reward citizens to participate in **civil society** (Zmerli & Newton 2007). Societies that have low levels of interpersonal trust will be able to capitalize upon divisions in society to justify autocratization and gain support for anti-democratic action. Scholars such as Almond & Verba (1963) and Inglehart (1990) argued that social trust and participation were at the heart of a democratic political culture. Social trust is also often associated with good governance and development and is higher in democratic regimes.

Political trust is also closely related to support and/or satisfaction with the regime and support for democracy, but there are key distinctions. Citizens can trust that the government or state is transparent, honest and competent but may still be dissatisfied with a specific regime's policies. Along those same lines, citizens can also support democracy intrinsically but have low levels of trust in the current government. More often than not, however, trust in the government is conflated with support for the regime and satisfaction with democracy. While diffuse support for democracy tends to be more stable, satisfaction with democracy tends to be more variable. Political trust lies somewhere in the middle – it is relatively stable but could be impacted by the latest government scandal and perceptions of **corruption** of the current regime.

In any event, political trust is critically important for the survival of a regime. It is regarded as a cornerstone of a regime's **legitimacy,** which determines the scope of the government's power (Badie & Birnbaum 1983; O'Connor 1973; Wong et al. 2009). Scholars of democracy have often focused on the importance of high levels of trust in order to make 'democracy work' (Putnam 1993; Almond & Verba 1963; Dahl 1971). Nevertheless, surprisingly, regime type does not necessarily determine levels of political trust. Far more important is whether or not the state is able to offer public goods, how corrupt the government is perceived to be, and how well government narratives show

SEE ALSO Political trust is associated with political **legitimacy** and government support. In **democratization** theories, political trust is correlated with a vibrant **civil society**. Low political trust then correlates with higher levels of **informality**. Others assess how **uncivil society** banks on and perpetuates low social trust.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Political trust is an important indication of political legitimacy (Easton 1975). Political trust is also associated with higher levels of support for government programs that offer a public good. It was widely assumed that authoritarian regimes would suffer from low levels of political trust, and declines in public trust in autocracies would be a precursor for democratic transitions (Qi & Shin 2011). Nevertheless, some authoritarian regimes have found ways to cultivate political trust, and autocracies are more interested in cultivating political trust and **legitimacy** than previously thought.

LITERATURE Scholars have noted that there are various explanations for political trust (Citrin 1974; Hetherington 1998, 2005; Hetherington & Rudolph 2008). Trust that is based on looking at past perfor-



mance is known as specific support or the evaluative orientation toward government (Stokes 1962; Easton 1965; Mishler & Rose 2002; Norris 1999; Tang 2005; Zhong 2014; Askvik et al. 2011; Espinal et al. 2006; Morris & Klesner 2010; Wong et al. 2011). The evaluative sources of political trust are based on government outputs and officials' performance. Typically, the perception of **systemic corruption** is associated with low levels of trust, while economic success is associated with high levels of trust, and political trust could decline when the public is not satisfied with how the government is performing. However, political trust that is based on performance may fade and only offer temporary legitimacy for a regime.

In contrast, trust that is based on procedures is known as 'diffuse support' (Easton 1965). In this instance, political trust develops when there is the perception that institutions and procedures are impartial, fair, efficient, honest, equitable, and responsive to society's needs (Miller & Listhaug 1990). Diffuse support is important for retaining trust during difficult times, such as during economic slowdowns or political instability (Hetherington & Rudolph 2015).

In addition to looking at institutions and performance, some scholars have also looked at the affective orientation toward government (Stokes 1962). The affective dimension of political trust stresses how cultural values and beliefs are passed on from one generation to another and can affect how citizens feel about specific political institutions, thereby impacting diffuse support (Easton 1965).

Citizens also expect that there are adequate opportunities for input into the decision-making process, which is less likely in authoritarian regimes (Dahlberg & Holmberg 2014; Van der Linde 2012). Thus, not surprisingly, earlier studies of authoritarian regimes expected trust to be much lower (Mishler & Rose 2001). However, a closer look at what occurs in many authoritarian settings challenges these assumptions.

World values surveys have revealed that trust is slightly lower in democracies than in non-democracies (Huang & Schuler 2018; Mauk 2020). This is in spite of the fact that authoritarian regimes often do not have regular and effective channels to incorporate citizens' opinions. However, authoritarian regimes do care about political trust to some extent because grievances can boil over into **protests** and other forms of contention (Li 2004; Zhu & Rosen 1993). Some dictators care more about political trust than their democratic counterparts and are effective in disseminating information that will increase and influence public trust toward the government, i.e., **disinformation** (Barber & Miller 2019; Cantoni et al. 2017; Chen 2017; Kao 2021; Stockmann 2013; Voigtlanderand & Voth 2014). Dictatorships can also offer to buy political support by offering material benefits (Burns 2003; Gimpelson & Treisman 2002; Smith 2004). Those who have been co-opted are more likely to support the regime (Geddes 2005).

Many Asian countries that are authoritarian have surprisingly high levels of trust (Shi 2001; Yang & Holzer 2006). Countries like Singapore and China have been able to consistently deliver goods to the public, while also conveying a message that the state is competent. Singapore, in particular, enjoys high levels of trust because the public sees the government as effective, successful and honest. Autocracies that have been able to manage the economy properly may also be able to generate public trust, which is important to staving off protests (Bratton & van de Walle 1997) and elite defections (Reuter & Gandhi 2011; Pepinsky 2009). This contrasts with other authoritarian regimes, such as Egypt and Iran, which have lost the trust of their publics due to economic mismanagement and a series of corruption scandals.

Scholars note that trust is even weaker in new **democracies**. Just after a country transitions to democracy, there is a good chance that citizens will be disappointed. Another issue for new democracies is that, in some cases, officials trained under the old corrupt regime remained in place. In post-communist societies, trust has been incredibly low due to the perception that the government is both corrupt and inept. Surveys reveal that post-communist countries are disappointed with government ineffectiveness and have little trust that the government is working for them.

Nevertheless, it is not all bad news for democracies. When it comes to dealing with multi-linguistic societies democracies that pursue the right policies tend to do better than authoritarian regimes. Studies have shown that democracies that recognize minority languages are able to gain the trust of their publics, while authoritarian regimes that do so are viewed with suspicion, and this calls attention to other inequalities (Kao et al. 2023).

Authoritarian regimes also do not perform consistently well when it comes to social trust. Citizens living under autocratic rule lack confidence in each other because they live in an environment where **power** is exercised arbitrarily. Citizens also tend not to trust one another because they are constantly being surveilled by both state and citizen informants (Box 3.11). This lack of trust, in turn, negatively affects the building of social capital, which is critical to democracy (Mishler & Rose 2001). Other studies, however, have countered that social trust is reasonably high in authoritarian regimes (Rahman 2002; Liverani 2008; Cavatorta and Durac 2010).

Another issue is that communist regimes did not trust citizens. Citizens were constantly being watched and surveilled, with some citizens being used as informants. Despite communist states' 'positive' **constitutionalism** – offering state and welfare services regarding healthcare, housing, education, pensions, etc. – they lacked the rule of law and many citizens were treated unfairly and not able to receive their benefits. Post-communist regimes also faced a challenge in their economic effectiveness – to create institutions for a market economy in order to fill the void left by the collapse. Post-communist institutions did not perform well and were considered untrustworthy.

When it comes to civic engagement in authoritarian regimes, the relationship with trust is not

straightforward. On the one hand, there are usually very low levels of civic engagement in authoritarian settings. Nevertheless, some authoritarian regimes have tried to co-opt **civil society** and control it rather than allowing it to participate and contest the state freely (Heydemann 2007; Jamal 2007). Co-opting strengthens the authoritarian regime as the trust level increases with these clientelistic relationships.

Research has also looked into the drivers of trust at the individual level. At the individual level, the poorest and wealthiest are more likely to trust government and institutions than the middle-income classes (Espinal et al. 2006). Age is also a factor with older people more trusting than younger people. Younger people are more likely to question authority and challenge the *status quo*.

CLASSIFICATIONS Concepts related to political trust are (a) 'diffuse support' and (b) 'specific support' for democracy, but these are more dimensions than categories: *Specific political trust* (a) refers to trust in particular officeholders, such as presidents, prime ministers, or other political leaders. It is often tied to their performance, qualifications, or policies. *Diffuse political trust* (b) refers to trust in the broader political system, including its principles and institutions (e.g., democracy, the rule of law). This type of trust is more enduring and less influenced by short-term events (Easton 1965). These can also be referred to as 'leadership trust' (a) and 'institutional trust' (b).

Norris (2017) refines and expands Easton's (1965) model by delineating five components of political support, arranged from the most specific to the most generalized level. The first (i) and most specific component pertains to the approval of incumbent officeholders, focusing on assessments of the performance and qualifications of leaders such as presidents, prime ministers, politicians, and civil servants. Research by Nam & Lee (2021) underscores the importance of leadership skills, including vision, effective communication, and efficient government management, in fostering trust in government. The next (ii) component concerns confidence in regime institutions, encompassing the **legislature**, **executive**, **judiciary**, and other governmental bodies. The third (iii) component evaluates regime performance, which takes a more abstract approach by examining the processes and outcomes of government policies. The next component (iv) reflects support for the core regime, emphasizing adherence to democratic principles and rejection of autocratic values. Finally, the most diffuse component (v) is national identity, capturing sentiments of patriotism and national pride (Choi & Woo 2023). Besides this one main approach, there are no real alternative classifications of political trust, but there are different ways of measuring it. For more on this see the section on measurement.

MEASUREMENT Political trust is measured by using survey data of citizens. Numerous surveys measure trust, including the regional barometer surveys, *Pew Research*, *Gallop polls*, and *YouGov*, to name a few. These surveys ask citizens a series of questions to measure levels of trust including the most direct questions of how much do you trust the government and how much do you trust other citizens.

In addition to surveys, trust is also measured through civil society membership; societies with a high number of citizens involved. Studies have shown that social trust and political trust are highly correlated (Mishler & Rose 2005; Zmerli & Newton 2007). Longitudinal data (or data over time) suggests that people trust each other less today than they did 40 years ago (Cook & Cook 2021; Pharr et al. 2000).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Low trust may be more easily found in democracies than authoritarian regimes, but this could be due to citizens in authoritarian regimes not being truthful in answering the surveys. Measuring trust in authoritarian regimes is not that straightforward, since citizens may be inclined to give answers that do not put them at odds with the regime (i.e. self-censorship – see **censorship**). There are possibly cultural reasons which may make measuring trust more challenging in non-democratic regimes. Some have argued that measuring political trust in Russia is hard to do accurately because Russian culture led to submissive attitudes and a tendency toward compliance (Jowitt 2005; Lukin 2009).

EXAMPLES In authoritarian contexts, much of the work studying political trust has looked at China and how the government has been effective in generating high levels of trust, particularly since the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. Since the communist regime came to power, China has experienced record economic growth, and surveys have shown that China has relatively high levels of political trust (Bratton & Mattes 2001; Li 2004; Zhai 2019). Governmental performance is one of the most relevant factors in sustaining political trust in China (Tang 2005; 2016; Wong et al. 2011; Yang & Tang 2010; Zhong 2014). In fact, the Chinese have higher levels of confidence in the government than in many other advanced industrial societies.

Another way in which China has managed to generate high levels of trust is by allowing some civil society actors to become active. In particular, China has allowed citizens to become active in apolitical issues to help develop bonds of trust. By doing so, the Chinese state has strengthened linkages of trust toward the government, strengthening its own rule. China has invested heavily in revamping its curriculum and propaganda efforts to sell a narrative that the regime is competent and that it is important for Chinese citizens to be good citizens. Nationalistic rhetoric and propaganda have been effective. Studies have shown that since citizens have been exposed to this new curriculum, this has changed their levels of support for the regime (Cantoni et al. 2017).

Robinson and Tannenberg (2019: 7) reveal that self-censorship significantly distorts reported levels of regime support in authoritarian states, demonstrating that apparent high support for regimes like the Chinese Communist Party is inflated and consistent across survey dimensions. This challenges the validity of cross-national surveys and suggests that studies on the determinants of regime support may



be biased, as self-censorship can obscure or even invert observed relationships between background factors and political attitudes as measured by direct questioning.

IMPACT ON POLICY As previously mentioned, political trust is vital to the survival of regimes. For this reason, regimes – both democratic and non-democratic have worked to measure political trust and understand why it has declined so precipitously in the last several decades. More governments are using their own public opinion surveys to gauge public opinion and better understand how to respond to the needs and interests of their citizens. This has led, in some instances, to the rise of more populist policies in some cases. In other cases, there has been a growth of elections and surveys along with other avenues for regimes to have an ear to the ground of what their public wants. Increasingly, authoritarian regimes are concerned with improving levels of public trust to enable them to rely less and less on more repressive strategies.

NEW FRONTIERS As public trust is so critical to implementing complex state objectives, such as getting citizens to comply with directives during the COVID-19 pandemic, more work is being done to understand how states generate higher levels of public trust. Early on in the pandemic (before the roll out of vaccinations) it was authoritarian regimes that enjoyed high levels of trust that were able to make the biggest inroads. Also, in democracies, support fluctuates, and scholars investigate why this is the case (e.g., Schraff 2021).

The relation between political trust and the level of 'democraticness' is complex and still being investigated. Mauk (2020) explores how democratic value orientations influence political trust, finding that this relationship is contingent on citizens' perceptions of their regime's democratic quality rather than the regime's actual level of democracy. Torres-Vega et al. (2021) demonstrates that economically threatening contexts, such as economic crises and low socioeconomic status, foster authoritarianism and trust in authoritarian leaders through psychological mechanisms, including a dangerous worldview and low perceived sociopolitical control.

Regime agency matters. Sika (2024) examines how interpersonal trust, **repression**, **co-optation**, and mobilization (**protests & uprisings**) interact in authoritarian regimes, arguing that while high interpersonal trust supports mobilization, excessive repression and strategies like co-optation and infiltration are used by regimes to fuel distrust, fragment movements, and lead to demobilization.

While authoritarianism tends to bolster political trust in non-democratic contexts, populism has the opposite effect. Populist attitudes often erode trust in institutions by framing them as corrupt or unrepresentative of 'the people.' This creates a bidirectional negative relationship between **populism** and political trust. In authoritarian regimes that incorporate populist rhetoric (e.g., "authoritarian populism"), this tension can complicate governance by undermining institutional legitimacy while simultaneously consolidating **personalist rule** (Stanojevic 2023).

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Tyranny

There is nothing among mortals more unjust nor more stained in blood than tyranny.
– Herodotus, *Histories,* 5.92A.1

Tyranny is a political regime in which one individual controls a monopoly of power in a state and is therefore not, in practice, constrained by legal checks and balances of power. Theorists of tyranny, starting from at least Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle in the fourth century BCE, regularly make the further assumption that such unrestrained and arbitrary rule is in most cases necessarily repressive and thus morally repugnant. In classical and medieval categories of constitutions, tyranny is the worst possible type of government, diametrically opposed to kingship, which is understood to be the ideal form of one-man rule.

It has been argued that tyranny fell out of favor as a term for autocratic constitutions by the mid-1750s, displaced by the concept of **despotism**. Machiavelli is perhaps the first theorist to eschew the term 'tyrant' in favor of his alternative '*principe nuovo.*' In modern political theory (PT), 'tyrannical' regimes are commonly described as **personalist rule**, **sultanism & neo-sultanism** or **patrimonialism**. Tyranny in popular discourse, and some academic discussions, is widely used to refer to the exercise of *any* form of abusive or arbitrary rule, whether at the level of the state, the individual or in relations between states. There have been, however, and continue to be, efforts to reintroduce the concept of tyranny, as understood by classical theorists, to modern political discourse.

DEFINITION Tyranny is a remarkably resilient concept in Western PT, one that has continued in use for over two and a half millennia. Mario Turchetti (2013) has demonstrated that, in this long sweep of history, political philosophers have held a generally consistent understanding of the meaning of tyranny. (Note though the contrary view of Newell 2013, who attempts to argue for a modern notion of impersonal and idealistic tyranny that is opposed to ancient tyrants' exploitation of power for personal gratification).

Two aspects of tyranny predominate. First, in classical PT, tyrannies are defined by the distribution of power. Tyranny is a form of constitution (in Greek: πολιτεία – *'politeia'*) pertaining to a state (πόλις – *'polis'*). Classical schemata of constitutions, such as that of Aristotle, define a *politeia* by the person or sovereign people (τὸ κύριον – *'to kurion'*) within that state (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1279a26). In tripartite categorizations of constitutions, the tyrant is thus an individual who possesses the only share, or all the power, in the state. In Aristotle's six-fold schema, tyranny is distinguished from kingship (βασιλεία – *'basileia'*). Kingship, unlike tyranny, is an established hereditary monarchy with constitutionally-defined powers that serve to limit the king's authority (cf. Thucydides, *Histories,* 1.13.1). Tyranny is unaccountable rule (ἀνυπεύθυνος – *'anupeuthunos'*) (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1295a20), whereas kingship is in accordance with law (κατὰ νόμον – *'kata nomon'*) (1295a15; Plato, *Statesman,* 302e). Tyranny is further distinguished from kingship as power is for the benefit only of the tyrant, unlike a king who governs for the sake of the common good (Thucydides, *Histories,* 1.17; Plato, *Republic,* 345d5-e1; Aristotle, *Nicomachaean Ethics,* 1160a36-b3).

Thus, tyranny is also inevitably government without the consent of the people (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1295a15-23; Xenophon, *Memorabilia,* 4.6.12). However, consent is not an issue of prime importance when defining the tyrant, except in order to differentiate tyrannical rule from **despotism** (itself a species of tyranny in Aristotelian theory where consent is granted by the populace, on which see Turchetti 2008). It is possible, as Aristotle noted, for a tyrant to rule more in the manner of a king and so preserve his rule longer. In this instance, the people may in fact be reconciled with tyrannical rule. Yet the crucial factor is power (δύναμις – *'dunamis'*) (Aristotle, *Politics,* 1314a35-7), and the power to rule without popular consent if necessary. This the tyrant cannot relinquish without losing his tyranny. For this reason, Polybius (*Histories,* 2.47.3) was able to claim that Cleomenes III turned Sparta from a lawful monarchy into a tyranny when, in 227 BCE, he abolished the constitution. The key determinant in this case is not the manner of Cleomenes' rule or popular consent, but the narrow distribution of power that followed Cleomenes' coup and his removal of checks on his authority. Given the importance of the distribution of power, the term 'tyranny' may thus be legitimately applied to historical and contemporary regimes that are more commonly labeled as **personalist rule** in modern political science. These are precisely those regimes where "dictators (…) have concentrated powers in their own hands" (Geddes et al. 2018: 11).

The second important aspect in any definition is the assumption that tyranny, as supreme and arbitrary power, leads naturally to the abuse of that power. This view was expressed best and most famously by Lord Acton in his letter to Mandell Creighton of 5 April 1887: *"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority."* (Acton 1907: 504).

We find echoes of this claim in one of the earliest theories of constitutions: that provided by the Greek historian Herodotus (active ca. 430 BCE). In a possibly fictional constitutional debate by a group of Persian nobles, the proponent of popular government argues, as a criticism of monarchy: *"How could autocracy be a suitable constitution, in which the power to act as one wishes with impunity resides? For it would turn even the best of men from his accustomed ways of thinking if he assumed this office"* (*History,* 3.80.3).

Here it is suggested that all autocrats may be vulnerable to moral corruption (conforming to a tripar-

tite theory of constitutions). In practice, however, a contrast between monarchy and kingship is still arguable. This is because the corrupting tendencies are less severe in the case of kingship, where the ruler's power tends to be more circumscribed and better established. In tyrannies, the need to preserve a new and relatively unstable regime may lead the tyrant to adopt ever more repressive means of coercion. This pattern is assumed even by **Machiavelli**, who controversially did not employ the term tyrant in *The Prince*, but nonetheless describes how structural pressures might affect the behavior of 'new princes' in a similarly negative way: *"a prince is always compelled to injure those who have made him a new ruler [sc. unlike a hereditary monarch]"* (Machiavelli 1974: chapter 3).

Some ruthlessness is required for successful bids for power and this ruthlessness may be gradually engendered in the established tyrant. Plato (*Republic,* 565d) uses the story of the cult of Apollo Lycaeus, in which the drinking of human blood turns the initiate into a werewolf, as a metaphor for how the tyrant can become brutalized as a result of his struggle for survival. Fear is initially assuaged by violence, but violence itself breeds fear of retribution. The tyrant is progressively consumed by paranoia: he listens readily to informers, both in order to identify threats and to encourage rivalry and ill-feeling between courtiers. At the same time, unrestrained wealth affords limitless opportunities for dissipation and vice. Tyranny is thus defined (especially by Plato in the *Republic*, cf. Parry 2007; Johnstone 2015) by corruption in the soul of the tyrant. As a result, the term is routinely used polemically as a pejorative label for corrupt or abusive rule, often as part of an effort to prompt **revolution** and **tyrannicide**. Used in this sense, tyranny may signify not just absolute or **personalist rule**, but bad government in general.

SEE ALSO Tyranny existed side-by-side with the concept of **despotism** until it was sidelined in the mainstream by the latter after the 1750s. When tyranny is defined as arbitrary, absolute one-man rule, it overlaps with concepts like **personalist rule**, **patrimonialism** and its more extreme forms **sultanism & neo-sultanism**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE As tyranny is a term with a long history, part of its significance is in its ability to facilitate comparative study of autocracy, and ideas concerning autocracy, in the ancient, medieval, early-modern and modern worlds. Theorists such as Leo Strauss (1968: 21) have argued that 'tyranny is a danger coeval with political life': study of this ancient concept is essential, therefore, if we are to recognize such threats in the contemporary world. Other terms, most notably **totalitarianism**, may on the other hand imply a uniquely modern and exceptional form of government. As Mark Lilla (2002) has argued, a fixation on the historical model of twentieth-century authoritarianism may make it difficult to recognize the existence in the modern world of simpler forms of autocracy that correspond more closely to the classical model of tyranny. Daniel Chirot (2005) has suggested, for example, that the classical model of tyranny is especially relevant to the study of twentieth-century African personalist dictatorships. He argues that both the terms tyranny and Weber's term of **patrimonialism** can be usefully employed to characterize these regimes.

Second, tyranny is a term which specifically implies moral (and negative) judgment. As Leo Strauss (1968: 22) noted, for this reason, twentieth-century political scientists generally avoided the term tyranny due to a *"belief that 'value judgments' are inadmissible in scientific considerations, and to call a regime tyrannical clearly amounts to pronouncing a 'value judgment.'"* And yet, if moral judgments are impossible then a false moral equivalence is the only result. Given its history, no term is perhaps more suitable than tyranny for use as a label for abusive and arbitrary rule and no term is better calculated to galvanize resistance to illegitimate government.

ORIGIN The words 'tyranny' and 'tyrant' are derived from the classical Greek τυραννίς and τύραννος, in origin themselves terms borrowed from Luvian (a language of ancient Anatolia). The earliest appearance of the word τυραννίς in Greek appears in a fragment of the seventh-century BCE poet Archilochus of Paros (fr. 19, in West 1992). In this work, Archilochus denied any desire both for the possessions of Gyges, a king of Lydia in ancient Anatolia, and tyranny. This suggests that the word was initially borrowed to describe Greek rulers who most closely resembled Eastern monarchs, who in the Greek imagination were extraordinarily wealthy and powerful. If so, the term has a similar origin to the English 'nabob,' derived from the Urdu word for ruler (*nawwāb*), but which from the eighteenth century could be used to describe any rich individual, especially those who made their fortunes in India.

It has sometimes been suggested that the word 'tyranny' in Greek was a largely neutral and value-free term until the time of **Plato & Aristotle** in the fourth century BCE (Parker 1998). However, tyrant could in fact be used as a pejorative label at least two centuries earlier and we know of no ruler who has ever styled himself a tyrant (Stewart 2021). Many Greek cities, moreover, sought to enact laws from at least the sixth century BCE that would prevent the accumulation of tyrannical power (Harris 2006: 17-18; Joyce 2022: 7-8). It is probable that Aristotle's definition of tyranny was neither controversial nor especially innovative.

LITERATURE A comprehensive overview of political theory relating to tyranny from antiquity to the present day is provided by M. Turchetti (2013). For a similarly wide-ranging historical survey of tyrannies throughout the ages, see Newell (2016). The classic study of tyranny in ancient Greece is Berve (1967), though non-specialists may find the brief history by Lewis (2009) more approachable. For summaries of ideas on tyranny from the ancient world to the Renaissance, see the volume edited by Panou & Schadee (2018). The decline in the importance of tyranny as a concept in eighteenth and nineteenth century politics is discussed by Richter (2005). For an attempt to study 'modern tyrants,' see Chirot (1994).



Important discussions of how tyranny might be reintroduced to modern political discourse include Lilla (2002) and Koivukoski & Tabachnick (2005).

MEASUREMENT There is no accepted measure for tyranny, which is one of the main limitations on its practical utility as a political concept. One of the very few theorists to attempt to establish a framework for objectively identifying tyrants was the Italian jurist Bartolus of Saxoferrato (1313-1357). In his work *De Tyranno,* he attempted to define tyrants in Roman law under two main headings: a ruler's lack of legal title (*ex defectu tituli*) and a ruler's behavior (*ex parte exercitii*). In the process, he sought to provide the means by which tyrants could be identified and legally removed by higher authorities, such as the Emperor or the Pope.

In contemporary times, Ronald **Wintrobe** includes the concept in his classification on dictators' attitudes toward demanding loyalty and their drive for control, but does not provide precise coding criteria. If tyranny is to be equated with **personalist rule**, then Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright and Erica Frantz's *latent measure of personalism* provides a possible means by which tyrannies may be identified. **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** (2018: 79-80) identify eight criteria for personalism but there are a number of difficulties facing comparative study with historical regimes before the twentieth century. These are principally due to the paucity of datasets and also because the terms used by Geddes et al. are not all immediately applicable to the context of ancient or medieval politics (the factions of ancient tyrants, for example, bear only a superficial resemblance to modern political parties).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES While the meaning of 'tyranny' has remained relatively stable over time, the application of the term to particular historical or contemporary regimes is a source of fierce disagreement. As noted above, no reliable means for measuring tyranny has been developed. When used simply as a term of abuse, the value of tyranny as a concept in political analysis is inevitably lessened. For this reason, Thomas Hobbes (1651) declined to include tyranny in his analysis of constitutions, since he regarded it simply as a 'misliked' form of government: 'for they that are discontented under Monarchy, call it Tyranny' (*Leviathan*, II.19). Timothy Snyder's pamphlet *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2017), written shortly after Donald Trump's (first) election as US president, provides a modern example of how the word tyranny can be misappropriated in exactly this way. Snyder sought to advise Americans on how to confront the looming prospect of tyranny under Trump's presidency. Such an analysis has proved decidedly alarmist given the resilience of American democracy following the 2020 and 2022 elections. In these polls, Trump's waning support among the electorate did in fact result ultimately in a loss of power and influence, which suggests that (regardless of his aspirations, which are debatable) Trump had made little or no actual progress toward establishing a tyranny during the four years of his presidency. Despite its title, Snyder's twenty 'lessons' provide little or no analysis of actual tyrannies, nor do they establish a sound method by which a given regime may be called tyrannical (that is, it remains unclear at what point Trump would have successfully transformed America from a democracy into a tyranny during his first term). 'Tyranny,' in this context, is merely a rhetorical device, employed to stoke fear and harden resistance to particular brands of politics in democracies.

The meaning of tyranny has widened from a specific constitution of a state, defined by an excessively narrow distribution of power, to a simple term for power misused (or its use 'misliked'). As such, Chirot (1994: 14) defines tyranny simply as 'the abuse of power.' Yet definitions of this kind encourage only limited differentiation between constitutional and legal structures, since power may be abused in all constitutions, including democracies. Newell (2016), for example, places not only 'garden-variety' classical tyrants under the umbrella of tyranny, but also ideological millenarian movements such as Islamic terrorist groups, which are neither a form of autocracy nor even, necessarily, a form of state government. Tyranny may equally be applied to forms of injustice that are perpetrated at the level of individual citizens – 'tyranny' consisting in the exclusion, for example, of *"homosexuals, the psychologically different, the 'idle,' the 'unhealthy,' those of mixed race, the 'antisocial'"* (Tormey 2005: 78). Alternatively, in the field of relations between states, the application of international law can become 'tyranny' (O'Donaghue 2021). Such a change in the meaning of tyranny is concerning because it invites a dangerous equivalence between injustice committed in democracies (including the practices of demagogues (Box 4.6), such as Trump, who may misuse some limited power but who are ultimately accountable to the electorate), and the more extreme abuses of absolute power that are only possible in a tyrannical regime.

In contrast to those who broadly apply 'tyranny' to all such forms of abuse, theorists such as Hannah Arendt (2017: 7, 611-612) or dissidents such as Václav Havel (2018: 356-358) have viewed tyranny, or 'classical dictatorships,' as inadequate terms for modern forms of totalitarian authoritarianism (most particularly Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union). For both Arendt and Havel, **totalitarianism** is a more developed ideological movement that aims not simply to force obedience but to create docile and fearful subjects through arbitrary terror and the promulgation of a warped view of reality as unquestionable fact. As Simon Tormey (2005: 78) has argued, *"modernity has (…) rendered the question of tyranny redundant," due to a fundamental "change in the nature of power."*

However, despite these objections, it does not necessarily follow that a term, because it is widely misused, cannot accurately describe objective reality if employed with greater precision. While tyranny may be a simpler, more 'primitive' form of autocracy, it is nonetheless potentially one found in the modern world. The prospects for the revival of tyranny in modern political discourse rest on the development of suitable measures and criteria for the identification of tyrants.

EXAMPLES The Greek world of the seventh to the early fifth centuries BCE is sometimes regarded as an 'age of tyrants.' Common examples include the Cypselid rulers of Corinth, the Pisistratids of Athens, or the tyrant Phalaris of Acragas in Sicily. These rulers conform, at least in part, to the stereotype both of the unconstitutional and of the abusive tyrant in literary sources, beginning with Herodotus. By the late fifth century, Thucydides (*History,* 1.18.1) was capable of suggesting that the era of tyrannies had come to an end. However, the fear of tyranny remained potent, at least in Athens, and with some justification: the fourth century and Hellenistic period provided several paradigmatic tyrants, such as Dionysius and Agathocles of Syracuse. The Romans adopted the term *tyrannus* and were capable of applying it to the Roman emperors, such as Julius Caesar *(huius tyranni)* (Cicero, *de Officiis,* 2.23) or Tiberius (*tyranni saeuitia)* (Suetonius, *Life of Tiberius,* 75.3) following their deaths. In the modern world, it applies to highly personalist and extremely brutal rulers, including Mao Zedong, Stalin, etc. and arguably Vladimir V. Putin or Xi Jinping are likely to go down in history labeled as such.

IMPACT ON POLICY Classical theory on tyranny assumes that the monopolization of power will lead inevitably to negative behavioral traits. Work in Political Science has demonstrated that the personalization of power in twentieth-century dictatorships can indeed be correlated with pathologies including greater repression (Davenport 2007; Frantz et al. 2020) and greater belligerence (Rosen 2005; Weeks 2012). The personality of the tyrant is likely to become increasingly unstable due to his reduced access to reliable information and tendency to believe flattery, rumor and slander. Tyrants may thus appear unpredictable in their behavior and even irrational, apparently unaware that they are acting against their own interests. But, as Peter Rosen (2005: 129) has argued, tyrants are not irrational, but simply 'calculate differently from other rulers.'

Tyrannical regimes differ fundamentally from democracies, and potentially also other forms of non-democracies, in representing the most extreme forms of closed and repressive societies. A failure to recognize this distinction may tempt democratic policymakers to underestimate the threats posed by tyrannies to the global international order (as the threat posed by Vladimir Putin was arguably underestimated before the seizure of Crimea in 2014 and then again before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine). By contrast, 'tyranny' is a label that can be used to mark out morally repugnant regimes and implies a clear moral distinction between (highly personalist) dictatorships and democracies. This basic moral distinction between democracies and non-democracies was central to George W. Bush's war on the 'Axis of Evil' (though an awareness of differences between various types of non-democracies was arguably absent, cf. Davenport 2007). Since America's 2022 withdrawal from Afghanistan, it is increasingly unlikely that Western policymakers will seek to effect regime change in tyrannies. However, when engaging in negotiations with personalist dictatorships, it remains important to recognize the fundamental differences that exist between tyrants and democratic politicians in their motivations, interests, career backgrounds and *modus operandi*. Such negotiations have historically tended to result in poor outcomes for democratic policymakers. While democratic politicians assume good faith and have confidence in their own powers of persuasion through their experience of politics in open societies, tyrants always assume bad faith and cannot be persuaded to act in any way contrary to what they perceive to be their own personal (rather than national) interests. Policymakers attempting to engage with tyrants must expect to be met, for their pains, with denial, deceit, distrust, distraction, dissimulation and, in the end, false promises.

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Box 1.20 Masters & Tyrants: Slavery & Shifting Loyalties

Malo periculosam, libertatem quam quietam servitutem
(I prefer the tumult of liberty to the quiet of servitude)
– Thomas Jefferson, *Letter to Madison* (1787)

The association between chattel slavery and forms of despotic rule is an ancient one. Freedom, conceived both as freedom from slavery and certain kinds of political freedom, appears as a concept even in the monarchies of the ancient Near East (von Dassow 2011). The ancient Greeks specifically conceived the absence of political freedom under tyranny as a form of slavery, even for nominally free persons. The Greek word δεσποτής / *despotēs* (cf. **despotism**) is generally used to refer only to masters of enslaved people; the only exceptions are when it is used to refer to the subjects of a tyrant.

In the narrative of the Greek historian Herodotus, for example, the Lydian noble Pythius addresses the Persian king Xerxes (ca. 518-465 BCE) as 'master' (δέσποτα, *despota*, 7.38.2), while Xerxes confirms that the former is indeed his slave (δοῦλος, *doulos*, 7.39.1). Aristotle believed that tyrants maintained control of elites by forcing them to attend to their persons so that they "continually work as slaves" (αἰεὶ δουλεύοντες, *Politics* 5.1313b.8-9).

Slavery has a further and deeper connection with tyranny in the ancient world. Enslaved people, in many cases, lived in close proximity to their masters and were privy to many of their owners' secrets. The power that a master possessed to sell, beat or even murder an enslaved person meant that such 'chattels' could, in many cases, be regarded by their owners as more trustworthy than free persons. However, this trust is dependent on the ability of the state to uphold the property rights of enslavers and to ensure that absconding enslaved people were found and punished.

In a **tyranny,** such property rights are not guaranteed. Rather, according to Aristotle, in tyrannies, enslaved people (as well as women) were granted far greater freedom in order to induce them to spy on their masters: *"There is a* gynocracy *(γυναικοκρατία) in private households, so that they may denounce their husbands, and licence for slaves for the same reason"* (5.1313b.33-5). This claim is not merely theoretical nor the result of prejudice or misogyny. In a democracy such as Athens, enslaved people could only inform against their masters in special cases of sacrilege, embezzlement of public funds or treason. Otherwise, evidence offered in court was only permissible after the enslaved persons had undergone torture, and this could only happen with the agreement of their master (see Hunter 1994: 70-95; Porter 2024: 559).

Historical tyrants, on the other hand, regularly manumitted the slaves of their enemies and even, in some cases, handed the property of their former masters to them as a reward (e.g., in the case of Nabis, tyrant of Sparta (207-192 BCE), see Polybius 16.13.1). Enslaved people thus provided a tyrant with a powerful tool for control and surveillance of private homes.

In modern political discourse, there continues to be a strong identification between slavery and citizenship in authoritarian regimes, one notable especially in the title of F.A Hayek's 1944 classic, *The Road to Serfdom*. The same basic concept of an enslaved nation can be articulated in a more modern sense by referring to the whole state as an effective prison. Soviet dissidents, in this way, described the life of a nominally free person in the USSR as living "in the larger zone" of the great prison that was Russia (Sharansky 1988: 233). More recently, the association between slavery and tyranny has been revived in Ukraine following the 2014 *Revolution of Dignity*, where the maxim "there are no slaves in heaven" has been adopted to galvanize resistance to Russian aggression. In a speech delivered in 2023 to memorialize the Heavenly Hundred martyrs of the Euromaidan, Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared, *"Slaves are not allowed into paradise. This is the essence of the Ukrainian interpretation of freedom. This is the reason why there will be no enemy left on our land."* (MoD UA, 2023)

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Winning Coalition

一人得道，鸡犬升天
(yī rén dé dào, jī quǎn shēng tiān)
(When a man obtains the Dao, even his chickens and dogs ascend to heaven.)
– Chinese proverb

This is a term of **selectorate theory** and identifies a group of people (elites) as a subset of a larger selectorate. Its support endows the ruler(s) with political power over the remainder of the selectorate as well as over the disenfranchised members of society. In other words, it is often synonymously used for the inner circle or **ruling coalition** of a **political regime** that shares the **rents** (spoils of office) and influences policymaking.

In selectorate theory, members of this group are considered to be 'the essentials.' The size and composition of the group significantly shape a leader's strategies for distributing resources, with smaller coalitions incentivizing private goods distribution and larger coalitions favoring public goods.

Selectorate theory, however, does not account for the nature of the power relations between the ruler and their 'staff' in the Weberian sense (i.e., **personalization** and **personalist rule**) and is somewhat biased regarding formal structures; therefore, there are discrepancies with other frameworks.

'Veto players' (Box 6.6), as defined by G. Tsebelis, are actors whose agreement is necessary to change the *status quo*. In systems with multiple veto players, policy change becomes more difficult due to the need for consensus among actors with divergent preferences. The size and cohesion of a winning coalition can thus influence the dynamics of veto players. For instance, in systems where the winning coalition overlaps significantly with institutional veto players (e.g., **legislatures** or **judiciaries**), leaders may face greater constraints in policymaking. Conversely, in autocracies with small winning coalitions (e.g., **juntas**), veto players are often co-opted or neutralized through private goods distribution, reducing their ability to block decisions.

The relationship between the winning coalition and 'audience costs' (Box 7.1) – the domestic political costs leaders incur when they back down after making public commitments – is also significant. Audience costs are typically higher in democracies with larger winning coalitions because leaders depend on broad public support for survival. In such contexts, failing to deliver on public promises can erode **trust** among coalition members and voters, undermining a leader's position. In contrast, autocracies with small winning coalitions are less exposed to audience costs because leaders rely on a narrow base of elite supporters rather than public opinion. Nonetheless, in (collegial) authoritarian regimes, audience costs may arise if elite members of the winning coalition perceive backing down as a sign of weakness that jeopardizes their shared interests.

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SECTION 2
CLASSIFICATIONS & TYPOLOGIES







5 (New) Zaïres, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo, 1993), depicting 'Président-fondateur' Joseph Mobutu Sese Seko Ngbendu wa Za Banga, strongman, ideologue and notorious kleptocrat.

5 Shillings, Uganda (1977), depicting President Idi Amin Dada Oumee, the 'Butcher of Kampala.'

10 Dalasis, The Gambia (2015), depicting His Excellency Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya Abdul-Aziz Awal Jemus Junkung Jammeh Naasiru Deen Babili Mansa, strongman and megalomanic.



CLASSIFYING POLITICAL REGIMES & RULERS

Measurement is central to the scientific enterprise, and it is intimately connected to the process of concept formation.
– Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (1994)

How we bound and pose our questions determines what we see and what we miss.
– Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (1984)

Tracing back to **Plato & Aristotle**, and N. **Machiavelli**, the human urge to classify and compare systems of government had a proud tradition once monarchies were no longer the only game in town. The sparks of republicanism initiated innovative classifications, the undoing of absolute monarchical rule, the fall of empires, subsequent waves of democratization (cf. Box 6.3) and revolution, the rise of totalitarianism, as well as the sudden demise of colonialism together with unprecedented globalization and hitherto unseen disparities in modernization. Moreover, with these changes scholars went about to order and explain this divergence of political systems.

Previously, such classifications were guided by their inventors' worldviews and tailored to specific purposes. Furthermore, this is still the case today. There are no 'neutral' or 'unbiased' classifications of government systems: for this reason, this section of the *Encyclopedia Tyrannica* provides an overview of some of the most important contemporary political regime classifications, highlighting their purpose, rationale, biases, blind spots and contributions to comparative authoritarianism.

With so many different systems of rule, dating back to the first-known polity (the Sumerian city-state of Ur, founded around 3800 BCE), ever-evolving in greater and new levels of complexity for over five millennia, it goes without saying that mapping old and new classifications of political systems is not a straightforward task. Short overviews of the most salient contemporary regime typologies are compared along four dimensions listed below. They are presented chronologically to trace their respective contributions to political science back to the original inventors.

RESEARCH OBJECT The theoretical 'Russian doll' of state-regime-government-ruler offers at least four nested *loci* of analysis. Most typologies operate on one main level with second-tier sorting criteria from other levels: Some classifications barely break open the 'black box' of the state, comparing only some of its (institutional) components. Others dig deeper into the ruling regimes' informal rules of operation. The (potential) high overturn of democratic political regimes – always reconstituting into new ruling coalitions – renders a government-focus more salient for comparison for this regime subset, while measures of powerful executive offices have sprouted ruler-focused categorizations (sometimes even dipping into **psychological profiles** of leaders). For scholars borrowing classifications, checking if the level of analysis of the desired classification matches their own research object should be the very first step of the research design. Keep in mind that these four levels are not the only possible ones. Polities can be classified according to the mode of origin, their method of succession, their performance, etc., and such codifications indirectly convey information about the nature of their ruling systems.

FOCUS Some typologies are autocracy-focused, others are clearly democracy-focused. Such 'focus' refers to a typology's main *explanandum* ('that what needs to be explained'): Is the purpose to draw a clear line between 'democracies' and 'non-democracies'? Or is the goal to sort out those regimes in the 'murky middle' – those **hybrid regimes** – that possess attributes of both autocratic and democratic rule? Or is the focus purely on the classification of dictatorships, ignoring everything considered a democracy? The design of a classification logically determines the scope of its applicability, and the original intention of the inventors impedes their typologies from being freely borrowed and implemented for other research agendas. Scholars trying to capture nuances of internal regime organization by lending a typology constructed for sorting between free and fair elections will not get far.

Table 2.1 extrapolates the definition of **political regimes** by S.-E. Skaaning (2006) along four characteristics and highlights how each type of typology tailors to a different set of research questions and *explanandum*. Skaaning (2006: 15) finds that a political regime is a group of people operating according to (a) an institutionalized set of formal and informal rules, (b) identifying the political power-holders (character of the possessor(s) of ultimate decisional sovereignty) also regulating the appointments to the main political posts (extension and character of political rights), in addition to (c) its vertical limitations (extension and character of civil liberties granted to the population) and (d) horizontal constraints on the exercise of political power (extension and character of division of powers – referring to control and executive autonomy) (Skaaning 2006; Van den Bosch 2014: 112). The figure below shows that these purposes widely vary: some typologies are unable to make any inquiries into the nature of dictatorships, and others are primed for studying transitions and democratization processes. Another group is designed for tracking regime trajectories over time, but does not clearly sort them in categories.

Figure 2.1 also somewhat visualizes these different approaches, with democracy-oriented research designs focusing on sorting regimes between those that fall clearly in the space marked A and those that

Table 2.1 – Focus & Explanandum of Classifications

Family	Level	Question	Focus*	*Explanandum*
Categorical	Dichotomous	How can we classify the behavior of states?	Character	Explaining (foreign) policy or performance by breaking open the black box of the state
	Trichotomous	How do elections affect regimes and their behavior?	Character, Horizontal Vertical	Democratization of states and political systems from within.
	Polychotomous	How does the internal constellation affect regimes and their behavior?	Character Who rules? Horizontal Vertical	Durability of regimes Impact of leadership Tolerance *vis-à-vis* opposition and dissent Regime resilience to external and internal actors.
Continuous	-	What is the level of freedom and constraints on the executive?	Horizontal Vertical	Monitoring the evolution of cases over time. Tracking the human rights record of regimes

*Focus according to Skaaning's (2006) four defining characteristics of regimes:

Character of the regime – The institutionalized set of fundamental formal and informal rules identifying the political power holders
Who rules? – Regulation of the appointments to the main political posts
Vertical limitations – Extension and character of civil liberties
Horizontal limitations – Extension and character of division of powers
Source: Adapted from: Van den Bosch 2014, based on Skaaning 2006; Boix et al. 2013.

do not. Those zooming in on regimes with imperfect elections (for instance, with the aim to study ongoing or potential **democratization** processes and **transitions**) fix their analytical gaze on the space marked B. Those who are autocracy-focused try to bring conceptual order to the complex group in space C. The scope of included regimes, however, is not always limited to just those observations falling in these respective spaces, but the explanatory value of typologies diminishes greatly with regard to their 'residual' categories. It is not because a dataset includes most countries in the world that a typology's focus is designed to increase our understanding of all covered cases.

CATEGORICAL vs. CONTINUOUS This aspect of typologies refers to their method of measurement. Continuous typologies attribute regimes with values to rank them across a continuum (along one or several dimensions), measuring them along the corresponding scales. Categorical classifications, in contrast, draw hard boundaries between regime 'types.' The basic ones are mere 'descriptive' (providing criteria to identify variables) and are combined to move up to the next level of 'classificatory' typologies (conceptually grouping criteria to sort observed cases into concepts); and on the next level, one finds 'explanatory' classifications (linking datasets to theoretical insights with the aim of comparing cases, predicting behavior and testing (new) hypotheses) (Elman 2005a: 3; Collier et al. 2008: 153.) Explanatory typologies are thus most valuable for qualitative analysis (but also used in quantitative research). Note: The works of C. Elman (2005a/b), G. Goertz (2008), Collier et al. (2008), Munck (2009), Boese (2019), and Meng (2024) offer solid methodological insights on the use of such typologies with guidelines how to construct them.

To quote C. Elman (2005: 3) in full: *"An explanatory typology is based on an explicitly stated preexisting theory. That theory may have been originally derived inductively from observations, or deductively using ordinary language or formal methods. Regardless of how the theory was first produced, however, an explanatory typology is primarily a complement to deductive approaches, because filling in [its variables] requires working through the logical implications of the theory [according to] its posited causal relationships."* A ludicrous counter-example would be a (fictional) typology to sort regimes according to their rulers' hair color (blond, dark, red, etc.). While one could technically distribute all the world's supreme power-holders along this single criterion, thus compiling a global dataset, it would be absurd to make any predictions about their behavior this way because hair color is not linked to a sensible explanatory theoretical frame.

There are two distinct 'families' of typologies (categorical and continuous), as shown in Table 2.1 visualizing their distinct logic and purpose. *Categorical* regime classifications can be subdivided into three



groups: Figure 2.1 illustrates how such classifications relate to one another and cover different aspects of the vast continuum of all known political regime manifestations. It also provides several examples of trichotomous, polychotomous and continuous typologies with their main sorting criteria. Table 2.2 shows how the contemporary classifications covered in this section relate to this systematization.

Dichotomous categories rigidly allocate regimes into two mutually exclusive categories. Most of them are designed to sort regimes in democracies (space A) and non-democracies (B & C). They differ in where exactly and how they draw the line that separates these two groups (cf. dotted line I). Such typologies are most robust is isolating democracy, and their (often) clear coding criteria allow for datasets to extend their scope back in time, sometimes even to the French Revolution (1789) or earlier.

Trichotomous categories tend to focus on space B – the 'in-between' of **hybrid regimes** – and aim to conceptually separate them from regimes in space A and C because, as a group, such regimes encompass characteristics of particular interest to some research, especially **democratization** theories that focus on the role of **elections**, **party** behavior other endogenous factors that can influence **transitions** toward (and from) consolidated liberal democracy.

Polychotomous categories then are different altogether. They categorize regimes with a greater level of complexity, using two or more criteria (and often subdivisions). They are often embedded in 'middle-range' theories – usually analyzing only a subset of regimes – and their intricacy permits amalgams (categorical hybrids) because their conceptual criteria are not mutually exclusive. While these typologies are more ambitious in their aims, any unclear categorical hierarchies, overlapping categories or amalgams can create methodological havoc. Their datasets are also more labor-intensive to compile and often reliant on subjective coding criteria.

Continuous measures can be simple or complex, ranging from a single-dimensional linear scale (e.g., pluralism) to intricate, multidimensional criteria, all tackling different aspects of regime organization or behavior. Most datasets cover spaced A, B and C but refrain from imposing any real (theory-grounded) categorization. Note that many of these do retain some arbitrary cutoff points to generally group cases, but it is a mistake to label and interpret these as 'categories' for analytical purposes.

These classifications might not label regimes, but they are excellent ways of tracking the trajectories of cases or their level of 'democraticness' or 'freedom' along their chosen criteria. Their scales provide information for measuring their evolution over time toward or away from autocracy and serve as an 'alarm bell' when regimes are backsliding regarding their **human rights** or eroding their democratic institutions. (Van den Bosch 2014: 215)

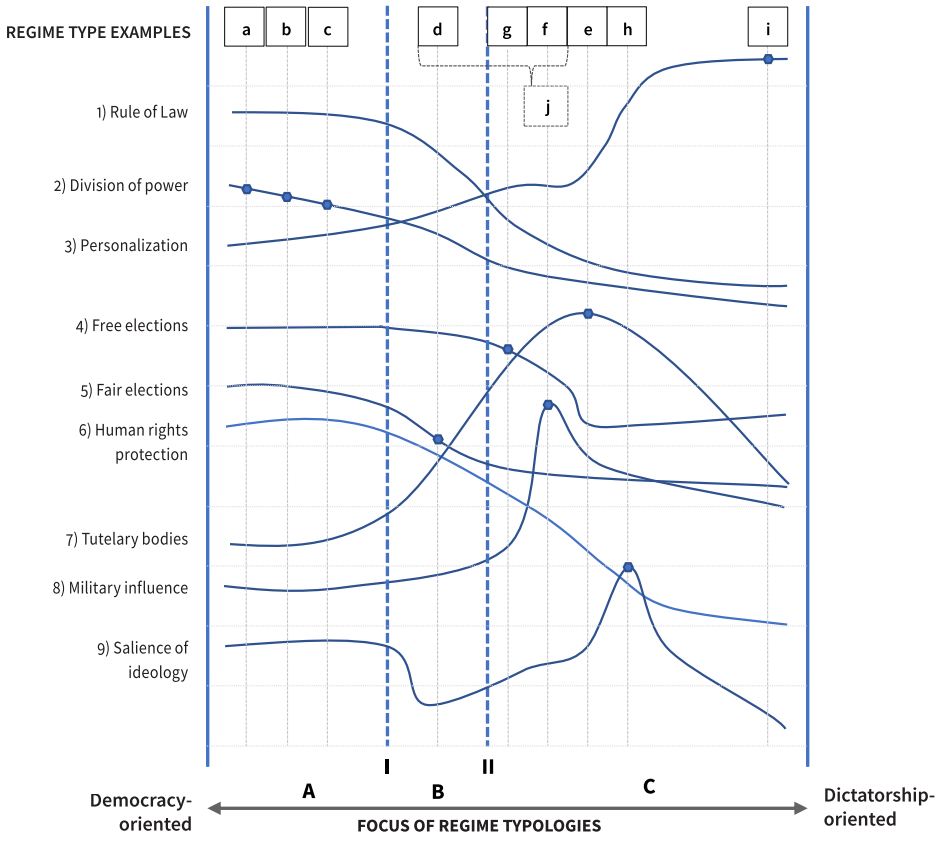
INDUCTIVE vs. DEDUCTIVE This last characteristic should be considered a spectrum, and most typologies travel back and forth between empiricism and theoretical deduction during their creation phase, informing choices about the selection of criteria. It is fairly impossible to consider a typology to be fully in the former or latter camp, for one extreme would be purely descriptive and the other impractically abstract. Still, some conclusions can be drawn about the choices of its creators, and with their choices come methodological trade-offs that have to be taken into account.

If a classification is *deducted* from a set of theoretical organizing principles, like, for instance, R. **Dahl's** (1971) typology (extrapolating regimes along two axes: 'political participation' and 'public contestation'), its resulting categories are often so-called 'pure types' or 'ideal types' – meaning: abstract concepts that have no matching equivalent in reality. To operationalize these, scholars can attribute each concept with more concrete coding criteria, making the process of identifying cases and sorting these into categories more manageable. Nonetheless, often, it is difficult to establish precise thresholds between categories, and without clear coding guidance, it becomes impossible to pigeonhole cases. Delineation and operationalization are thus the main challenges when linking deductive typologies to the empirical world. Note that continuous measures, even with precise measuring scales, always suffer from this predicament because of the absence of any thresholds.

When classifications are *inducted* from a set of observations, the selected sorting criteria in how to divide cases utterly depend on the chosen sample and the level of in-depth analysis. Any sample can contain several methodological biases when formulating claims about them or constructing a typology. These biases are: (a) Unequal *availability of data*, where less-known or hard-to-access cases are omitted altogether or unequally utilized to induct theoretical claims. For instance, many regime datasets ignore countries with less than three million inhabitants, and this easily amounts to 97 contemporary polities (out of a total of 234). (b) The *assumption of homogeneity* is another caveat. Treating both Russia and Belarus or China and Vietnam as identical types gravely underestimates the effects resulting from the size, power, resources, etc. (c) *Selection by outcome bias*, where faulty causal relations are inferred, outliers ignored, or the relationships of the (reduced, incomplete) sample cannot make any claims about excluded cases. *Historical contingency* (d), where the contemporary sample available – as is the case with countries and regimes – is the product of successful survival and adaptation. This means that cases that were maladaptive have already disappeared from the sample, resulting in a bias when proclaiming generalizations (that actually solely apply to 'winners') (Ebbinghaus 2005).

Since all typologies are a reduction of reality, merely a lens to study it, and in addition, they oscillate between deduction and induction during their design process; they tend to stumble into methodological pitfalls on both sides. The fairest approach is to acknowledge that they cannot be perfect, applaud their contributions (either new insights or exiting hypotheses) and find new, innovative ways to address their methodological shortcomings.

Figure 2.1 – Spectrum of Regime Classifications



The figure illustrates the analytical complex of how classifications can approach the full spectrum of political regimes. Shown are (only) nine abstract indicators (1-9) that can be used as potential sorting criteria for typologies. Without scale, each hypothetical indicator is presented by a curve (low – absent/weak vs. high – present/strong. The dots indicate which criterion is most characteristic for each regime type example.

(Disclaimer: The curves are purely illustrative to show the heterogeneity of political regimes, not authoritative. The location of the (contemporary) regime type examples is approximate and criteria are presented without overlap for the sake of simplicity.)

One finds thus a spectrum of political regimes (a-j), ranging from space A (liberal democracies) to C (closed dictatorships) that can be treated either as a multidimensional continuum (by continuous typologies) or can be subdivided as follows:

CATEGORICAL TYPOLOGIES:

- Dichotomous classifications aim to establish the most precise divider (I) between A and non-A (often blurring B & C), enabling robust separation of democracy and non-democracy.
- Trichotomous typologies focus mostly on hybrid regimes and aim to define, isolate and subdivide cases in space B (hybrid regimes) and establish the cut-off lines (I & II) on both sides.
- Polychotomous typologies are more difficult to pin down, since they operate at middle-range and are often just limited to one space (A, B or C). They operate on two or more indicators to make multi-dimensional categorization possible (allowing amalgams).

CONTINUOUS MEASURES (usually) cover the whole spectrum (A, B & C) according to one or several categorizing criteria, but refuse to draw thresholds (like I & II) dividing the continuum. By adding measures of scale, they allow monitoring regime trajectories along the chosen criteria.



LEGEND:

Contemporary regime type examples			
a	Parliamentary democracy	**f**	Military regimes
b	Semi-presidential (mixed) democracy	**g**	Single-party regimes
c	Presidential democracy	**h**	Totalitarian regimes/ ideocracies
d	Dominant-party regimes	**i**	Personalist/ neo-sultanist regimes
e	Monarchies	**j**	Authoritarian regimes (grouped)

SELECTED EXAMPLES: Below several well-known typologies are listed highlighting their corresponding sorting criteria with those presented in the figure. These are necessarily proximate for illustrative purposes, not authoritative. (Note: classifications might use more categories than those nine selected for display in the graph.)

CATEGORICAL TYPOLOGIES

Trichotomous classifications (main focus on B)

- Schedler (2006): electoral authoritarianism (d) – using criteria 4.
- Levitsky & Way (2010): subdivide (d) into 'competitive authoritarian' and 'hegemonic electoral authoritarianism' – using criteria 4 & 5.

Polychotomous classifications

Democracy-oriented (focus on A)

- Duverger (1978): parliamentary (a), mixed (b), presidential (c) – using criterion 2 (division of power).

Dictatorship-oriented (main focus on C)

- Linz (2000): totalitarian (h), authoritarian (j), [neo-] sultanist(ic) (i), traditional (e) – using criteria 3 (leadership), 4 (pluralism), 9 (ideology) and mobilization.
- Geddes et al. (2012, 2013): monarchy (e), military (f), single party (g), personalist (i) – using criteria 3 (personalization), 7 (tutelary bodies), 8 (military influence) from the perspective of the ruler.
- Hadenius & Teorell (2007): limited multiparty (d), monarchies (e), military (f), single party (g) – using criteria 4 (pluralism), 7 (tutelary bodies), 8 (military influence) regarding regimes' organization of power.
- Kailitz (2013): liberal democracy (a-b-c), electoral autocracy (d), monarchy (e), military autocracy (f), one-party autocracy (g), communist autocracy (h), personalist autocracy (i) – using criteria 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 & 9.

CONTINUOUS MEASURES

- Freedom House Rating – focus on A, B, C – using criteria 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6 among others.
- Polity IV – focus on A, B, C – using criteria 2 (executive recruitment), 3 (constraints on chief executive) & 4 (political participation)
- Svolik (2012) – focus on B & C – using criteria 2 (legislative selection), 3 (executive selection), 4 (restrictions on political parties), 8 (military involvement).

Source: created by J.J.J. Van den Bosch, based on: Boix et al. 2013; Duverger 1978; Geddes et al. 2012, 2013; Gilbert & Mohseni 2011; Hadenius & Teorell 2007; Kailitz 2013; Levitsky & Way 2010; Linz 2000; Schedler 2006; Skaaning 2018; Svolik 2012; Vaccaro 2021; Van den Bosch 2014

The sections below compare and present examples of regime and ruler typologies. An overview of all contemporary classifications is listed in Table 2.2, indicating their family, level, logic (inductive vs. deductive) and focus. They are ordered by type of classification, listing their strengths and methodological pitfalls. The selected examples are meant to be representative of the literature but not exhaustive, and each one is examined according to the four dimensions of this introduction (research object, focus, categorical vs. continuous, inductive vs. deductive).

COMPARING DATASETS The number of datasets has boomed in the last decades. Before, there was a structural shortage of regime data in comparative political science that severely impeded Large-N comparisons of political regimes. Today, we find ourselves at the other end: *"Empirical advancement has outpaced our theoretical and conceptual improvement."* Gerschewski (2023: 7) cautions against this trend, heralded since G. Sartori – *"Today, we find ourselves in a situation in which we are often tempted to use only those quantifiable measures of observable events and institutions that are currently readily available for our concept building. But, as we are reminded, concept building is not a decision by fiat and not a mere 'prelude to serious research.' (...) It is an integral part of the research cycle. Shaky concepts lead to shaky theories."* (Gerschewski 2023: 7, citing Schedler 2011: 370).

The regime classifications described in this section provide basic information about the scope and range of the accompanying datasets (if these exist). However, the idea of a detailed comparative overview of coding methodologies, for instance, provided by S.-E. Skaaning (2018) for measures of democracy, was abandoned once it became clear how often coding criteria are updated, expanded and improved. Besides his excellent overview, consult Meng (2024) for a survey of the use and evolutions of quantitative

Table. 2.2 – Contemporary Regime Classifications: Family, Logic & Focus

Family	Level	Focus		
		A	B	C
Categorical	Dichotomous	**Schumpeter**		
		Aron		
		Lipset		
		DD Index (Alvarez et al.)		**DD Index** (Cheibub et al.)
		BMR (Boix et al.)		
	Trichotomous		Gasiorowski	
			Mainwaring et al.	
			Schedler	
			Levitsky & Way	
			RoW	
		Anderson et al.		
	Polychotomous			**Sartori**
				Linz & Stepan
				Wintrobe
				GWF (Geddes et al.)
		Hadenius & Teorell (Wahman et al.)		
				Kailitz
		Anckar & Fredriksson		
Continuous	n/a	Dahl		
		Cutright		
		Vanhanen		
		Bollen		
		Polity IV		
		Freedom House (FH)		
		Selectorate Theory		
			Svolik	
		V-Dem		

Logic: Regime classifications in **bold** are considered foremost ***inductive*** *(derived from observations).* Those not marked are considered foremost *deductive* (derived from theory)

General **focus** of classifications, also illustrated in Figure 2.1.

A – Democracy-oriented

B – Murky Middle: Gray zone-oriented

C – Dictatorship-oriented
Source: Author's own work.



studies for comparative authoritarianism.

Democracy, as a form of governance, is a relatively recent phenomenon in human history. Even with the most generous interpretation (accepting exclusive forms, i.e., without female suffrage), it has existed in its modern form for only 100 to 150 years.

Today's classifications of political regimes are utterly preoccupied either by capturing or measuring this contested concept or slicing up the universe of regimes into broader categories, democracies and non-democracies, and designing categories to understand variation in just one group. So, even when the focus is not explicitly on democracy, these approaches remain inherently democracy-biased (alternative versions are being explored, e.g., Van den Bosch 2024). Democracy routinely serves as the implicit standard against which all other regime types are measured, reflecting a pervasive belief in its superiority (one forgets, this was not always the case, as covered in **classical & early modern classifications** – as also expanded upon in Box 2.1).

This bias is deeply rooted (often hidden) in Western-centric moral convictions that liberal democracy represents the pinnacle of governance – a belief that has become so entrenched and ubiquitous that it has become the new normal. While liberal democracy has indeed emerged as a dominant voice of righteous government, human history has known numerous contenders for 'just rule' or the 'truest' form of governance. In retrospect, these historically dominating regime types have largely been eclipsed by the newcomers. Who knows when liberal democracy will be dethroned by something 'more just'? Maybe a 'sustainable 'green' democracy'? Maybe the nation-state model has to be improved upon first?

Nevertheless, as the 'liberal' components of contemporary democracy face increasing contestation globally, existing typologies for classifying political regimes have so far remained resistant to conceptual evolution (Wolf 2023). This rigidity not only limits our understanding of potential improvements beyond liberal democracy but also constrains our ability to fully grasp the diversity and complexity of autocratic regimes throughout history. Consequently, current typologies are not definitive; they are open to revision and expansion as new frameworks emerge to capture better the nuances of political systems, old and new, and what is to come.

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Box 2.1 Regime Types – The Break between Past & Present

The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.
– Ludwig Wittgenstein

The disciplines of Political Science, Comparative Politics, and International Relations (IR) are recent academic creations, and all have done much to enrich our understanding of politics. Nevertheless, as relatively new scholarly developments, they do not always dialogue with an older tradition of political thought, a tradition that still affects how politics is spoken about across Europe and the American continent. Suffice it to say that Ancient Greek and Latin languages remain the staple way through which political regimes are categorized in this day and age (democracy, dictatorship, republic, among many others), but beneath the semblance of continuity lies a number of misleading changes. This text is mainly concerned with pointing to the origins of those variations and why they can become either paradoxical or confusing.

Alasdair MacIntyre began his classic book, *After Virtue*, with a 'disquieting suggestion.' Imagine, he wrote, that the natural sciences were to suffer the effects of a catastrophe so that all that remained were loose 'fragments' of what was once a cohesive and disciplined approach to studying the natural world (MacIntyre 2013: 1). Unsettling though the loss of science may be, almost as disquieting was that no one after the disaster realized that they were no longer performing *"natural science in any proper sense at all"* (MacIntyre 2013: 1). The 'periodic table' was commonly invoked, although nobody had any sense of how the table's elements were apprehended and later classified. MacIntyre constructed that image for allegory to suggest that *"in the actual world we inhabit the language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder as the language of natural science in the imaginary world"* (MacIntyre 2013: 2).

MacIntyre's purpose was to showcase how modern ethics had become increasingly fragmented throughout the Enlightenment. Bearing the spirit of his critique, the goal herein is to suggest that the language of politics is as fragmented now as the discourse of ethics. This sense of disarray is often made evident by the plethora of terms that are currently used across the social or political sciences: **authoritarianism**, **totalitarianism**, **dictatorships**, **tyranny**, **autocracy**, and **democracy**, among many others. There are reasons why so many terms have proliferated, most of which have proved useful in interpreting the contemporary world. This sense of fragmentation surrounding the nature of politics was and is partly instigated by major social and economic changes, not least by the rise of mass politics, which have shaped most modern societies since at least the nineteenth century. However, social and economic changes are not the only explanation. The persistent search for conceptual novelty after the appearance of totalitarianism in Europe in the middle of the twentieth century further split the past from the present, which in turn contributed to growing confusion as to how to categorize political regimes and how to determine their relationship with certain phenomena, such as populism and pluralism.

Indeed, contemporary misunderstanding is especially evident in the debates over the rise of **populism**, the relationship between authority and democracy, and the nature of dictatorships. At any rate, before making sense of modern linguistic confusion and how best to mitigate it, the question of whether political language is at all fragmented requires answering. Unraveling the ascendancy of democracy is a step in that direction. Viewed mainly with skepticism until the Enlightenment, not to say disdain, it is the contemporary world's archetypical **political regime**. The ascendancy of democracy points to a shift in political thought, a shift that increasingly separated ancient political language from its modern iteration.

Aristotle referred in his *Politics* to political regimes (or constitutions) – six in total (see: **Plato & Aristotle**) – on the basis of whether they were good or deviant. The good regimes were monarchy, aristocracy and the (constitutional) polity, whereas their problematic deviations were tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy, respectively (Aristotle 1998: Book III, Chapter VII). Democracy was seldom considered virtuous throughout the long history of political theory (Keane 2009), in sharp contradistinction to contemporary attitudes. There are many reasons for this shift. A simple one resides in democracy's subversive nature. Democracy was, after all, unconventional, if not seditious, up to the nineteenth century, which explains why it garnered so much enthusiasm throughout the Enlightenment and especially after the French Revolution. Linguistic outliers are convent heuristics that disparage political adversaries, especially those who defend the *status quo*. Revolutionaries thus appropriated Democracy in their struggle against monarchy and aristocracy.

Giuseppe Mazzini's polemics in the 1830s against François Guizot are a case in point, as he extolled the benefits and rise of democracy: *"Too long the power of this word, democracy (…) has been despised. Branded not long ago as the watchword of certain obscure fanatics, now it meets us as if by enchantment; it is central to all questions of any weight; it has become the burden of all writers, even the most quiet loving, to whatever rank they may belong"* (Mazzini 2009: 66).

Mazzini was correct. Democracy has indeed become a burden to all modern writers. No longer the malevolent regime of mob rule, it ceased to become deviant, regardless of whether it was repudiated by some critics throughout the twentieth century (for example, Schmitt 1988; 2007; Weaver 2013). So prominent became the concept of democracy in the last two hundred years, that many felt natural to claim that it was the standard toward which all other regimes headed. As the Cold War ended, not only was the ambitious *Journal of Democracy* launched in 1990, but the field of political transitology (Box 5.3) – now largely discredited – addressed when and how non-democratic regimes were to transition into full-blown democracies as practiced across North America and Western Europe (Carothers 2002; Kubicek



2000; Wiarda 2001).

Even those politicians who questioned the benefits of transitioning to democracy in the late twentieth century did so on the grounds that the pace of reform was not universal and that cultural specificity had to be incorporated against universalizing, Eurocentric conceptions. Either way, none of those late twentieth-century critiques explicitly rejected democracy. On the contrary, democracy remained immaculate, even among non-liberal conceptions thereof. In this regard, the liberal tradition is not the only reference to democracy today; the PRC, for instance, still refers to democracy in its Constitution, albeit to the *"people's democratic dictatorship that is led by the working class and based on an alliance of workers and peasants,"* a faithful endorsement of the Marxist-Leninist tradition (cf. Box 1.3).

Moreover, so embedded is democracy in contemporary political discourse, that it has seeped into IR. In the wake of Russia's full-blown invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, both Moscow and Beijing underscored just how much they were seeking to move toward a "multipolar, just, democratic world order" (CBS News, 2022). Were that not enough, democracy and its defense – particularly against illiberalism – comprise a major segment of international political literature, primarily concerned with the future of the contemporary global order (Cooley & Nexon 2021; Doyle 2012; Ikenberry 2020; Wilson 2005; Zakaria 1997).

Besides its revolutionary appeal and the extent to which ideas of democracy encroached upon political thinking in the nineteenth century, the shift from a 'despised' regime to a source of 'enchantment' has partly to do with major social and economic changes. Those changes subsequently spawned an era of mass politics. The rise of nationalism, industrialization and imperialism meant that politics was no longer limited to a privileged few.

Benjamin Constant already contended in 1816 that the liberty of the ancients had ceased to be the liberty of the moderns; politics was entering a new era in which the mass could no longer be ignored: *"Back then, each people constituted an isolated family, the born enemy of other families; whereas now there is a mass of human beings that have the same basic nature, though with different names and forms of social organization. This mass is strong enough to have nothing to fear from barbarian hordes. It is enlightened enough to find war a burden. Its uniform tendency is towards peace"* (Constant 1988: 313).

Modern mass politics affected the study and discourse of politics, effectively changing how politics was discussed after that. Liberalism and **Socialism** became two distinctive modernizing ideologies that responded to the challenges of mass politics. Likewise, (political) sociology, as a field, dealt precisely with the causes and consequences of mass society. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Émile Durkheim's *anomie* and Max **Weber**'s reflections on bureaucracy and legitimation, to name just two suppositions, were geared towards reflecting on the particularities of mass politics (Durkheim 2007; Weber 1998a/b). The trend persists today.

Contemporary research questions in the field of comparative politics are also partially constituted by the advent of mass politics. Robert **Dahl,** his mid-twentieth century classic, *Who Governs?* accounts for how large-scale democracy transitions from oligarchy to pluralism (Dahl 2005b). Dahl also pioneered another conception of democracy, namely polyarchic democracy, in order to accommodate the effects of major social-economic on political representation (Dahl 2005a).

Were that not enough, the challenges posed by mass politics were further exacerbated by technology in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly by new types of mobilization that unsettled the division between the public and private spheres. Those changes then instigated a new set of challenges. No longer was **tyranny** the only nefarious regime since the terror of totalitarianism displaced it. While tyranny displaced the public arena, totalitarianism, as a novel practice, went a step further by encroaching upon the private space (Arendt 1958b: 1979; Linz 2000).

The advent of totalitarianism shifted the political lexicon even further. That being said, prior to the age of mass politics, the range of political regimes had already changed as it became increasingly condensed. Baron de **Montesquieu,** in his influential *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) in the eighteenth century, dropped three of Aristotle's six regime types (Montesquieu 1989). The trend persisted in the aftermath of the twentieth century, although the prominence of democracy mediated it as the ideal type.

In other words, the enchantment with democracy, coupled with the rise of totalitarianism, conceptualized by the later 1950s, meant that regimes were gradually reduced to being either democratic or non-democratic. Under **Linz** (2000), the latter residual category was then further parceled into two types: **totalitarianism** and **authoritarianism**. So elegant was Linz's ([1975] 2000) dichotomy between democracy and authoritarianism that discussions over the nature of political regimes were increasingly reduced to pointing out the differences between democratic, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes and how one could potentially transition to another.

That said, democracy itself, despite remaining the ideal standard, was itself split into variants. In this sense, the contemporary political lexicon is reduced to a dichotomy but paradoxically characterized by a persistent search for novelty, as if pressured to look beyond the duality of democracy versus authoritarianism. Not only does the literature currently refer to direct, participatory and polyarchic democracies, it also speaks of liberal, illiberal, sovereign, embedded, managed and hybrid democracies, as per this volume.

All in all, the reduction in regime types ironically led to a proliferation of new and hyphenated terms. The goal was to provide nuance, seeing as democracy, authoritarianism and totalitarianism by themselves could not do justice to all the variety across the globe. For all the changes, however, some traditions remain. Despite the importance of Linz's (2000) concepts and the extent to which they borrow from – but also modified – Aristotle's and Weber's conceptions, some assumptions or biases persist. Orientalism, for instance, still pervades: scholars deploy specific concepts, such as **sultanism**, to characterize non-Western regimes, much in the same way Aristotle deployed **despotism** to categorize people outside Greece (Richter 1990). Aristotle circumscribed **tyranny** to Greek-speaking peoples, whereas **despotism** was the 'politics' of those who lived eastward. In a similar vein, H.E. Chehabi & Juan Linz refer exclusively

to countries outside Europe and North America in their edited volume *Sultanist Regimes*, namely to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, Iran and the Philippines (Chehabi & Linz 1998).

In sum, nineteenth-century political struggles against monarchy and absolutism, coupled with major social and economic shifts, separated the past from the present language of politics. Democracy, in particular, turned into a virtuous regime, and so the study of politics was forced to grapple with how to differentiate between democracies and non-democracies, particularly as the menace of totalitarianism affected twentieth-century societies. The linguistic shifts reflected, in sum, an attempt to accommodate major social change, but not always with success. Although novel terms like *polyarchic democracy* and **totalitarianism** are innovative to the effect of clarifying trends that were neither possible nor even fathomable two thousand years ago, conceptual novelty also holds a negative – confusing – side, not unlike MacIntyre's warnings.

Political concepts are sometimes applied without their etymology being fully delineated. The fixation with democracy, coupled with other linguistic innovations, has led to conceptual paradoxes that would be easily resolved had older distinctions been brought to the fore – had the link between past and present not been as fragmented as it is now. There is indeed a break between past and present thinking on politics: partly derived from democracy's subversive (or emancipatory) potential, partly from the rise of mass politics, and partly from linguistic creativity. It is with the latter issue to which this essay now turns.

Linguistic creativity has fostered confusion regarding three contemporary issues. The first has to do with separating dictatorship from democracy or even autocracy. To take an example, Gordon Tullock's (1987) study, *Autocracy*, carves out a distinction that actually mixes very different political practices, which he takes to be analogous: *"In the actual government, however, there is not much difference between a hereditary ruler and dictator. There are differences (…)but they clearly belong in the same family of governments. The word 'autocracy' encompasses both."* (Tullock 1987: 1).

The problem with Tullock's distinction is that dictatorship historically was never a type of government to begin with, even if it is often referred to as such in modern political speech. Juan Linz (2000), for instance, was well aware of dictatorship being exceptional, a temporary curtailment of freedom for the benefit of a magistrate, that is, the dictator, upon whom a range of powers was bestowed to deal with emergencies: war, civil strife or a natural disaster. Democracies or republics, following the Roman tradition, were legally allowed to suspend civil liberties to become dictatorships in certain circumstances, whereas autocracies held no such need insofar as the autocrat already possessed the powers necessary to deal with any emergency. An autocracy does not encompass a dictatorship simply because the autocrat needs no additional powers. Furthermore, a dictatorship is not necessarily the opposite of democracy. Rather, democracies potentially accommodate dictatorship; the 'people' may well decide to curb civil liberties temporarily, as during wartime (cf. Box 1.2 on elected dictatorship & protection pacts).

The second confusion arises from the distinction between authoritarianism and democracy itself. It is an unfortunate distinction because not only do both those concepts stem from different, albeit terminologically rich, languages – 'authority' from Latin, and 'democracy' from Greek – but because they misleadingly suggest that authority (from which authoritarianism derives) is somehow alien to modern liberal democracies. Authority or *auctoritas*, following the Roman tradition, speaks to a specific type of non-coercive and non-persuasive power, often constituted by tradition, whereas democracy refers to a regime, that is to say, to those practices from which **power** (*kratos*) derives (Arendt 1956). That being said, when Linz (2000) conceptualized authoritarianism, he provided his definition to make sense of twentieth-century political trends, particularly of Spain under Francisco Franco's rule.

The contention herein, however, is that coining the opposite of democracy as authoritarianism was unfortunate, for *auctoritas* remains central to the workings of the modern liberal tradition. The latter emphasizes the rule of law against the encroachment of mob rule. The Roman senate, from which the original concept of *auctoritas* originated and which later constituted the underlying hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, spoke to a power that was neither persuasive nor coercive in its entirety (Arendt 1956; Lincoln 1993). Contemporary political discourse has been increasingly compelled, both in IR and political science, to revisit the concept of authority (Arendt 1956; Barnett 2001; Costa Lopez 2020; Hopgood 2009; Hurd 1999; Lake 2007; 2009; Lincoln 1993; Osborne 2023). Indeed, the distinction between authoritarianism and democracy (or liberal democracy) provides too sharp a contrast when it is, in fact, the balance between authority and people's power – and not the exclusion of one over the other – that has been the source of debate since at least the eighteenth century.

Third, the fragmented nature of political language leads to further linguistic confusion over the relationship, if there is a relationship at all, between **populism** and **democracy**. So prominent is democracy as an ideal type that those who remonstrate against elites by appealing to the 'masses' are labeled not 'democrats' but 'populists' (Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008 – cf. demagogues in Box 4.6). Nevertheless, for the ancients, the only difference, perhaps, between populists and democrats was one of language: a democrat was speaking in Greek, a populist in Latin. Both democrats and populists, as each word suggests, advocated power to the people against elite privilege, much in the way that revolutionary Mazzini cautioned against Guizot and much in the way that the Roman *populares* (democrats) disparaged the *optimates* in the late Republic (Seager 1972).

The shift from an ancient Greek word (democrat) to a Latin variant (populist) is thus deceptive. The only way in which to avoid said confusion is to hyphenate democracy, to the effect of contrasting populism with *liberal* democracy. The confusion extends further, however, because populists are often criticized for their surreptitious authoritarianism (for example, Gricius 2021). In other words, if populists are simply taken to be democrats, then the distinction between authoritarianism and democracy falls apart. A brief incursion into ancient political language is especially worthwhile in this regard.



Linz (2000) characterized **authoritarianism** as a system in which pluralism was lacking, but that is precisely why democracy was considered dangerous by Aristotle, including many others who discoursed on politics up to the nineteenth century. The danger of democracy lay in giving power to an unruly majority, often swayed by a demagogue. As a result, the liberal-democratic ideal requires authority – the authority of the law – to curb the potential for mob rule and the rise of charismatic demagoguery (Box 4.6). To that effect, modern liberal democracies are not opposed to authority; rather, they are partly based on it. Contemporary democracies in Europe and the United States are as much based on mediating people's power with the authority of the law and its magistrates. Populism or 'democracism' is thus not an abandonment of democracy for the sake of authority but of fully neglecting authority for the sake of democracy.

To conclude, making sense of how past and present concepts are deployed in the political sphere remains a relevant research endeavor. The reduction in standard regime types, coupled with the multiple hyphenated terms that are meant to refine and allegedly distinguish modern political practices, suggests that something might be wrong with the language by which existing political phenomena are studied. Hence, a return to their approximate meanings is important for the study of politics and for the study of regime types especially. There are approaches in political theory that are suited to that task. Hannah Arendt's political theory, for instance, was partly constituted by Martin Heidegger's philosophical hermeneutics insofar as it sought to recall the past to make sense of continuity and change (Arendt 1958a; 1965; 2005). That said, despite her attempt to search for clarity with recourse to the past, Arendt was also no stranger to linguistic creativity, as she was one of the first thinkers to study and clarify the meaning of **totalitarianism**, clearly demarcating it from its past forebearer, **tyranny**.

Following from the tradition of hermeneutics, the work of Reinhardt Koselleck is also relevant. Interested in the impact and origins of political concepts, including how they changed over time, Kosselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte* (or conceptual history) offers a luminous contribution to the history of ideas beyond a rudimentary, etymological excavation (Kosselleck 2004). Furthermore, the work of Leo Strauss, not least his contributions to interpretation and political philosophy, also offer another historical alternative to understanding past ideas and how they were later appropriated (Strauss 1980). Finally, the work of Quentin Skinner, who founded the so-called *Cambridge School of political theory*, is an approach that is sensitive to historical context by harking back to how ideas became politicized within a given historical juncture (Skinner 1975; 1978; 2002).

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CLASSICAL & EARLY MODERN POLITICAL REGIME CLASSIFICATIONS

There are three classes of intellects: one which comprehends by itself; another which appreciates what others comprehend; and a third which neither comprehends by itself nor by the showing of others; the first is the most excellent, the second is good, the third is useless.
– Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (*The Prince*), 1532.

In this section, we bring together several classical and early modern classifications of political regimes. While the list presented here is far from exhaustive, it highlights the most influential voices in this long tradition. Many other scholars have contributed to these concepts in more incremental ways, deepening their application to different periods and yielding their own insights. However, for reasons of space, we have selected the most salient and impactful classifications from various eras.

It goes without saying that the conceptual contributions of **Plato & Aristotle** have been profoundly influential, not only within the European cultural sphere but beyond. Their classifications of constitutions have shaped centuries of political thought. For further exploration of how these ideas intersect with notions of **traditional rule**, readers may refer to the entry on **religions of the world & statecraft**, which discusses how these classical ideas merged with other interpretations beyond Europe.

Following this classical foundation, medieval classifications provide a bridge to late medieval and Renaissance thinkers. During this period, there was a growing drive to compare European polities with non-European ones, marking a significant shift in comparative political analysis. No overview would be complete without mentioning **Machiavelli** or **Montesquieu**, whose works were highly influential on thinkers like Locke, Rousseau, and Hobbes. Although these latter thinkers are not specifically mentioned here, they adhered to classifications with similar understandings of **democracy**, **aristocracy**, and **monarchy**.

One figure too often omitted from the traditional pantheon is Jean **Bodin**. His original thought was highly influential in shaping early modern political theory on regicide (**assassination**) and absolute **power**, and for this reason, his work is included here. We conclude this section with Max **Weber**'s theory of *Herrschaft* or **rulership** (often translated as 'domination' and sometimes as 'authority'), which has become foundational for contemporary methods of regime classification and the concept of **legitimacy**.

All these thinkers were primarily concerned with delineating what constitutes 'just rule.' Given that democracy was still a fringe phenomenon in their time, while other ideological battles raged (i.e., between **monarchies** and **republicanism**), they were more open to considering various (sub-optimal) alternatives to democratic governance. This openness contrasts a significant paradigm shift once compared to late-modern and contemporary classifications of political regimes, which almost always relate to liberal democracy as their proverbial alpha and omega. This is particularly true for dichotomous and trichotomous categorizations of regime types and also continuous measures.

Regarding this observation, Lee Morgenbesser (2024) finds that the scholars of the so-called first generation (ca. the 1950s, i.e., Hannah Arendt, Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, etc.) eclipsed previous scholarship for their successors by not con-



necting sufficiently (or at all) with interwar thinkers and their predecessors. Their 'wave' of scholarship had fixed its gaze on **totalitarianism**, which, together with democracy, became the only two gravity centers in the political regime universe. When, in the 1970s, **authoritarianism** was 'reinvented' (**Linz**), or **dictatorship** was dug up again (**Sartori**), these terms were redefined in relation to either democracy and/or totalitarianism, a stubborn bias that persists today and is not found in pre-war scholars (Morgenbesser 2024), and obviously with thinkers before the advent of democracy.

Another notable advancement in the political thought of these scholars is their routine preoccupation with corrupted forms of rule – often labeled as **tyranny** or **despotism**. This issue remains very much relevant today, reframed as the process of **personalization** in political regimes or the emergence of **personalist rule** – also captured in concepts like **sultanism & neo-sultanism** and **patrimonialism** and **neo-patrimonialism**. This concern with the one-man rule has continuously driven what must be one of the longest-standing efforts of political regime classifications.

Finally, it is worth noting that all archetypes discussed here are honored by separate entries in the first section of the Encyclopedia. Thus, the overviews presented in this section serve primarily as an overarching framework to conceptually link their guiding ideas and provide context for their emergence, logic, *raison d'être* and influence.

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Plato & Aristotle – Classification of Constitutions

The true forms of government, therefore, are those in which the one, or the few, or the many, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest, whether of the one or of the few, or of the many, are perversions.
– Aristotle, *Politics*, III.7.

Plato (ca. 429-347 BCE) and his disciple Aristotle (384-322 BCE) are usually believed to be the most important philosophers of antiquity, and their way of thinking set the stage for the whole development of Western philosophy, including political philosophy. Plato proposed different ways to classify political regimes in three of his dialogues: the *Republic*, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws*. As Melissa Lane points out, we have to take into consideration that those three dialogues, written in different periods of Plato's life, present different methodologies: "moral-political imagination" (*Republic*), "methodological-political clarification" (*Statesman*), and "theological-political reflection and prescription" (*Laws*) (Lane 2006: 184).

In books VIII and IX of the *Republic*, Socrates describes five types of political regimes, from the best to the worst: (a) the perfect constitution, that is kingship (βασιλεία – *'basileia'*) or aristocracy (ἀριστοκρατία – *'aristokratia'*), (b) timocracy (τιμοκρατία – *'timokratia'*) or rule by property owners, (c) oligarchy (ὀλιγαρχία – *'oligarchia'*), (d) democracy (δημοκρατία – *'dēmokratia'*), and (e) tyranny (τύραννις – *'tyrannis'*). Strauss (1992: 130) suggested that this classification was modeled on the myths of five ages and races found in Hesiod (*Works and days*, 105ff.).

The perfect constitution (a) is based on the contemplative and dialectical knowledge of the Idea of the Good possessed by the rulers, which makes it irrelevant whether there is one ruler (kingship or **monarchy**) or more of them (**aristocracy**). Socrates described (VIII, 544c) the four other regimes as 'perverted constitutions' (*hemartemenai politeiai*) or 'diseases of the city' (*poleos nosema*). **Timocracy** (b), associated by Plato with the Cretan and Spartan constitutions, is driven by the desire for war and the pursuit of personal glory and honor. In oligarchies, the ruling class must have a certain value of property (*timema*). Socrates describes **oligarchy** (c) as the constitution in which the rich rule, while the poor are excluded from power, and all except the ruling class are beggars. **Democracy** (d) is described as a counterpart to oligarchy and is based on equality and freedom. Socrates calls it the most beautiful and colorful of constitutions but points out that it is anarchic and that the excess of freedom leads to tyranny. **Tyranny** (e) is based on enslavement and violence. The tyrant begins as the self-proclaimed protector of the *demos*, but in order to maintain his power, he is forced to purge the city of his enemies by means of terror.

Julia Annas claimed that this classification is loosely related, at best, to the real constitutions existing in Plato's times because it is based on Plato's psychology, and the constitutions represent the states of the soul (Annas 1999: 76-77). For Blössner, Plato merely 'pretends' to take into account empirical observations (Blössner 2007: 355; Bloom 1991: 416-419). Scholars point out that the classifications offered in the two other dialogues, the *Statesman* and the *Laws*, are more realistic and inductive.

In *Statesman*, Plato distinguishes seven types of constitution: the *perfect constitution*, ruled by the 'true statesman,' as he defines him, and six lesser

types (302c-303c). The classification, unlike in the *Republic*, is based on two criteria: (A) the number of those who rule (one, a few, the many) and (B) the presence vs. absence of the rule of law. The first criterion (A) allows the separation of regimes into three groups: kingship and tyranny, aristocracy and oligarchy, and democracy. The second (B) distinguishes these between the good ones (kingship, aristocracy, democracy) and the bad ones (tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy without the rule of law). The bad regimes are the perversions of corresponding good ones. The source of this sixfold division can be found in Herodotus (*Histories,* III.80-82; Klosko 2006: 214; Schofield 2006: 33). This classification exercised an enormous influence on later theorists like Polybius, **Machiavelli** or **Montesquieu**. In *Statesman*, the types of constitutions are evaluated differently than in the *Republic* because whereas kingship is the best and tyranny the worst of all the six, democracy is the most favorable of the three bad constitutions and the least favorable of the three good ones. The rule of the few represents a mean both in the good and the bad regimes.

In his *Laws*, Plato enumerates five types of constitution (kingship, aristocracy, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny), claiming that the best possible political regime is a mixed one, containing elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy (IV, 712b-d). The key principle is that the ruler of this constitution should be the law itself (IV, 712c-715d). The idea of intermediate or mixed forms of constitution appeared already in the *Republic* (*dunasteiai* and *onetai basileiai* in VIII, 544d), but Socrates was not interested in discussing them (Schofield 2006: 75; Lane 2006: 184).

Aristotle's classification follows the one in Plato's *Statesman*. Already in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (VIII.10), he divides the regimes into six. The good ones are kingship, aristocracy, and timocracy or *politeia* (literally, "constitution"), whereas the bad ones are tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy (which, as in *Statesman*, is the least bad of the bad constitutions). In *Politics*, Aristotle uses Plato's deductive criterion of the number of rulers (one, a few, or the many), but he immediately points out that according to the observations of real regimes, the difference between oligarchy and democracy is not so much the number of rulers (this is merely accidental) as the fact that, in the first, the rich are in power, while, in the second, it is all free citizens (III.8). Also, even though Aristotle, just like his master, Plato, points out on many occasions that in the good regimes the law should rule rather than the will of individual rulers, he differentiates between the good and the bad regimes on a different basis. In kingship, aristocracy, or *politeia,* the ruler(s) govern for the sake of the common good, while in tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy, for the sake of their own interest.

Another difference between Plato and Aristotle is that Aristotle refers to existing regimes and offers subdivisions of the six main regimes on the basis of empirical observation (Saxonhouse 2015: 185). For instance, he distinguishes four types of **monarchy**, five types of **democracy** and four types of **oligarchy**, as well as various intermediate and mixed forms. Kingship, for Aristotle, is the most divine type of constitution, and it is based on one ruler whose power may be limited in various ways. Its two historical types are the traditional hereditary kingship of 'heroic' Greek times and the Spartan, limited kingship. **Tyranny** is a monarchy without virtue or the rule of law, and the two existing forms of it are Eastern **despotism** and elective tyranny of some Greek city-states – see Box 1.2 on 'electoral dictatorship.'

Aristocracy is the government of the best (IV.7), and ideally, the virtue of the rulers is taken into consideration. However, in other forms, wealth and/or merit are the prerequisites (like in Carthage or Sparta). **Oligarchy** is the rule of the rich and can differ according to the property rate, and some forms of it can be hereditary (like the rule of powerful families or *dunasteia*, which is called tyranny among oligarchies). **Democracy** is the rule of people with low incomes or people in need. In many cases, the laws are obeyed, but there is also a type where the law is not respected by the multitude, by the instigation of the demagogues (Box 4.6). *Politeia* is a mix of oligarchy and democracy, of wealth and freedom; if there is also virtue present, it is a type of aristocracy in the sense of the government of the best (IV.8). *Politeia* is based on the rule of the middle class of citizens who, because they are neither rich nor poor, usually obey "the rule of 'reason'," If this class is numerous, it provides stability to the regime (IV.11).

Aristotle shares with Plato the assumption that the goal of a political regime is the common good of the whole political community, as well as the belief that virtue in the ruler and the obedience of the ruler to the law are necessary for that (Strauss 1992: 26-27; Morrison 2013: 176). Aristotle favors a more inductive approach, criticizing Plato for being too abstract and theoretical in his thinking, including the classification and discussion of different regimes (Miller 2009: 545-546). However, he also seems to offer either a more idealistic view of the most favorable constitution (in books VII-VIII of *Politics*) or a more pragmatic and realistic one (in books IV-VI), and it is even debatable whether Aristotle's views in *Politics* are coherent (Miller 2009: 540-541). It is usually claimed that for him, the best possible regime is *politeia*, a *"mix of oligarchy and democracy and as a sort of hoplite [citizen-soldier] republic"* (Ober 2015: 224). However, in *Politics,* Aristotle also considers other regimes as the best under certain conditions (like kingship or aristocracy (Miller 2009: 548; Balot 2015: 107).

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Medieval Classifications of Constitutions

Our legend of the Renaissance is a Renaissance legend
– C.S. Lewis (1954: 56)

Clive S. Lewis, who was one of the greatest literary scholars on the medieval and early modern period, provocatively and, to some extent, ironically denies the existence of the Renaissance as a European cultural movement, claiming that this is a largely an 'imaginary entity responsible for everything the speaker likes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries' (Lewis 1954: 55). He points out, however, something crucial to our understanding of the relationship between antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern period, namely, that while ancient people had no idea they lived in antiquity and medieval people would be quite surprised to learn that they lived in the Middle Ages, intellectuals of the early modern period (fifteenth to eighteenth century) were acutely aware of the period in which they lived. In fact, a key part of the culture of early modernity is an ideologically driven construction of the periodization of history. Lewis said that "our legend of the Renaissance is a Renaissance legend" (Lewis 1954: 56), but the same could be said about the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment. Those three movements are self-descriptions, entirely based on the ideological perception of the past by their founders and representatives (cf. Taylor 1989; Hart 2009).

The common feature is the condemnation of the Middle Ages as a dark period 'in-between' (the very name *medium aevum* in Latin signifies that), in which culture deteriorated in comparison to the glory of classical antiquity, predominantly due to the position of the Catholic Church in the West. Because of that, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment are, on the one hand, a retrieval of the classical light, darkened by the religious superstitions of the medieval period, and a progressive movement toward something even better in the future, on the other.

Why does it matter to our understanding of medieval political theory and its classification of political regimes in particular? The image of the Middle Ages in the public sphere still has little to do with historical sources and is a mythological construct filled with entities such as 'the Inquisition' or 'the Crusades,' supposedly demonstrating how freedom and intellectual curiosity were stifled by religious oppression. It would not matter so much if this legendary view of medieval culture was limited to popular perception, but the power of this construct can be seen among scholars if they have not studied medieval sources in sufficient depth. As Brett (2003: 276) points out, some scholars even questioned the existence of political theory in the Middle Ages.

For instance, John Culcullen and Jonathan Robinson, in their entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Culcullen & Robinson 2006), admit that ideas that we associate with modern liberalism, constitutionalism, or **republicanism** can be found, to some extent, already with medieval authors, but they seem to express a slight puzzlement that the medieval regime was never 'completely' repressive, or that liberalism could stem from medieval Christian culture. Those caveats are a result of the widely accepted, although largely groundless, assumption that the medieval period, unlike antiquity or early modernity, was a period of strong religious repression of free thinking. Cary J. Nederman points out that in academia, there is "a deeply ingrained pedagogical prejudice" regarding the Middle Ages (Nederman 2009: xiii). What still seems to be hard to accept is that Christianity tended, predominantly, toward limiting violence and oppression of the secular power (cf. Morris 1972: 10-11; Canning 1996: 65). James Blythe emphasizes the persistence of those assumptions or, as Lewis would put it, 'legends,' also among non-medieval historians who, even having read the sources, "frequently lapse into their old world view" (Blythe 1992: 5). It is combined with the fact that the vast number of medieval sources is still not available in critical editions and that those

sources are not being read in the increasingly Latinless culture (see Tierney 1997: 54); this calls for a more open-minded approach to the medieval political ideas.

It is possible to view the Middle Ages as largely continuous with classical antiquity and, in turn, continuous with the early modern period with its 'Renaissances,' 'Reformations,' and 'Enlightenments' – for the almost playful application of those concepts to medieval political thought consult McGrade (2011: 1042-1043); and on the models of 'continuity' and 'rupture' with regard to this, see Nederman (2009: 5-60). Access to Greek sources in the West was severely limited in the early medieval period. (Note that the former bilingualism of the Greco-Roman elites had begun to disappear already in the third century and is not a medieval phenomenon per se.) The situation began to change already in the so-called Renaissance of the twelfth century through the intense activity of translating the Greek and Arabic sources, organized and promoted by the Church from the eleventh century onward, especially in Spain and Sicily. The translations of Aristotle, in particular, influenced the political philosophy of the late Middle Ages (the translation of *Politics* by William of Moerbeke appeared in 1265, followed by an influential commentary written by Thomas Aquinas).

Before that, the key factor was a synthesis of the biblical revelation with the Greek and Roman philosophy, which in the West was conducted primarily by Augustine of Hippo. An example of this is Augustine's interpretation of the biblical claim that human beings are the images of God (*Genesis* 1:26), which strengthened the previous stoic and neo-platonic ideas of the equality and freedom of all individuals by virtue of their participation in God's nature. Authors such as Augustine used *New Testament* references to freedom (in the letters of Paul or the Gospels) to emphasize that slavery, persecution, or oppression is against human nature as God created it. On the other hand, Augustine, in time, accepted the interventions of secular power in religious matters, which was standard in Pagan antiquity but began to be questioned in the Christian period. Augustine, in his *City of God*, developed an influential theory according to which secular, political power, with its use of coercion and repression, did not exist in the primordial state of human innocence but was a result of the fall of Adam and Eve. In Augustine's view, the 'classification of constitutions' was unimportant because all constitutions are unnatural and sinful, allowed by God only as a remedial, corrective punishment for humanity. All human beings, men and women, regardless of their race or social background, were created as free and equal, and no one should exercise any form of domination over another human being. In practice, however, we have to accept the miserable state in which humanity has fallen because it disobeyed God. Nonetheless, as Canning points out, the enduring theme of the Christian medieval political theory was that *"all the baptized were children of the free woman not the slave-girl"* (Galatians 4:31), *"and that they had rights of liberty by virtue of their baptism, as Gregory the Great had emphasized."* (Canning 1996: 165; see also Finnis (1998: 257) on Thomas Aquinas; and Brett (2003: 295) on William of Ockham).

A major shift in medieval political theory occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in the age of the 'discovery of the individual' (Morris 1972). The causes are complex, but we may point, first, to the separation and growing conflict between the hierarchical Church (the papacy) and the secular power (the empire), which prevented a concentration of political power, so typical for the modern period, and resulted in social and political liberty, greater than in antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Second, the development of jurisprudence (on its key importance, see Canning 1996: 114-115), especially in Italian universities, led to the revolution in legal thinking, resulting in the emergence of such key concepts as individual rights, due process in court, the people as the source of political power, or the notion of *universitas* or a corporation (understood as an abstract, 'fictitious person' – in Latin *persona ficta* – transcending all its members). Third, the study of Aristotle challenged Augustine's claim that secular power is intrinsically unnatural and sinful (or even created by the devil, as Pope Gregory VII claimed (Canning 1996: 93)), which in time led to the growing interest in a variety of ways in which the naturally emerging and essential for human flourishing political communities can be organized (on the Aristotelian and the juristic current, represented respectively by Baldus de Ubaldis and Bartolus de Sassoferrato, see Canning 1996: 167-171).

A key development was a misunderstanding of Aristotle's *Politics*. William of Moerbeke translated it in the 1260s, and Aquinas wrote a commentary on it, which was completed by his disciple Peter of Auvergne (although it was believed that the work was entirely by Thomas). As Tierney points out, medieval scholars imagined they were paraphrasing Aristotle while, in fact, they were developing their own ideas, originating out of their contemporary medieval Christian education and culture (Tierney 2008: 40).

Aquinas and later Aristotelians accepted the Platonic-Aristotelian sixfold division of constitutions according to the number of rulers (cf. **Plato & Aristotle**). However, they were much more interested in a different classification, namely, that into a 'regal' (*regale*), 'political' (*politicum*), and 'despotic' (*despoticum*) constitution, which they tried to combine with the first. Blythe proposes to refer to the first division as 'forms' and to the second as 'modes' of constitution. (Blythe 1992: 11-12). On the basis of those two ways of classifying constitutions, medieval thinkers came up with what was to be considered the best type, that is, a mixed constitution. The three modes were developed not on the basis of Aristotle's discussion of constitutions but of household management in Book One of *Politics*.

First of all, Aristotle distinguishes (*Politics* I, 1254b1-10) three relationships within a household: (1) that between a master and slaves, which he calls 'despotic' (*despotike*), (2) that between husband and wife, which he calls 'political' (*politike*), and that between a father and his children, which he calls 'kingly' or 'regal' (*basilike*). While despotic rule is



by definition that over slaves, Aristotle explains the difference between regal and 'political' rule (which is over free people) by pointing out that in the first case, one person rules, while in the second, the ruler becomes the ruled, and the ruled the ruler in turn (*kata meros, Politics* I, 1252a15ff). William of Moerbeke did not understand what Aristotle meant and translated *kata meros* as the Latin *secundum partem*, suggesting thus that the ruler is 'partly' the ruler and 'partly' the ruled.

Aquinas, who worked with William's erroneous translation, interpreted this as suggesting that the regal constitution is unlimited, while the political is limited by the law to which the ruler(s) are subject. (*In libros Politicorum* 1.1.15). A despotic constitution is also unlimited by the law, the difference between it and the regal one being that in the first case, the enslaved are ruled, while in the second, they are free people who consent to the ruler's authority. In Aquinas' theory, Aristotle's sixfold schema (one, a few, the many, and good vs. corrupt) become the forms in which the superior modes of rule can be exercised (Blythe 1992: 45). Thus, there could be a regal or 'political' monarchy, aristocracy or democracy. For Aquinas, both regal and 'political' were 'political' when contrasted with despotic (freedom vs. slavery). Also, the number of rulers is accidental and of lesser importance, while the essential distinction is between the unlimited and limited exercise of power, with the law (which Aquinas identified fundamentally with reason) being the key element (Finnis 1998: 255-274).

While in Aristotle, a mixed constitution could only combine aristocracy and democracy, in Aquinas, it consists of all three forms. Thomas uses the description of the Jewish community in the *Book of Exodus,* interpreted through an Aristotelian lens, as a model for what he considers to be the best kind of constitution, that is, a mixed one (Tierney 2008: 90). Although in an ideal world, the regal monarchy, exercised by a virtuous king, would be the best, reflecting the metaphysical order of the universe ruled by God, in the world as it is, the best constitution is a mixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, where a prince is elected by the people advised by the wise few (*optima politia, bene commixta*, in: *Summa Theologiae* 1-2.105.1). Another difference between Aristotle and Aquinas is that the former was concerned with balancing various social classes in a mixed constitution, while Thomas was not interested in classes. He wants different elements of government to limit each other through mutual 'checks and balances.'

While for Aquinas, the key division was into 'political' and despotic constitution, while regal and 'political' were two subdivisions of the rule over free subjects, for Giles of Rome, the key distinction was between regal and 'political,' the despotic being a subdivision of the regal. Giles of Rome favored absolute monarchy (regal constitution in his terminology) over a 'political' constitution (based on equality and consent, analogical to the relationship of husband and wife, see *De regimine principum* 1.1.23, 2.1.15) (Jones 2011: 419). The difference between regal and despotic constitutions was, for him, Aristotelian: the first was for the benefit of the subjects, and the second was for the benefit of the ruler.

Giles' insistence that the monarch is above the law is an exception in medieval political theory. Other authors emphasized the necessity of the rule of law, popular consent or election and tended toward the mixed constitution. Already in Peter of Auvergne, monarchy as the rule of one is not an option: all legitimate government is mixed (see *Questiones* 3, q. 17). The division into monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy only identifies the dominant element (Blythe 1992: 81).

If Peter of Auvergne is the first to assign an unequivocally positive role to the multitude, Ptolemy of Lucca goes further in dismissing monarchy in favor of **republicanism** (although he, like other medieval thinkers, takes into account some specific geographical, climatic, or social factors, which make any of the constitutions the best in given circumstances). He develops a highly original classification of constitutions based loosely on the first chapter of *Politics*. Ptolemy distinguishes between four kinds of constitutions: (1) sacerdotal and regal, (2) regal alone, (3) 'political,' and (4) economic. In his interpretation of Aristotle, he identifies, quite significantly, the despotic mode with the regal one. In the end, Ptolemy replaces the sixfold or fourfold classification of Aristotle and Aquinas with a twofold classification, in which he reduces all forms of government dependent on multiplicity (monarchy dependent on the people, aristocracy, polity, oligarchy, democracy) to what he calls 'political' constitution and all forms of government dependent on one alone (monarchy, despotism, tyranny) to 'regal' constitution (Blythe 1992: 107).

Engelbert of Admont proposed his variation on the Aristotelian scheme. He assumes four forms: (i) **monarchy** (rule of one, based on virtue), (ii) **aristocracy** (rule of a few, based on virtue), (iii) **oligarchy** (rule of the few, based on wealth and power), and (iv) **democracy** (rule of the many, based on freedom) (Blythe 1992: 130). He describes the degenerate forms of those four constitutions (monarchy degenerating into tyranny, aristocracy into oligarchy, oligarchy into hereditary oligarchy, and democracy into barbarism), which results in the seven forms associated with natural family relationships. A man rules his wife (a) aristocratically, his children (b) regally, and his servants (c) tyrannically. The elder brother rules his siblings (d) oligarchically, but brothers relate to each other (e) democratically (plus corrupt oligarchy and corrupt democracy give seven types) (Blythe 1992: 122). Engelbert also proposes mixtures of those seven, which gives him eleven possible constitutions, which he finds concrete examples for in existing countries.

Bartolus de Sassoferrato takes Aristotle's sixfold classification of constitutions and adds the seventh form, which is the rule of many tyrants. (Blythe 1992: 172-173). He also is extremely pragmatic in his assessment of the value of constitutions. Any government that works for the common good is acceptable, but democracy may be preferable for the smallest countries, and aristocracy for larger ones, while monarchy is for the largest (on this general tendency in

medieval thought, see McGrade 2011: 1046). Marsilius of Padua accepts the sixfold schema of Aristotle, but in distinguishing between the good and the bad forms within this schema, he introduces his theory of the necessity of the will or consent of the subjects in legitimizing any rule: the people are the sovereign (Canning 2011: 95-102). Nicole Oresme, who translated *Politics* into vernacular and provided a commentary on this work in the 1370s, emphasized, like the jurists, the importance of the rule of law in distinguishing between good and bad constitutions. The essential element of corrupt constitutions is a full, unlimited power exercised by the ruler(s). Oresme also proposes to see the six forms of government as a linear continuum, where the boundaries between various forms are not clear-cut (Blythe 1992: 207-217).

When compared to Aristotle, for whom the criterion distinguishing between good and corrupt constitutions was the common good, medieval thinkers were introducing other criteria, such as the rule of law (especially the jurists, but also Aquinas and later Oresme) or the consent of the subjects (Marsilius). They were also quite creative in proposing various classifications based on their interpretations of Aristotle but stemming from a completely other context: the medieval synthesis of the Greco-Roman Pagan thought with the Christian revelation in the context of the development of new forms of social and political life in Western Europe.

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Machiavelli – Republics & Principalities

Since there cannot be good laws without good arms, I will not consider laws but speak of arms
– Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (*The Prince*), 1532.

Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli (1469-1527), an Italian diplomat and historian, is heralded as one of the great political thinkers of the Renaissance. His (posthumously published) works have been put in front of many carts to pull all kinds of political thought, and resulting interpretations contain much bias derived from translation and the worldviews of its interpreters. For some, he was an immoral 'apostle of the Devil' or 'teacher of evil' (cf. Leo Strauss) for praising cruel pragmatism before mores, justice and temperance. To others he was merely an 'amoral' realist with a surgical approach to political survival. A few even consider him a front-runner for democracy – *"While appearing to instruct kings he has done much to educate the people."* (Rousseau, cited in Viroli 2005).

In any case, untangling Machiavelli's worldview, his relationship with religion (and the papacy), personal convictions, actual (surviving) writings interpreted by his contemporaries, reinterpretations by scholars of later epochs, and *their* legacies, his mythical reputation, and infamous popular image, from current historical research is beyond the purview of this encyclopedia entry. Below, solely Machiavelli's take on regime classifications is presented in brief.

Machiavelli's *Il Principe* (*The Prince,* written in 1513-1514, but published after he died in 1532) was written as a handbook for princes when he was courting the House of Medici, the ruling family in the Republic of Florence in an attempt to regain their favor. (Before, Machiavelli had been wrongfully accused of conspiring against the Medici in 1513 and was tortured before being released again). Machiavelli embarked on *The Prince* not to flatter the Medici but to prove to them his impeccable competence in the 'art of state.' (Viroli 2005).



Il Principe is probably the most (in)famous of the 'mirrors of princes' (*specula principum* in Latin) and was even placed on the *Index* (forbidden works) by the Catholic church in 1559. Such 'mirrors' originated from a medieval (both Islamic and European) tradition of educating a young sovereign by compiling advice on political and governmental ethics. Together with his *Discourses on the Ten Books of Titus Livy* (1531), this book expresses most clearly his views on principalities (monarchies) and republics (Nederman 1998; 2022).

The scope of Machiavelli's polities under observation was local, limited, and selective: Regimes were located mostly in his native *Regnum Italicum* (the area of Lombardy and Tuscany); foremost limited to city-states (with few kingdoms, the closest one being Naples); and Machiavelli focused on (new) rulers without firm support bases. In his works, he largely ignored *'principi naturali'* (established hereditary rulers) whose rule had been legitimized, but wrote for and about *'principi nuovi,'* "whose origins were recent, remembered, and resented." (Pocock 2010: 145-147) From this Hobbesian starting point, a ruler must be pragmatic to hold on to power and build out a state. In Machiavelli's own words: *"he should not depart from the good if it is possible to do so, but he should know how to enter into evil when forced by necessity."* (Bondanella 2005: 61). These nuances in scope render his insights less universal than commonly assumed, although they fail to diminish Machiavelli's influence on Western political thought. See also J. Barthas (2010) and M. Viroli (2013) for critical overviews of his legacy. For an in-depth analysis of Machiavelli's understudied early work (poetry, military analyses and his diplomatic and personal correspondence), consult C.J. Nederman's (2023) recent work *The Rope and the Chains: Machiavelli's Early Thought and Its Transformations*.

Machiavelli inductively sorted the 'ordered' political world he knew into two firm categories: (a) monarchies ('principalities') and (b) republics (referred to as 'politics'), both operating on a continuum with (c) tyranny at the other end of the spectrum. G. Giorgini (2008) notes that Machiavelli was the first to *not* consider law-bound monarchies opposed to arbitrary, lawless tyrannies, but finding the latter to be *"a reformable regime, capable of being turned into a principality through the education of the ruler."*

His main focus is the distinction between two regimes, both characterized by the rule of law: (a) monarchies and (b) republics. Both types can attain a minimal constitutional order (*vivere sicuro*) or basic level of security, but only (some) republics could create a fully constitutional regime, where liberties are protected by laws (*vivere libero*), where freedom of speech (oratory debate) allows for (non-violent) contention (*lite*) between the nobility and the people, making their active participation an asset to the polity's adaptability and survival. Only the pluralism of republics can avoid the pitfall when a single ruler embarks on a disastrous course of action, either by misguidance or lack of *virtù* (to be interpreted amorally as the 'flexible disposition to act pragmatically' not as moral 'virtue'). A republic (with its pluralism), therefore, is more adaptable and better fit to survive but also has a caveat – a devotion to perpetuate institutional arrangements whose time has passed. (Nederman 2022; Pocock 2010: 153).

In contrast to the former two concepts, Machiavelli's coverage of **tyranny** (c) is really sparse. He stayed true to the Ancient Greek tradition (cf. **Plato & Aristotle**) but in an inconsistent fashion. Most confusion is derived from his prudent writing style – he was writing for princes, after all – and by simultaneously using the term descriptively (equating any monarchy) and prescriptively (corresponding with arbitrary one-man rule) (Giorgini 2008: 232). Tyranny is ruling by fear of armed violence, with the absence of the rule of law. It equals chaos and corruption, and its lack of security makes liberty impossible.

By singling out new, yet-to-be-established rulers as a subject and audience, Machiavelli states it is meaningless and futile to speak of any claim to authority and the right to command in the absence of (the threat of) superior political power. Still, he alludes to the necessity of religion (political **ideology**) to legitimize regimes (Giorgini 2008: 242; Nederman 2022). Focusing on human agency (and not divine intervention), eschewing morals as a guiding principle, placing different regimes on a continuum, and identifying leader and institutional characteristics that may ensure a polity's survival, Machiavelli paved the way for a brand-new way of analyzing political regimes and their transitions. Whatever the interpretations of his writings and ongoing debates, his fingerprints are all over modern political science and its regime classifications.

Although the most famous, Machiavelli was not the first or only authority on ruthless statecraft. See also Box 2.2 on Kautilya and consult Jun-Hyeok Kwak (2022) on the reception of Machiavellian thought and East-West theoretical dialogues on power politics in East Asia.

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Bodin – Sovereignty & Absolute Power

[O]h, how many tyrants there would be if it were lawful to kill them! He who taxes too heavily would be a tyrant, as the vulgar understand it; he who gives commands that the people do not like would be a tyrant, as Aristotle defined a tyrant in the Politics; he who maintains guards for his security would be a tyrant; he who punishes conspirators against his rule would be a tyrant. How then should good princes be secure in their lives?
– Jean Bodin, *Six livres de la république* (1576)

Jean Bodin (ca. 1530-1596) was a French jurist and political philosopher. He wrote on economics, naturalism, demonology and politics. His seminal work on sovereignty provides a foundational understanding of political authority in the aftermath of the Reformation when European medieval polities were turning into centralized states. Bodin defines sovereignty as the ultimate, absolute, self-subsisting and perpetual power within a state (not dependent for its validity on the consent of the subject), impacting both its internal governance and external relations. He describes it as *"the most high, absolute, and perpetual power over the citizens and subjects in a Commonwealth,"* which the Latins refer to as *majestas*. This concept of sovereignty is crucial for understanding the full political power a state wields, including its conduct in war and international relations.

Bodin's views on tyrannicide (cf. **assassination**) align with his theories on sovereignty. He argues that while tyrannicide may be justified against usurpers, it is impermissible against a prince who is an absolute sovereign. In such cases, even if the sovereign

Box 2.2 Kautilya – The Arthashastra

Having secured his own personal safety first from his wives and sons, the king can be in a position to maintain the security of his kingdom against immediate enemies as well as foreign kings.
– Protection of Princes, *Arthashastra,* Chapter XVII, Book I.

The *Arthashastra* is an ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, political science, economic policy, and military strategy, attributed to Kautilya (also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta), who was a key adviser to the first Mauryan emperor, Chandragupta Maurya (ca. 340-297 BCE). While most text fragments were composed in the late fourth century BCE, others were added later, and the *Arthashastra* is a comprehensive guide for rulers on how to govern effectively, maintain power, and ensure the prosperity of their states. Its insights into political regimes and rulership have had a lasting influence on both Eastern and Western political thought.

Arthashastra (अर्थशास्त्रम् – *Arthaśāstram*) translates from Sanskrit as 'the manual on prosperity' or 'science of statecraft' with *shastra* referring to a body of knowledge like 'rules, manual, treatise, etc.' and *artha* to 'wealth, property, prosperity.' *Artha* is one of the four 'transitional aims' in life (*Purushartha – Puruṣārtha*), alongside *Kama* (pleasure, love, psychological values), and – more important – *Dharma* (righteousness, moral values) with the ultimate goal, *Moksha* (liberation, spiritual values, self-actualization) in Hinduism. (Note, these goals feature in a different constellation in Jainism and Buddhism as well).

This collection of books is unique in its comprehensive and detailed treatment of statecraft. They cover a wide range of topics, including administration, law and justice, economic policy, and military strategy. Kautilya's work is not only theoretical but also provides practical guidance for rulers on how to handle various aspects of governance. For example, he outlines the duties and responsibilities of key officials, the organization of the state, and the methods for maintaining law and order. The treatise also includes a penal code and detailed instructions on foreign policy and military tactics.

One of the central themes of the *Arthashastra* is the concept of the state as an organic entity composed of seven essential elements, known as the 'Saptanga Theory.' These elements include (i) the ruler *(Swami)*, (ii) ministers *(Amatya)*, (iii) the land and its people, i.e. 'kingdom' *(Janapada)*, (iv) the fortified capital and other defenses *(Durga)*, (v) the treasury and the polity's economic base *(kosha – koṣa)*, (vi) the armed forces *(Chaturangabala/ Danda)*, and (vii) alliances *(Mitra)*. Kautilya emphasizes that the stability and prosperity of a state depend on the proper functioning and interaction of these elements. This holistic approach to governance underscores the importance of a well-rounded and integrated state apparatus. Note that a 'state' in this histor-



ical context is not a Western concept but refers to *"an order of society which is not created by the king or the people, but which they exist to secure (…) essentially a beneficial institution for protection of human life and welfare and for the better realization of the ideals of humanity."* (Gonda 1957: 159)

Regarding guidance, Kautilya's advice for rulers (i) echoes through time. A ruler's conduct and ability are central to the state, emphasizing virtues like righteousness, honesty, and leadership. Trusted and able staff is crucial, as well as moderation, to avoid **despotism** or **tyranny**. The king's contentment relies on the people's welfare. Kautilya stressed maintaining connections with the populace and staying clear of **kleptocracy** through excessive taxes, with the king representing the state's unity and upholding Dharma.

His selection criteria for ministers (ii) are quite nuanced, urging rulers not to rely on personal ties, i.e., 'classmates' (see also: **personalist rule** and **patrimonialism**) because even if they can be trusted (inasmuch as the ruler knows them well enough), they have been his 'playmates' as well, and would end up despising the ruler. Employing those who are intimate and trusted with a ruler's secrets can result in blackmail from their side. The other way around, employing those whose secrets are known to the ruler will result in sycophancy (Box 6.5), as the fear of disclosure will prevent them from speaking openly and truthfully. Similarly, those with proven devotion might not be competent (cf. **meritocracy**). Those with hereditary positions and a family history of serving the dynasty will try to dominate a new ruler. In turn, employing esteemed scholars of statecraft will result in serious blunders since they only have theoretical knowledge. *"Hence he shall employ as ministers such as are born of high family and possessed of wisdom, purity of purpose, bravery and loyal feelings inasmuch as ministerial appointments shall purely depend on qualifications."* (Shamasastry 2012)

For the study of political regimes, his work appreciates the art of **coup-proofing** and dealing with internal enemies or treason (be they ministers, priests, the commander-in-chief or the heir-apparent). Kautilya even provides advice on how to construct harems (Box 5.11) and outfit them with booby traps and alarms for personal protection. (Shamasastry 2012)

Kautilya's classification of political systems is notable for its emphasis on the practical aspects of governance. He categorizes these based on their primary functions: rule-making, rule-application, and rule-adjudication, thus presenting a functional classification of the various branches of government and their role in maintaining order and ensuring the state's smooth operation.

The *Arthashastra* also introduces the 'Mandala Theory' (*rajamandala* or 'circle of states') for **foreign policy**, which posits that neighboring states are natural enemies, while the enemy's enemy is a friend. This theory provides a strategic framework for understanding and navigating international relations, emphasizing the importance of alliances and diplomacy. (Joshi 2019)

The work is remarkable for its pragmatic and often ruthless approach to statecraft. Kautilya advocates for a realist perspective, where the primary goal is the stability and sustainable expansion of the state. He does not shy away from endorsing the use of espionage, strategic manipulation, and even assassination when necessary to achieve political objectives (cf. **intelligence services**). This pragmatic approach is balanced by an underlying commitment to the welfare of the people, as Kautilya insists that the ruler's ultimate duty is to ensure the prosperity and security of his subjects.

The influence of the *Arthashastra* on Western scholarship is under-explored and under-appreciated. It was lost after the fall of the Gupta Empire (after ca. 550 CE) and remained obscure for nearly 1,400 years until its accidental rediscovery in 1905 by Rudrapatna Shamashastry at the *Oriental Research Institute of Mysore*. The first English translation was published in 1915 (by R. Shamashastry), followed by translations into Russian, German, and other languages.

The *Arthashastra* remains relatively unknown outside of India. (On its reception in post-independence India, consult: Misra 2016). Currently, Kautilya's writings are mostly reappraised as an ancient, coherent, non-Western IR theoretical frame (Shahi 2019), particularly relevant for the field of political realism, by itself an inherently 'Western' invention based on the 'Westphalian myth' – treating the 'Peace of Westphalia' (1648) as the starting point and basis of the modern world order (Dar 2021).

The *Arthashastra* – with its holistic treatise of war, peace and rulership – remains a unique and remarkable contribution to the understanding of **monarchies** and their **foreign policy**, contrasting the Western tradition of isolating 'the art of war' and military strategy (Joshi 2019) and of treating **power** as a means to an end (happiness, prosperity, welfare), not as a goal by itself (Set 2015).

Western scholars have drawn parallels between Kautilya's work and that of Niccolò **Machiavelli**, whose treatise *The Prince* also advocates for a pragmatic and sometimes ruthless approach to governance. Although many take affront when calling Kautilya the 'Indian Machiavelli' – urging for a turning of the tables and labeling Machiavelli as the 'Italian or Mediterranean Kautilya' (Dar 2021) since the *Arthashastra* predates *The Prince* by nearly two millennia.

Both Kautilya and Machiavelli emphasize the importance of maintaining power and control, often through fear and strategic deception. However, Max **Weber** found Machiavelli's *The Prince* harmless compared to Kautilya's elaborate details on deceit, espionage, political **assassination**, and strategic manipulation. (Dar 2021) For instance, Kautilya proposes to set up fake **coup** conspiracies and even 'honey traps' in the harem (cf. Box 5.11) to test the loyalty of ministers. He provides expert tips on how to recruit spies, from what social background (orphans, beggar women, merchants, priests, etc.) to which purposes. (Shamasastry 2012) The *Arthashastra* thus stands out for its 'ethical flexibility.'

While Kautilya advocates for a pragmatic approach to governance, he does not entirely dismiss the importance of ethical considerations and welfare politics, even extended to animals. He emphasizes that a ruler must be learned, just, and dedicated to the principles of *Dharma* (moral and ethical duties), and this balance between pragmatism and ethics is a key feature of Kautilya's political philosophy, distinguishing it from purely Machiavellian thought. (Joshi 2019)

One of the most remarkable aspects of the *Arthashastra* is its enduring relevance. Despite being composed

over two thousand years ago, many of its insights remain applicable to modern political and strategic thinking. Kautilya's emphasis on the importance of a strong and capable ruler, the need for a well-functioning administrative apparatus, and the strategic use of alliances and diplomacy continue to resonate with contemporary scholars and policymakers.

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commits heinous acts, subjects are not allowed to act against the sovereign's life or honor. This notion underscores the inviolability of sovereign power, as seen in the absolute monarchies of countries from his time like France, Spain, England, Scotland, Ethiopia, Turkey, Persia and Muscovy (Turchetti 2024).

Bodin also distinguishes between different forms of states and governments. He categorizes **political regimes** into **monarchy** (rule by one), **aristocracy** (rule by a few), and **democracy** (rule by all). However, he notes that these categories can overlap. For example, a monarchy might function as a democracy if the ruler allows all people access to state offices, irrespective of their social status. Conversely, a monarchy can resemble an aristocracy if state roles are reserved for the nobility or wealthy (Turchetti 2024).

Understanding the distinctions between forms of state and government is essential for differentiating royal, despotic, and tyrannical monarchies. In his seminal work, *Les six livres de la R*épublique (1576), Bodin sub-classified monarchies, which he categorized according to their adherence to natural law and the right of conquest. Bodin identified three types: (a) royal monarchy, (b) seigneurial (despotic) monarchy, and (c) tyrannical monarchy.

Royal monarchy (a) This form of government is legitimate and legal, characterized by the ruler's adherence to both divine and natural laws. In a royal monarchy, the subjects obey the laws of the prince, who in turn respects the laws of God. This ensures the protection of natural liberty and property rights for all subjects.

Seigneurial (despotic) monarchy (b) Bodin described this as a legitimate form of rule resulting from conquest in a just war *(justum bellum)*. In this system, the ruler exercises absolute control over both the possessions and persons of the subjects, akin to a master-slave relationship. However, this form of monarchy is considered legitimate if it is established with the consent of the conquered people, acknowledging the victor's rights.

Tyrannical monarchy (c) Tyranny, according to Bodin, is always illegitimate and illegal. It disregards natural law and oppresses free subjects as if they were enslaved, treating their property as if it belonged to the tyrant. Tyranny is marked by the absence of legal and moral legitimacy, as it violates the fundamental rights of the subjects. Only in this case is tyrannicide (**assassination**) permitted.

Bodin emphasized the importance of distinguishing between despotism and tyranny. While both deviate from the ideal of royal monarchy, despotism can be legitimate under certain conditions, whereas tyranny is inherently unlawful. Bodin warned against conflating these concepts, as doing so would obscure the critical differences between legitimate rule by conquest and the oppressive rule of a tyrant. His work laid the groundwork for future discussions on governance and the legitimacy of political authority.

Bodin and J. Locke were among the last of the humanists who made such a nuanced distinction between **tyranny** and **despotism** before these concepts became routinely conflated by the eighteenth century (Turchetti 2018).

Bodin's theory of sovereignty is not synonymous with despotism. When he describes a sovereign as 'absolute,' he refers to the Roman legal concept of *absolutus*, meaning 'not bound' by civil or positive laws. However, a sovereign remains subject to natural and divine laws. This distinction is crucial, as Bodin's notion of sovereignty is supreme yet limited by higher laws. The kings of France exemplified this, with their sovereignty constrained by divine and natural law (Turchetti 2024).

Jean Bodin was a pivotal figure in political thought during the sixteenth century, influencing a wide range of fields, including political theory, jurisprudence, and religious studies. His most significant



contribution was his theory of sovereignty, which became a cornerstone in the development of modern political theory. However, his ideas on sovereignty were interpreted differently across Europe, with some viewing him as an absolutist and others seeing elements of **constitutionalism** in his work (Salmon 1996). Despite being largely forgotten by the eighteenth century, Bodin's work regained scholarly attention in the twentieth century, securing his legacy as a foundational thinker in political philosophy. His influence extended to thinkers like **Montesquieu** and Hobbes, and his ideas on legislative sovereignty impacted English political thought, influencing figures such as Sir Robert Filmer and, indirectly, John Locke (Lindfors, no date).

Despite this, the term **absolutism**, introduced in the nineteenth century, led some historians to misinterpret Bodin as an advocate of unchecked sovereign power. Both royalists and parliamentarians utilized his notion of sovereignty to support their divergent views, particularly in France, where it influenced the absolutist movement and the doctrine of the divine right of kings. Turchetti (2007; 2024) argues that this misunderstanding arises from comparing Bodin to later thinkers like Hobbes and Rousseau rather than examining his work within its respective historical context. To accurately interpret Bodin, one must consider the sources and debates of his time rather than projecting future developments onto his ideas. Thus, Bodin's work should be seen as a systematic definition of sovereignty, distinct from the later concept of absolutism.

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Montesquieu – Aristocratic Liberalism

There is no greater tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of the law and in the name of justice.
– Montesquieu

Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu (1689-1755), the eighteenth-century liberal thinker, studied the polities of his era at a time when full democracies (according to contemporary standards) had not yet emerged. In contrast to his predecessors, Montesquieu considered **political regimes** on a scale between liberalism and despotism. To capture these distinctions, Montesquieu contributed a typology, dividing forms of government into monarchies, republics and despotism. All three can be considered ideal types, mixing a different proportion of ideals, interests and force (Duindam 2016: 229).

While partial to democratic republics in theoretical principle, he found that "intermediate categories of aristocracy and monarchy appear as the most sensible and pragmatic polities, sensible compromises between human rectitude and frailty." (Duindam 2016: 228). He asserted that what is formally written (constitutions and laws) is not sufficient and that the 'Spirit of the Laws' – the customs and mores of a people – matters more. Unlike **Plato & Aristotle** but following **Machiavelli**, the virtue of the rulers is not taken into account, just the dimension of pluralism (number of rulers) and the level of restraint imposed on the ruler.

Republics (democratic or aristocratic) and monarchies are bound by fixed laws; despotism is not. (a) **Democracy** falters when citizens no longer identify their interests with those of the ruling system ('spirit of inequality') or when the 'spirit of extreme equality' overturns the authority of their chosen magistrates, opening the door to despotism. (b) In **aristocracy,** the guiding principle is 'virtue,' or at least the ability to rule with moderation, refraining from oppressing citizens, as well as from seeking supreme power. Laws should provide checks and balances as well as ensure equality among aristocrats. (c) In **monarchy**, laws should bind the singular ruler, and 'honor' is the principle to ensure its moderation and uphold its intermediary institutions. (Note that honor in this meaning refers to both the moral character of a ruler as well as the ability to bestow honor (titles, **patronage**) on loyal subjects – Duindam 2016: 229). (d) **Despotism** is a corruption of these systems, leading to unbridled, arbitrary power. Its ruling principle is fear. The first three 'moderated' forms of rule involve their respective institutions and governmental structures, eliciting adequate behavior (motivations) from citizens. When these are corrupted, all three descend into the latter. In his thinking, liberty is thus a negative freedom – the protection of the law

against unbridled state power – not the freedom to do whatever one wants (Bok 2018).

Montesquieu was too much of a realist to trust the virtue or honor of politicians and thus advocated for the separation of powers, checks and balances, and warning politicians against the specter of tyranny or unruly chaos. His ideas influenced great thinkers ranging from A. de Tocqueville and E. Durkheim to the Founding Fathers of the US Constitution. His scientific objectivity regarding regime types, comparing each system and its nature with the "human passions that set it in motion" (Scott 2011: 160), was groundbreaking, and Montesquieu is rightly treated as one of the first political anthropologists.

More revered for his treatise on democratic republics and thoughts on liberty, Montesquieu's thinking on aristocratic republicanism has often been ignored. Although his extensive coverage of Rome and Venice – *la Serenissima Repubblica* ('the most serene republic') – is ambivalent at times, he does praise these polities' tranquil longevity, spanning centuries. Despite his normative preference for democratic republics (especially by the end of his life), Montesquieu believes that all three moderated types of rule can obtain a certain form of stability when meeting their required individual standards and principles (Montesquieu 1949; Carrithers 1991).

Aristocratic resistance to centralized power was a cornerstone of political thought to obtain 'just rule' that lasted well in the nineteenth century (de Dijn 2009). (For this reason, Montesquieu only refers to aristocratic republics as 'oligarchies' (cf. Aristotle) if ruling elites abandon virtue and moderation). He finds that aristocratic republics *"possess a certain strength that democracy doesn't have. The nobles there form a body which, through its prerogative and for its particular interest, restrains the people. To ensure that laws are executed, it suffices only to make them."* (Carrithers 1991: 267).

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Weber – Rulership

When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan.
– The Holy Bible, Proverbs 29:2

When the sun rises, it rises for everyone
– Cuban proverb

Max Weber's theory of rulership, encapsulated in his concept of *Herrschaft*, is a foundational framework in political sociology for understanding the legitimization and exercise of power. This entry explores the nuances of translating *Herrschaft*, Weber's goals in classifying principles of rulership, the typology itself and its relevance to comparative authoritarianism, and concludes with criticisms of his approach while underscoring its enduring impact. This entry thus zooms in on his classification as a whole; selected individual concepts that matter greatly for comparative authoritarianism are treated separately in-depth throughout the *Encyclopedia Tyrannica*.

The term *Herrschaft*, central to Max Weber's sociology, poses significant challenges for translation due to its nuanced meaning, which encompasses authority, rule, and domination. Each translation emphasizes different aspects of the concept. The issue at hand is that Max Weber died in June 1920 before finishing his book *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft (Economy and Society)*. He had finished (and proofed) three chapters but was still working on the fourth, by then mostly fragments with no clear plan on its final outlook to be found in his notes. By 1921, as agreed with his publisher, his first three installments had been published under the intended title. By 1922, his widow saw to it that an updated version appeared with an additional three installments based on his notes and earlier draft. This is the posthumously published version that was translated to English in 1968 (edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich) under the title *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology,* which makes the biggest splash in the (Anglo-Saxon) scholarly community, boosting Weber's fame. However, fragments of the earlier published version were also translated into English in the 1940s, and these different translations have created quite some havoc in understanding Weber's terminology (K. Tribe in Weber 2019: vii-viii)

Regarding the translation of *Herrschaft*, the term 'Authority,' as used by Talcott Parsons in early translations from the first publication in 1921 (made during the 1930s and published in 1947), highlights legitimacy but may obscure the power dynamics inherent in *Herrschaft*. Parsons also introduced 'imperative control' to reflect these dynamics better (Blau 1963; Szelenyi 2016). The alternative transla-



tion: 'Domination,' favored by Gerth & Mills ([1946] 2013), underscores the asymmetrical power relationship between ruler and ruled, aligning with Weber's definition of *Herrschaft* as the probability that a command will be obeyed (Tribe in Weber 2019: 471-472). However, critics argue that this translation overemphasizes coercion and neglects the role of legitimacy in Weber's theory. In contrast, 'rule' or 'rulership' emphasizes governance and avoids the negative connotations of domination while remaining faithful to Weber's focus on power within social relationships. For these reasons we have consistently used 'rulership' or 'rule' throughout the Encyclopedia.

The complexity of translating *Herrschaft* is rooted in its historical and linguistic context. Unlike the Latin-derived *dominium* (its original meaning resembling that of the Greek δεσπότης *(despotēs)* 'master of the household,' cf. **despotism**), *Herrschaft* evolved differently in German with broader meanings, encompassing terms like 'authority,' 'command,' 'lordship,' and 'sovereignty' (Koselleck 1982). In specific contexts, translations such as 'lordship' for medieval Europe or 'mastership' for industrial production might be more appropriate (Tribe in Weber 2019: 472-473). Ultimately, the choice of translation depends on the context and the translator's interpretation of Weber's intent.

Weber's classification sought to provide a systematic framework for understanding how power is legitimized across different historical and social contexts. His aim was not merely descriptive but analytical, offering ideal types as heuristic tools for comparative analysis. By focusing on legitimacy, Weber moved beyond normative assessments to examine how domination operates empirically. He was particularly interested in historical transitions between forms of rulership, such as the shift from traditional or charismatic rule to legal-rational rule, which he linked to the rise of modern capitalism and bureaucratic states.

Weber's typology has profoundly influenced political science and sociology. Scholars have used it to analyze political regimes, **bureaucracies**, social movements, and leadership dynamics. For instance, his concept of **charismatic rule** has been applied to nationalist leaders and revolutionary movements (Breuilly 2011), while legal-rational rule has shaped studies on state-building and modern governance (Allen 2004). His framework remains central to debates on **legitimacy** and **power** in both historical and contemporary settings.

Max Weber's purpose in classifying rulership was to understand how power is legitimized and exercised across societies and organizations, motivated by the rapid social and economic changes of his time. He viewed legitimacy as central to comprehending authority. Different societies, Weber argued, legitimize power in distinct ways, and his typology relied on 'ideal types' to make comparisons, which are abstract models that capture the essential features of a phenomenon. These ideal types are not intended to perfectly represent reality but serve as heuristic devices to simplify and analyze complex social phenomena. Real-world societies rarely conform entirely to any single ideal type; instead, they often exhibit a mix of different forms of rule.

'Power' *(Macht)* and 'Rulership' *(Herrschaft)* were clearly distinguished by Weber. *Herrschaft* is the probability that a given group of people will obey a command (Weber 2019). *Macht* is defined as the probability that an actor within a social relationship can impose their will despite resistance (Szelenyi 2016: 3). Rulership, thus, involves not only the 'power' to command but also the 'duty' of others to obey. A useful example illustrating this distinction is that of an army commander. While the commander can impose their will on the enemy through superior arms or soldiers, they do not have rulership over enemy soldiers, as their compliance is forced rather than based on authority. Conversely, the commander's troops obey because they recognize the legitimacy of their authority and are duty-bound to follow orders (Blau 1963: 306-307).

In any genuine relationship of rulership, there must be a minimum level of willingness to obey. This willingness can stem from various factors, such as affection for the ruler, adherence to custom, or material rewards for loyalty. However, the most stable foundation for rulership is the belief in the **legitimacy** *(Legitimität)* of the power relationship. This rationalization of asymmetric social relationships between ruler and ruled is what Weber termed legitimacy. *Legitimität* is thus a set of beliefs by the governed that the current political order and power relations constitute a 'just rule.' (Blau 1963: 306-307; Szelenyi 2016: 3; Weber, 2019: 338-339).

In Weber's framework: *Herrschaft = Macht + Legitimität*.

Weber identified three ideal types of legitimate rule and further divided them into subtypes. He called these three 'genetic ideal types,' and 'genetic' in this context highlights the developmental and transformational aspects of these types, as opposed to a static or purely classificatory approach (Breuilly 2011: 479). Of course, actual instances of rulership typically exhibit a mix of these three types. This classification has had a profound influence on the social sciences, being used to analyze political regimes, study bureaucratic development, examine charisma in leadership and social movements, and explore the relationship between democracy and dictatorship, but these were not Weber's original intentions.

Weber foremost looked at rulership from the perspective of capitalist development, making no other value judgments (like morality) besides their economic efficiency and functional rationality. For his belief in the superiority of the Protestant Ethos and the Western development model of statehood, he was rightly characterized as Eurocentric (see below), but there is much value in that his framework was devoid of a democracy bias. Of all these ideal types, the teleological end goal (cf. **modernization theory**) is a legal-bureaucratic rule, but this does not equate with democracy. (If not teleological, it was at least universal, inevitable, and accessible to human understanding and explanation in Weber's view) (Rudolph & Rudolph 1979: 196).

Max Weber's three ideal types of legitimate rule:

(I) traditional, (II) charismatic, and (III) legal-rational – offer a framework for understanding how power is legitimized and exercised in different social and historical contexts.

TRADITIONAL RULE (I) This is rooted in the sanctity of age-old customs and traditions, where legitimacy derives from continuity with the past. Individuals obey not because of personal qualities or legal mandates but because 'that is what our people have always done' (Allen 2004). Obedience is owed to rulers or institutions that embody these traditions, such as monarchs, tribal leaders, or religious figures like popes or caliphs. This form of rule predominated in pre-modern societies and relies heavily on shared belief systems tied to traditions or **religions**. Its pure form lacks a clearly defined sphere of competence subject to impersonal rules (Erdmann & Engel 2007). Instead, the exercise of power is often characterized by a mixture of adherence to established customs and the arbitrary discretion of the ruler (Weber 2019).

Subtypes of the traditional rule include (i) *patriarchalism*, (ii) **patrimonialism**, and (iii) 'estate-type' or feudal rule:

Patriarchal rule (i) This is a group of less complex familial systems (without staff) like *primary patriarchalism* (households characterized by (male) hereditary rule) or *gerontocracy* (characterized by rule by elders). (For a current take on 'gerontocracy,' see Box 1.12). These are the most basic forms of traditional domination, where authority rests with males and/or elders who are seen as custodians of sacred traditions and act in the interest of their community (Weber 2019). This form of authority lacks a separate administrative staff, relying instead on the voluntary compliance of community members. Its scope is typically limited to the household or small community, reflecting its minimal organizational capacity (Weber 2019). Gender-based criticisms berate this implicit masculinization of family systems (see below).

Patrimonialism (ii) As societies grow more complex, patriarchal rule often evolves into patrimonialism. Patrimonial rule is characterized by the emergence of a personal administrative staff loyal to the ruler, blurring the lines between private and public spheres (Weber 2019; Erdmann & Engel 2007). The ruler treats the state as an extension of their personal household, filling administrative positions based on loyalty rather than merit. Weber's historical examples of patrimonial rule include ancient Egypt, China, and the Roman Empire (Weber 2019). In its extreme form, **patrimonialism** can develop into **sultanism**, where power becomes highly centralized and arbitrary, with the ruler exercising unchecked discretion. Both terms have given life to new concepts, respectively **neo-patrimonialism** and **neo-sultanism**, which have shaped comparative authoritarianism in significant ways.

Estate-type or feudal rule (iii) *Estate-type or feudal rule* emerges when the administrative staff – such as vassals or nobles – appropriates power by gaining control over specific resources and responsibilities. This decentralization limits the ruler's authority and creates a system based on reciprocal obligations (Blau 1963). A defining feature is the 'fief,' a grant of land or resources given to vassals in exchange for loyalty and military service (cf. 'feudalism' in Box 1.14). For Weber, while feudalism fosters a web of dependencies, it also restricts economic freedom and market development due to its fragmented and often arbitrary power structures (Weber 2019).

CHARISMATIC RULE (II) This ideal type is based on the extraordinary qualities or perceived divine mission of a leader. This form of legitimacy inspires devotion and voluntary submission from followers who believe in the leader's exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character. Charismatic rule often emerges during periods of crisis or upheaval and can be transformative. However, it is inherently unstable because it depends on the personal attributes of the leader and often struggles to institutionalize itself into enduring systems (Weber 2019). Examples include messianic figures, revolutionary leaders like Che Guevara or Mahatma Gandhi, and even fascist leaders such as Adolf Hitler or Benito Mussolini. Scholars have extended Weber's concept to analyze modern populist leaders and media-driven charisma (Dow 1969; McCulloch 2014; Joosse & Willey 2020). (**Charismatic rule** has a more detailed entry in the section 'Concepts & Archetypes.')

LEGAL-RATIONAL RULE (III) is grounded in impersonal laws and procedures, characteristic of modern **bureaucracies**. In this form of rulership, legitimacy stems from adherence to a system of rules widely accepted by members of a political organization. Obedience is owed not to individuals but to the office they hold within a bureaucratic hierarchy *(Amsthierarchie)*, which operates on principles such as merit-based appointments and specialization. Legal-rational rule is closely tied to processes of rationalization that underpin **modernization theory**, modern capitalism and (Western-type) state institutions (Allen 2004). Examples of rulers that are obeyed because of rule-based orders include elected presidents, prime ministers, defense ministers, and officials like UN secretaries-general. Charisma can play a role in (directly) elected positions, but it is the obedience toward the office (and the acceptance of the political order) that makes others duty-bound to follow orders. For example, Winston Churchill was appointed as prime minister of the UK on 10 May 1940 after Neville Chamberlain resigned. His directives were followed as long as he held that office (contingent on his support in parliament and in line with the legal prerogative accompanying his position).

Weber emphasized that these ideal types are heuristic tools rather than perfect representations of reality. No society or organization embodies any one type in its pure form; instead, real-world systems exhibit a mix of these forms. Each type also reflects a dynamic process of emergence, operation, persistence, and decline, highlighting how legitimacy evolves (Breuilly 2011). Together, these ideal types provide a powerful analytical framework for under-



standing the diverse ways in which authority operates across different historical and social contexts. Max Weber's approach to rulership has, of course, been subject to several significant criticisms, particularly concerning his use of ideal types, his focus on legitimacy, and the broader applicability of his framework.

Methodological issues Critics argue that his ideal types oversimplify complex social realities and are difficult to apply empirically (Allen 2004). Blau (1963) finds that they conflate conceptual elaborations with hypotheses about factual relationships, leading to assumptions about interconnected elements that may not hold true in empirical reality. Additionally, ideal types can obscure contradictions and conflicts within social phenomena – issues that Weber himself was deeply interested in analyzing. These critiques suggest that while ideal types are valuable analytical tools, they must be applied cautiously and with an awareness of their limitations.

Breuilly (2011) points out a tension between Weber's view of modernity as a fundamental shift in social relations and his use of universal categories like charismatic domination. While traditional and legal-rational rule align more clearly with pre-modern and modern systems of governance, respectively, applying charisma across different historical periods can be problematic. This critique highlights the challenges of adapting Weber's typology to contemporary political movements and leadership styles.

Finally, by neglecting structural factors and focusing foremost on beliefs and legitimacy, Weber is criticized for under-emphasizing the material conditions shaping real-life power dynamics.

Static nature One key critique is the static nature of his typology, which some argue fails to adequately account for social change and the historical conditions that give rise to rulership. Roth and Schluchter (1979) suggest that Weber has no theory of 'evolution;' he rather conceived 'development' over time.

In terms of charisma, for instance, Blau (1963) highlights that Weber's analysis concentrates on how charismatic movements transform into traditional or bureaucratic institutions but does not robustly explain how charisma itself emerges. This limitation suggests that Weber's framework may overlook the dynamic and fluid nature of power relations and the processes through which rulership evolves. In addition, he never assessed these systems 'adaptability' to changing conditions or the power of amalgams.

Orientalism Another criticism concerns the Eurocentrism of Weber's framework. His concepts did not translate seamlessly to non-Western contexts. Wai (2012: 36) observes that Weber's work reflects the Eurocentric biases that Enrique Dussel (1995) critiques, portraying Weber as a deeply Eurocentric thinker whose worldview was shaped by an ethnocentric framework. According to Dussel, Weber's perspective was grounded in the metaphor of Europe as the ultimate historical subject, akin to Hegelian philosophy, positioning Europe as the source of conceptual and historical guidance for the world. This is evident in Weber's framing of world history in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958), where he asks, *"Which chain of circumstances has resulted in the fact that on western soil and only there cultural phenomena have been produced which, as we represent it, show signs of evolutionary advance and universal validity?"* (cited in Dussel 1995: 10).

For Weber, Europe was not just a regional entity but the benchmark for historical progress, asserting that its experiences alone possess universal significance. He further argued that *"neither scientific, artistic, governmental nor economic evolution have led elsewhere to the modes of rationalisation proper to the Occident"* (cited in Dussel 1995: 145, n. 9). This perspective underscores Weber's belief in Europe's centrality to world history while simultaneously revealing the limitations of his approach in recognizing other historical realities (Wai 2012).

Gender bias Gender-based criticisms of Max Weber's typology have focused on the implicit masculinization of leadership and the exclusion of women's experiences and roles within these frameworks. Scholars have pointed out that all of Weber's types – traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational rule – are predominantly modeled on male-dominated historical and social structures, thereby marginalizing or ignoring the ways in which women have exercised authority in both formal and informal contexts. In particular, Weber's concept of charismatic rule has been critiqued for its association with traditionally masculine traits such as heroism, exceptionalism, and public leadership. This framing often excludes or diminishes female leaders by relegating them to 'frivolous' or less 'serious' forms of charisma, as opposed to the 'heroic' charisma attributed to male figures like Napoleon or Hitler. Scholars such as Joosse & Willey (2020) have explored how gender intersects with charismatic power, highlighting the tendency to undervalue the leadership of women or to frame their authority in ways that reinforce gender stereotypes.

Furthermore, Weber's treatment of traditional rule has also been criticized for its patriarchal underpinnings. His examples exclusively present legitimacy from customs and traditions that historically excluded women from positions of power or confined them to subordinate roles within domestic or community spheres. Even with structures such as patrimonialism and feudalism – both deeply embedded in essentially patriarchal systems – Weber's framework risks perpetuating a view of political order that normalizes male dominance.

Despite these critiques, Weber's classification remains a cornerstone of political science. It provides valuable insights into the complex nature of rulership and its role in shaping social and political life while encouraging critical examination of power structures in various contexts. His typology has profoundly influenced political science by providing a framework for analyzing political systems, leaders, and social movements. It has informed studies on democracy and authoritarianism, the role of bureaucracy (Blau 1963), post-communist capitalism (Sze-

lenyi 2016), nationalist leadership (Breuilly 2011), its relation to authoritarian constitutionalism (Alviar García & Frankenberg 2019), and the intersection of charisma with gender (Joosse & Willey 2020).

Hamilton (1984: 394) argues that the core of Weber's sociology of rulership lies in the relationship between three central tenets: principle, legitimacy, and organization. Among these, Hamilton identifies principle as the key tenet that underpins Weber's framework. In comparative authoritarianism studies, however, 'organization' has dominated, and this has skewed later applications of this concept to modern regimes. A recurrent error is the equation of Weber's forms of rulership with **political regimes**. The former are ideal type categories to capture forms of just, legitimate political orders, and the latter are specific constellations of ruling networks.

Still, Weber's typology has been instrumental in this field in analyzing regime types and their mechanisms or strategies of legitimation. Scholars have extended concepts of ideal type amalgams for examining **neo-patrimonial** systems where personal loyalty undermines bureaucratic norms in regimes and polities or **hybrid regimes** that mix democratic procedures with authoritarian practices (charisma or personal rule). (Anter & Bruhns 2020) Even with their own shortcomings, Weber's theories have altered the way we perceive and think about autocracies.

For a deeper plunge into Weber's intellectual legacy for analyzing various (modern) authoritarian phenomena, consult **charismatic rule** for the sources of charisma, its routinization, later interpretations and adaptations (i.e., Breuilly (2011) his fourth type: 'institutional-charismatic legitimacy'). **Traditional rule** is mostly fleshed out in its (original and post-Weberian) subtypes: **patrimonialism**, **neo-patrimonialism**, and **sultanism & neo-sultanism**. Legal-rational rule is not treated separately in this encyclopedia but is covered in **bureaucracies** and **bureaucratic authoritarianism**.

As a final note, in his 2016 article, Iván Szelényi (also) introduces a 'fourth' type of rulership to complement Weber's conceptual trinity. Szelényi identifies this fourth type as a rule based on the *Wille der Beherrschten* ('the will of the governed'), which he presents as a critical refinement of Weber's legal-rational rule. This type emphasizes the role of the governed in legitimizing authority, particularly in the context of **electoral authoritarianism** and **hybrid regimes** where rulers may not strictly adhere to the principles of legal-rational rule or where majoritarian approval coexists with violations of the rule of law. Szelényi uses this framework to analyze post-communist regimes, such as those led by Vladimir Putin in Russia (at the time) or Viktor Orbán in Hungary, which exhibited mixed forms of rule blending legal-rational elements with traditional or charismatic features (Szelenyi 2016).

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DICHOTOMOUS CATEGORIES OF POLITICAL REGIMES

Concepts are tools, but poorly designed tools are worse than none.
– Attributed to Giovanni Sartori

Mauveés ovriers ne trovera ja bon hostill
(Bad workmen will never find a good tool)
– Old French saying, ca. 1400

A bad workman blames his tools
(Its modern equivalent)

With the emergence of dichotomous approaches, democracy studies were born. Without self-reflexivity by radically separating and denoting what is democratic in juxtaposition to what is not, Western political systems started to self-identify and embrace this time-old label. Logically, reflecting their class-based regimes at the time, with limited suffrage and colonial contexts, earlier conceptions of democracy were narrowly defined and elitist (**Schumpeter**), focused on their pluralist freedom (**Aron**), or higher levels of development (**Lipset**). All took pride in their political institutions and **constitutionalism**.

With democratic self-awareness, so boomed the study of democratic regimes (Duverger 1978; Lange & Meadwell 1991), party systems (Duverger 1951; Blonder 1968; Lijphart 1968; Sartori 1976) and (democratic) elections (Lijphart 1994; Golder 2005). Most of them stuck to a dichotomous worldview, focusing solely on democracy, slowly expanding their scope beyond the West as familiarity and data collection improved. Note that **Sartori**, while overall espousing a dichotomous approach, did distinguish among dictatorship types.

With the third wave of democracy (Box 6.3) and the emergence of **democracies with adjectives**, so did the need to resurface for conceptual clarity. Hence, a new generation of dichotomous categories emerged, like the **Democracy-Dictatorship Index** (Alvarez et al. 1996), that actively turned away from the prevalent and popular **continuous measures** that had been booming since the 1980s. Even today, such minimal approaches have not ceased to be attractive, and adherents have improved their coding criteria in order to deal better with **hybrid regimes**: e.g., Bernhard et al. 2001; Cheibub et al. 2010; Boix et al. 2013; Bjørnskov & Rode 2020.

An important argument in favor of dichotomous classifications is their clear, consistent, parsimonious coding criteria that are easily reproduced. Foremost, their 'alternation rule' (i.e., regime turnover) to qualify as democracy is the major linchpin that has drawn criticism since this rule risks confusing manipulated but ultimately lost elections with genuinely competitive electoral contests.

However, comparisons with **continuous measures** show that the latter are actually much more demanding before they group cases as being 'democratic enough' on their (respective) scales in order to be labeled as such, so even the latter's arbitrary thresholds embrace much more demanding criteria than the former's categorical binary sorting.

In addition, dichotomous classifications pride themselves on their ability to create datasets stretching back far in time. Their minimalist definition of democracy (including the bare essentials regarding suffrage) is foremost focused on turnover and **elections**, not the nature of **power** or **legitimacy**, and this raises the question that for early modern political regimes when democracy was still a fringe phenomenon, is a dichotomous approach really the most relevant one? Was 'electoralism' the one crucial variable setting political regimes on (meaningful) divergent pathways in their political, economic, social and cultural development? What about **ideology** and the importance of traditional forms of rule and their extremes, like **absolutism**? What about the impact of 'rationalist' modern forms like **republicanism** or **corporatism**? What about patterns of non-democratic **regime promotion** before the advent of the first wave of democracy (Box 6.3)?

To sum up, dichotomous classifications are categorical and incredibly democracy-focused (an exception is **Geddes, Wright & Frantz**, who actually also use a binary cut-off to isolate dictatorships and then proceed to classify these in a polychotomous fashion). In any case, all non-democracies fall under a residual category. Diachronic datasets reaching all the way back to the French Revolution lose their analytical value if they can only observe democratic regimes (in a binary fashion). Adjusting and lowering the bar of what constitutes **democracy** to its bare minimal definition is one way to discover historical patterns of limited inclusion and pluralism in such longitudinal studies, but once that definition becomes too minimalist, it fails to sort out some forms of **electoral authoritarianism** or **competitive authoritarianism**. So, it is not possible to burn the candle at both ends. These typologies are not designed to study dictatorship unless as an undifferentiated group in juxtaposition to democracy.

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Schumpeter – Democratic Minimalism

The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.
– Joseph Schumpeter (1942)

Joseph A. Schumpeter (1883-1950), renowned economist and once finance minister in Austria (1919-1932), contributed immensely to the study of democracy through his original classification introduced in his seminal work *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), which represents a significant departure from classical conceptions of democracy. Schumpeter rejected the traditional notion that democracy is defined by the pursuit of the 'common good' or the direct rule of the people. Instead, he proposed a procedural or minimalist definition, focusing on the competitive struggle for leadership through elections. His approach emphasizes that democracy is not about achieving specific substantive outcomes – such as equality or justice – but rather about the institutional process through which leaders are selected. This minimalist view has had a lasting impact on how political regimes are classified and studied within comparative politics.

While Schumpeter did not explicitly outline detailed coding criteria for classifying political regimes, his procedural definition implies several key elements: (a) *competitive election*s – the existence of free and fair elections where multiple political actors vie for power is central to Schumpeter's definition. Democracy, in his view, is a system where individuals acquire power through a competitive struggle for the people's vote; (b) *the institutional framework* – formal procedures and institutions that govern political decision-making (including elections and mechanisms for holding leaders accountable).

Schumpeter's approach focuses almost exclusively on electoral competition as the defining feature of democracy. Unlike broader definitions that incorporate civil liberties, political equality, or popular sovereignty, his approach is foremost concerned with how leaders are chosen rather than what they do once in office. His approach shifted the focus away from normative debates about what democracy should achieve and toward empirical questions about how democratic institutions function in practice. His work helped popularize a procedural understanding of democracy that emphasizes institutional processes, such as the **Democracy-Dictatorship Index** (DD) (Alvarez et al. 1996; Cheibub et al. 2010). By centering elections as the primary criterion for defining democracy, Schumpeter influenced subsequent measures of democracy, such as the **Polity Index** and **Freedom House**, which also prioritize electoral competition in their classifications of regimes.

Of course, Schumpeter's minimalist definition has been subject to significant criticism for ignoring civil liberties, the rule of law, and broader participation beyond elite competition (his personal political views, which radicalized during the inter-war years at the peak of geopolitical tension, have also been condemned). Also, critics argue that free and fair elections alone do not guarantee democratic governance if fundamental rights are not protected. Moreover, his model has been criticized for being overly elitist and sidelining the role of ordinary citizens in shaping policy or influencing governance between elections. Logically, his approach cannot account for electoral authoritarianism or hybrid regimes since these became prevalent in the 1990s (Swedberg in Schumpeter 2003).

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Aron – Constitutional Pluralistic vs. Monopolistic Party Regimes

Every political regime contains a minimum of unity and of meaning which the sociologist must uncover.
– Raymond Aron, *Democracy and Totalitarianism* (1968: 27)

Raymond Aron (1905-1983) was one of the greatest political sociologists of the twentieth century. He was truly a political sociologist, not a sociologist of politics (such as Seymour M. **Lipset**). His work on non-democratic politics must be considered in this context. It is a large, complex, and complicated work. The key concepts here, as far as non-democratic politics is concerned, are 'industrial society' and 'the primacy of politics.'

Industrial society is an umbrella term. Aron (1962) analyses three sections of the social life of industrial society: economic systems, social and class structures, and political regimes. In analyzing and comparing economic systems, he distinguishes four situations: (a) the general concept of industrial society, which is a 'genus' or Weberian ideal type; (b) different 'kinds' or types of industrial society; (c) different growth patterns, and (d) different stages of growth (Aron 1962: 363). This is very important because it allows him to compare systems that appear to be antithetical: 'constitutional pluralistic regime' and 'a monopolistic party regime' (Aron 1968), or a Western capitalist regime and a Soviet-type regime. Both regimes are two types of the same genus, or in other words, different methods of solving similar problems. He was convinced of this by his trip to Asia, from where Europe is viewed not as two disparate worlds, the Soviet world and the Western world, but as one reality: industrial civilization (Aron 1962: 50).

The basic distinguishing feature between constitutional pluralistic regimes and monopolistic party regimes is the political criterion of the number of parties: pluralism vs. one-party monopoly. Elsewhere, Aron (1964: 171-172) argues that the 'least bad' distinction between the two regimes is the recognition of free trade unions. So, these are political criteria, not economic or social ones. Whatever the socioeconomic system, there always remains the political problem of what is the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, where it is determined who rules and how, and how the rulers are chosen. Politics is superior to socioeconomic issues. Socioeconomic issues are not the origin of politics but the opposite. What specifically distinguishes modern industrial societies is political in origin. Further, politics has primacy in the humanistic sense. The way rulers are chosen and the way they exercise power shows the human or inhuman character of the whole system (Aron 1968: 11).

Aron (1968) divides monopolistic party regimes into three types: conservative authoritarian or traditional autocratic (Salazar's regime in Portugal is an example), fascist (Nazi), and communist. In this context, he is most interested in two questions. First is the analysis of **totalitarianism**. Aron (1968: 193-194) defines totalitarianism through what are essentially, in his time, five conventional defining characteristics and asks three basic questions: (i) To what extent is totalitarianism historically unique or historically recurrent? (ii) To what extent is Soviet totalitarianism comparable to Nazi totalitarianism, and (iii) to what extent is a one-party regime doomed to totalitarianism (Aron 1968: 194-195)? Regarding the first question (i), Aron was a modernist, like many of the classics on the subject: Arendt (1951), Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956), Linz (2000), and Sartori (1987).

He answered the third question (iii) in the negative. He mentioned Mussolini's Italy as an example of a non-totalitarian one-party regime (Aron 1968: 195). However, he was most interested in the second question (ii), i.e., the comparison between communism and Nazism, which he considered fully legitimate. Aron (1968; 1983) systematically refuted the arguments by proponents of the view identifying fundamental differences between the two regimes; although he admitted the differences, he saw similarities and argued that the fundamental affinity between the two regimes was best justified by Hannah Arendt (1951) in her work *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (Aron 1968: 198). However, Aron's analyses of the differences and similarities between Nazism and communism were not universally accepted and had their prominent critics (cf. Besançon 1998; Todorov 1994).

The works of Max Weber and Montesquieu deeply influence Aron's typology. Aron adopted the German, especially Weberian, hermeneutic approach to social sciences, emphasizing the importance of understanding the meaning behind social actions, which shaped his analysis of political sociology. From **Montesquieu**, Aron drew the concept of examining regimes based on their 'essential' characteristics, principles, and sources of potential 'corruption.' Aron's typology was deductive and time-bound, only applicable to industrial society, and he followed Montesquieu, who broke with a two-thousand-year-old tradition of searching for the best regime by relativizing the question: what is the best regime for which societal type? (Scott 2011: 160).

Finally, there is one more key issue to which Aron

(1957; 1965) devoted much attention, which is indirectly related to the conceptualization and typology of non-democratic regimes, and that is Marxism. He was interested in the role of authentic (i.e., Marx's) Marxism in communist regimes and the relationship between authentic Marxism and Marxist-Leninist ideology. Were communist regimes necessarily oppressive? According to Aron, simplistically speaking, yes. Communism is not a 'degeneration' of Marxism but one of its many interpretations, and all attempts to put it into practice have resulted in **despotism**. The undemocratic character of communist regimes is an inevitable 'perverse effect' (Aron 1984: 31; Boudon 1977) that was foreseen and predicted. In this, Aron agreed with several experts on Marxism, such as Raymond Boudon (1977), Dominique Colas (2002), Leszek Kołakowski (1978) and Martin Malia (1994). It should be noted that Aron's analyses of Marxism and the problem of ideologies, in general, have had a much greater impact than his definitions and typologies of non-democratic regimes, which have influenced foremost the French environment and have not penetrated much into the Anglo-Saxon mainstream.

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Lipset – Democratic Stability & Economic Development

Stability is not immobility.
– Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859)

Seymour Martin Lipset's (1922-2006) work on the relationship between economic development and democracy has left a lasting legacy in political science, particularly through his contributions to modernization theory. In his influential 1959 paper *Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,* Lipset argued that democracy is more likely to emerge and be sustained in societies that achieve higher levels of economic development. His thesis posited that factors such as wealth, industrialization, education, and urbanization create social conditions conducive to democratic stability.

S.M. Lipset did not propose a formal typology of regimes but laid the groundwork for understanding how socioeconomic factors influence political systems. He used a *de facto* dichotomous classification, based on his own judgment, sorting countries into democracies and dictatorships using two scales: (i) legitimacy and (ii) effectiveness. Lipset (1960: 45) defined democracy *"as a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office."* Note that he thought that the criteria for democracy might differ in different political regions (Vanhanen & Lundell 2014: 2).

Lipset's approach was rooted in **modernization theory**, a movement he influenced greatly. His works find that as societies develop economically, they tend to democratize. He identified several key indicators of economic development – such as per capita income, industrialization, urbanization, and education – that correlated strongly with stable democracies. For instance, he argued that wealthier nations are more likely to sustain democratic regimes because economic stability reduces class conflict and fosters political stability. Similarly, he believed that higher levels of education promote a more informed citizenry capable of engaging in democratic processes. Industrialization and urbanization were also seen as crucial because they fostered social organizations like labor unions, which could mobilize citizens to demand political rights.

Besides Joseph **Schumpeter,** the works of Max **Weber** influenced S.M. Lipset's thinking. This is visible in his emphasis on political **legitimacy** – meaning widespread public belief in the system's fairness and effectiveness – as a contributing factor to democratic



regimes' stability. Without legitimacy, even economically developed democracies could be vulnerable to authoritarian movements.

The stability of political institutions is thus closely tied to both (i) legitimacy and (ii) effectiveness. A fourfold table illustrates the relationship between these two factors, with countries falling into different categories based on their combinations (A – high legitimacy & high effectiveness, B – high-low, C – low-high, D – low-low).

Highly legitimate and effective systems (A), like the United States or the United Kingdom (in the 1950s), tend to be stable and democratic, while regimes that lack both legitimacy and effectiveness (D), such as certain dictatorships, are unstable unless maintained by force. Note that Lipset does highlight **racism** in the US (segregation laws in the America South) and the UK (the colonization of Catholic Ireland) as challenges to the legitimacy of these examples (Lipset 1959: 90-91).

Historical examples from the 1930s show that countries with high legitimacy but declining effectiveness (B) remained democratic, while those with low legitimacy (C), like Germany and Austria, descended into authoritarianism. The analysis also highlights that prolonged effectiveness, particularly through economic development, can eventually confer legitimacy on a political system. Conversely, ineffective systems may lose legitimacy, leading to instability. Thailand's social stability (despite regular **coups**) contrasts with its less-stable neighbors, showing how legitimacy and effectiveness interact in shaping political outcomes (Lipset 1959: 90-91).

The impact of Lipset's work on political regime classification has been profound. His thesis reinforced the **modernization theory** by positioning economic development as a precondition for democracy. It also spurred the development of quantitative measures for classifying political regimes, influencing subsequent research and the creation of datasets.

However, Lipset's approach has faced significant criticism over time. Critics argue that his focus on socioeconomic factors was overly deterministic, implying a linear path from economic development to democracy while neglecting the roles of political agency, culture, and historical context. Additionally, critics have pointed out that Lipset's framework struggles to establish clear causality between economic development and democratization; many countries with similar levels of development exhibit vastly different political systems. Empirical exceptions – such as wealthy authoritarian regimes or poor democracies – have further challenged the universality of his thesis.

To recap, while Lipset's work remains foundational in understanding the social requisites of democracy, it has been critiqued for its overemphasis on economic determinism and its neglect of other critical factors shaping regime transitions. Despite these criticisms, his contributions continue to influence contemporary debates on **democratization** and regime classifications.

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Democracy-Dictatorship Index (DD)

There are two sides to every story and then there is the truth.
– Universal saying

The original classification of political regimes by Mike Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, Fernando Limongi, and Adam Przeworski (1996) presents a minimalist, dichotomous approach, distinguishing political regimes as either **democracies** or **dictatorships** (the latter term used interchangeably with 'authoritarian regimes').

Their primary sorting criterion is the existence of competitive elections that allow for genuine alternation in power. Specifically, they define a regime as democratic if (a) the chief executive is elected, (b) the legislature is elected, (c) more than one party competes in elections, and (d) an alternation in power has occurred under the same electoral rules.

While imperfect, this classification is noteworthy because it relies exclusively on observable criteria, avoiding subjective judgments about regime characteristics like civil liberties or the quality of governance. This approach has been criticized for its procedural, minimalist definition of democracy, which focuses narrowly on electoral processes and overlooks other important aspects of democratic governance, such as civil liberties, political freedoms, and the rule of law. (Cheibub et al. 2010)

The main critique warns against 'electoralism,' or equating competitive elections with democracy (cf. Karl 1986), as their criteria ignore other essential democratic dimensions like broad suffrage and

civil liberties. Other scholars have pointed out that the distinction between 'observables' and 'subjective judgments' is not as clear-cut as Alvarez et al. (1996) suggest, as even determining whether **elections** are free and fair can involve subjective interpretation.

This main criticism of oversimplification is directed as much against the typology as against the general approach of defining democracy in this fashion. However, it is not just a theoretical position: For example, regimes with competitive elections but restricted suffrage or civil liberties (e.g., Apartheid-era South Africa – Box 4.7) cannot be considered democratic. Alvarez et al.'s (1996) attempt to correct for this by requiring alternation in power is seen as both over- and under-inclusive, as it may classify regimes as democratic even when significant political repression exists or classify as non-democratic those genuinely popular democratic regimes that succeed in getting re-elected over and over again.

In *Democracy and Dictatorship Revisited*, José Antonio Cheibub, Jennifer Gandhi, and James Raymond Vreeland (2010) build on and improve upon the dichotomous classification of political regimes introduced by Alvarez et al. (1996). They improve the scope and add sub-type differentiation.

First of all, Cheibub et al. (2010) extend the dataset to include regimes from 1946 covering almost 200 countries. Second, they deepen the level of detail by introducing a sixfold classification that categorizes regimes as either democracies or dictatorships, with further subtypes for each. Democracies (i-iii) are classified into (i) parliamentary, (ii) semi-presidential, or (iii) presidential systems, while dictatorships (iv-vi) are categorized as (iv) monarchic, (v) military, or (vi) civilian.

The classification remains minimalist; democracies are regimes where government offices are filled through contested elections. This definition involves two key components: 'offices' and 'contestation.' For a regime to be democratic, both the chief executive and legislative body must be elected, and there must be an opposition with a genuine chance of winning. Contestation requires three conditions: *ex-ante* uncertainty (the election outcome is unknown beforehand), *ex-post* irreversibility (the winner takes office), and repeatability (elections occur regularly) (Cheibub et al. 2010).

To classify a regime as democratic, the same four rules must be met: (a) The chief executive is chosen by popular election or an elected body. (b) The legislature is popularly elected. (c) More than one party competes in elections. (d) An alternation of power has occurred under the same electoral rules that brought the incumbent to office.

While the first three rules are straightforward, the fourth rule – alternation in power – does pose challenges. It is difficult to distinguish between regimes where incumbents stay in power due to popularity and those where incumbents manipulate elections to ensure victory. In cases where incumbents would cancel elections if they anticipated losing, the regime should be classified as a dictatorship. The authors address this problem with the assumption that subsequent/current actions reveal what incumbents *would* have done at different points in time.

There are rare cases that defy classification. Like the proverbial Schrödinger's cat, these cases can potentially be either type until one peeks in the box. For example, as of the 2024 general elections, Botswana is ruled by the *Umbrella for Democratic Change* (UDC), which won a parliamentary majority, marking the end of nearly six decades of governance by the *Botswana Democratic Party* (BDP). Up until 2024, the DD classification was unable to classify Botswana as a democracy or a dictatorship since there had been no electoral overturn and there was no way to establish (for sure) if the BDP would have accepted their electoral defeat (thereby extrapolating the observation by assuming they would also have done so in the previous sixty years if they would have lost then). To pick a lane, Botswana was classified (out of caution) as a dictatorship until 2024 (but the case was marked and therefore easily identified in the dataset). So, doubtful cases are dictatorial until proven not guilty.

The authors defend their minimalist definition: *"A minimalist definition of democracy such as the one we adopt in DD is compatible with a variety of specific ways in which social and political life is organized. It does not attach any weight to the specific way governments are formed, political parties compete, candidates are selected, voters vote, and votes counted; to the way justice is organized and dispensed; to how much or in what ways the state intervenes in the economy or to whether private property is upheld. It recognizes that all governments are constrained in their actions, be it by those who hold guns or by those who own capital, domestic or international. All that a minimalist definition of democracy requires is that citizens be given periodically the opportunity to choose their leaders in electoral contests; that they be presented with more than one alternative; and that those who win become, indeed, the country's leaders. The specific characteristics listed above may be used to make further distinctions within or across each regime category. But the minimalist approach begins with the assumption of two sharply defined categories, democracies and dictatorships."* (Cheibub et al. 2010: 73-74).

Still, critics argue that this approach may classify regimes with significant democratic deficits as democracies merely because they held competitive elections (which they lost). The DD dataset thus confuses the outcome of regime performance (and their transition) with its nature. *"Papua New Guinea and Sweden thus receive the same score, despite evident differences in the quality of elections, civil liberties, and barriers to competition afforded in these two settings."* (Coppedge et al. 2011: 249). Gilbert and Mohseni (2011) assert that competitiveness, competition, and tutelary interference are the three dimensions that are important for regime classification today. The DD dataset only measures (observed) competition and, therefore, is ill-equipped to analyze **hybrid regimes**.

The sub-classification of their category for dictatorships – (iv) monarchic, (v) military or (vi) civilian – is done according to their inner sanctums, adhering to objective proxy criteria for the supreme leader: (a) monarch or not? (b) and a member of a royal dynasty? (c); or instead, has a military back-



ground or not? (Cheibub et al. 2010: 83-89). This division can also be criticized for being too simplistic and for not accounting for processes of **personalization** and resulting **personalist rule**, the level of political party pluralism, or the level of military domination. Nor are authoritarian amalgams, like military-monarchic regimes (i.e., Thailand), considered. Rebel regimes can also be misclassified as civilian, and there is no solution for some succession scenarios where successors have a categorically different background from their predecessors.

In any case, the main purpose of the DD dataset is to radically distinguish democracies from non-democracies and erase the uncertainty emanating from 'hybrid regimes' and 'semi-democracies.' The regime typology is deductive, categorical and absolutely democracy-focused. It is particularly valued for its reliability and consistency in distinguishing (two) regime types over time and across countries, making it highly suitable for longitudinal, large-scale comparative studies. However, its definition of democracy is too minimalist to be relevant for all types of research, and the DD dataset is usually combined with additional measures to capture nuances. Like all dichotomous typologies, it cannot account for incremental changes in democratic backsliding.

Recently, C. Bjørnskov and M. Rode (2020) expanded the coverage of the DD index to a total of 192 sovereign countries and 16 currently self-governing territories, spanning from 1950 to 2018, including periods under colonial rule for over 90 entities. Additionally, they provide more detailed institutional information and introduce a new, self-created indicator that tracks both successful and failed coups d'état.

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Boix, Miller & Rosato (BMR) – Competition & Suffrage

There are no eternal facts, as there are no absolute truths.
– Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886)

Carles Boix, Michael Miller, and Sebastian Rosato's (BMR) classification of political regimes, developed in their 2013 study, represents a significant advancement in the empirical study of political regimes. They aimed to create a comprehensive historical dataset to measure and classify democracies and non-democracies, covering the period from 1800 to 2007. For a while, this dataset became one of the most widely used tools in comparative politics, particularly in studies of political development, regime transitions, and democratization. BMR's classification has had a profound impact on the field, offering a robust framework for understanding political regimes across time.

BMR's approach to classifying political regimes is democracy-focused, deductive and dichotomous, meaning it divides regimes into two distinct categories: democracies and non-democracies (autocracies) if they satisfy conditions for both *contestation* and *participation*, thus following R. **Dahl** (1971). This binary classification is based on institutional criteria rather than normative assessments of regime quality. The focus is on the formal rules that govern elections and suffrage rather than on broader considerations such as the depth or quality of democracy.

A regime is coded as democratic if it meets several key conditions: (A) *Competitive elections* – The executive must be elected either directly or indirectly through 'popular' elections, and the legislature must be elected in 'free and fair' elections. The competitiveness of these elections is fundamental; opposition parties must be allowed to run, and they must have a reasonable chance of winning. (B) *Universal male suffrage* – a majority of the adult male population must have the right to vote. This criterion reflects historical realities where male suffrage was often the first step toward broader democratic inclusion.

Variable 'A' is calculated using a state's political design and a similar coding mechanism for minimal democracy as used in the **Democracy-Dictatorship Index** (DD) (Alvarez et al. 1996; Cheibub et al. 2010). To determine whether elections are free and fair, Boix et al. (2013) define free elections as those where voters have multiple options on the ballot and fair elections as those without electoral fraud or abuse of government power that undermines opposition chances. They primarily rely on electoral turnover –

the peaceful transfer of executive power to an opposition party – as a strong indicator of free and fair elections. However, turnover is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition. For example, Sweden (1933-1976) is considered democratic despite no turnover, and South Africa post-1994 is judged democratic even without an opposition victory. For periods with prolonged single-party control (over two electoral terms), they examine whether internal coups, external interventions, state power abuses, or fraud explain the lack of turnover. If none are found and elections are contested, the period is coded as having free and fair elections. Similar criteria are used to gauge non-peaceful turnovers. So, in contrast to the DD index, Boix et al. prefer limited (targeted) subjectivity over repeated procedural misclassification.

For variable 'B' – universal 'male' suffrage is achieved when at least half of the male population is enfranchised. The authors acknowledge that this threshold is somewhat arbitrary. They chose this criterion for two main reasons: first, requiring full male suffrage would drastically reduce democratic observations before World War I, losing valuable data on early **democratization** (Huntington's 'first' wave – Box 6.3). A similar loss of information would occur by making female suffrage a condition for democracy. Second, the threshold allows for the exploration of how material and class-based conflicts influenced regime choices over time. The flexibility of this threshold also enables researchers to adjust it based on specific research questions, such as the impact of female suffrage.

Democracy in the BMR classification must meet these clear (cumulative) standards for both contestation and participation (suffrage). This is categorical, as a continuous measure entails no necessary condition for democracy (unless a maximal score on each component is required). If any of these conditions are not met, a regime is classified as non-democratic (autocratic). This (residual) category encompasses a wide range, including electoral authoritarian regimes where **elections** may exist but are non-competitive or where civil liberties are significantly curtailed. For example, regimes where people vote but elections are uncompetitive (and therefore, policymakers are not accountable) or cases with meaningful electoral competition but limited suffrage to a small elite (e.g., Apartheid South Africa).

BMR's coding approach involves evaluating historical records and previous datasets like the **Polity Index** but often reinterpreting cases to improve comparability across their extended period (Boix et al. 2013). For example, BMR reclassified some regimes that had been previously coded as democratic due to more restrictive suffrage laws or less competitive elections.

BMR's classification has had several significant impacts on the field of comparative politics. First, their dataset covers an extensive period from 1800 to 2007, making it the first among the longest-running datasets available for regime classification. This expanded temporal scope, combined with *consistent* criteria, allows scholars to study long-term trends in **democratization**, regime **stability**, and **transition** patterns across different historical contexts. For instance, researchers can examine how events like industrialization or wars have influenced regime transitions over two centuries (Boix et al. 2013).

Despite its strengths, BMR's approach has received several criticisms. One major critique concerns all dichotomous classifications. Like others of the same kind, BMR's framework oversimplifies the complexity of many political systems, which scholars refer to as **hybrid regimes** or **anocracies**. They can also not benchmark intra-regime changes or democratic backsliding, which takes place between election cycles (e.g., **authoritarian constitutionalism**).

Another critique relates to civil liberties, which do not play a central role in their classification system. Some scholars argue that this underemphasis on civil liberties overlooks important aspects of democratic quality (like restricted press freedoms or assembly rights). Finally, while BMR made significant strides in extending their dataset back to 1800, concerns remain about incomplete or unreliable data from earlier periods. For instance, some European democracies under Nazi occupation during WWII were duly classified as democratic. A comparison with **Regimes of the World** (RoW) has shown several of these shortcomings (Lührman et al. 2018).

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TRICHOTOMOUS CATEGORIES OF POLITICAL REGIMES

Theories are nets cast to catch what we call 'the world:' to rationalize, to explain, and to master it. We endeavour to make the mesh ever finer and finer.
– Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959)

At the end of the Cold War, the global political landscape underwent significant changes. Many authoritarian regimes at the end of the 'third wave' (Box 6.3), particularly in the post-Soviet and developing world, began to liberalize to some extent by holding regular elections. However, these regimes fell short of transitioning into full liberal democracies. In the early 1990s, there was still widespread optimism that democracy would become the dominant political system globally. However, as time progressed, it became clear that many of these regimes were not moving toward liberal democracy (cf. 'Transitology' – Box 5.3) at all, but instead found some equilibrium, remaining stuck in a hybrid state – seemingly combining elements of both democracy and authoritarianism.

Initially, these regimes were often classified as **democracies with adjectives** reflecting their partial adherence to democratic norms. However, scholars soon realized that new and better conceptual frameworks were necessary to analyze these hybrid regimes. Early contributions from scholars like **Gasiorowski** (1990; 1993; 1996) provided important data on these regimes in the developing world. Later, **Mainwaring, Brinks & Pérez-Liñán** (2000; 2007) refined the coding criteria for classifying these systems, marking a significant advancement in the field. These scholars all acknowledged that political regimes exist on a continuum between democracy and autocracy and that dichotomous classifications were insufficient to capture the complexity of these new **hybrid regimes**, which they called 'semi-democracy.'

By the early 2000s, a pivotal moment occurred with the publication of a special issue of *The Journal of Democracy* (Volume 13, Issue 2), where scholars like Larry Diamond, Andreas Schedler, and Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way formalized the study of hybrid regimes by introducing terms like 'electoral authoritarianism' (**Schedler**) and 'competitive authoritarianism' (**Levitsky & Way**). This marked a conceptual shift: these regimes were no longer seen as diminished or corrupted forms of democracy (e.g., illiberal democracy, cf. Zakaria 1997) but rather as distinct, new types of authoritarianism that employed elections as tools for maintaining power.

This shift in classifications had profound implications for comparative authoritarianism. It redirected scholarly attention toward studying **elections & electoral malpractice**, **constitutional authoritarianism**, and the unequal playing field in these regimes. Scholars began to focus on how electoral regimes interacted with **civil society** and **opposition** forces while maintaining control through seemingly democratic institutions like parliaments and political parties. This subfield challenged analysts to think carefully about the relationship between **democratization** – which is related to the electoral process – and alternation in power – which relates to electoral outcomes (Donno 2013: 714).

Regimes of the World (RoW) is a spin-off from **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem) aimed at tackling hybrid regimes. They, however, split the 'murky middle' between closed autocracy and liberal democracy into two categories: electoral autocracy and electoral democracy, divided along the Dahlian tightrope of minimalist prerequisites for democracy (for their coding details, see the entry on V-Dem.)

In 2021, **Anderson, Brownlee & Clarke** brought the concept full circle: In the 1990s, hybrid regimes were considered a diminished democratic subtype (semi-democracies); in the 2000s, they were treated as a separate type of authoritarianism, and in 2021, Anderson et al. framed them as non-authoritarian non-democracies (NANDs).

As of 2024, it is clear that this reclassification has achieved its goal. The study of electoral authoritarianism has actually become mainstream in comparative politics, enabling scholars to analyze these regimes with greater precision. While trichotomous classifications were initially useful for identifying hybrid regimes, more nuanced **polychotomous categories** have since emerged, offering better tools for understanding the diversity within electoral authoritarian regimes. As a result, no innovative trichotomous datasets have been developed. Instead, scholars have absorbed these insights into more comprehensive frameworks for studying authoritarianism today. For in-depth methodological and theoretical treatises of **hybrid regimes**, consult the entry directly in the section 'concepts & archetypes.'

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Trichotomous Categories of Political Regimes, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Gasiorowski – Political Regime Change (PRC)

The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.
– Alan Watts

Mark J. Gasiorowski's (1993; 1996) classification of political regimes, as implemented in the *Political Regime Change* (PRC) dataset, is a widely used approach in comparative politics to categorize regime types and track transitions between them. The PRC dataset classifies regimes into three main categories: democratic, semi-democratic, and authoritarian. It covered 97 developing countries in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia (excluding Japan, Australia and New Zealand) with populations of at least one million in 1980. The PRC dataset starts at the date of independence or equivalent from around the same time. His approach was inspired by earlier attempts at classifications and studies of regime transitions like Diamond et al. (1987), **Linz & Stepan** (1978), and Rueschemeyer et al. (1992), who in turn go back to **Dahl** (1971). Unlike Linz (1975), Gasiorowski (1996: 470) classifies totalitarian regimes under authoritarianism since there are so few cases.

In Gasiorowski's system, *democratic regimes* (i) are those where there is meaningful competition for government positions through regular elections that exclude the use of force. These regimes also ensure a high level of political participation, meaning no major adult social group is excluded from the political process. Furthermore, civil and political liberties must be sufficiently protected to guarantee the integrity of political competition and participation.

Semi-democratic regimes (ii), on the other hand, exhibit some degree of political competition and freedom but fall short of full democracy due to significant limitations. These may include restrictions on the power of elected officials, compromised electoral fairness, or constraints on civil liberties that prevent certain political orientations or interests from organizing or expressing themselves fully. In these regimes, while elections may be competitive to some extent, they deviate significantly from popular preferences due to these restrictions.

Finally, *authoritarian regimes* (iii) are characterized by little or no meaningful political competition or freedom. In such regimes, elections (if they exist) are not genuinely competitive, and there is little space for opposition or dissent.

In addition to these three categories, Gasiorowski's dataset includes a *transitional category* (iv) for countries undergoing deliberate efforts to shift from one regime type to another. This transitional category signals periods of institutional flux that researchers might want to account for separately from stable regime types.

The coding criteria in Gasiorowski's PRC dataset are event-based and go beyond simply focusing on **elections** as indicators of regime type. While multi-party elections are considered a necessary condition for democracy, they are not sufficient on their own. The dataset uses additional criteria to assess whether a regime meets the standards for democracy. These include (a) Whether the government unilaterally changes political institutions or invokes legislation to stifle peaceful opposition. (b) Whether the government tolerates information critical of its policies and leaders. (c) Whether the government ensures that the right to peaceful opposition is honored by military or security forces. If a country meets the criterion of competitive elections but fails any of these additional criteria, it is coded as semi-democratic. For cases where competitive elections are not used to assign authority or where important social groups are excluded from electoral competition, regimes are coded as authoritarian unless there is clear evidence that the government tolerates significant forms of peaceful political activity (Reich 2002).

One major criticism of Gasiorowski's classification system is related to the ambiguity surrounding the semi-democratic category. This category often encompasses a wide range of regimes with varying degrees of democratic and authoritarian practices. As noted by Reich (2002), this can make it difficult to clearly distinguish between different types of semi-democratic systems, resulting in conceptual vagueness. The semi-democratic category was designed to capture **hybrid regimes** that emerged during many third-wave transitions (Box 6.3); however, its broad application can sometimes obscure important differences between cases (Munck & Verkuilen 2002; Reich 2002).

Another criticism concerns an over-reliance on elections as a baseline indicator for determining regime type. Although Gasiorowski's framework incorporates broader indicators such as civil liberties and **opposition** rights, critics argue that it still places too much emphasis on electoral processes. This focus can overlook other critical factors influencing regime characteristics, such as informal power structures or constraints on executive authority (Munck & Verkuilen 2002; Reich 2002).



Additionally, the event-based focus of the PRC dataset has been critiqued for potentially missing longer-term trends in regime behavior that discrete events like elections or constitutional changes may not capture. By focusing primarily on the observable, the dataset underestimates gradual shifts in regime characteristics over time. Finally, the coding for the PRC dataset was performed by Gasiorowski alone. This raises concerns about potential coder bias and the lack of intercoder reliability checks. (Munck & Verkuilen 2002; Reich 2002)

While Gasiorowski's work built on earlier conceptualizations of hybrid regimes, his work made a major empirical contribution by offering the PRC dataset that (however imperfect) operationalized these categories.

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Gasiorowski – Political Regime Change (PRC), *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Mainwaring, Brinks & Pérez-Liñán – Semi-Democracies in Latin America

La democracia es un camino que hay que recorrer todos los días
(Democracy is a path that must be traveled every day)
– Adolfo Suárez González (1932-2014), first democratically elected prime minister of Spain

Scott Mainwaring, Daniel Brinks, and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán's classification of political regimes in Latin America from 1945 to 1999 represents a significant contribution to the field of comparative politics. Their work is particularly notable for its methodological rigor and theoretical innovation, offering a more nuanced approach than previous models.

Like **Gasiorowski** (1993; 1996), Mainwaring et al. (2000; 2007) introduced a trichotomous ordinal scale that classifies political regimes into three categories: (A) democratic, (B) semi-democratic, and (C) authoritarian. Thus, their model recognizes the existence of intermediate regime types that do not fit neatly into either category: this middle ground – semi-democracies (B) – captures the reality of **hybrid regimes**.

At the core of their classification is a minimalist (but not sub-minimal) procedural definition of democracy that is supplemented with discretionary coding. It encompasses four key criteria: (i) free and fair elections, (ii) inclusive suffrage, (iii) protection of civil liberties, and (iv) effective civilian control over the military. These criteria are disaggregated and then re-aggregated to form an overall assessment of a regime's type. For each criterion (democratic principle), a regime can either meet that criterion, partially violate it or violate it in a major way.

Democracies (A) are those cases with no violations of any of the four criteria. *Authoritarian regimes* (C) have at least one 'major violation' for any of the four criteria. *Semi-democracies* (B) have at least one and a maximum of four 'partial' violations.

This method allows for a more detailed analysis of regimes that may meet some but not all democratic criteria, and their classification system is underpinned by explicit coding and aggregation rules designed to ensure transparency and replicability in regime assessments. The rules specify how different types of violations of democratic principles should be coded and distinguish between major and partial failures (violations) (Mainwaring et al. 2000).

The authors admit that while they strive for objectivity in coding regimes, there is an unavoidable element of subjectivity involved in making these judgments. They argue that informed judgments based on case-specific knowledge are preferable to using procedural criteria that can only amount to a sub-minimal definition of democracy. Still, this subjectivity and potential bias have been criticized. Also, there is quite some variation within (B) semi-democratic and (C) authoritarian types.

The introduction of a trichotomous classification system has had a profound impact on comparative politics, particularly in studies focusing on Latin America. It provided greater differentiation between regime types than previous models and could deal with cases from the third wave of democracy (cf. Box 6.3). Their work has also led to improved measurement practices in comparative politics by introducing explicit coding rules that enhance transparency and replicability. Overall, their work has spurred further research into hybrid regimes.

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Mainwaring, Brinks and Pérez-Liñán – Semi-Democracies in Latin America, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Schedler – Electoral Authoritarianism

The modern history of representative elections is a tale of authoritarian manipulations as much as it is a saga of democratic triumphs.
– Andreas Schedler (2002)

Andreas Schedler's (2006; 2009) classification of political regimes, particularly his concept of 'electoral authoritarianism,' has significantly shaped the study of **hybrid regimes** that blend democratic elements with authoritarian control. His work focuses on regimes that hold regular multi-party elections but systematically violate democratic norms, using elections as a tool to maintain authoritarian rule while presenting an institutional *façade* of democracy.

Schedler's (2002) different take on elections and their function in autocracies co-contributed to a pivotal turn in the field around 2002 (boosting the institutionalist trend in comparative authoritarianism) that closed the door on a previous canon of research that had not been interested in authoritarian elections and opened a new one with a focus on **elections & electoral malpractice**, constitutions (**authoritarian constitutionalism**) and other regime institutions.

With his colleagues, he heralded the age of hybrid regimes: *"The modal dictator in the contemporary world holds multiparty elections. He sets up the institutional façade of democracy, yet undermines its spirit through authoritarian manipulation. He admits regular elections to highest national office and allows independent opposition parties to participate. At the same time, he subjects these elections to severe and systematic manipulation through strategies like media censorship, voter intimidation, the banning of parties or candidates, and electoral fraud. The contemporary dictator, that is, practices 'electoral authoritarianism.'"* (Schedler 2013: 1).

Electoral authoritarianism has become a cornerstone concept in comparative politics, offering a framework for understanding regimes that do not fit neatly into the binary categories of democracy and dictatorship. Schedler defines electoral authoritarianism as a distinct regime type characterized by the presence of multi-party elections for both the executive and legislative branches, which distinguishes these regimes from 'closed' authoritarian systems where elections are either non-existent or entirely controlled by the ruling elite (Schedler 2002). However, despite holding elections, these regimes engage in systematic manipulation to ensure that the ruling party or leader remains in power. Such interference can take various forms, including restricting opposition access to media and resources, controlling electoral administration and vote-counting processes, and using intimidation or violence to suppress opposition activities.

Schedler (2002: 47) considers a sub-classification, distinguishing between two subtypes of electoral authoritarian regimes: 'competitive' and 'hegemonic.' In the former, rulers face insecurity, and elections serve as a real battleground for power, with opposition forces having a meaningful chance to contest. In the latter, rulers seem invincible, and elections are largely symbolic, functioning as a theatrical display to reinforce the ruling elite's dominance.

Regarding operationalization, Schedler (2002) borrowed Diamond's (2002) classification of 192 independent states, classified using a combination of **Freedom House** (FH) scores, electoral data, and informed judgment. Specifically, a regime is classified as electoral authoritarian if it holds multi-party elections but receives average FH scores between four and six, indicating significant restrictions on political rights and civil liberties (Schedler 2006).

Schedler's classification has had a profound impact on how scholars understand political regimes in the post-Cold War era. One of his major contributions is providing conceptual clarity to hybrid regimes that combine elements of both democracy and authoritarianism. Before Schedler's work, these regimes were often poorly understood or misclassified as either flawed democracies or soft dictatorships. By introducing the concept of electoral authoritarianism, Schedler offers a more precise framework for studying such systems on their own terms.

With the third wave of democracy (Box 6.3), many countries transitioned away from outright dictatorship but failed to become fully democratic; thus, electoral authoritarianism emerged as one of the most common regime types, making up more than two-thirds (69.9 percent) of all autocracies in 2002. Miller (2013; 2020) finds this has been a strategic choice on the part of (weaker) autocrats, preferring



elections to the international and domestic costs of not holding them.

Despite its contributions, Schedler's approach has faced several criticisms. One critique (common for trichotomous categories) is that his framework places an overemphasis on elections as the defining feature of electoral authoritarianism and does not give enough attention to other forms of political stability – such as **repression**, **co-optation**, **legitimacy** or other forms of control over civil society opposition. Seeberg (2018) finds that an incumbent's control over the economy correlates with successful election manipulation. Another criticism is that Schedler's category of electoral authoritarianism is still too broad (despite the subtypes he provides) and overlooks important questions about how **power** is exercised once it is obtained. His residual category of 'closed' regimes has also been criticized (cf. Snyder in Schedler 2006) as lumping cases together with too much order and too little control on government.

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Schedler – Electoral Authoritarianism, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Levitsky & Way – Competitive Authoritarianism

The ballot is stronger than the bullet.
– Abraham Lincoln

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's concept of 'competitive authoritarianism' has become a significant analytical tool for the study of **hybrid regimes** that blend democratic and authoritarian features. First introduced in 2002 and accompanied by an eloquent middle-range theory of **democracy promotion** in their 2010 work *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (see: **Linkage & Leverage Theory**), the authors sought to address the limitations of traditional dichotomous categories of political regimes, and also bring more clarity to the middle ground where formal democratic institutions exist, such as elections and opposition parties, but the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents; In other words, those regimes upholding a *façade* of democracy while subverting its core principles.

Levitsky and Way define competitive authoritarian regimes quite narrowly as a specific (sub-)type of hybrid regimes: those that hold regular, competitive, multi-party and inclusive elections, offering genuine opportunities for opposition parties to challenge incumbents. However, while **elections** are competitive, they are not fair. The ruling party or leader manipulates state power to suppress opposition and tilt the electoral playing field in their favor. This manipulation can take various forms, including limiting opposition access to media and resources, controlling the **judiciary** to harass opponents, and employing **patronage** networks to secure support.

Despite these manipulations, competitive authoritarian regimes maintain a *façade* of democratic **legitimacy** by holding such elections, which helps them secure **foreign aid** and investment while appeasing domestic pressures for political participation. The defining feature of competitive authoritarianism is the 'uneven playing field' on which political competition occurs. While opposition parties can contest elections and even win some seats in parliament or local offices, they face significant disadvantages compared to incumbents who control state resources and institutions. This distinguishes competitive authoritarian regimes from both full democracies (where elections are free and fair) and closed authoritarian regimes (where elections are non-existent or tightly controlled). A. **Schedler** (2002; 2006) his concept of 'electoral authoritarianism' is thus much broader.

Unlike some regime classifications that rely on rigid quantitative measures, Levitsky and Way's approach is more qualitative. They do not provide a strict set of quantifiable coding criteria but instead focus on four key 'arenas of contestation' where **opposition** forces can challenge **incumbents**: (i) *Electoral arena* – The level of electoral competition is assessed by examining the fairness of electoral rules, access to media for all parties, and the extent of electoral manipulation by incumbents. (ii) *Legislative arena* – This arena looks at whether opposition parties can operate within the legislature, scrutinize the executive branch, and influence policymaking processes. (iii) *Judicial arena* – The independence of the judiciary is evaluated based on its ability to resist pressure from the executive branch, particularly in cases involving opposition figures or challenges to

the ruling party's power. (iv) *Media arena* – Media freedom is analyzed by looking at whether independent media outlets exist and whether opposition voices can be heard in public discourse.

Levitsky and Way (2002) emphasize that these arenas do not need to be uniformly strong across all competitive authoritarian regimes; instead, there can be significant variation in how these arenas function from one regime to another. For example, one regime may have a relatively independent judiciary but highly controlled media, while another may allow some media freedom but tightly control the legislature.

By introducing the category of competitive authoritarianism, Levitsky and Way refined the study of hybrid regimes and moved beyond simplistic dichotomies by recognizing that many regimes combine elements of both systems. However, their claim that these regimes are relatively stable and find some sort of equilibrium has been challenged: Carothers (2018) argues that competitive authoritarianism has proven to be far less stable than previously thought. His analysis shows that most of the 35 regimes identified as such between 1990 and 1995 have either democratized or been replaced by more overtly autocratic systems. Their quasi-democratic institutions have actually often contributed to their breakdown.

One major criticism is that Levitsky and Way did not provide clearly defined coding criteria, thus making it difficult for researchers to identify competitive authoritarian regimes across different countries or periods consistently. In any case, their classification was applied to various world regions and contributed to our understanding of **democracy promotion**.

For applications on Eurasia, consult Levitsky & Way 2010; Way 2017 (Ukraine); Vladisavljević 2016; Castaldo 2020 (Serbia); Bieber 2020 (Balkans); Evans 2024 (Belarus). For comparative work in Africa, see Bogaards & Elischer 2016 and Cheeseman 2016, with Matti 2010 (on the DRC). For MENA, mostly Turkey is an important case: Özbudun 2015; Esen & Gumuscu 2016; 2019. For Latin America, there are several comparative works: Mainwaring 2012; Levitsky & Loxton 2012; 2015; Cameron 2018. Regarding case studies in the Indo-Pacific, see Giersdorf & Croissant 2011; Croissant 2022 (Malaysia); Mostofa & Subedi (Bangladesh).

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Regimes of the World (RoW)

Every nation gets the government it deserves.
– Joseph M. de Maistre (1811)

This dataset is a spin-off of **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem); therefore, check the latter for an overview of its methodological approach.

The *Regimes of the World* (RoW) framework was developed to systematically classify political regimes based on their *de facto* implementation of democratic principles and processes rather than relying solely on formal institutional arrangements. This typology addresses the increasing complexity of regime classification in a world where most states hold de jure multi-party elections, but the quality and fairness of these elections vary significantly.

RoW identifies four regime categories: (i) closed autocracies, (ii) electoral autocracies, (iii) electoral democracies, and (iv) liberal democracies. These categories are distinguished based on the extent to which regimes meet key democratic criteria derived from Robert **Dahl's** concept of 'polyarchy.' The criteria include free and fair elections, multi-party competition, suffrage, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and institutional guarantees such as judicial and legislative oversight.

RoW (like V-Dem) is a deductive, democracy-focused regime typology, utilizing V-Dem data to inform classification choices. These categories are thus tied to liberal democracy as their alpha and omega (cf. Coppedge 2023), and besides the electoral navel-staring, no other authoritarian features or attributes are considered as sorting criteria to distinguish between non-electoral regimes.

RoW sorts political regimes into four categories – closed autocracies, electoral autocracies, electoral democracies, and liberal democracies – based on their adherence to democratic principles: (i) *closed autocracies* lack *de facto* multi-party elections or meaningful competition, with no fulfillment of Dahl's democratic prerequisites such as freedom of expression or association. *Electoral autocracies* (ii) hold *de jure* multi-party elections for the chief executive but fail to meet democratic standards due to significant irregularities or constraints on competition. *Electoral democracies* (iii), by contrast, meet three key criteria: *de facto* multi-party elections, free and fair elections, and a minimum score of 0.5 on V-Dem's *Electoral Democracy Index* (EDI), which reflects Dahl's institutional guarantees like freedom of association and clean elections. *Liberal democracies* (iv) fulfill all the criteria for electoral democracies while also ensuring robust legislative and judicial oversight, individual liberties, and equality before the law, as measured by a score above 0.8 on V-Dem's *Liberal Component Index* (LCI).

As with V-Dem, the RoW typology innovatively incorporates measures of uncertainty using Bayesian confidence intervals, in this case, to identify ambiguous cases near thresholds between categories. This allows researchers to account for classification ambiguities in their analyses. By combining qualitative thresholds (e.g., free and fair elections) with quantitative indices (e.g., EDI scores), the framework provides a nuanced yet systematic approach to regime classification. It captures the complexity of modern regimes, offering longitudinal coverage from 1900 to 2016 and addressing gaps in prior typologies that often-overlooked electoral manipulation in contemporary autocracies.

The purpose of this typology is multifaceted. First, it provides a robust framework for distinguishing between different categorical types of regimes along both democratic and autocratic spectrums. This is particularly valuable for research on democratization, regime survival, international aid effectiveness, and the diffusion of democratic norms. Second, it introduces a novel approach to addressing uncertainty in regime classification by incorporating measures of ambiguity using V-Dem's Bayesian confidence intervals. This allows researchers to identify cases that are close to thresholds between categories and conduct robustness checks by excluding ambiguous cases.

Lührmann et al. (2018: 68-71) compare its thresholds with various dichotomous (**Democracy-Dictatorship Index**, **Boix, Miller & Resato**, **Geddes, Wright & Frantz**, **Hadenius & Teorell**) and other continuous measures (**Freedom House**, **Polity Index**) and find that: *"Overall the new RoW typology relatively closely tracks the classification of country-years as either democratic or autocratic by major extant binary measures of democracy. This is a good sign of convergent validity. However, there are substantial differences concerning a significant number of cases, primarily where de-facto practices deviate from de-jure standards. We argue that the RoW typology does a better job than others in these instances, discriminating 'real' from 'fake' democracies."* (*Lührmann et al.* 2018: 71).

The RoW typology also improves upon existing measures by offering greater longitudinal coverage (from 1900 to 2016). By combining qualitative thresholds (e.g., multi-party elections) with quantitative indices (e.g., V-Dem's EDI), it strikes a balance between precision and comprehensiveness while minimizing coder bias through advanced statistical modeling.

In summary, this typology serves as a theoretically grounded and empirically validated tool for analyzing **hybrid regimes** across time and space. It enhances our ability to study the nuances of regime types in a world where formal democratic institutions often coexist with authoritarian practices.

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Regimes of the World (RoW), *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Anderson, Brownlee & Clarke – Non-Authoritarian Non-Democracy (NAND)

At the core is still a vacuum
– Jason Brownlee (2010)

The truth is out there
– X-Files

Ashley Anderson, Jason Brownlee and Killian Clarke's (2021) conceptualization of **hybrid regimes** represents a significant departure from traditional approaches in comparative politics. Historically, many scholars have defined autocracies in residual terms – essentially as non-democracies. These **dichotomous categories** classify regimes based on the absence of democratic features such as electoral contestation and alternation of power. In most of these approaches, any regime that does not meet the criteria for democracy is consequently labeled an autocracy, authoritarian regime or dictatorship, but is actually just a 'non-democracy,' a 'pseudo-class' of heterogeneous cases (cf. Satori 1991).

Anderson et al. (2021) argue that this residual approach leads to conceptual slippage, where regimes that are not fully democratic but also not fully autocratic are lumped together under the broad category of **authoritarianism**. To address this issue, they propose a substantive definition of autocracy based on 'positive' criteria rather than the mere absence of democracy. (For these reasons, they also diverge from **Linz's** (2000) ('negative') defining criteria, such as lack of a guiding ideology and lack of extensive or intensive political mobilization, or from Purcell's (1975) characterization regarding the low degree to which they respond to their citizens' demands. The levels of institutionalization or repression are also too varied across cases to count as a defining criterion.

They define *autocracy* as a politically exclusive rule characterized by two key features: (i) Monopolization of state control by a single group and (ii) absence of routinized mechanisms for other groups to share or replace the ruling group in executive power. For *Democracy,* they adhere to a minimalist, procedural definition (cf. Alvarez et al. (1996) – **Dictatorship-Democracy Index**). This leaves their third category: NANDs (Non-Autocratic Non-Democracies).

NANDs capture regimes that do not fit neatly into either democracy or autocracy categories: They do not meet the criteria for electoral democracy (i.e., they lack the procedural elements necessary for being classified as democracies, such as free and fair elections with meaningful contestation), nor do they exhibit the characteristics of substantive autocracy (i.e., they do not have a politically exclusive rule, where a single group monopolizes executive power and prevents others from sharing or replacing them. They actually observe five major manifestations of NANDs: (a) anarchies, (b) foreign occupations, (c) transitional regimes, (d) competitive oligarchies, and (e) competitive authoritarianism. All five of these regime types fall short of the procedural standards of democracy and, for that reason, have often been erroneously treated as autocracies in prior research.

The first three (a, b, c) are all regimes in flux and have routinely been quarantined in datasets because they are so hard to pin down. In none of these cases does a ruler actually rule – power is too diffuse – so they cannot be considered autocratic. Since these regimes also did not hold free and fair elections to the executive, they cannot be considered democracies. The latter two (d & e) are quite different. When regimes did not extend their suffrage extensively enough to meet the 'participation' dimension of democratic definitions, they are considered competitive oligarchies (d). In the final categories, the exclusion of rival or opposition groups is not total and these cases match the conceptualization of **Levitsky & Way** (2002; 2010) and are hence also called 'competitive authoritarian' regimes (e).

Anderson et al. (2021) offer specific coding criteria but do have to fall back on an arbitrary cutoff to mark the dividing line between authoritarianism and competitive authoritarianism (i.e., above and below 80 percent of the vote share for the ruling group). They also take an 80 percent threshold for electoral suffrage to count as a democracy (above 80 percent) or non-democracy (below 80 percent). The authors are fully aware that the operationalization of their classification will face a different set of hurdles than its conceptualization.

How to cite:

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POLYCHOTOMOUS CATEGORIES OF POLITICAL REGIMES

Science is rooted in the effort to discover something about the world, rather than to be content with one's own or another's illusions.
– Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (1959)

The study of regime classifications has long been shaped by a dichotomous framework that juxtaposes democracy against non-democracy. Even the most influential classifications of autocracies – such as those by **Linz** or **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** or **Hadenius & Teorell** – begin by isolating democracies as a distinct category before applying criteria to classify the remaining non-democratic regimes. This approach, while methodologically consistent with the rise of democracy as a dominant political ideal, reflects an inherent bias. Democracy serves as the foundational reference point, shaping the conceptual and empirical boundaries of regime typologies. This bias is deeply rooted in Western-centric normative assumptions that liberal democracy represents the pinnacle of governance.

Historically, earlier classifications (e.g. **Plato & Aristotle**) avoided this dichotomous bias due to the absence of democracy as a dominant regime type in those times. These frameworks often employed true polychotomous approaches, dividing regimes into multiple families and subcategories without privileging democracy as the starting point. Nonetheless, contemporary classifications are typically considered polychotomous because they offer nuanced categorizations within the broader dichotomy of democracies versus autocracies.

The evolution of regime typologies has also been influenced by shifting scholarly priorities. For instance, Hadenius and Teorell (2007) emphasized **elections** as a stepping stone toward **democratization** (following a broader electoral turn alongside **Schedler** and **Levitsky & Way**), while others, such as **Kailitz**, reintroduced ideological dimensions to authoritarianism. Despite these innovations, all classifications face methodological challenges. Polychotomous frameworks, while offering greater explanatory power by incorporating multiple variables, are prone to observation biases and difficulties in categorizing hybrid regimes.

A major issue that plagues many categorical classifications but is particularly pronounced for those focused on dictatorships is that when cases are once pigeonholed into one category or another, they can no longer 'move' between types before they break down and are replaced. The initial coding is usually done carefully: when a new dictatorship comes to power, many coders prudently wait until the transitional period is over in order to label it, but slow-evolving, incremental changes are not accounted for. For example, some regimes become personalist over time (like Mao Zedong's communist party regime in China), while their initial (single-party) label sticks. The issue is even more pronounced after **succession** (meaning a leader transfer, not a **transition**), where new rulers can either be very much controlled by the inner circles of their predecessors or exhibit notable higher levers of personalism, e.g., after a palace coup (Van den Bosch 2024a).

Of course, current regime classifications have developed measures for **personalization**. Some coders reclassify regimes from single-party to multi-party labels as they take stock of regimes' institutional adaptation. However, too many regime features are fluid and are either captured in binary fashion or omitted. For this reason, Van den Bosch (2024b) proposes to introduce vectorial dimensions for personalization, the intensity and dominance of the guiding ideology, and pluralism while also accounting for various organizational features (and their amalgams: party-based, military and tutelary bodies).

The overview below presents the most influential polychotomous classifications, as well as some lesser-known ones (Sartori 1971; 1993; Wintrobe 1990) and brand-new ones (Kailitz 2024; Anckar & Fredriksson 2018).

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Polychotomous Categories of Political Regimes, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Sartori – Purifying Classifications & Typologies

What democracy is cannot be separated from what democracy should be.
– Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited* (1987)

Giovanni Sartori (1924-2017) is not usually regarded as an original scholar of undemocratic politics. Perhaps this is because his insights on dictatorship are scattered in various texts; he did not write a coherent book on dictatorship theory, and his arguably most important texts on the subject remain in the original Italian (see Sartori 1971: 456-485; 1995). Thus, we associate Sartori more with classifications and typologies (not the same thing, in his view) of parties and party systems (Sartori 1976; 2005) or democratic regimes (Sartori 1994). We also know him as a methodologist of the social sciences, where comparisons, typologies, etc. play a central role (Collier & Gerring 2009; Kubát & Mejstřík 2019; Sartori 1984). His contributions to methodology cannot be downplayed; Sartori (1970) introduced the ideas of 'conceptual traveling' and 'conceptual stretching,' which are critical reflections to ensure that political concepts are applied correctly across different contexts.

Sartori was primarily interested in three issues in relation to the conceptualization and typology of non-democratic regimes. The first is the use of different words (concepts) in terms of their historical development, or what terms we can use to refer to historical and contemporary regimes, and to what extent we can or cannot confuse them. Second, it is the circumstances surrounding the use of the concepts of **authoritarianism** and **totalitarianism** (including their definitions). Third is the general theory of dictatorship and the typology of dictatorships.

Non-democratic regimes have been variously labeled, some of which are of historical origin, while others emerged only in the twentieth century. Terms such as 'tyranny,' 'despotism' or 'absolutism' are a thing of the past. **Tyranny** is an anachronistic term and should, therefore, only be used in the context of antiquity. **Despotism** is also a historical concept, except perhaps for regimes that originated and operated outside the Western civilizational and cultural world (Sartori 1995: 65-67). The most appropriate historical term for it is **absolutism**, which is a general term for unrestricted political power (Sartori 1995: 68). On the contrary, 'authoritarianism' and especially 'totalitarianism' are modern terms. **Totalitarianism** is a regime that must have advanced technological means at its disposal to allow the expansion and penetration of totalitarian power into different spheres of life. Another aspect of the modernity of totalitarianism is the ideologization of politics and the ideological indoctrination of society (and the party nature of the regime) (Sartori 1987). Indeed, Sartori's conception of totalitarianism does not substantively depart from the mainstream 'six-point syndrome' (Schapiro 1978: 18) of Friedrich and Brzezinski's (1962: 9-10) definition.

Sartori further advocated that the word 'totalitarianism' should not be used to refer to a specific political system but should be replaced by the prefix 'totalitarian' in the sense of a term denoting the essence of an extremely despotic type of dictatorship (Sartori 1995: 253). It is, therefore, in his view, correct to use the term 'totalitarian dictatorship' rather than 'totalitarianism,' which is consistent with his view that totalitarianism (and authoritarianism) is a Weberian ideal type of dictatorship that is more universal as a concept.

On the borderline between historicism and modernity is the concept of 'dictatorship,' which is a general term that encompasses all the above-mentioned words and terms. Sartori paid the most attention to the concept of dictatorship. The term 'dictatorship' is clear enough; it is simply a general label for any non-democratic regime. Sartori was not satisfied with the existing typologies of dictatorships. He argued that they conflated disparate geographical, ideological, and political criteria. To manage this confusion, he first proposed a classification (Sartori 1971; 1995) and later a typology (Sartori 1993) of dictatorship (cf. **dictatorship** for these details). With his classification of dictatorship, Sartori carefully organized this concept, which is both very diverse and very common (Panebianco 2005: 259-260).

On the other hand, it is somewhat lost in the vast number of typologies of non-democratic regimes (cf.



Balík & Kubát 2015; Brooker 2014) while naturally overlapping with some of them. It could not compete with more established typologies, notably Juan J. **Linz** (2000) or, for example, Wolfgang Merkel (1999), even if translated into English. His later typology of dictatorship (in English) suffered a similar fate. Sartori (1924-2017), for natural reasons, could not enter the discussion of the new forms of dictatorships of recent years.

How to cite:

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Linz & Stepan – Totalitarianism & Authoritarianism

A simple dichotomy between democratic regimes and nondemocratic rule obscures the distinctiveness of the totalitarian phenomenon.
– Juan José Linz (2000)

Juan José Linz (Storch de Gracia, 1926-2013), along with his co-authors Alfred Stepan (1936-2017) and Houchang Chehabi, has had a profound impact on the study of dictatorships and non-democratic regimes. Their regime classifications, based on Linz's original work from 1975, have been as influential as they have been criticized. The saying 'tall trees catch much wind' absolutely applies, and Linz and his colleagues undoubtedly advanced the field by generating so many debates.

While Linz is primarily recognized as a scholar of **totalitarianism**, continuing and refining the intellectual tradition of figures like Hannah Arendt, Carl J. Friedrich, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, his broader goal was to make sense of the growing diversity of political regimes that fell between the poles of democracy and totalitarianism. His typology aimed to bring analytical clarity to this 'in-between' space, offering a nuanced framework for understanding non-democratic governance. Linz's typology is considered polychotomous but has a trichotomous bias. He distinguished authoritarian regimes from the vantage point of both democracies and totalitarian systems but did subdivide this space by separating authoritarianism from regimes based on traditional legitimacy (such as **monarchies**) and those defined by personal rule.

The problem started with delineating totalitarianism. The concept was very narrowly defined and, according to Linz (1975), does not even encompass a significant portion of communist and fascist states (Kailitz & Köllner 2013). A detailed treatise of Linz's **totalitarianism** can be found under its dedicated entry, but suffice to note that contemporary classifications have broadened the concept and now refer to ideologically-guided regimes as **ideocracies**. For instance, **Kailitz** (2013; 2024) includes the latter in his dataset. More on Linz & Stepan's diminished subtype 'post-totalitarianism' can be found under 'totalitarianism' as well.

Linz's framework for **authoritarianism** was groundbreaking in its time but not without limitations. His definition of authoritarianism was primarily residual and negative – isolating those regimes that were both non-democratic and non-totalitarian (Kailitz & Köllner 2013). This reliance on juxtaposition with (foremost two) ideal types (democracy and totalitarianism) shaped the choice for his four main sorting criteria: (a) levels of pluralism, (b) the presence or absence of a guiding ideology, (c) the degree

of leadership restraint, and (d) the extent of political mobilization.

This affected the definition of authoritarianism, which feels negative and imprecise as it blows hot and cold at the same time in identifying those regimes characterized by constrained *but* unaccountable political pluralism, lacking a comprehensive or directive ideology *but still* shaped by distinctive mentalities, with minimal political mobilization – both in scope and intensity – *except* during certain phases of their evolution, and where authority is wielded by a leader *or* a small group, operating within ambiguous and loosely defined boundaries (Linz 1964; 1975).

These criteria were originally designed to identify (and contrast) democracy and totalitarianism rather than authoritarianism itself (a full overview of the contrasting features of the latter two can be found in **authoritarianism**.) As a result, authoritarianism became a broad category that was difficult to imagine as an ideal type in its own right; it is more an equilibrium between two extremes and an ideal type. Critics have rightly noted that Linz's umbrella category of authoritarianism is too expansive to facilitate meaningful comparisons between cases. Moreover, its subtypes (see below), in contrast, are too narrowly specific to compensate for this issue.

The seven subtypes of authoritarian regimes, all covered under the same entry, can be compared based on their characteristics of pluralism, ideology, leadership, and mobilization. These distinctions expose their diversity and their internal dynamics, but all subtypes are also ideal types, and actual cases often exhibit characteristics from multiple categories.

His work on personalist regimes, particularly in collaboration with Chehabi on (neo-)sultanism, has been influential but also methodologically challenging due to difficulties in operationalizing the criteria for these regimes. Hence, the shift to **personalist rule** in the last 30 years. Note that Linz actually categorized 'personal rule' into four distinct systems: (i) *oligarchic democracy,* (ii) *caciquismo,* characterized by the dominance of local political bosses, (iii) *caudillismo,* marked by the leadership of military chieftains rather than professional officers, and (iv) modern *sultanism,* which was the most contemporary and widespread form of personal rule. (Brooker 2000: 33). For a detailed overview of *caciquismo* and *caudillismo,* consult Box 1.10. Linz's (neo-)sultanism is fully covered in **sultanism & neo-sultanism** and compared to its Weberian origin.

Kailitz and Köllner (2013) rightfully note that it is still often overlooked that Linz fundamentally viewed sultanistic (personalist) regimes and monarchies as independent types and not as 'authoritarian regimes' in the proper sense. This means that Linzean 'authoritarianism' cannot be equated with our contemporary and prevalent use of the term authoritarian regimes as synonyms of autocracy and dictatorship (see Table 1.2 under **authoritarianism**).

While his separation and distinction of (neo-) sultanism brought attention to the unique characteristics of personalist rule, it arguably diminished the analytical coherence of authoritarianism as a category by failing to treat personalist tendencies as features that could exist across regime types.

Operationalization has been another major challenge for Linz's typology. His classifications rely heavily on subjective assessments, making replication difficult. Furthermore, his framework lacked clarity regarding coding criteria and their hierarchical application. This ambiguity complicates efforts to classify regimes consistently or compare them systematically. For instance, while Weberian concepts of legitimacy guided Linz, his primary focus was on how power is exercised within regimes rather than how access to power is gained – a critical dimension in studies of transitions and regime change (Schedler 2009).

Linz's typology also reflects its historical context. Developed in the 1970s and expanded in the 1990s, it was rooted in post-WWII conceptualizations of political regimes. Consequently, it struggled to account for newer phenomena, such as **hybrid regimes** or electoral authoritarianism**,** that emerged prominently after the Cold War. His framework did not incorporate dimensions like state capacity or 'stateness,' which are now recognized as important for understanding regime durability and performance and, in many ways, crucial to benchmark how power is exercised (Schneider 2010: Gilbert & Mohseni 2011).

Over time, the typology was refined with the expansion of two previously under-highlighted categories: post-totalitarian (Linz & Stepan 1996) and sultanistic regimes (Chehabi & Linz 1998). However, these expansions failed to address criticisms from contemporary scholarship, which has largely moved away from this framework, deeming it obsolete (Snyder & Mahoney 1999; Hadenius & Teorell 2007). Critics have highlighted not only the typology's lack of general applicability but also its misalignment with the complexities of empirical political realities (Lidén 2011; 2013).

Despite these limitations, Linz's work remains widely cited for its insights into non-democratic governance. His meticulous attention to nuance influenced later typologies and classifications of political regimes. However, his framework has not been broadly applied due to its methodological difficulties and its inability to adapt to rapidly changing political realities after the 1980s.

How to cite:

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Wintrobe – Tinpots & Totalitarians

The paradox is that the more the dictator uses his repressive apparatus to stifle opposition, dissent, and criticism, the more reason he has to be afraid, because the more opposition is stifled, the less he knows how much support he really has.
– Ronald Wintrobe (1990)

This two-dimensional classification by Ronald Wintrobe was inspired by earlier works on **totalitarianism**, especially those of J. Kirkpatrick (1982), H. Arendt (1951) and Friedrich and Brzezinski (1965). With the focus limited to autocratic rulers only, grounded in economic and rational choice theory, Wintrobe deductively extrapolates dictators' attitudes toward demanding loyalty, retaining control and collecting the fruits of office (**rent-seeking**) along two dimensions: (A) Opting for personal consumption (**rents**) with minimally required repression or instead seeking full control. (B) Seeking loyalty or not by providing public services in exchange for political support (Wintrobe 1990; 1995).

The rationale of this leader typology is to show different dictatorships' resilience to economic change and make policy suggestions for democratic regimes on how to deal with them and which ones will be more likely to reform and liberalize in light of economic downturns and enticements (foreign aid). Wintrobe's works contributed significantly to the study of correlations between civil liberties and economic performance by positing that **repression** and **co-optation** can be treated as two substitutes for maintaining authoritarian control (Svolik 2012: 9).

His typological matrix yields four categories of rulers: (a) *tinpots*: characterized by low levels of repression and loyalty, minimizing the costs for staying in power. (b) *tyrants*: characterized by high levels of repression and low loyalty, not investing in institutions to foster support. (c) *totalitarians*, characterized by high levels of repression and loyalty, and (d) *timocrats*, characterized by low levels of repression and high loyalty, maximizing the welfare of the people (see also **timocracy**). Only tinpots (a) and totalitarians (c) find themselves in some sort of equilibrium (Wintrobe 1990; Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 12-13).

Wintrobe's contributions remain mostly theoretical since his deductive typology does not have clear coding criteria or thresholds. Islam and Winer (2004) developed a dataset (borrowing available indexes as proxies) to test Wintrobe's hypotheses but could only partially confirm his theory, finding that positive economic growth leads to a reduction in the degree of freedom in totalitarian regimes, while negative growth having either a positive impact or no effect on freedom levels. However, broadening the defining scope of 'totalitarian' worsens these findings (Islam & Winer 2004: 315).

In later revisions, Wintrobe (2019) aims to establish bridges between his categories and other classifications. This is troublesome because his typology came out of a (bygone) Cold War reality and focuses on a ruler's rational choice (not on regime behavior as such). He considers military regimes (from the 1980s) a subtype of tinpots (both have short lifespans), and he equals single-party regimes with totalitarians (notwithstanding the absence of an **ideology**). However, there does seem to be an empirical equivalent for 'timocracies,' Wintrobe (2019: 306-307) admits these biases, his personal preference for rational-choice theories, and concedes the complexity of such comparisons.

Wintrobe extended his theory to suicide **terrorism** (2006), coup d'états (2012) and **hybrid regimes** (2018), papal **theocracy** (Padovano & Wintrobe 2013) and a recent article (Qvortrup et al. 2020) links the typology to explain the use of plebiscites in autocracies.

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Geddes, Wright & Frantz (GWF)

As virtually all close observers of authoritarian governments have noted, politics in such regimes, as in all others, involves factionalism, competition, and struggle. The competition among rival factions, however, takes different forms in different kinds of authoritarian regimes and has different consequences.
– Barbara Geddes (1999: 121)

The typology developed by Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz (GWF) has become one of the most influential frameworks for classifying authoritarian regimes since the early 2000s. Their contribution marked a significant departure from earlier paradigms (e.g., **Linz & Stepan**), which treated non-democracies as a residual category between democracy and totalitarianism. By abandoning the concept of totalitarianism altogether, GWF isolated all non-democratic regimes under a single analytical framework.

The GWF typology broke with the Linzean tradition of viewing **authoritarianism** as a residual category. Instead, it adopted a deductive, dictatorship-oriented perspective, focusing on identifying and analyzing variations among authoritarian regimes. Although at its core, it should be counted as one of the **dichotomous categories** – since GWF rely on an arbitrary threshold to distinguish democracies from non-democracies – their classification was designed to explore differences within authoritarian systems rather than between democracies and autocracies. One cannot make the argument the democracies are the residual category since their coding criteria clearly define all dictatorships as non-democracies before classifying them further into subtypes.

A regime is coded as democratic in the GWF framework if the executive comes to power through 'reasonably fair competitive' direct or indirect elections with suffrage extending to at least 10 percent of the population (Geddes et al. 2013: 6). However, this criterion requires significant subjective judgment from coders. For instance, determining whether an election was 'reasonably fair and competitive' often relies on reports from election observers, which can be problematic due to the lack of universally agreed-upon standards among such organizations. Furthermore, key concepts such as what constitutes a 'competitive' election or a 'large' party remain ambiguously defined in Geddes et al. (2013). Similarly, their method for estimating the size of parties that operated without legal recognition is unclear (Wahman et al. 2013).

Initially, the typology (Geddes et al. 1999) categorized non-democratic regimes into three primary types: party-based/civilian (**single-party regimes**), **military regimes**, and **personalist rule** (it also included residual categories for countries under foreign occupation or colonial rule and states with populations under three million inhabitants). **Monarchies** were initially subsumed under personalist rule. However, subsequent updates introduced monarchies as a distinct category, cf. Geddes et al. (2014b; 2018). Since these three/four categories all respond with authoritarian archetypes, each of them is expanded upon in a separate entry in the section 'Concepts & Archetypes.'

One of the most impressive aspects of the GWF typology is its accompanying dataset. The original dataset provided clear coding criteria and covered regimes from the early 1970s to 2000. Over time, it was expanded to include most regimes worldwide after WWII. The coding criteria focused on distinguishing leadership groups and identifying the dictator's background. Analogous to **selectorate theory**, one finds that GWF analyzed the size and composition of the **winning coalition**, as well as its relationship with the ruler (**incumbent**). This explanatory typology enabled scholars to theorize regime behavior using rational choice and game-theoretic models. By focusing on leadership dynamics and coali-



tion structures, GWF provided a robust framework for studying both the performance and behavior of dictatorships. This approach complemented earlier research that primarily distinguished democracies from non-democracies using democracy-focused **dichotomous categories** or **continuous measures**.

Despite its innovations, the GWF typology faces significant challenges in classification, especially regarding its amalgams. As Svolik (2012: 31) observes, *"the simultaneous establishment of a single-party, military involvement in politics and a high concentration of power in a dictator's hands are neither logically nor empirically exclusive."* This highlights how authoritarian regimes often exhibit overlapping characteristics that resist neat categorization into one of GWF's three pure types. For example, personalist leaders frequently emerge within military or single-party regimes but rarely eliminate these institutions after consolidating power (Svolik 2012). As a result, distinguishing when a regime transitions from military or party rule to personalist rule is particularly challenging. Moreover, some dictatorships do not fit any of GWF's original categories: for instance, *"regimes that simply do not experience military interventions, do not have a single party, and are not governed by a leader who managed to monopolize power (e.g., contemporary Iran)"* (Lidén 2013).

Similarly, amalgams that combine elements of multiple types – such as military-single-party regimes or military-personalist regimes – pose difficulties for classification due to their conceptual ambiguity (Svolik 2012) (the methodological intricacies of these amalgams are discussed in the methodological section under **personalist rule**). This lack of clarity raises questions about whether GWF's typology is collectively exhaustive or capable of addressing increasingly complex authoritarian configurations.

Personalist rule remains one of the most debated aspects of GWF's typology. This was greatly facilitated because Geddes et al. abandoned the older idiosyncratic terminology of Linzean **sultanism & neo-sultanism** and replaced it with **personalist regimes** (as did S. Huntington) and provided explicit coding criteria. Borderline cases, e.g., between personalist and military rule, existed and were particularly difficult to pigeonhole (as GWF admit themselves). A leader may have a military background or even wear a uniform but still function as an individual leader rather than as part of a collective military institution (Lidén 2013). Such methodological debates pushed efforts to better understand and operationalize personalism as either a regime type or a latent variable and really paved the path for this subfield of **personalization**.

Elections are another matter. The GWF typology was designed solely to capture the regime institutions that shaped and constrained the leadership coalition. It was not created to deal with elections, legitimacy, relations with the people or how state institutions are subverted and manipulated by regimes to stabilize or consolidate their rule. For this reason, many critics argue that GWF overemphasizes single-party regimes at the expense of other types of **electoral authoritarianism**. This structural shortcoming boosted new approaches, both within **trichotomous categorizations** (i.e., **Schedler** and **Levitsky & Way**) and in **polychotomous categorizations** (i.e., **Hadenius & Teorell** and **Kailitz**).

Despite these challenges, the GWF typology has had a transformative impact on comparative authoritarian studies. By offering systematic criteria for analyzing dictatorships based on leadership dynamics and coalition structures, it has significantly advanced our understanding of authoritarian behavior and their performance (both domestically and internationally).

Furthermore, GWF implicitly acknowledged that the era of totalitarianism had largely passed, necessitating updated classification systems that reflected contemporary realities. Their work has inspired new generations of scholars to explore how different regime types shape political outcomes such as stability, **repression**, and economic performance, as well as their **foreign policy** behavior.

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Hadenius & Teorell – Pathways to Democratization

Getting to democracy is easier from a regime in which competition is encouraged and the main challenge is to broaden participation; getting to democracy is much more difficult from a regime that has no tradition of political competition, however inclusive and participatory it might be.
– Axel Hadenius & Jan Teorell (2007: 56)

The classification of political regimes by Axel Hadenius and Jan Teorell (H&T) represents a significant contribution to the study of democratization and regime typologies, particularly in understanding the role of **elections** and varying levels of pluralism in authoritarian and hybrid regimes. Their framework critiques and complements earlier classifications, such as those by **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** (GWF), by addressing gaps in how electoral regimes are conceptualized.

The core principle of their dataset is the recognition that **elections** can serve as a significant institutional feature in certain authoritarian regimes. Competitive elections differ fundamentally from those in which opposition parties are either prohibited or excluded, allowing only the ruling party to participate. In such cases, opposition parties are unable to nominate candidates or gain representation in the legislative assembly. These differences matter in studying **democratization** patterns, making it a valuable tool for studying **transitions** from authoritarianism.

Hadenius and Teorell's (2006; 2007) critique of the GWF dataset centers on the latter's inability to capture the nuances of electoral regimes adequately. Specifically, they were dissatisfied with those **trichotomous categories** that divided regimes into democracies, closed autocracies, and hybrid regimes, cf. L. Diamond's **hybrid regimes**, A. **Schedler** and **Levitsky & Way.** To address this limitation, they proposed a more refined typology based on the 'organizational nexuses' of power. This approach examines how elites organize their authority within various institutions and structures, focusing on how decision-making and leadership selection processes are confined to specific organizations.

A key innovation in their classification is the differentiation among party-based regimes allowing various forms of pluralism for governance. They distinguish between limited multi-party elections, single-party elections, and no-party candidate elections as distinct models of (authoritarian) electoral pluralism. This differentiation is particularly important for understanding hybrid regimes where monarchies or military governments can also hold elections with varying levels of pluralism. By accounting for other organizational mechanisms in authoritarian regimes, they do not reduce their complexity to solely one dimension (pluralism).

Developed in 2007, the typology focuses on institutional features that define the modes of accessing and maintaining political power. First, they separate their democracies and non-democracies (see below); in the next step, their typology identifies three primary types of authoritarian regimes: (A) monarchies, (B) military regimes, and (C) electoral regimes. **Monarchies** (A) are characterized by hereditary **succession**, where power is passed within a royal family under constitutional or traditional norms. **Military regimes** (B) are defined by the predominance of military officers in political decision-making through actual or threatened force. *Electoral regimes* (C) are distinguished by the use of elections to confer legitimacy, further divided into subtypes: (i) *no-party* regimes (where parties are banned, but sometimes individual candidates compete for office), (ii) *one-party* regimes (with only one legal party), and (iii) *limited multi-party* regimes (where **opposition** parties exist but elections are not fully competitive) (Hadenius & Teorell 2007).

The dataset not only categorizes main regime types and their hybrids (see below) but also identifies several minor types of authoritarian regimes to account for cases that do not fit neatly into the primary typology. **Rebel regimes** represent a distinct subcategory of military rule. These regimes arise when a rebel movement originating outside the regular armed forces seizes power through military means. They remained classified as such as long as the regime had not yet transitioned or been reconstituted into another type of governance (an example of this is Congo-Kinshasa since 1997 (Hadenius & Teorell 2006: 6)). Also, **theocracy** is a distinct category where political power is concentrated in the hands of a religious elite, as seen in Iran since 1979. *Transitional regimes*, designed to oversee political transitions, are classified separately, such as Togo from 1991 to 1993. Additionally, there are cases where central governments lack full territorial control due to factors like *civil war* (e.g., Somalia since 1991) or *foreign occupation* (e.g., Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989). Finally, a residual 'other' category includes unique cases that defy conventional classification, such as Libya since 1977 and Lesotho from 1972 to 1985 (Hadenius & Teorell 2007: 148-149; Wahman et al. 2013: 28).

The classification emphasizes institutional structures over individual leadership or ideological orientation. This approach allows for a systematic comparison across cases and periods, distinguishing it from earlier typologies like GWF's focus on personalism or **Linz & Stepan**'s broader regime categories. The dataset accompanying this typology spans 1972–2003 and uses a combined **Freedom House** and **Polity Index** score to dichotomize democracy and autocracy, setting a threshold at 7.5 on this aggregated new 0–10 scale (Hadenius & Teorell, 2007).

In 2013, Michael Wahman, J. Teorell, and A. Hadenius introduced an updated version of this dataset, incorporating several key improvements. First, they expanded the time coverage to include the period from 1972 to 2010. Second, they refined the coding



criteria for electoral regimes by addressing criticisms related to the ambiguity of dominant-party systems. The updated dataset distinguishes between dominant-party multi-party systems (where the ruling party consistently wins more than two-thirds of the vote) and more competitive multi-party systems (as shown in **parties**, this matches the distinction between a 'hegemonic party' and a 'dominant party'). This differentiation is crucial for understanding regime dynamics because dominant-party systems often behave more like one-party regimes in terms of stability and democratization prospects (Wahman et al. 2013).

The updated dataset also addresses methodological critiques by offering greater transparency in coding decisions and providing robustness tests for different democracy thresholds (e.g., 6.5, 7.0, or 7.5). This flexibility allows researchers to adapt the data to their specific analytical needs while maintaining comparability with other datasets like those by Geddes et al. (2012) or Cheibub et al. (2010). The original threshold for classifying democracy was adjusted downward compared to the original edition (Hadenius & Teorell 2007) – where it was initially set at 7.5 it is now 7.0. The updates take into account **Freedom House** its less stringent 'electoral democracy' category instead of the more demanding 'free' category used in the earlier version. This shift demanded a recalibration of criteria, resulting in a lower threshold for defining democracy.

Regarding hybrids, military or monarchy regimes may coexist with electoral dimensions (e.g., multi-party, one-party, or no-party systems). While the disaggregated hybrid typology captures these combinations in detail, the simplified main typology classifies hybrid monarchies as monarchies and hybrid military regimes as military regimes to avoid multiple observations per country-year. This simplification reflects the view that the nature of rule – whether by a monarch or the military – is a more fundamental characteristic than electoral features. Their amalgams differ from those in the GWF's typology because H&T only allow the overlap of two categories, not three (Wahman et al. 2013: 28).

However, the H&T classification has faced criticism for certain methodological choices. One major critique is their decision not to account for **personalist rule** as a distinct regime type. While they acknowledged that personalism is a latent variable that can manifest across all regime types, they opted to use longevity as a proxy for personalism – a measure deemed inadequate by many scholars. This omission limits their ability to capture the varying degrees of **personalization** within different regime types. In contrast, other typologies that treat personalist rule as a separate category can at least isolate regimes where personalism is overtly influential.

Another criticism concerns the essentially dichotomous nature of their classification system when it comes to their approach of systematizing the universe of **political regimes**, which first separates democracies from non-democracies before applying additional criteria to categorize forms of authoritarian rule based on organizational structures. While this approach aligns with the GWF framework, H&T used combined **Polity Index** and **Freedom House** indices to establish a cutoff threshold for distinguishing democracies from non-democracies. Although this threshold was empirically validated against other classifications, it remains an arbitrary measure that relies on **continuous measures** not directly linked to definitions of democracy. Since the H&T typology serves foremost to map pathways toward **democratization**, their dichotomous bias can be forgiven, of course, but in this sense, its mission overlaps much more with that of **trichotomous categorizations**.

Despite these limitations, the H&T typology was a timely intervention in comparative authoritarianism research. It underscored the importance of **elections** in authoritarian regimes and provided a nuanced framework for analyzing how different forms of electoral pluralism operate within autocratic systems. Critics have argued that the typology is overly complex and that cases are fragmented into several categories (cf. Brownlee 2007: 520). While it is true that the classification is more descriptive than explanatory, tracing the pathways of rare regimes with a few cases still yields valuable insights. The framework was often used in conjunction with other classifications before the advent of **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem) and served its purpose of advancing the study of political regimes by offering a sophisticated analysis of electoral mechanisms and pluralism in authoritarian contexts. While not without its flaws – particularly regarding personalism and arbitrary thresholds – it remains an influential framework for understanding **democratization** pathways and the institutional dynamics of non-democratic regimes.

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Kailitz – Ideocracies & Variations of Political Regimes

Die Legitimation von Ideokratien liegt in ihrer utopischen Ideologie, die als Leitmotiv für politische und gesellschaftliche Transformationen dient.
(The legitimacy of ideocracies lies in their utopian ideology, which serves as a guiding principle for political and societal transformations.)
– Steffen Kailitz & Patrick Köllner (2013)

Steffen Kailitz's typology of political regimes, grounded in the principle of 'legitimation,' represents a significant contribution to comparative politics by offering a nuanced framework for understanding how regimes justify their rule. His approach innovates existing typologies by emphasizing legitimation strategies (or their sources), introducing more relevant regime categories, and addressing electoral dynamics in authoritarian contexts. However, it has also faced criticism for certain conceptual ambiguities and practical limitations.

Kailitz's classification is inductive and dictatorship-oriented, with seven generic regime types based on their primary mode of legitimation. It thus identifies the mechanisms regimes use to justify their rule rather than focusing solely on their organizational structures or the background of their power-holders.

The seven types are: *(i) liberal democracies* – these regimes derive legitimacy from free and fair elections and the effective constraint of executive power through institutions like parliaments and judiciaries; *(ii) electoral autocracies* – while these regimes also hold elections, they are neither free nor fair, and executive power is only weakly constrained; *(iii) communist ideocracies* – legitimacy is rooted in a dominant ideology based on Marxist-Leninist principles; *(iv) one-party autocracies* – these regimes rely on a single party for legitimacy but are not necessarily grounded in communist ideology. *(v) Military regimes* – legitimacy stems from control by the armed forces; *(vi) monarchies* – these regimes base their legitimacy on hereditary succession and traditional authority; *(vii) personalist autocracies* – legitimacy is centered on the **charisma** or **personality cult** of a single leader. (Kailitz & Köllner 2013; Köllner & Kailitz 2013).

Kailitz's approach introduces several innovations that set it apart from earlier frameworks, such as those by Geddes (1999), Hadenius & Teorell (2007), or Cheibub et al. (2010). Unlike typologies that emphasize who holds power (e.g., military, party), Kailitz centers his classification on how regimes justify their authority. This shift highlights the normative and ideological dimensions of regime stability. Kailitz distinguishes between communist **ideocracies** and one-party autocracies, underscoring the role of **ideology** in legitimizing rule. This adds granularity to the analysis of party-based systems and contrasts with scholars like Cheibub et al. (2010), who struggle to unify civilian dictatorships beyond their exclusion from other categories analytically.

This typology has been influential, foremost because it reintroduced ideology as a central criterion for categorizing regimes. Drawing on the works of H. Arendt, Z. Brzezinski, C.J. Friedrich, J.J. Linz, A. Stepan, and others, Kailitz isolated regimes with utopian ideologies in a (somewhat) broader sense. His broader definition *de facto* conflated **totalitarianism** and 'post-totalitarianism,' which were more narrowly delineated by Linz & Stepan.

His original framework was primarily focused on communist ideocracies, but its updated version expanded to include other ideological systems (see below). Kailitz argued that ideology constitutes a distinct source of legitimacy for such regimes, even though they are relatively rare in the twenty-first century. Their presence and significance, however, remain important for typologies, particularly for those aimed at making historical comparisons or observing long-term evolutions.

Another key innovation is Kailitz's introduction of 'electoral dictatorship' as a distinct regime type within autocracies. He, however, sees them as 'Potemkin villages' (deceiving institutional *façades*), unlike **Hadenius & Teorell** (2007; Wahman et al. 2013), who provide a highly detailed but potentially idiosyncratic typology of electoral regimes. Kailitz thus navigates a middle path by acknowledging elections as tools for legitimizing authoritarian rule while maintaining broader applicability across contexts.

Kailitz's framework avoids the pitfalls of overly rigid or overly detailed classifications – what Sartori (1993) termed 'model mania.' By focusing on broad yet meaningful distinctions, he provides a practical framework that balances theoretical clarity with empirical applicability.

In his first database, Kailitz (2013) applies his typology to analyze regime durability from 1946 to 2010, revealing the following patterns: Monarchies emerge as the most durable regime type, followed by communist ideocracies. Military and personalist regimes tend to be short-lived. Electoral autocracies occupy a middle ground, using elections as tools for legitimization but often lacking the stability found in monarchies or ideologically cohesive systems.

In 2024, his original dataset (Kailitz 2013) was expanded and updated. Rebaptized *Varieties of Political Regimes* (Va-PoReg), Kailitz (2024) and his colleagues (impressively) extend the temporal scope from 1900 to the present, covering not only independent countries but also polities under occupation and colonial regimes. Still using legitimation as the defining criterion, Va-PoReg covers the following regime types: democracy (i), electoral autocracy (ii), ideocracy (iii), one-party autocracy (iv), military (v), absolute monarchy (vi-a), constitutional monarchy (vi-b), personalist (vii), electoral oligarchy (viii), semidemocracy (ix), non-electoral transitional regime (x), (in addition to 'colonial' (xi) and 'occupation regimes' (xii), and residual categories like 'no



central authority' or 'part of other country').

A logical result of this increased level of nuance and detail is that the complexity grows alongside the margin of coding error. In the updated classification, several new categories were introduced. Among these, the distinctions between *electoral oligarchy* (viii), *semi-democracy* (ix), and the differentiation between *absolute* (vi-a) and *constitutional monarchies* (vi-b) are particularly noteworthy.

Ideocracies (iii) were also subdivided to encompass a broader range of guiding ideologies, distinguishing between regimes structured around left-wing (iii-a **Communism** & **Socialism**) and right-wing ideologies (iii-b) **Fascism** & **Corporatism**), as well as those ruled according to political interpretations of Islam (**political Islam** & **Islamic States**).

The inclusion of *semidemocracy* (ix) aimed to capture regimes that do not extend full suffrage – especially cases where suffrage was restricted to males while excluding females from the electorate. This categorization relies on Tatu Vanhanen's participation measure, which uses the (arbitrary) threshold of at least 15 percent average electoral participation to delineate semidemocratic inclusivity.

Electoral oligarchy (viii), by contrast, is more restrictive and was designed to capture regimes such as Apartheid-era South Africa, where entire racial groups were excluded from the electoral process. These regimes are defined as lacking even universal male suffrage or falling below the 15 percent threshold on Vanhanen's index of participation.

The differentiation between *absolute* (vi-a) and *constitutional* (vi-b) monarchies hinges on the level of consultation involved in governance. Constitutional monarchies are characterized by the presence of electoral parliaments chosen by at least 15 percent of the population, introducing a degree of consultation and inclusivity. A nice addition is that they use the suffix 'monarchical' to identify those monarchies that do not fall into the category of constitutional or absolute monarchy due to the lack of governmental power of the monarch (e.g., monarchical democracies like Belgium, the Netherlands or Denmark).

Personalist autocracies (vii) are better identified than in the original version (Kailitz 2013). Here, they are defined negatively by the absence of institutions capable of effectively constraining a ruler's power. This approach aligns with Geddes' classification. Symptoms such as self-coups also play a significant role in identifying personalist autocracies.

This additional complexity comes with several costs. By borrowing best practices from **Vanhanen** and others, they also invite criticisms regarding the latter's arbitrary thresholds and methodological baggage. Coding such cases now heavily depends on the intervention and subjective judgment of the coders. For instance, when coding *oligarchies* (viii), scholars must verify whether low participation rates – falling below 15 percent on Vanhanen's index – are not caused, for instance, by electoral boycotts.

Despite the increased complexity and nuance introduced by these additional categories, Kailitz's typology remains binary for individual categories when considering latent measures like personalization or ideological salience, which can evolve. For example, personalization may gradually manifest within a regime even if it is not immediately apparent in its formal structures. Similarly, ideology – whether totalistic or just dominant – may erode in importance while still playing a significant role in legitimizing a regime's organization.

A key challenge arises when regimes undergo institutional changes that appear to shift their sources of legitimacy. For instance, if a military junta eventually allows elections, does this signify a genuine transition of the regime's legitimacy? (Can't they revert to force the moment their electoral experiment fails?) Are **elections** always a form of legitimation, or is the electoral arena merely a strategic tool for dividing opposition forces, gathering information on opposition parties' preferences, or providing hesitant collaborators with a fan of options to cooperate (more or less) with the regime? These questions highlight ambiguities inherent in categorizing regimes based on a mix of institutions and theoretically deducted forms of legitimation alone.

To be fair, such criticisms are not unique to Kailitz's framework but extend to other categorical typologies as well. The interplay between ideology, legitimacy, and institutional structures remains complex and dynamic, posing challenges for scholars attempting to classify political regimes with precision and consistency over time.

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Anckar & Fredriksson (A&F)

The distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion.
– Albert Einstein

The inductive typology developed by Carsten Anckar and Cecilia Fredriksson represents a recent, categorical contribution to this field, particularly due to its longitudinal scope, covering regimes from 1800 to 2016. The inspiration for this approach stems from earlier longitudinal dichotomous frameworks that divide regimes into two broad categories, democracy and non-democracy, but go no further (like Alvarez et al. 1996; Boix et al. 2013) or have imprecise sub-classifications (Cheibub et al. 2010).

Anckar and Fredriksson's (2018) typology (A&F) is a nominally polychotomous classification system that seeks to sub-classify both democracies and autocracies into distinct categories. The primary purpose of the typology is to measure the evolution of political regimes over a long historical period. At its core, A&F retain the fundamental dichotomy between democracies and autocracies. However, they go further by offering detailed subcategories for each group (and not just for one, like Geddes et al. 2014 or Hadenius & Teorell 2007).

For democracies (I), the typology distinguishes between constitutional monarchies (I-A) and republics (I-B), with further subdivisions into parliamentary (I-A-i) and semi-monarchic (I-A-ii) systems for monarchies and presidential (I-B-a), semi-presidential (I-B-b), and parliamentary systems (I-B-c) for republics. Constitutional monarchies (I-A) are primarily parliamentary (i) systems but include rare cases of semi-monarchies (ii) where executive power is shared between a monarch and elected officials. Republics (I-B) are categorized based on their executive structure: presidential systems (a) feature presidents elected by popular vote with significant executive authority; semi-presidential systems (b) share executive power between a president and a prime minister; parliamentary systems (c) lack a popularly elected president with substantial powers.

Autocracies (II) are divided into absolute monarchies (II-A), military regimes (II-B), party-based (II-C) systems, split into single-party (II-C-i) and multi-party regimes (II-C-ii); personalist regimes (II-D), and oligarchies (II-E) (including monarchic oligarchies and other forms). This structure allows for a nuanced understanding of regime types across different historical contexts.

A&F combine indices and measures from several existing datasets, including both continuous and categorical variables, to create a unified framework for coding absolute **monarchies** and **military regimes**. A&F fall back on **Hadenius & Teorell** (2007); for party-based rule and **oligarchy,** they borrow from **Geddes, Wright & Frantz (GWF)** (2014); for **personalist rule,** they follow GWF and treat it as a separate subtype but follow Linz's definition of (neo-)sultanism (derived from **Weber**) – see also **sultanism & neo-sultanism**.

The coding criteria rely heavily on institutional characteristics rather than leadership traits or ideological orientations. For instance, democracies are distinguished from autocracies based on the presence of contested elections that meet criteria for competition and participation. Autocratic subcategories are defined by the mechanisms through which leaders acquire and maintain power – whether through hereditary succession, military force, party dominance, or personal authority.

One notable strength of A&F's approach is its historical breadth. While datasets like **Freedom House** provide valuable insights into regime characteristics since WWII, they lack the temporal depth necessary for analyzing long-term trends in political development. By extending their dataset back to 1800, A&F offer an additional resource for studying historical patterns in democratization and authoritarianism.

However, the typology inherits some methodological challenges from its predecessors. For instance, the reliance on strict categories may oversimplify complex political realities, such as **hybrid regimes** that exhibit characteristics of both democracy and autocracy. Additionally, the dataset does not account for variations in personalism – a limitation acknowledged by the authors themselves, nor do they observe **ideology**, although the latter is a defining criterion (its absence) in the Linzean approach to isolate personalist types.

The main issue is that the classification places the distinction between constitutional monarchies and republics at the same hierarchical level as the distinction between autocracies like military or party-based regimes. This (intended) equivalence glosses over the fact that dictatorships often differ more from one another than they do from democracy. This thus underlines the essentialist dichotomous bias in this polychotomous typology.

The A&F typology is an ambitious attempt to classify political regimes over more than two centuries. Most of its offered categories have proven to be meaningful in the past and distinguish between more features of authoritarian regimes than **Regimes of the World** (RoW) or Cheibub et al.'s **Democracy-Dictatorship Index**. Since it is a new typology, it is hard to assess its reception in the scholarly community of comparative authoritarianism. Its authors have, of course, built upon it (Anckar 2021; 2022) and sparked in-depth research in semi-presidentialism (Åberg & Denk 2024).

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CONTINUOUS MEASURES FOR CLASSIFYING POLITICAL REGIMES

Better measure short of seven, than spoil all at once.
– Gaelic saying

Measure twice, cut once.
(Its modern equivalent)

Continuous measures of democracy remain vital tools in comparative politics today. These datasets – now characterized by their comprehensive data and scale-based approach – are among the most widely used in the field. Their primary advantage is their ability to measure 'democraticness' (Van den Bosch 2014: 214), capturing the extent to which regimes vary on both horizontal (power-sharing) and vertical dimensions (societal relations), cf. Table 2.1. By examining the balance of power among legislative, executive, and judicial branches, along with the level of freedom enjoyed by citizens (including political and civil rights), continuous measures offer a single, comparative measure for all regimes. While these measures may overemphasize certain variables or encounter coding inaccuracies, they nonetheless provide a systematic and repeated assessment across nearly all countries.

Early operationalizations like those designed by **Cutright** (1963), **Vanhanen** (1984) or **Bollen** (1980) were far from perfect, oversimplified, and working with scarce and unreliable data. In addition, their authors pursued many (in retrospect) unsuccessful hypotheses and dead ends. Still, they pioneered the practice; others learned from their mistakes and their methodological insights. In most instances, these trailblazers were very much aware of the shortcomings of their models and assiduously annotated their recommendations for future generations.

Polity IV and Freedom House, two prominent measures of democracy, have their origins in these earlier efforts. The **Polity Index** traces its roots to the work of Ted Robert Gurr in the 1970s, who sought to assess political authority and regime characteristics over time, emphasizing institutionalized democracy and autocracy (and **anocracy**). **Freedom House**, founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and many other prominent politicians, scholars and journalists, initially aimed to promote democratic values during World War II. Its annual reports on global freedom began in the 1970s, measuring political rights and civil liberties. This index is influenced by earlier democratic theories, particularly Robert Dahl's (1971) concept of 'polyarchy,' which emphasizes competition and participation as key components of democracy.

By the mid-1990s, there was a counter-move away from scales toward **dichotomous categories**, with both sides defending their positions, i.e., Elkins' (2000) empathetical and accurate defense of gradual measures. In the same period, there was a generation of scholars that continued to build on previous models but were soon overtaken by the Internet age and its better data collection possibilities. For instance, Z. Arat's (1991) classification is somewhat forgotten.

Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat, in her book *Democracy and Human Rights in Developing Countries* (1991), offered an innovative approach to understanding political regimes by emphasizing the balance between civil-political and socioeconomic rights. Arat argues that democracy cannot be sustained without addressing both sets of rights equally. Her classification of regimes is based on this balance, using a ratio (RT) to measure how well governments protect *civil-political rights* (e.g., freedom of speech, political participation) versus *socioeconomic rights* (e.g., access to healthcare and education). A balanced regime would have an RT close to 1, indicating equal attention to both. Arat's innovation lies in her argument that neglecting socioeconomic rights can destabilize democracies, a perspective often overlooked by traditional liberal democratic theories. However, her approach faced criticism for its overemphasis on socioeconomic rights – as Western-centric – and the difficulty of measuring these rights consistently across different countries. Despite these critiques, Arat's work was influential in integrating human rights into discussions about democratic stability in developing nations.

By the early 2000s, electoral authoritarian regimes had become so widespread that a new branch (**trichotomous categories**) developed just to study these in-between regimes. Also, a new appreciation was

found for the FH Index and *Polity IV*, despite ongoing methodological concerns. New measures were created, like the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index* (BTI) by the *Bertelsmann Foundation*, published in 2006, or the *Democracy Index* launched by the *Economist Intelligence Unit* (EIU) the same year.

Unrelated, a deductive frame with a theorization of a radically new continuous measure came out in 2003. **Selectorate theory** stands out in this category because it aspires to cover all political regimes without being democracy-focused or democracy-biased, a rare feat. Although the framework's operationalization has been criticized, as well as some of its conceptual assumptions, it proved very influential when it comes to our comparative understanding of **political regimes**.

As A. Schedler (2006: 10) argued in defense of **Freedom House** (FH) and similar continuous measures: *"In its assessments of political rights, Freedom House asks more questions than we need, yet still asks the right questions, in order to judge the democratic quality of electoral processes."* Despite critiques regarding the transparency and consistency of coding criteria, these continuous measures have reliably tracked countries' positions over time, with wide acceptance of their classifications by most scholars (Van den Bosch 2014: 215).

Pemstein et al. (2010) offered a new solution to the ongoing challenge of having to select one measure among a booming amount of democracy measures by developing the *Unified Democracy Scores* (UDS), a latent variable model that synthesizes ten existing democracy indices. These indices – all rooted in Dahl's conceptualization of democracy (focusing on contestation and participation) – often diverge due to differences in operationalization and aggregation methods. Rather than arbitrarily choosing one measure, the UDS model aggregates them, leveraging their strengths while accounting for their individual uncertainties and errors. This approach allows researchers to avoid discarding valuable information embedded in other scales. Overall, the UDS revealed a high degree of convergence among these measures, as they generally capture the same underlying concept of democracy. However, confusion cases made different indices go haywire. By averaging these differences and providing uncertainty estimates, the UDS offered a more reliable and nuanced measure of democracy (Pemstein et al. 2010).

The idea of measuring democracy as a *latent variable* that cannot be directly observed and only indirectly measured represented a significant shift in the political science methodology since it acknowledges democracy's complex and often unobservable qualities rather than treating it as a simple, binary concept. Bollen and Paxton (2000) were among the first to conceptualize democracy in this way, using confirmatory factor analysis to construct democracy scores that account for both observed indicators and the unobserved dimensions of democratic quality. This foundational work inspired later scholars, including Treier and Jackman (2008), who further developed the concept by employing a *Bayesian Item Response Theory* (IRT) model, treating democracy as a latent variable inferred through multiple indicators such as civil liberties, political participation, and institutional constraints. Their probabilistic approach allowed for more nuanced classification across a spectrum, recognizing variations in democratic attributes among regimes.

Coppedge et al.'s (2011) and Lindberg et al.'s (2014) **Varieties of Democracy** project (V-Dem) adopted a latent variable framework to operationalize democracy along multiple dimensions, such as electoral, liberal, and participatory democracy, making it one of the most granular and versatile measures available (note that Boix et al. (2013) also contributed to this shift with a probabilistic model in their extensive historical dataset, which applies Bayesian methods to handle incomplete data and recognizes gradations between authoritarian and democratic regimes over time).

The big game changer in this field has been the creation of V-Dem. This dataset, unlike FH or Polity IV, did not stumble into its role as a global authority on the measurement of 'democraticness;' this was specially designed for it. V-Dem originated in 2014 as a response to the limitations of existing democracy indices, which were seen as too simplistic and over-focused on electoral aspects. Co-founded by political scientists Staffan I. Lindberg, Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, and Jan Teorell, the *V-Dem Institute* manages over 2,000 experts worldwide to continuously update and refine a highly detailed dataset with over 329 indicators related to various dimensions of democracy, covering more than 200 countries since 1900.

Finally, regarding continuous measures' ability to distinguish between democracy and autocracy, Kasuya & Mori (2019; 2022) investigate inconsistencies in democracy measurement thresholds, particularly in the cutoffs set by popular continuous democracy indices: FH, Polity IV, and Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)/RoW. These indices frequently set cutoffs to distinguish democracies from non-democracies, but the selected thresholds are often arbitrary and lack a solid theoretical or empirical foundation.

To compare, Yuko Kasuya and Kota Mori use categorical classifications like **Boix, Miller & Rosato** (BMR), the **Democracy-Dictatorship Index** (Cheibub et al. 2010) and **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** (GWF) as benchmarks because they believe such measures align better with theoretically grounded definitions of democracy. Their analysis reveals that the thresholds that best align continuous measures with categorical ones are actually lower than the cutoffs these continuous measures commonly use (specifically, they find optimal thresholds at around 3.5–3.7 for FH, 4.5–5 for Polity, and 0.39–0.42 for V-Dem/RoW. In contrast, the traditional cutoffs (2.5 for FH, 6 for Polity, and 0.5 for V-Dem/RoW) represent stricter criteria for democracy).

Their findings thus suggest that continuous democracy measures set a higher standard for what qualifies as democracy than binary measures, indicating a potential misalignment with theoretically informed definitions and a need for reconsidering



conventional cutoff points to improve conceptual consistency.

To recap, these datasets are particularly useful for mapping the democratic trajectories of countries over extended periods, helping to assess whether regimes are progressing or regressing in democratic quality or human rights protection. However, it is crucial to remember that these measures do not fully capture the qualitative differences between regimes that may appear similarly democratized (Kailitz 2013: 39). Additionally, accepting a continuous measurement implies a willingness to acknowledge the existence of (low but positive) levels of democracy even within authoritarian regimes (Cheibub et al. 2010). This can complicate qualitative, explanatory analysis and may lead to unintended (or misguided) quasi-categorical classifications. Especially when groups of regimes with similar or close rankings are labeled for convenience, and these labels are rendered or interpreted by other scholars as categorical distinctions. This, regrettably, is an all-too-common pitfall that should be absolutely avoided (Van den Bosch 2014: 215).

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Dahl – Polyarchy

A definition of democracy can serve as the basis for a distinction between democracies and nondemocracies only if it includes a universal standard that reflects the principle of political equality.
– Robert Dahl (1989)

Robert A. Dahl's (1915-2014) theory of polyarchy, introduced in *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (1971), has left a lasting mark on the field of comparative politics, particularly in the study of political regimes and democracy. Dahl's work shifted the focus from classical democratic theory, which often emphasized ideal forms of direct democracy, to a more empirical and procedural understanding of how democracy functions in real-world settings. The concept of 'polyarchy' ('the rule by many'), originally coined by Dahl & Lindblom (1953), provided a framework for understanding this attainable form of democracy as a system that exists along a continuum rather than as a binary condition of either democracy or autocracy. Polyarchy is a quality of a political system (like democracy) and also a dimension (unlike democracy). The absence of polyarchy is hegemony (see below) (Coppedge & Reinicke 1990: 52). This allowed for more nuanced classifications of political regimes and contributed to the development of empirical tools for measuring democracy.

Dahl's classification of political regimes is based on two main dimensions: contestation and participation. (A) *Contestation* refers to the extent to which citizens can freely and fairly compete for political power. This dimension includes the existence of competitive elections where opposition parties and candidates can challenge incumbents without fear of repression. (B) *Participation* focuses on the inclusiveness of the political system, specifically the proportion of the population that has the right to participate in political processes, such as voting or running for office.

Dahl argued that polyarchies are characterized by high levels of both contestation (A) and participation (B), making them the closest approximation to democracy in practice. To further define polyarchy, Dahl (1998) outlined six institutional guarantees –

originally eight (cf. Dahl 1971) – that are necessary for a regime to qualify as a polyarchy: (i) elected officials, (ii) free and fair elections, (iii) freedom of expression, (iv) alternative sources of information, (v) associational autonomy, and (vi) inclusive citizenship. These criteria emphasize both procedural aspects (elections) and broader civil liberties necessary for meaningful participation (Lührman et al. 2018; Teorell et al. 2019).

Dahl (1989) directly responded to **Schumpeter's** (1942) minimalist definition and found that the latter considers the mere formation of government as the endpoint of democracy. Munck (2009: 122) explains: *"Schumpeter's definition can be seen as starting with voters, running through elections, and ending, unambiguously, with the public offices to be filled by election winners."*

Second, Schumpeter's definition neglects rights beyond traditional political rights like voting. While he hints at freedom of the press (Schumpeter 1942: 272), he does not explicitly include it or other civil rights. In contrast, Dahl expands democracy to include civil rights and freedoms such as the press, assembly, and expression and considers how economic inequalities affect participation (Dahl 1989: 114-115, 178-179; 1998). Dahl thus raises another important question: Are there rights beyond political rights that are essential to democracy? (Munck 2009: 122-123)

Dahl's (1971) theoretical continuum stretches out alongside these two scales: (A) liberalization (public contestation) and (B) inclusiveness (participation) – and thus identified four ideal types: closed hegemonies (A-low, B-low); competing oligarchies (A-low, B-high); inclusive hegemonies (A-high, B-low); and 'polyarchy' (A-high, B-high). While Dahl did not develop specific coding criteria for classifying regimes based on these dimensions (reliable or complete data were not available), his framework inspired generations of scholars to operationalize his concepts into measurable indicators: Coppedge & Reinicke 1990 (*Polyarchy Scale*); Teorell et al. 2016; 2019 (*Polyarchy Index*); Lührman et al. 2018 (**Regimes of the World (RoW)**. Dahl's work had a transformative impact on comparative politics by shifting the study of democracy from normative theorizing toward empirical analysis. His emphasis on observable features – such as elections, civil liberties, and participation – provided a practical framework for comparing political systems across countries and periods.

One major contribution was Dahl's influence on how scholars classify political regimes. Dahl's work helped shift the field away from **dichotomous categories** toward continuous measures. This shift allowed scholars to account for varying degrees of democratic features within different regimes and embark on the study of **democratization**, a path paved by Dahl himself. Dahl's conception also contributed to the study of **hybrid regimes**.

Despite its profound influence, Dahl's approach has faced several criticisms of overemphasis on procedural elements, overlooking substantive outcomes like social justice or economic equality. Also, some critics argue that while his model ensures competition and participation, it does not guarantee that these processes lead to genuinely representative governance or public accountability. Next, some argue that Dahl underestimates how entrenched elites can manipulate democratic institutions even within polyarchies; see Box 2.3 on 'aoratocracy.' A common criticism for scholars of his time is that his model is largely based on Western liberal democracies and may not fully apply to non-Western societies with different cultural or historical contexts. His model did not account for factors contributing to the long-term stability or resilience of democratic institutions. (Krouse 1982; Munck 2009)

Robert Dahl's classification of political regimes through his concept of polyarchy remains one of the most influential frameworks in comparative politics. His work shifted the field toward empirical analysis and influenced numerous subsequent measures of democracy.

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Box 2.3 In Invisible Hands: Aoratocracy?

I don't know why people are so keen to put the details of their private life in public. They forget that invisibility is a superpower.
– Banksy

Linguistically derived from Greek, *aoratocracy* literally means rule by the invisible. The term is a neologist umbrella term proposed by the undersigned. For the sake of clarity, we want to emphasize at once that the proposed term in no way refers to nor suggests any conspiracy antics featuring secret world governments and all kinds of cozy occult societies. Rather, it refers to policy and decision-making processes and governance systems that are *decisively* influenced and shaped by actors who remain – either voluntarily or because they are obliged to do so – largely invisible to the public eye.

Let us briefly look at a few examples of (potential) key actors in *aoratocracies*. Although they often conduct public advocacy and thus also work in the open, policies shaped by lobbies and lobbying firms and associations certainly fit into the definition *if* their influence and impact are such that policy choices and political decisions would be radically different without their presence. In some cases, the positions, roles and influence of actors involved in supposed *aoratocracies* are traditionally heavily underestimated.

This is the case, for example, with civil servants, like the stereotypical *éminence grise.* Although civil servants are usually not supposed to publicly take political sides, on the interface of their capacities as citizens and state employees, they might influence policy choices or obstruct the implementation of policies, given their crucial position at different levels of governance and the dependency of elected officials on their work. Finally, what also qualifies as *aoratocracies* are 'parallel governance systems' by resistance movements, provided these systems are not openly advertised or claimed. We propose that there is only an *aoratocracy* at work if and only if the practical consequences of the influence and actions of the aforementioned actors shape politics and policies in a more decisive way than that of the publicly 'visible' actors.

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Cutright – Index of Political Development

Large scale comparative studies of national political systems offer the social scientist a methodology of great analytic power if only proper use can be made of the material at hand.
– Phillips Cutright (1969)

A value laden curiosity about democracies and dictatorships is not substitute for theoretical focus.
– Phillips Cutright (1963)

Phillips Cutright's (1930-2020) regime classification, developed in 1963, stands as one of the early and significant contributions to the quantitative analysis of political systems. His framework aimed to systematically measure political regimes based on empirical indicators that could be coded and analyzed.

S.M. **Lipset's** (1959) dichotomous categorical approach with intuitive measures was unsatisfactory and insufficient to capture the relation between democracy and development: *"one cannot distinguish among national political systems without a scoring system that assigns values to different nations according to some stated criteria. Although Lipset states his criteria he does not differentiate between France and Albania, Brazil or Chile. We would be better able to assess his descriptive statistics if the dependent variables – the national political system – had been indexed or scaled."* (Cutright 1963: 254).

At its core, Cutright's approach sought to explore the relationship between political regimes and socioeconomic development, offering insights into how different regime types might impact social and economic outcomes. His work was pioneering for its time, as it attempted to quantify developmental indicators, laying the groundwork for future studies in comparative politics.

Cutright follows Lipset (1959) and accepts the clas-

sification of political regimes into two broad camps: democratic and non-democratic systems, but he deducted his own continuous classification based on a set of coding criteria designed to measure various aspects of political participation, institutional development, and stability. These variables were cumulated into an index, and their total sum was crucial in determining whether a regime was *overdeveloped* or *underdeveloped*. Note that Cutright (1963: 37) emphasizes that the terms 'over-' and 'underdeveloped' are not meant to reflect a moral or ethical judgment about what a nation *should* have in terms of its political system. It is just a technical assessment of their institutional features relative to a nation's level of communications development.

The first coding criterion was (i) *political participation*, which measured the degree to which citizens could engage in the political process. This included factors such as the regularity, competitiveness, and inclusivity of elections. High levels of political participation – where citizens had meaningful opportunities to vote in free and fair elections – were typically indicative of democratic regimes. The second criterion was (ii) *legislative development*, which assessed the effectiveness and independence of legislative bodies. This involved evaluating whether a country's legislature served as a meaningful check on executive power or whether it functioned as a rubber-stamp institution. A well-developed legislature that acted independently from the executive branch was seen as a hallmark of democratic governance. The third criterion was (iii) *political stability*, which measured the durability of political institutions and their ability to avoid frequent disruptions such as coups or revolts. More stable systems were often associated with consolidated regimes, particularly democracies (Cutright 1963).

In addition to these broad criteria, Cutright's *Index of Political Development* (1963) introduced specific variables for coding regimes. This index awarded points based on four key factors: the (a) presence or absence of a parliament, (b) the composition of parliament, (c) the method of recruitment for the chief executive, and (d) the latter's support base. For example, countries lost points if the largest party in a multi-party legislature held more than 70 percent of seats, as such dominance suggested a lack of pluralism. Similarly, dominant-party control over both parliament and the presidency resulted in further point deductions unless the people directly elected the president (Cutright 1963; Vanhanen & Lundell 2011). Cutright and Wiley (1969) later added a score for voting rights to include a measure of *political representation* (iv).

Cutright's coding system was an early attempt to apply reproducible, comparative measures to classify regimes. It relied heavily on available data points like election outcomes, levels of representation in parliament, and reports on institutional functionality. This approach allowed him to create an index that could be used to compare political systems across countries systematically. He laid the foundation for later scholars who would build more sophisticated models for understanding political systems.

Another significant contribution was Cutright's focus on linking regime types with social and economic development outcomes. He argued that democratic regimes were more likely to achieve higher levels of social development in areas such as education and healthcare. This emphasis on development outcomes helped shape what would later become known as **modernization theory** (see also S.M. **Lipset**) – the idea that democracy and development are mutually reinforcing processes. Cutright's index was invoked frequently in the 1960s and 1970s in research on the relationship between democracy and socioeconomic development, social mobilization, social inequality, and mass communications (Bogaards 2007: 1212).

Moreover, Cutright's work helped refine how scholars conceptualized democracy for empirical research purposes by emphasizing three core elements: participation, legislative function, and stability. These components remain central to many contemporary studies on democracy today.

Despite its groundbreaking nature, Cutright's approach received substantial criticism from both methodological and theoretical perspectives. One major critique centered around his simplification of regime types. By categorizing regimes as either democratic or non-democratic based on his criteria, Cutright's framework often failed to capture more complex or hybrid regimes within his binary system.

Another criticism focused on Cutright's static approach to regime classification. His framework provided a snapshot view of political systems at a given moment in time but did not account for **transitions** between regime types or variations over time. This limitation made it harder for scholars using his model to analyze shifts toward democracy or authoritarianism within countries experiencing political change.

Scholars also pointed out that Cutright's criteria reflected a Western-centric bias, particularly in his emphasis on institutions like parliaments that might not function in the same way in non-Western contexts. This bias limited the applicability of his classification system beyond Western democracies, where different institutional arrangements might still support stable governance.

Like other early adherents of **modernization theory,** Cutright aimed to correlate democracy with development outcomes. Critics argued that his approach often implied correlation without causation and later studies showed that development is possible under authoritarian rule.

Lastly, critics noted that Cutright did not clearly specify how his index related to broader concepts of political development beyond institutional complexity or specialization. The assumption that more complex institutions equated with higher levels of development left many scholars questioning whether his measures fully captured what it meant for a country to be politically developed.

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Vanhanen – Index of Democratization (ID)

It was better to use quantitative indicators instead of using subjective evaluations when measuring democracy.
– Tatu Vanhanen (1990)

Tatu Vanhanen (1929-2015) was a Finnish political scientist and sociologist. His typology of political regimes, particularly his *Index of Democratization* (ID), represents an ambitious attempt to quantify democracy through a simple and objective framework. The core logic behind Vanhanen's approach is that democracy can be measured by focusing on two key dimensions: (i) political competition and (ii) political participation. These dimensions are operationalized using electoral data, specifically the level of voter turnout and the distribution of votes among political parties. While this method offers a straightforward way to differentiate between democracies and non-democracies, it has been subject to significant criticism for its oversimplification and methodological shortcomings (Bogaards 2007).

Tatu Vanhanen's journey in developing his ID began in the 1960s with his efforts to measure variations in political systems, although he initially did not focus directly on democracy. His early work, including his 1968 doctoral thesis *Puolueet ja pluralismi* (*Parties and Pluralism*), examined the pluralism of party systems in Commonwealth countries. Vanhanen hypothesized that the distribution of power within a society depended on the distribution of resources, and he used the largest party's share of votes as a measure of political pluralism. Over time, his focus shifted toward **democratization**, and by the early 1970s, Vanhanen introduced two key variables to measure the distribution of political power (see below). These variables were combined into an index by multiplying them, which later became his ID (Vanhanen & Lundell 2014).

Influenced by Robert Dahl, Vanhanen was convinced that two variables (competition and participation) were sufficient to capture the core aspects of democracy. His subsequent studies expanded to cover multiple regions and historical periods (Vanhanen 1975; 1977a/b; 1979), consistently using these two variables to assess democratization. By 1984, Vanhanen (1984; 1990; 1997) explicitly shifted his focus from simply measuring power distribution to measuring democracy itself, renaming his index accordingly. This framework became central to his later comparative studies on democratization (2003; 2009) across different countries and periods (Vanhanen & Lundell 2014).

Drawing from **Dahl's** (1971) *Polyarchy*, Vanhanen's deductive typology is built on the assumption that the essence of democracy lies in the ability of citizens to participate in elections and the degree to which political power is contested. To capture these elements, he uses two variables: the *election turnout index*, measured as a percentage of the total population (not just eligible voters), and the vote share of smaller parties, calculated as 100 minus the vote share of the largest party. This latter measure forms what Vanhanen calls the *competition index*, which reflects how competitive elections are by indicating how much power is concentrated in a single party versus spread across multiple parties.

The two variables – turnout and competition – are then multiplied to generate an overall ID. The resulting score is intended to reflect both the inclusiveness of political participation (through turnout) and the extent of political pluralism (through competition). Higher scores indicate more democratic regimes, while lower scores suggest less democratic or authoritarian systems. Vanhanen also sets specific thresholds to distinguish between democracies and non-democracies: if voter turnout is below 10 percent or if smaller parties receive less than 30 percent of the vote, a country is classified as non-democratic.

Despite its clarity and simplicity, Vanhanen's typology has faced several critiques from scholars who argue that it fails to capture the full complexity of democratic governance. One major criticism is its arbitrariness. The cutoff points that Vanhanen uses to distinguish between democracies and non-democracies – such as 30 percent for smaller parties' vote share and 10 percent for voter turnout – are acknowledged by Vanhanen himself as arbitrary. These thresholds lack clear theoretical justification, raising concerns about their overall validity in accurately categorizing regimes (Bogaards 2007).

Another significant critique is the oversimplification inherent in reducing democracy to just two variables: competition and participation, excluding civil liberties, political rights, the rule of law, and institutional checks and balances. By focusing solely

on electoral data, the index provides an incomplete picture of democratic governance, especially when compared with more comprehensive measures like **Freedom House** (FH) or the **Polity Index** (Mainwaring et al. 2000).

Moreover, there are concerns about subjectivity in coding. In countries where both parliamentary and presidential elections occur, Vanhanen weights election results based on his assessment of the power balance between these institutions. This introduces a degree of subjectivity to what is otherwise presented as an objective measure. Additionally, his index does not account for scenarios where different parties control different branches of government (e.g., one party controls the presidency while another controls parliament). This neglect of divided control limits its ability to capture political competition in such cases fully (Bogaards 2007).

Vanhanen's ID is clearly democracy-focused and struggles with differentiating between highly autocratic regimes. Research has shown that at the extreme end of authoritarianism, his index fails to make meaningful distinctions between (closed) authoritarian regimes. This significantly weakens its utility for analyzing non-democratic systems. (Vaccaro 2021)

Finally, there has been a noted decreasing association with other democracy measures over time. While Vanhanen's index initially correlated well with other widely used measures of democracy, such as those from FH or Polity IV, this correlation has weakened since 1980 with the emergence of **electoral authoritarianism** (Vaccaro 2021). This raises questions about its validity and reliability, particularly in more recent periods where democratic backsliding (**autocratization**) and **hybrid regimes** have become more common.

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Bollen – Democracy as Rights & Liberties

The concept of political democracy is continuous. We talk and think about the degree to which democracy is present.
– Kenneth A. Bollen (1990)

Kenneth A. Bollen's conceptualization and measurement of democracy represent a significant contribution to the study of political regimes, particularly in the field of comparative politics. His approach is grounded in a procedural and multidimensional understanding of democracy, which emphasizes the distribution of power between elites and non-elites.

Bollen defines democracy (as a scale) as *"the extent to which the political power of the elites is minimized and that of the nonelites is maximized"* (Bollen 1980: 372). By political **power**, Bollen (1990: 9) refers to the capacity to influence or control the national governing system. 'Elites' are those individuals or groups within society who hold a disproportionate share of political power. These elites include members of the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government, as well as leaders of political parties, local governments, businesses, labor unions, professional associations, and religious organizations. This (working) definition highlights a procedural focus on political rights and liberties rather than on specific institutional arrangements or outcomes, making his approach distinct from minimalist definitions that concentrate solely on electoral processes.

Bollen's work has been influential in promoting a



multidimensional and continuous approach to measuring democracy. Rather than treating democracy as a binary concept, Bollen views it as existing along a continuum. This allows for a more nuanced analysis of regimes by incorporating various aspects of political rights and liberties into composite indices. His datasets, such as the *Cross-National Indicators of Liberal Democracy*, 1950-1990 (Bollen 1998), operationalize this conceptualization by measuring political rights and liberties across different countries and periods. These indices provide researchers with tools to evaluate not only whether a regime is democratic but also the degree to which it exhibits democratic characteristics.

Bollen's (1989; 1990; 1993) focus on measurement issues and validity has also been pivotal in advancing the field. His collaborative works aimed to refine his original classification (Bollen & Grandjean 1981; Bollen & Jackman 1989; Bollen & Paxton 2000). He has consistently emphasized the importance of addressing conceptual challenges, urging scholars to consider how they define and operationalize democracy carefully. His work on methodology factors in cross-national measures highlights the need for critical evaluation of both data sources (e.g., subjective judgment by original coders) and methodologies (aggregation of data) used in regime classification (Bollen & Paxton 2000; Treier & Jackman 2008).

Despite these contributions, Bollen's approach has faced several criticisms. One major critique concerns the difficulty on how to operationalize his concept of democracy. While he emphasizes political rights and liberties as key dimensions, critics argue that it remains unclear how these elements interact: *"It is not clear, however, whether regimes that protect political rights and liberties minimize the political power of elites and maximize that of nonelites, and it is doubtful that this is true in anything resembling linear fashion, as the definition suggests would be the case. This problem is emblematic of those stemming from nonprocedural definitions."* (Mainwaring et al. 2000: 3-4).

Another criticism centers on Bollen's limited attention to institutional details. While his focus on political rights and liberties broadens the scope beyond electoral processes, critics argue that this emphasis might overlook crucial institutional factors that shape democratic systems. For instance, elements such as electoral systems, political party structures, or checks and balances play vital roles in determining how power is distributed within a regime. By not giving sufficient weight to these institutional details, Bollen's approach misses important variations in how democracies function.

Additionally, Bollen's multidimensional approach raises challenges related to aggregation and weighting. Combining various indicators into a single index can be subjective, with different aggregation methods potentially leading to different outcomes in regime classification. Critics argue that this process may obscure important variations within each dimension (e.g., political rights vs. civil liberties), making it difficult to capture the complexity of democratic regimes fully.

Despite these criticisms, Bollen's work has had a lasting impact on the study of political regimes. His multidimensional framework has stimulated debates about how best to conceptualize and measure democracy, pushing scholars to move beyond simple dichotomies toward more sophisticated approaches. His emphasis on continuous measurement remains influential in contemporary efforts to assess democratic regimes across time and space.

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Polity Index – Measuring Authority Structures

The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear.
– Aung San Suu Kyi

The Polity Index is one of the most widely used tools in political science for measuring political regimes, offering a quantitative framework to classify states along a spectrum from autocracy to democracy. Developed by Ted Robert Gurr (1936-2017) in the 1970s, the dataset has evolved through several iterations – *Polity I* was created in 1975, *II* in 1985, *III* in 1995, and the commonly used version,

Polity IV, was released in 2000. Currently, the work is continued under M.G. Marshall at the *Center for Systemic Peace* (CSP). The Center is based in Vienna, Virginia (US), and its mission focuses on promoting peace and reducing global violence through comprehensive data analysis and research on political instability, governance, and societal development. Besides Polity, CSP operates the *State Fragility Index* and reports on global conflict trends to inform policy and foster sustainable development.

The *Polity Project* (Marshall et al. 2019) was designed to measure 'authority patterns' rather than 'freedom,' distinguishing it from other indices like **Freedom House**. The latest index provides a 21-point scale ranging from -10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic), derived from two underlying scales: the *democracy score (Democ)* and the *autocracy score (Autoc)*. These scores are calculated based on five key institutional dimensions: (i) competitiveness and (ii) openness of executive recruitment, (ii) constraints on executive authority, and (iv) regulation and (v) competitiveness of political participation. By subtracting the *Autoc* score from the *Democ* score, the Polity Index generates a single value that places countries into one of three regime classifications: autocracies (-10 to -7), **anocracies** (-6 to +6), and democracies (+7 to +10) (Van den Bosch 2014: 113-114).

The Polity Index's methodology has been praised for its focus on institutional characteristics, yet it is not without significant criticisms. One major issue is its lack of transparency and conceptual vagueness. Critics argue that the coding rules for its components are abstract and inconsistently applied, making it difficult to understand how scores are assigned. Furthermore, the aggregation process – combining component scores into a single index – is opaque, with no clear theoretical justification for the weighting scheme used. This has led some scholars to question whether the index accurately measures democracy or autocracy as conceptualized in political theory (Cheibub et al. 2010; Gleditsch & Ward 1997).

Additionally, while the scale appears continuous, its distribution is often bimodal, clustering countries at either end of the spectrum and leaving intermediate categories underexplored or poorly defined (Reich 2002). This dichotomous nature limits its utility for analyzing hybrid regimes that blend democratic and authoritarian elements. This group is called **anocracy** and is described separately in its own entry since it is often used as synonymous with **hybrid regimes** (Boix et al. 2013; Coppedge et al. 2011).

Another criticism concerns Polity's overemphasis on electoral processes and executive constraints at the expense of other democratic dimensions such as civil liberties, political rights, and the rule of law. While these institutional features are central to democracy, their narrow focus may overlook critical aspects of regime quality. For example, regimes that hold elections but suppress dissent or restrict freedoms may receive relatively high scores, obscuring their authoritarian nature (Alvarez et al. 1996).

Moreover, Polity's handling of conflict-affected states has been contentious. Since the idea behind Polity was to quantify institutional frameworks, the index reached its limits in cases where there was no regular institutional setup. The introduction of *Polity II* in 1985 attempted to address issues related to coding interregnum or transition periods by assigning a value of zero during such times but has been criticized for overrating countries undergoing anarchy or transitions compared to other indices like **Freedom House** or **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem) (Boese 2019).

Colomer et al. (2016: 20) identify at least two significant concerns that discourage relying on the Polity Index for measuring transitions. First, while Polity includes a 'transition' category, it paradoxically often does not result in a shift to a different type of regime. Second, despite the inclusion of this category, the database frequently classifies short-lived experiences – lasting only one or two years or a few brief periods – as distinct regimes rather than treating them as transitional phases.

Although efforts were made in Polity IV to remove explicit references to conflict in coding definitions, previous versions measured conflict directly, and critics find this is still the case indirectly. This renders the correlation of anocracy with civil war 'virtually tautological' (Vreeland 2008), and conflating regime type with instability or weakness does not advance our understanding of the nature of political regimes (Van den Bosch 2014).

Despite these limitations, the Polity Index has had a profound impact on comparative politics and international relations research. From its inception, its continuous scale has encouraged researchers to move beyond binary classifications of regimes as either democratic or authoritarian. Its long time-series data covering over two centuries and numerous countries have made it an invaluable resource for studying regime dynamics and transitions. Usually combined with other measures, scholars have used Polity data to explore questions about democratization, regime stability, and the relationship between political systems and outcomes such as economic development or conflict. Often, Polity is taken apart, and its measures are upcycled into other **continuous measures** or Large-N research.

Ultimately, while the Polity Index remains a cornerstone of political science research, it must be used with caution and awareness of its methodological limitations. Its strengths lie in its ability to quantify institutional patterns over time and across cases, but its narrow focus, vague coding criteria and potential biases necessitate supplementation with alternative indices and qualitative approaches.

The *Polity V* project is still in progress and has seen partial releases. It aims to cover countries from 1800 to 2018, focusing on states with populations of 500,000 or more. In April 2020, a hybrid version of *Polity V* was made available, updating data for 74 of 167 countries. These updates focused on countries experiencing 'polar factionalism,' a precursor to political instability. The full release of *Polity V* has not yet been announced (Center for Systemic Peace, 2020).



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Freedom House (FH)

Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth.
– George Washington

Freedom House (FH), a US-based NGO, has been at the forefront of assessing political rights and civil liberties across the world since 1972. Its annual *Freedom in the World* reports have become a widely utilized resource in comparative politics, offering insights into the state of democracy globally. The organization's classification system and its methodology have significantly influenced how political regimes are understood and categorized. However, despite its contributions to the field, the FH approach has faced a long history of criticism, particularly regarding transparency, subjectivity, and ideological bias.

Traditionally, FH classifies countries into three groups based on their levels of political rights and civil liberties: 'Free,' 'Partly Free,' and 'Not Free.' These groupings each reflect a spectrum of freedom rather than a binary distinction between democracy and authoritarianism. Countries classified as 'Free' exhibit robust political rights and civil liberties, with open political competition, respect for individual rights, and a vibrant civil society. 'Partly Free' countries have significant restrictions on these freedoms, often characterized by limited political competition and government interference in media and civil society. 'Not Free' countries experience severe violations of political rights and civil liberties, typically under authoritarian rule with little to no respect for individual freedoms (Freedom House, 2024b).

This three-tiered system offered more nuance compared to earlier **dichotomous categories** of regimes as either democracies or dictatorships. It echoes Robert **Dahl's** emphasis on contestation and participation but extends beyond electoral processes to include civil liberties as integral components of democracy. This broader understanding enables FH to capture the complexity of political regimes that may hold elections but still restrict civil liberties.

As a continuous measure, FH employs a detailed checklist approach to assess political rights and civil liberties in each country. The coding process is based on expert analysis of various sources such as news reports, academic studies, and information from international organizations. The checklist is divided into two primary dimensions: (I) *Political Rights:* This dimension evaluates factors such as the electoral process, political pluralism, participation, and the functioning of government. (II) *Civil Liberties:* This dimension assesses freedoms of expression, association, religion, rule of law, and personal autonomy.

Each item on the checklist is scored on a scale from 0 to 4, with higher scores indicating greater freedom. These scores are then aggregated to generate overall ratings for political rights and civil liberties for each country. The average of these two scores determines the country's overall 'Freedom Rating' on a scale from 1 (most free) to 7 (least free). Based on this rating, countries are classified into one of the three categories: 'Free' (1–2.5), 'Partly Free' (3–5), or 'Not Free' (5.5–7).

With its 2004 edition, FH introduced a 'Democracy Score' – an average of each country's ratings on all of the indicators covered in its survey. This score was designed to simplify the analysis of the countries' overall progress or deterioration from year to year. Based on its scale of 1 (most free) to 7 (least free), FH identifies the following groups: consolidated democracy (score 1–2), semi-consolidated democracy (3), transitional government/hybrid regime (4), semi-consolidated authoritarian regime (5), and consolidated authoritarian regime (6–7).

While this checklist approach allows for systematic evaluation across countries, it has been criti-

cized for its aggregation rules. Scholars like Cheibub et al. (2010) argue that the FH methodology lacks transparency in how different scores are combined to arrive at final classifications. They contend that the aggregation process is arbitrary and could lead to billions of possible combinations that result in different classifications (Van den Bosch 2014). The FH ratings do not reflect consistent criteria across cases (see below); therefore, countries with very different democratic qualities can receive the same top scores, with FH thus failing to capture the diversity in how democracy is implemented.

FH groups together cases and labels these, either along the cutoff thresholds on the 'Freedom Rating' or the 'Democracy Score,' but under no circumstance can these be considered 'conceptual categorizations.' Too often, scholars refer to these group labels ('Free' – 'Partly Free' – 'Not Free'), separated by arbitrary cutoff points on their ranking scale, as 'categories' identifying distinct 'regime types' – FH is guilty of this – killing any research design findings that are based on this (due to methodological error overdose).

Despite these criticisms, FH's classification system has had a profound impact on the field of comparative politics. Its data provides a longitudinal measure of freedom across a large number of countries over time, making it an invaluable resource for scholars studying **democratization** trends or regime **transitions**. The extensive coverage offered by its cyclical *Freedom in the World* reports allows researchers to conduct cross-national comparisons and analyze how democracy correlates with other variables such as economic development or conflict.

Moreover, FH reports have influenced not only academic research but also policymaking and advocacy efforts. International organizations often cite FH data in policy debates or when allocating **foreign aid** based on democratic credentials. Advocacy groups have also used the organization's rankings to promote **human rights** or pressure governments to uphold democratic norms.

FH has faced significant criticism over several aspects of its methodology, with *"problems in all areas of conceptualization, measurement, and aggregation."* (Munck & Verkuilen 2002: 28). This, in turn, has stimulated important debates within the field about how democracy should be conceptualized and measured. Scholars have developed alternative indices – such as the **Polity Index** or **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem) – that aim to address some of the limitations identified in the FH approach.

As mentioned above, one major critique concerns coding transparency: FH does not provide enough disaggregated data or clear explanations for how its ratings are calculated (Cheibub et al. 2010), making it difficult for researchers to scrutinize the coding process or assess whether individual scores are justified.

A related issue is the subjectivity in coding: Since FH relies heavily on expert assessments rather than objective indicators, there is real concern that personal biases may influence how countries are rated (Coppedge et al. 2011). For example, Kenneth Bollen has proven that expert-based evaluations are prone to systematic measurement errors due to subjective judgments (Bollen & Paxton 2000).

Finally – and perhaps most controversially – FH has been accused of ideological bias in the past. Numerous studies have shown evidence that countries with Marxist-Leninist regimes were systematically downgraded during the Cold War era (Boese 2019: 104). Even today, some critics argue that FH tends to favor Western-style liberal democracies while downrating socialist or left-leaning governments. This ideological bias raises questions about whether FH ratings reflect an objective assessment of freedom or merely align with US foreign policy interests.

In conclusion, while FH's regime ranking has played a prominent role in shaping our understanding and tracking of democracy and authoritarianism globally, it is not without its flaws. Its checklist approach provides valuable insights into political rights and civil liberties across countries (and its country reports are valuable even without comparative intent), but its index suffers heavily from issues related to transparency, subjectivity in coding decisions, and (lingering) ideological bias.

Still, one has to acknowledge that FH does a reasonable job in evaluating electoral processes and that its qualitative country reports can offer insightful assessments (Schedler 2009). In any case, FH remains an influential voice in both academic research and policy advocacy concerning global freedom trends – a testament to its enduring relevance despite ongoing debates about its methodology.

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Freedom House (FH), *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Selectorate Theory

It's always better for a ruler to determine who eats than it is to have a larger pie from which the people can feed themselves.
– Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook* (2012)

With its roots in economics and comparative politics, selectorate theory integrates the logic of political survival with theories of coalition building and public and private distribution politics (**patronage**). It is a universal theoretical frame created by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Morrow, presented in one seminal work, *The Logic of Political Survival* (2003), this deductive analytical lens can be applied to all political regimes, not discriminating between democracy and autocracy. Since it extrapolates power dynamics based on the relative size (and relation) of distinct groups within polities, it is considered a continuous measure to classify regimes.

Selectorate theory divides all polities into the following groups, hierarchically presented here from those with the most political power to those disenfranchised (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003: 38-39, 51,70-76, 342-346). Note that abbreviations are the original ones used by the authors.

Incumbent (I) The current leadership or supreme holder(s) of power: president, king, prime minister, head of the politburo, etc. Depending on the polity, this can be one or more persons. The leadership has the authority to raise revenue and allocate resources, dividing it between public goods allocations that benefit everyone in society with private rewards that only go to members of the winning coalition. In the model, incumbents do have rivals: A *challenger* (C) refers to an individual or would-be leadership group (from the selectorate) attempting to depose the incumbent leader within the 'rules' or norms of transition in the existing system with the goal to gain control over policy choices regarding taxing and spending.

Winning coalition (W) A subset of the selectorate of sufficient size such that this subset's support endows the leadership with political power over the remainder of the selectorate as well as over the disenfranchised members of the society. In exchange for their support, members of the winning coalition receive a share of whatever private benefits the incumbent doles out to her supporters. Common synonyms for this group are 'inner circle' or 'ruling coalition.'

Selectorate (S) Defined as the set of people whose endowments include the qualities or characteristics institutionally required to choose the government's leadership and necessary for gaining access to private benefits doled out by the government's leadership. For instance, in a monarchy, the selectorate is the royal family and related aristocrats; in a military regime, it is a group of officers; in a party regime, the bulk of the group are active party members. The term was adopted from British parliamentary politics to denote the group within a political party that has effective power to choose leaders (Shirk 1993: 71). Peter Paterson (1967) seems to be the first to have conceptualized it.

Opposition (O) An organized subset of the selectorate that is oppressed by the winning coalition and incumbent because they challenge the established or proposed political order and/or the rules (both formal and/or informal) to become part of or replace the winning coalition.

Residents (N) The group of residents of the polity that are unenfranchised or otherwise excluded from political power. Their policy preferences are ignored on a daily basis, though depending on the openness of the regime they can obtain political leverage by organizing and pressuring the government through strikes, manifestations, boycotts, sit-ins, riots, etc. but also through lynch mobs, revolution, supporting rebels or separatists.

The selectorate and winning coalition are very different in various polities. The categories to be included this group range from: (a) personal origin: birthplace and lineage; (b) special proficiency: skills, beliefs, and/or knowledge; (c) wealth (also land ownership); and (d) gender and/or age. Military prowess is among the most common special skills used to determine selectorate membership. Possession or control over arms is a special type of expertise that continues to play a crucial role in many polities with small W and S. (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003: 43, 46)

In inclusive democratic elections for instance, the selectorate *(de jure)* equals the electorate, making the winning coalition much more inclined to provide public goods to the population as a whole in order to win re-election. Even so, the theory does differentiate among democratic systems like proportional or first-past-the-post (single member electoral district) systems, finding that the former favor larger minimal W.

Autocracies are as different from each other as from democracies, but a common characteristic is the small size of the S and W. Of course, context is everything here: Military **juntas** can have a small S if the previous **coup d'état** was done by higher officers and much bigger S when lower officers ousted the last ruler. There is one observation though: loyalty toward the ruler is higher when a W is small and a S large.

Since the theory applies quantified game theory to the power relations of an established **incumbent** *vis-à-vis* the ruling coalition and other groups, the theory cannot be applied to study the emergence or demise of political regimes, just their ongoing politics.

The theory and related terms are still very influential and prevalent, even when its more salient conclusions have been pulled into question. While

experimental game theory tests confirm the findings (Bausch 2014; 2017), many have found issues with the original authors' empirical measurement criteria (Clarke & Stone 2008; Rockoff 2014; Kennedy 2019). The authors did respond with additional clarifications (Morrow et al. 2008; Bueno de Mesquita & Smith 2015) and several others have also proposed modifications to the theory (Arena & Nicoletti 2014; Cao & Ward 2015).

Bueno de Mesquita & Smith (2022) updated their model recently using **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem) data, finding that institutions, rather than attitudes and behaviors, provide a stronger foundation for distinguishing government resource allocations across all types of governments.

J. Weeks (2014) and many others have criticized some of the selectorate theory's core assumptions: e.g., members of the winning coalition do not automatically lose power when the incumbent is ousted (they can have their own support bases and that all actors perceive the world in the same way, thus ignoring a lot of the uncertainty (and disinformation) that exist in real-life politics. Van den Bosch (2021: 11-12) finds that the theory does not qualify the nature of power relations between groups (collegial or dependent) but extrapolates findings merely based on their quantified (relative size) and relational proportions, which is problematic for a nuanced understanding of **personalist rule**.

Callagher and Hanson (2015) provide an excellent critical review of the theory and conclude that the theory is a 'dull blade' for understanding authoritarianism – *"It can be useful for an initial stab at predicting general tendencies in politics, but it is not the right tool for every job, nor is it advisable for detailed work."* (2015: 368). This is a criticism often voiced for other continuous measures beholden to the assumption that democracies and dictatorships can and should be analyzed along a continuum.

In detail, Callagher and Hanson (2015) focus on three problematic aspects of selectorate theory and its application. First, they question the utility of the theory's key concepts of S and W in authoritarian regimes where formal institutions to structure political transitions are absent or inconsequential. Second, the theory underestimates the role of the unenfranchized members of society, the 'ejectorate' that has the power to oust the regime with extralegal means (cf. Zimmerman 2014). Third, the theory assumes that the members of the S are homogeneous, and it unrealistically links public goods and political rights. With only the size of W as a relevant feature the theory struggles to explain even policy change. Moreover, selectorate theory neglects the role of authoritarian political institutions such as legislatures and parties in providing rulers the capability to grapple with threats arising from within the ruling elite and from society at large (Callagher & Hanson 2015: 368-369, 381).

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Svolik – Institutions in Dictatorships

This is the essential lesson of politics: in the end ruling is the objective, not ruling well.
– Bruce Bueno de Mesquita & Alastair Smith, *The Dictator's Handbook* (2012)

Milan Svolik (2009; 2012) chooses radically to map (only) dictatorships along a continuous spectrum benchmarking their institutional variety, foregoing strict categorization. He eloquently boils down the heterogeneity of autocracies along two single conceptual dimensions: (A) authoritarian control and (B) authoritarian power-sharing. His deductive approach is to counter the prevailing practice of classifying dictatorships into a few ideal types or according to their prominent descriptive features; criticizing this practice for collapsing multiple and distinct conceptual dimensions of authoritarian politics into a single typology. He finds biases in difficult classification judgments that weigh incommensurable aspects of authoritarian politics for sorting regimes into categories that are neither mutually exclusive nor collectively exhaustive, compromising the validity and reliability of the research based on them and limiting the appropriateness as general-purpose typologies of dictatorships (Svolik 2012: 17, 29).

His approach explicitly identifies the two above-mentioned conceptual dimensions of authoritarian politics and develops scales to measure them. The accompanying dataset (borrowing existing data) focuses on the political organization of dictatorships by coding their use of authoritarian institutions (as well as informal rules). At the country level, he measures four conceptual dimensions: (a) military involvement in politics, (b) restrictions on political parties, (c) legislative selection, and (d) executive selection, and links them with data on leadership change and ruling coalition duration and composition (Svolik 2012).

In this impressive attempt to unburden scholars of the restrictive chains of categorization, Svolik cannot fully forego the use of categories himself (he still resorts to a typology to circumscribe various shades of military rule). On the other hand, he exposed the (at the time) current use of 'leader tenure' as a faulty proxy to measure 'regime durability' (Wright 2015: 577). Using rational choice and game theory, Svolik made enormous inroads in the study of the process of **personalization;** he consolidated current thinking about the power relations of the inner circle, the use of institutions for information-gathering purposes by the dictator (for reducing uncertainty), and as a tool for binding junior cadres to the regime.

Svolik's dataset serves its designed purpose, scaling the internal power (sharing) relations, the level of power concentration, and its application of institutions to maintain power. Its strict focus on the logic of the inner sanctum allows it to map autocratic trajectories (or countries' authoritarian spells – Box 2.4), but it cannot be used to study **democratization**. Because the theory is reliant on rational choice and game theory, it cannot account for executive mistakes or the 'irrational' actions of other regime insiders, other crucial factors such as ideology, culture, and historical context, nor the effects of international cooperation (and learning) among dictatorships (cf. Knutsen et al. 2017).

Another critique concerns Svolik's emphasis on power-sharing mechanisms between dictators and elites as a primary means of maintaining regime stability. Frantz and Ezrow (2011) argue that such approaches underestimate the diversity of strategies regimes use to retain power. For instance, **personalist regimes** may rely more heavily on **clientelism** or **patronage** networks rather than formalized power-sharing arrangements. Svolik's framework may not fully capture the variety of tools specific authoritarian leaders develop and employ to uphold regime stability.

Svolik is also criticized for insufficiently addressing how authoritarian regimes interact with their populations. Gerschewski (2013) notes that Svolik's focus on elite dynamics neglects how dictators seek **legitimacy** or build popular support through propaganda, social programs, or economic development – factors that are critical in many regimes' survival strategies. Moreover, Svolik's reliance on quantitative data to test his framework raises questions about generalizability. Pepinsky (2014) points out that such data may not fully capture the unique cultural and institutional factors present in countries like China or Russia, limiting the applicability of his conclusions across different contexts.

Still, despite these limitations, Svolik's work is a fundamental contribution to the study of autocracy for its cold logic and crystal conceptualizations.

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Box 2.4 Authoritarian Spells

I put a spell on you!
– Song written and recorded by 'Screaming' Jay Hawkins (1956)

In comparative politics, the term *authoritarian spells* refers to a period during which a country experiences authoritarian rule, typically following a democratic breakdown or other political transition (e.g., occupation). An authoritarian spell is marked by the suspension or significant curtailment of democratic institutions and practices, such as competitive elections, civil liberties, and political pluralism and will last as long as a country is ruled this way.

Authoritarian spells are often counted in country-years and analyzed in terms of their beginning and end points, which coups, revolutions, or gradual democratic transitions may trigger. Autocracy-to-autocracy transitions or leadership transfers within dictatorships do not interrupt such spells.

Depending on the definition of **democracy** and its classification criteria, authoritarian spells can end the moment a democratically elected government takes over (either the powerholders change or the previous government is elected in free and fair elections) or later when a country experiences its first democratic turnover (a regular, democratic, peaceful transfer of power of one democratic government to another with a different political coalition). Because of these different approaches, it is important to check the exact coding criteria of datasets. The concept is useful for understanding how regimes transition between democracy and various forms of authoritarianism and for tracking the intensity of **authoritarian legacies**.

Some research specifically tracks 'personalist spells' (cf. **personalist rule**) or 'totalitarian spells' (cf. **totalitarianism**) to explore the impact of these particular forms of rule on state structures (foremost institutions) and their societies, in particular **civil society**, the organizational capacity of **opposition** forces, and the quality of journalism and free press.

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Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM)

Democracy requires more than an aggregation of existing preferences; it demands public reasoning focused on the common good.
– V-Dem website

Presented to the world in 2014 (Lindberg et al. 2014), *The Varieties of Democracy* (V-Dem) project represents a groundbreaking initiative in the study and measurement of democracy, offering a nuanced, multidimensional, and highly disaggregated framework. Its purpose is to address the limitations of traditional democracy indices by capturing the complexity of democratic governance, recognizing that democracy extends far beyond the mere presence of elections. V-Dem's approach has had a transformative impact on academic research, policymaking, and advocacy while also facing critiques that underscore the inherent challenges of measuring such a multifaceted concept.

Currently the king of continuous measures, V-Dem is exceptional in disaggregating its comprehensive, maximalist definition of liberal democracy into hundreds of observable indicators. With an elaborate, transparent and standardized method for harnessing the power of thousands of country experts, the observed data points can then be transformed into either a continuous measure (V-Dem) or turned into a (essentially trichotomous) categorical classification: **Regimes of the World** (RoW). Specially designed for democracy, this inductive, democracy-focused measure has several limits when it comes to differentiating authoritarian regimes (i.e., with competing ideologies), although, notwithstanding its complexity, its indicators can be accessed individually by students of dictatorship.

The primary aim of V-Dem is to provide a comprehensive and detailed understanding of democracy by conceptualizing it through seven key principles: electoral, liberal, majoritarian, consensual, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian. Of these, five – electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian – are operationalized as separate indices. This framework acknowledges that different schools of thought prioritize different democratic values (Coppedge et al. 2011). For example, while electoral democracy emphasizes free and fair elections as fundamental, liberal democracy focuses on constitutional protections for individual rights and checks on executive power. By disaggregating these dimensions into over 350 indicators (later expanded to 470), V-Dem allows researchers to analyze specific aspects of democracy in detail and trace their evolution across 177 countries from 1900 to the present.

Note that V-Dem also has a Historical V-Dem project that codes democracy indicators and institu-



tional features from the French Revolution (1789) to the early twentieth century, covering 80 polities with around 200 V-Dem indicators, including 130 expert-coded indicators. Its integration with V-Dem (using overlapping data) ensures consistent data from 1789 to the present for countries with continuous lineages like France and India, as well as former entities like Bavaria and The Two Sicilies.

V-Dem's methodology is distinguished by its rigor and transparency. It employs a combination of factual data (A-type indicators) and expert assessments (C-type indicators), relying on a network of over 2,800 country experts who provide ratings for various democratic practices and principles. To ensure reliability and mitigate biases in expert coding, V-Dem uses *Bayesian Item Response Theory* (IRT) models (see also Treier & Jackman 2008). (Coppedge et al. 2024a/b)

Bayesian IRT is a statistical method for measuring abstract concepts, like democracy, using multiple indicators. In democracy research, such as V-Dem, it analyzes expert ratings of indicators (e.g., electoral integrity, freedom of expression) to estimate a country's 'democracy level.' Indicators vary in importance and difficulty, and Bayesian IRT accounts for these differences. Unlike traditional IRT, the Bayesian approach incorporates prior knowledge and quantifies uncertainty. It adjusts for biases in expert ratings and weights indicators based on their informativeness. The result is a continuous democracy score for each country, with uncertainty estimates, enabling nuanced comparisons and tracking changes over time. Bayesian IRT is powerful because it systematically handles complex data, providing a transparent and flexible framework. It transforms subjective expert ratings into reliable, probabilistic measures of democracy, supporting research on global democratization trends and differences between countries.

This statistical approach thus accounts for coder error and cross-national comparability issues by generating probabilistic estimates for each indicator for each country-year. Once aggregated into latent factor scores using the Bayesian factor analysis, the scores are then combined into the five main democracy indices through clearly defined aggregation rules. By providing measures of uncertainty for its estimates, it allows users to assess the robustness of its findings (Coppedge et al. 2024a/b).

The impact of V-Dem has been profound. In academic research, it has facilitated studies on democratic transitions and backsliding, the relationship between democracy and development, and the effects of democratic institutions on governance outcomes. Policymakers use V-Dem data to diagnose weaknesses in democratic systems and design targeted interventions to strengthen governance structures. Advocacy groups leverage its findings to raise awareness about global trends in democracy and human rights. Organizations such as the *World Bank*, *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP), *Transparency International*, and International IDEA (*Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*) have incorporated V-Dem data into their analyses and programs.

In its pursuit of modeling various definitions of democracy, V-Dem sometimes encounters its limits and reopens older conceptual debates in the process: for instance, when V-Dem initially sought to operationalize Arend Lijphart's consensus-majoritarian dimensions of democracy, it abandoned this effort due to the inability to replicate Lijphart's findings with broader datasets, questioning the empirical validity of these dimensions outside the author's original framework (Coppedge 2023).

Despite its strengths, V-Dem has faced criticism on several fronts. One concern is the complexity of its aggregation procedures. While the multidimensional approach allows for a nuanced understanding of democracy's components, critics argue that combining these dimensions into a single score risks oversimplification or distortion. For instance, strong performance in one dimension could mask deficiencies in another. Another critique pertains to the subjectivity inherent in expert coding. Although V-Dem employs rigorous training and aggregation methods to minimize bias, the reliance on subjective judgments introduces potential inconsistencies across countries and periods. Additionally, some scholars have questioned how V-Dem integrates *de facto* (practical) versus *de jure* (legal) aspects of democracy into its measures. For example, while suffrage laws *(de jure)* are included in the *Polyarchy index* – a spin-off index (Teorell et al. 2016; 2019) – as an indicator of participation, actual voter turnout *(de facto)* may not be fully captured (Boesse 2019; Vaccaro 2021).

As mentioned, the tendency to treat authoritarianism as merely the absence of democracy has been critiqued for ignoring institutional and power dynamics within authoritarian regimes. These critiques underscore areas for refinement while affirming V-Dem's broader contributions to democratic measurement. This also applies to their categorical spin-off, **Regimes of the World** (RoW).

A final critique is a painful one, especially considering its name, 'Varieties of Democracy' – recently, Wolf (2023) argued that V-Dem has progressively shifted away from its original emphasis on exploring the varieties of democracy, instead placing disproportionate focus on 'liberal democracy.' This shift is reflected in V-Dem's publications, where alternative democratic models are increasingly marginalized. While V-Dem continues to offer data on diverse conceptions of democracy, Wolf (2023) highlights that its scholarly and policy-oriented outputs predominantly center on liberal democracy, implicitly framing it as the sole legitimate form of democracy. A reflective paper by Coppedge (2023) acknowledges some of these criticisms and explains what role the works of **Dahl** and Lijphart have played in the development of V-Dem's approach.

In conclusion, V-Dem has absolutely redefined how democracy is measured by offering an unparalleled level of detail and transparency. Its multidimensional framework enables researchers to explore diverse conceptions of democracy while providing policymakers with actionable insights into governance challenges. However, its methodological com-

plexity (which is probably the main reason why other (much simpler) **continuous measures** are still popular) and reliance on expert coding highlight ongoing debates about how best to measure such an elusive contested concept. As V-Dem continues to refine its approach through iterative improvements and feedback from the scholarly community, it remains an indispensable tool for understanding democracy's varied forms and trajectories worldwide.

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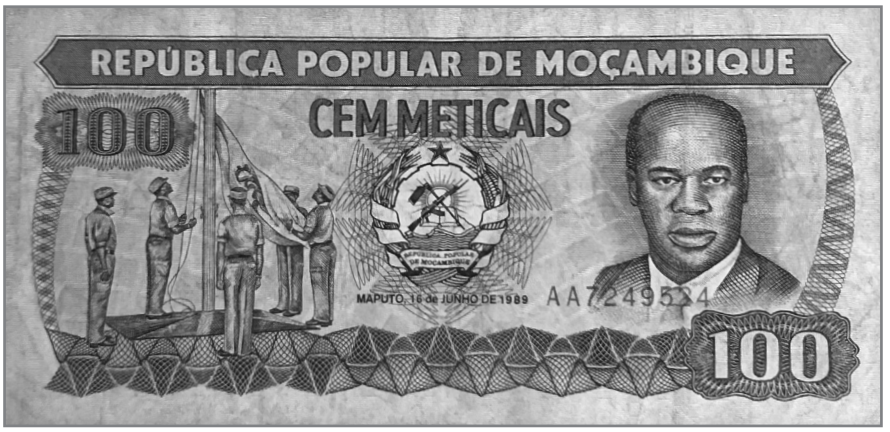
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SECTION 3
REGIME BEHAVIOR







100 Escudos, Cape Verde (1989), depicting Amílcar Cabral, independence leader of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.

100 Meticais, Mozambique (1989), depicting Eduardo Mondlane, independence leader and founder of FRELIMO.

5 Kwanza, Angola (1999), depicting António Agostinho Neto and José Eduardo dos Santos. They are Angola's first (1975-1979) and second rulers (1979-2017) and key leaders of the MPLA.



Autocratization

The means of defense against foreign danger, have been always the instruments of tyranny at home.
– James Madison, 1787.

The ship of democracy, which has weathered all storms, may sink through the mutiny of those on board.
– Grover Cleveland

Autocratization refers to the gradual deterioration of democratic institutions and governance, characterized by discrete changes in rules and informal procedures affecting **elections**, civil liberties, and political rights. It often involves elected leaders consolidating power (executive aggrandizement), often with public support, using legal channels like legislative majorities or pliant judiciaries. This process can give autocratic power grabs a semblance of democratic legitimacy. Autocratization challenges the 'transition paradigm' (Box 5.3), highlighting that regimes do not automatically move toward democracy.

DEFINITION Autocratization refers to the deterioration in the quality of democratic institutions, governance and transparency. Autocratization encapsulates a wide range of processes and takes place through a series of discrete changes in the rules and informal procedures that shape not only elections but also civil liberties, political rights, and accountability. There may also be greater power to actors that do not have electoral accountability such as *de facto* leaders (Ercan & Gagnon 2014).

While **democratization** is the gradual process of a country transitioning to democracy, autocratization is the gradual degradation of the democratic system. The changes may be nuanced and happen slowly over time. Though these changes are initiated by the incumbent leader and/or ruling party, they take place with the support of the public to some extent. Public support may enable an opportunistic leader to accumulate power using pre-existing legal channels such as through legislative majorities or referenda. If the leader has a pliant **judiciary**, they can also use the courts to enforce greater levels of executive control. Thus, these institutional changes take place through a vote or with the support of other officials, giving these autocratic power grabs the veneer of a taking place through a democratic mandate (Bermeo 2016). In the notable case of Hungary, Viktor Orbán's *Fidesz* party controlled about two-thirds of the parliament. He used this massive advantage to ram through a series of new laws that increased executive power, referring to this as his 'two-thirds revolution.'

Autocratization often starts with the democratically elected leader undermining the media in order to control the narratives about the regime. The leader uses hostile rhetoric and characterizes the information that the media produces as 'false' – or, more recently, 'fake' news. Thus, would-be autocrats can call into question the veracity of any of the mainstream media's reporting. As the leader goes on the offensive to tarnish the media's image, this can lead to self-censorship, a much more common occurrence in autocracies. The government can also try to control public broadcasters by punishing, co-opting or nationalizing the private media. In Poland, the ruling *Law and Justice Party* (PiS) passed laws in 2016 that granted government-appointed officials control over the public media (**propaganda**). Would-be autocrats can create more obstacles for any media that is critical of the regime, such as refusing to grant a license, raising taxes on the media, or fining individuals or media establishments that violate new rules on what can be reported.

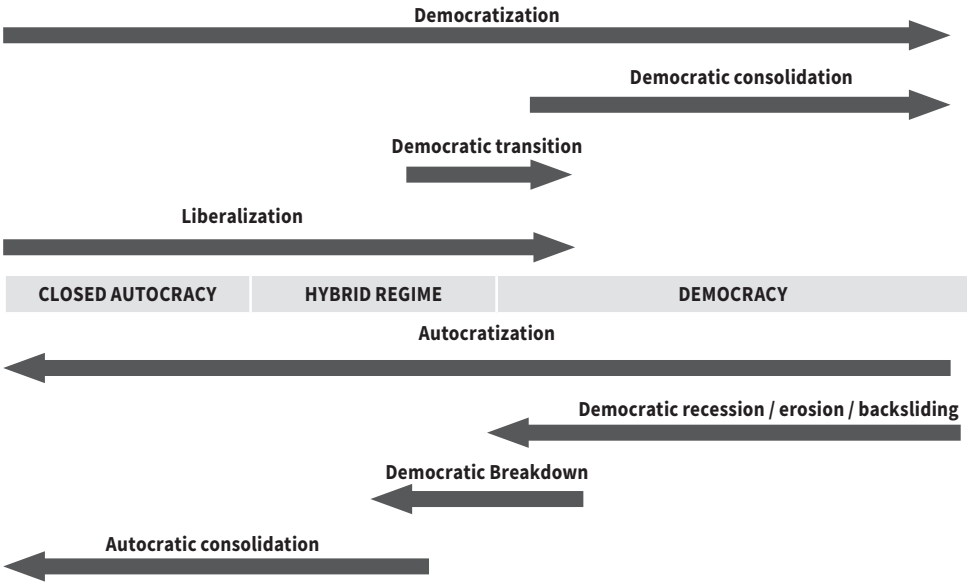
Another aspect of autocratization is to undermine various mechanisms of horizontal accountability. One such target is judicial independence. With a weakened judiciary, would-be autocrats can use the courts to remove barriers to their power and undermine the rule of law while using the **judiciary** to target their opponents. To ensure greater control over the judiciary, leaders can decrease the retirement age for judges so that they can appoint loyalists. They can also interfere with the appointment process by giving the executive greater power to appoint high-level judges. Would-be autocrats can also give the executive and possibly a pliant legislature greater power over the judiciary – such as giving a council directly appointed by the president the power to inspect and remove judges.

Autocratizing regimes also make institutional changes that can affect vertical accountability. They can change the rules of how **elections** are run, such as who gets to vote, how they get to vote, how votes are counted, how votes translate into seats and who gets to run in elections. Gerrymandering districts is one way that the incumbents can gain an unfair advantage in the legislature without ever having to gain more supporters. Another tactic is to alter the rules for how long the leader can stay in power. Thus, eliminating **term limits** – often only seen in autocracies – is now a more common tactic used by democracies as well. Today, 33 percent of term limit extensions occur in democracies, up from just eight percent prior to 1989.

Autocratizing countries also try to erode **civil society**, using national security arguments such as the threat of **terrorism** and instability to justify greater control over society. These carefully crafted narratives also make citizens more likely to support these restrictions on civil liberties in the name of stability. NGOs, in particular, face greater scrutiny.

Autocratization is often conceptualized by what it is not. Autocratization is distinct from autocratic replacement, such as when one authoritarian regime is replaced by another authoritarian regime (cf. **transitions**). Authoritarian regimes break down and are frequently replaced by another authoritarian regime, such as when Ugandan dictator Idi Amin

Figure 3.1 – Autocratization & Democratization



Source: editors' own work, based on: Lührmann & Lindberg (2019: 1100)

was ousted from power but was quickly replaced by another dictator, Milton Obote (Levitsky & Way 2015). Autocratic replacement constitutes a maintenance of the *status quo* while autocratization consists of a worsening of democratic conditions (Cassani & Tomini 2020).

A failed democratization attempt and state failure are also beyond the scope of autocratization (cf. **fragile & failed states**). If shortly after authoritarian breakdown takes place, elections are held, but the autocracy is reinstalled soon after, these cases are considered reversals or 'aborted openings' (Diamond 2000). For example, after Hosni Mubarak was ousted from power in 2011, Egypt briefly attempted to democratize, but within a few years, General Abdel el-Sisi was installed in power indefinitely.

Autocratization also does not constitute the attempts of authoritarian regimes to consolidate control and counter democratic narratives around the globe. These efforts to fight against pro-democratic movements and external **democracy promotion** are about sustaining the *status quo* and ensuring authoritarian resilience (Heydermann & Leenders 2011).

Autocratization can also be distinguished from democratic breakdown, as shown in Figure 3.1. While democratic decay is a gradual and continuous process, democratic breakdown is the endpoint of the process when a democracy has failed (Svolik 2015; Kapstein & Converse 2008; Denk & Anckar 2014). In studies of democratic breakdown, there has been a clear rupture or break with democracy that is easy to pinpoint. In contrast, autocratization may eventually lead to a democratic breakdown, but this could take years to achieve and may not be as easy to pinpoint when exactly it has happened.

SEE ALSO there are many different terms to describe this process, including democratic decay, democratic decline, democratic erosion, democratic backsliding, executive aggrandizement, and authoritarianization. A specific process that falls under autocratization is **personalization** – when a ruler centralizes power in an already authoritarian regime. Related topics can be found under **transitions,** and if external powers are involved in the autocratization process, the latter are sometimes considered **black knights.** External interactions and influence can range between **authoritarian learning** and **authoritarian diffusion** or with direct support for autocracy; these can be considered **authoritarian collaboration** or **authoritarian promotion**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Autocratization demonstrates that the break from democracy is often not sudden. Though there are still coups taking place around the world, **coups d'état** are becoming far less frequent, as there are other processes of becoming authoritarian, such as slow and gradual executive aggrandizement that is taking place with some public support. This process is not only gradual but also more clandestine than in the past. Aspiring autocrats are able to learn from each other and subvert electoral standards without breaking the democratic *façade*.

Autocratization also illustrates that many regimes are not fully democratic or fully autocratic but instead lie somewhere in between. However, autocratization challenges the transition paradigm. More



specifically, it highlights that not all non-democratic regimes are weak, and not all transitioning regimes are becoming more democratic. In fact, in the 2020s, more regimes are becoming more autocratic rather than the other way around. At the moment, the headwinds may be pushing these regimes to become more autocratic. This is not just a plateau but a bleak picture for democracy. Thus, the study of democratic rollback is an important new research frontier that needs to be further explored. (cf. Box 6.3 on waves of autocracy)

ORIGIN Autocratization is a relatively recent term, popularized by the **Varieties of Democracy** institute, but the process of backsliding has been written about for some time now (Cutright 1969; Shoemaker 1981; Stack 1978; Winham 1970). As scholars in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s studied the different waves of democratization taking place, they also noticed that democratizing regimes were struggling to consolidate; they were either stalling in democratization efforts or were actually moving in the wrong direction (Diamond et al. 1989; Haggard & Kaufman 1994; Linz & Stepan 1996). Many works started to look at the problems related to the quality of democracy in newer democracies and the emergence of **hybrid regimes** (Diamond 2002). During the mid-2000s, the number of articles and books focusing on this topic mushroomed, with scholars using various terms to identify and, in some cases, sound the alarm that regimes were becoming increasingly authoritarian. With the improvement and rising availability of datasets that measure the quality of democracy, there have been more scholarly works tackling autocratization.

LITERATURE The biggest debates in the literature on autocratization center on how it should be referred to, defined and measured. According to Andrea Cassani and Luca Tomini (2020), autocratization can take different forms, depending on the regime of the country autocratizing (i.e., the point of departure), what institutional dimensions are involved, and what the new regime looks like (i.e. the point of arrival). Thus, there are so many different ways of conceptualizing autocratization and different types of autocratization.

For this reason, Anna Lührmann and colleagues at the Varieties of Democracy specifically use the term autocratization for all of the processes of regimes becoming increasingly autocratic. By using the term autocratization this denotes that the process can take place in a democracy or an autocracy because it constitutes a deliberate process of regime change that is moving toward autocracy regardless of what the starting point is. For example, China has become increasingly authoritarian under Xi Jinping, but while this is a case of autocratization, it is not democratic backsliding. That is because 'democratic' erosion, decay or decline, for example, can only take place in regimes that are democratic. This is important to note because the process of autocratization is more likely to take place in a regime that is not democratic (Levitsky & Way 2015), as two-thirds of autocratization episodes around the world took place in countries that were already autocratic, with only one-third taking place in democracies.

CLASSIFICATIONS There are a host of different terms used to describe this process of becoming less democratic. Some scholars use the terms democratic backsliding (Bermeo 2016; Waldner & Lust, 2018), democratic regression (Erdmann & Kneuer 2011), democratic recession (Diamond 2015); democratic decay (Daly 2019); democratic deterioration (The Economist); democratic erosion (Plattner 2014; Coppedge 2017); de-democratization (Tilly 2003; Cunha 2015; Ágh 2015); performance deficit (Fukuyama, 2015); and democratic deconsolidation (Foa & Mounk 2016). The term that describes all of these processes is autocratization.

Larry Diamond (2021) highlights different types of autocratization, including (i) a decline in stability or quality of democracy in a younger democracy, sometimes referred to as backsliding, erosion or decay; (ii) a decline in the vigor of long-established democracies known as democratic deconsolidation; and finally, (iii) a deepening of authority in non-democratic states.

Democratic deconsolidation (ii) refers to the erosion of democratic norms. In consolidated democracies, constitutions and laws may not be as easy to change. The US constitution, for example, is nearly impossible to change without super majorities from congress and state legislatures.

Nevertheless, in consolidated democracies, there has been a slow erosion of how the public and elites feel about democratic procedures and democratic norms. Survey data helps reveal whether or not there are lower levels of trust in the system and growing dissatisfaction with democracy, a greater willingness of political actors to violate the rules of the system, low levels of political literacy, and a belief that democracy might not be on the only game in town. Some other examples of democratic deconsolidation are the declines in voter turnout, declines in civic engagement in politics, greater support for anti-system political parties and a decline in membership of political parties (Foa & Mounk 2016). In Latin America, public disillusionment over the benefits of democracy and its capacity to bring opportunities and prosperity has raised concerns over the continued legitimacy of democracy as the best form of government. Brazil has seen a declining public faith in democracy and a greater willingness of political actors to breach fundamental rules of democracy (Borges 2021; Foa & Mounk 2016; Meyer 2021).

Some scholars have noted that this process is distinct from backsliding and is known as hollowing, or where there is a declining interest of citizens in participating rather than just a change in the institutions and processes (Greskovits 2015). According to this view, civic engagement may continue while backsliding is taking place, and democratic hollowing could be occurring even while democratic institutions are intact. For example, although the US constitution has remained unchanged, there are increasing concerns that US citizens are no longer willing to sustain the constitution due to a lack of civic education and faltering commitment to essen-

tial democratic values.

One reason why a hollowing of democratic norms can take place while democratic procedures are still in working order is that political and cultural norms change so slowly. Therefore, cultural erosion can evolve in comparison to the relatively swift changes that can be made to weaken institutions. Pippa Norris uses the analogy that old floorboards can crack for years without the foundations collapsing (2017: 2-3).

Legal scholars have more specifically focused on the rule of law backsliding, where the courts, law and rights are undermined (Pech & Scheppele 2017). The Philippines represents a perfect case of this. Since the 2016 election of Rodrigo Duterte (reign: 2016-2022), the rule of law has been ignored in favor of vigilante justice against alleged drug dealers and users (cf. **death squads**). Duterte was arrested in March 2025 and delivered to the international criminal court (ICC) in The Hague to account for these unlawful killings.

Other scholars refer to judicial capture and constitutional capture, or where a democratic constitutional system is reshaped to benefit an incumbent regime. The courts, the laws and rights are sidelined. In some cases, regimes play constitutional hardball (Box 3.1) – or engage in practices that are technically permissible under the constitution but which violate existing constitutional understandings (Tushnet 2003). In other cases, such as Hungary, an entirely new constitution was adopted that suited leader Viktor Orbán and the *Fidesz* party.

Other scholars have looked at how regimes are becoming more authoritarian by using terms such as authoritarian deepening or resurgence (Walker 2015; 2016), reconsolidation or re-solidification of autocracies (Levitsky & Way 2015; Carothers 2002), and authoritarian backsliding (Waldner & Lust 2018). There is some disagreement over whether or not the process of authoritarian regimes becoming increasingly authoritarian constitutes a form of backsliding, which is why the more inclusive term autocratization is more appropriate.

MEASUREMENT There are various ways to measure autocratization. Autocratization is typically measured by evaluating the quality of democracy in a regime and then identifying any discrete changes taking place over time in a negative direction. The areas that are examined include the quality of electoral processes, political rights, civil liberties and institutional capacity. While the **Polity Index** series has been looking at political rights and freedoms since the 1960s, the **Freedom House** Index has been measuring political rights and civil liberties since 1972.

Today, there are more datasets available that conduct democratic assessments over a wider period and space with more accuracy, reliability and specificity. In addition to these reports, the *Economist Index of Democracy,* **Varieties of Democracy** and the international *Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (IDEA) have also produced valuable reports and indices on the state of democracy. Scholars are now able to use large data sets to build Large-N studies that help identify patterns of not only breakdown but backsliding as well.

There is also an effort to capture waves of autocratization and not just individual cases or episodes of this (cf. Box 6.3). For Huntington, a wave of democracy was when more countries were transitioning to democracy than the number of breakdowns taking place. Note that the comparison is between a group of countries in transition (or undergoing a dynamic process) with a group of countries that has completed a discrete event. Measuring a wave of autocratization looks at the number of countries transitioning toward autocracy, exceeding those that are becoming more democratic.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Measuring autocratization presents many different methodological issues, namely being able to measure various components of democracy accurately and being able to identify whether the quality of democracy is suffering. This entails having clear measures of democracy that are updated regularly to identify if any backsliding is taking place. Some of the measures used to assess the quality of democracy use expert surveys that rely on the perceptions of experts to assess the quality of democratic processes and institutions. This comes with issues pertaining to assessor reliability and validity in making these judgments.

Full breaks with democracy are easier to measure, such as **coups**, which are often announced by the military. In contrast, it is much more difficult to capture the cuts to democracy. Thus, some scholars have noted that the incremental regime changes taking place lack a theoretical explanation of the different thresholds (Coppedge 2017; Edgell et al. 2020; Lührmann & Lindberg 2019; Tomini & Wagemann 2018). Are we looking at a decline in electoral democracy or a decline in liberal democracy? Which type of decline is more serious?

Others claim the thresholds are too arbitrary (Pelke & Croissant 2021). What changes need to take place to qualify as autocratization? It needs to be meaningful enough to cause outright transformation in the formal and informal institutions, affecting how political power is assigned and exercised. Negative changes in terms of executive constraints, civil and individual liberties, political rights, electoral integrity, competition and participation can vary in magnitude and do not necessarily trigger regime change. It may be easier to identify different types of hybrid regimes based on **continuous** measurements, such as flawed democracies, semi-democracies, and electoral authoritarian regimes, but this comes with problems of how these regimes in the gray zone are measured.

Another issue with autocratization is that there is no way to measure how much power is concentrated in the hands of one person – or, effectively, the level of **personalization** (Sinkkonen 2021). Much of autocratization today is driven by the rise of **personalist rule** in politics. However, it is difficult to measure the level of personalism across a wide set of regimes.

A final issue is that autocratization has a much smaller sample size of cases of democracy ending in this manner. Most democracies still end via **coup**



d'etat or an elite seizure of power. While autocratization is the most common direction that regimes are moving, most regimes are not going from democratic to autocratic but rather are going from autocratic to very autocratic. There are fewer examples of countries plunging from democracy to full-blown autocracy, but notable cases of Turkey, Hungary and Venezuela are useful for understanding this process.

EXAMPLES Turkey is one of the most well-known cases of autocratization leading to full democratic breakdown. When Recep Erdoğan and the *Justice and Development Party* (AKP) came to power in 2002, they boasted impressive electoral victories. Early successes in delivering economic growth and investment made the AKP very popular with professionals and intellectuals in the big cities on the one hand, and traditional supporters from the countryside. Under Erdoğan's leadership, Turkey appeared to be focused on democratic and economic reform, increasing rights for the Kurds and joining the European Union. Nevertheless, through a series of discrete maneuvers sanctioned by the public, Turkey has become fully authoritarian (Azgin 2020; Esen & Gumuscu 2020; Özbudun 2015). Erdoğan has been an expert at using 'democracy' to sustain himself in power indefinitely.

Erdoğan's early moves to consolidate power faced little backlash, such as when the AKP passed more than 500 laws (Bermeo 2016). There was also public support for a 2007 referendum to elect the president by popular vote instead of by the parliament, which Erdoğan won in elections in 2014 and 2018. In 2010, Erdoğan passed two-dozen constitutional changes via a national referendum (Baser & Öztürk 2017). One of these changes granted Erdoğan the power to appoint 14 of the 17 Constitutional judges. Erdoğan was also able to remove more than 3,000 sitting judges in 2014. Judges were also removed from their task of deciding what parties were legal for elections, as the AKP-controlled legislature was given the power to make these decisions instead (Bermeo 2016).

Erdoğan was able to assert greater control by using real or manufactured threats to justify repression. After protests broke out in 2013 against the government tearing down Gezi Park in Istanbul, the government responded with over 5,000 arrests. Another 8,000 individuals were injured, and 22 people were killed (Demirel-Pegg 2020). The government then ramped up attacks on the media, and Turkey became the world leader in imprisoning journalists, according to *Human Rights Watch*.

A 2016 coup attempt brought further repression. Erdoğan responded by declaring a state of emergency, purging the regime of dissidents from the media, the judiciary and even the AKP (Whiting & Kaya 2016). On the heels of these events, Erdoğan pushed through a referendum that expanded his presidential powers and enabled him to stay in office, possibly until 2029. Subsequent counter-terror legislation was passed after the two-year state of emergency expired, giving the government tremendous power to dismiss public officials and amplifying the authority of the police.

It is helpful to return to the case of Hungary – a commonly cited example of autocratization in a country that started as a democracy. Viktor Orbán, who has led the *Fidesz* party since 1993, was elected prime minister in 2010 by a wide margin. As mentioned previously, this led Orbán to declare that a two-thirds revolution had taken place. *Fidesz* worked to rewrite the constitution within months of taking power, and the state was politicized with *Fidesz* allies installed in the civil service.

After *Fidesz*'s 2010 victory, the regime made changes to the electoral system that would guarantee its success in future years. Voters used to cast two votes in national elections for a party list and a representative in their constituency. Only the number of votes for the candidates that did not win their constituency would be added to the aggregate votes for their party in the national list. This was a safeguard to ensure better support for smaller parties. The regime changed this system to allot a proportion of the winning candidate's votes to be added to their party's aggregate, which would make it incredibly challenging to defeat the *Fidesz* party. The opposition would have to secure three percentage points more of the popular vote in order to win. The governing party relies on state resources, media bias and questionable campaign financing.

The next change was that the number of parliamentary seats was reduced from 386 to 199, with new gerrymandered districts that would increase the chances of *Fidesz* maintaining control. This made it more difficult for progressive areas such as Budapest to vote for their parties, while the conservative countryside was given more representation in spite of having fewer people. A 2010 law gave citizenship to ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries which gave them the right to vote, and they were largely supportive of Orbán's right-nationalist agenda, voting for *Fidesz* at an astonishing 95 percent rate. Fake parties were created to divide and split up anti-*Fidesz* votes in competitive districts. These tactics gave *Fidesz* an insurmountable edge.

Additionally, because *Fidesz* controls the parliament by at least two-thirds, it also benefits from the rule that for any motion to be heard by the parliament must be decided by qualified majority voting (or two-thirds majority). It will be very difficult for the opposition ever to reverse some of these reforms and appointments *Fidesz* has made through this process.

There are also changes to the judiciary that have undermined the rule of law. The Constitutional Court, which was established in 1990, originally had 11 members that were nominated by a parliamentary committee, which consisted of one representative from each party in parliament and then elected by a two-thirds majority vote. Members of the Constitutional Court then elected the president of the Court. After the 2010 elections, *Fidesz* amended the constitution to remove the cap on the number of members of each party that could sit on the committee, ensuring that the number of members was proportional to the size of each party's seats. *Fidesz* then increased the number of court justices to 15 and lengthened the

tenure for judges from nine to 12 years. All judges over 62 had to retire, and all new seats were filled with loyalists.

The independence of the press is increasingly challenged. The private media has been targeted, with government advertising being withheld and higher taxes on revenues employed. The independent media has also faced attacks and constant political interference, leading to mass resignations. By 2017, 90 percent of all media in Hungary was owned by either the state or a *Fidesz* ally, according to a count by Budapest-based scholar Marius Dragomir. This media empire includes every single regional newspaper in the country. The media is also under the control of KESMA – the non-profit government-owned conglomerate of more than 400 media products and companies, including television, radio, websites and advertising, spewing out government **propaganda**. The government-controlled media has a new media board and editorial slant that mirrors *Fidesz*'s positions. By taking control of the media, the government can ensure that the public is mostly exposed to government narratives.

Ironically, *Fidesz* also passed a new law that penalizes the spread of fake news, but this is primarily used to target rivals of the party. Anyone who criticizes the government can be detained based on how the regime interprets the new law. Other civil liberties and political rights are also under attack, such as the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. The *Fidesz* party decided to ban the depiction and promotion of homosexuality. NGOs also face constant scrutiny. NGOs are subject to regular financial inspections by the State Audit Office, especially those that are foreign-funded.

Fidesz's rule will also have a long-lasting legacy since young people during their impressionable years have been targeted. *Fidesz* has passed laws to reshape the curriculum in order to deemphasize critical thinking and other skills that might lead students to question the government's narratives.

Increasingly, Orbán is able to run the country without **opposition**. When emergency laws were passed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this gave Orbán extraordinary powers. Though this was eventually withdrawn by 16 June 2020, new regulations have been implemented that help ensure that Orbán can make decisions virtually unfettered. In response to the 2015 European migrant crisis, *Fidesz* declared a state of emergency that has since been renewed. Then, in the wake of the war in Ukraine, Orbán declared another state of emergency to be able to respond swiftly to the fallout of the conflict.

Dissent has been stamped out in every major aspect of political and social life, but hard measures have not yet been implemented, such as banning elections altogether or creating a police state. Thus, on the road to autocratization, many autocratizing regimes may land on soft **fascism** rather than the more repressive authoritarian regimes that dotted the landscape in the twentieth century.

IMPACT ON POLICY The recent autocratization wave that has taken place has put numerous pressures on states and international organizations to respond, while policy makers have struggled to mount an effective defense. NGOs, which used to focus on democracy support, are now also having to play defense. This has led to policymakers seeking to understand the ways in which autocratization is taking place and how to counteract it best.

NEW FRONTIERS Autocratization is a new subfield of comparative politics. As such there continues to be new literature looking into the drivers of autocratization and what are the most effective modes of resistance. Marlies Glasius (2018) takes a different approach to analyzing autocracy by not focusing on elections but on accountability, which could be used to benchmark democratic backsliding by differentiating between illiberal practices and authoritarian practices. Knutsen et al. (2024) are refining Large-N data and comparing datasets in order to account for nuanced instances of autocratization and democratic backsliding.

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Authoritarian Constitutionalism

For my friends, anything – for my enemies, the law.
– Getulia Vargas, President of Brazil

Prawo jest jak słup – przeskoczyć się go nie da, ale obejść zawsze można
(The law is a pillar – too tall to leap, but easy to step around.)
– Polish saying

In political theory, 'authoritarian constitutionalism' refers to the practice of an authoritarian regime utilizing or manipulating a constitution to obtain or hold on to power. In doing so, it goes against the **ideology** of **constitutionalism** that propagates limits on executive governance to render it legitimate, utilizing means such as the rule of law, the protection of civil liberties, and the division of powers (into well-delineated legislative, judiciary and executive branches with checks and balances). Constitutionalism is thus a core tenet of liberal **democracy** and is conceptually challenging to merge with **authoritarianism**.

Elkins et al. (in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014: 142-143) aptly summarize the need to understand the phenomenon: "*if all provisions in constitutions [across regime types] were operating manuals, we would expect that democratic and authoritarian constitutions would diverge. If all provisions were window dressing, we might expect convergence. Oddly, if we find that constitutional texts are similar across regime type, it implies that the practices of constitution making may be playing very dif-*

ferent functions. The same terms may be genuine promises in democracies and mere obfuscation or window dressing in the authoritarian context."

DEFINITION As a phenomenon, authoritarian constitutionalism is approached from different angles (A, B, and C below). Constitutions themselves, of course, are also the direct object of comparative study within this context, but the results of such study are surprising. It is actually hard to define an 'authoritarian constitution:' Not all of them are 'drafted by dictators' and the timing (of their creation) and context should be taken into account. Elkins et al. (in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014: 143-148) argue that an authoritarian constitution is one promulgated in a year when the country is under authoritarian rule.

Elkins et al. (in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014: 143, 162) find that the empirical evidence shows few statistically significant differences between authoritarian and democratic constitutions when controlling for other factors. The differences observed – such as fewer rights or less judicial independence in authoritarian constitutions – are minor. Surprisingly, authoritarian constitutions often grant less formal **executive** power. Over time, authoritarian constitutions tend to resemble democratic ones, suggesting that authoritarian regimes adapt their constitutions to imitate democratic models while innovating in informal practices. Overall, regime type has less influence on constitutional form than factors like region, era, and constitutional legacy (i.e., the path dependency derived from institutions chosen for the first constitution in a country's history).

Sometimes, authoritarian constitutionalism is treated as a *regime type* (A) that combines authoritarian governance with the presence of institutional constraints on power. It involves a political system where constitutional mechanisms are used to legitimize and sometimes limit authoritarian rule, but without adhering to democratic principles such as fundamental rights, justice, or equality (Pozas-Loyo & Ríos-Figueroa 2019b; Isiksel 2013). According to Barros (2002: 20), such *"institutional limits imply a legal standard, a mechanism of enforcement, and a division between those subject to the standard and those enforcing it, ensuring that actors are bound by prior decisions in the form of rules."*

Tushnet (2015: 438) dismissed the idea that constitutional 'institutional constraints' by themselves are effective in limiting executive power in authoritarian regimes. (Authoritarian executives adopt laws unchecked and usually possess absolute majorities in the legislatures they control anyhow). Only when elites share an ideological commitment to the principles of 'constitutionalism' can constitutions constrain public power. From this interpretation flow three observations: (a) It brings authoritarian constitutionalism back into the realm of worldviews, belief systems and ideology – and renders it a diluted subtype of **constitutionalism**. (b) It posits that there is a different mode of constitutionalism in democracies and non-democracies, but that there exists semantic equivalence when qualifying both modes. (c) Thus, the category of constitutionalism can be pluralized, allowing the creation of typology to draw distinctions between regimes that should be normatively distinguished (Tushnet 2015: 395; Pozas-Loyo & Ríos-Figueroa 2019b: 342) – more details can be found under 'classifications & methodological issues' below.

At other times, authoritarian constitutionalism is treated as the mere *practice* (B) of utilizing constitutions for authoritarian purposes. (Following this interpretation, this entry is thus listed here, in the encyclopedia section of **authoritarian behavior**, and not under regime types). This approach, however, radically separates 'constitutionalism' in democratic and authoritarian contexts (Pozas-Loyo & Ríos-Figueroa 2019b: 342), where constitutions are thus used for categorically different purposes. In democratic constitutionalism, the practice is ideological (devoted to ideas of constitutionalism); in the authoritarian context, it pertains to regime survival, elite interests, tactics and as a 'means to an end.'

Alternatively, but rarely used this way, the term describes a certain *stage* (C) of regime behavior on a journey between liberal democracy and closed authoritarianism, often overlapping (but not synonymous) with **hybrid regimes** and rather evolving in the direction of an autocratic endpoint (**autocratization**). Although one can argue, this stage can also take place in the opposite direction, for instance, in the context of a controlled **transition** – e.g., a military dictatorship returning to the barracks and abandoning the political scene – where constitutional provisions are forced upon the new regime by the outgoing incumbents to guarantee a desirable **exit option**. (cf. Negretto in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014) In the latter case, authoritarian constitutionalism is one of the stages of a larger transition toward liberal democracy. (In any case – as shown in Box 5.3 on 'transitology' – no trajectory has a certain outcome, of course).

SEE ALSO This entry is closely related to the **ideology** of **constitutionalism** and overlaps with the functioning of courts (**judiciaries**) under **authoritarianism** or through changes due to **populism** affecting democratic polities. Authoritarian constitutionalism is a good example of a non-democratic rule-based order, in line with Max **Weber's** theories of **legal-rational rulership**; see also the introduction in Alviar García & Frankenberg (2019). For other institutions that function differently under dictatorship, consult **bureaucracies** and **legislatures**. For a pre-modern example of 'rule by law' as an authoritarian ideology, see **legalism**.

CLASSIFICATIONS & METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES
While 'constitutionalism' is a normative term referring to a worldview, 'authoritarian constitutionalism' encompasses a set of factual ways how to distort a constitutional order and enable regimes to engage in **autocratization** (either democratic erosion or autocratic consolidation). When scrutinizing this (relatively) new term, some (law) scholars take issue with this conceptual tension forced upon the term **constitutionalism** – a doctrine for limiting government, not to enable its dominance – concluding that 'authoritarian constitutionalism' is an oxymoron, seemingly



absurd and nonsensical. (Lachmayer 2017)

To overcome this, Mark Tushnet (2015: 420) insists upon the need "to pluralize the idea of constitutionalism," urging us to move beyond a strictly liberal-democratic framework. A reductionist approach, confined to such a framework, *a priori* dismisses the possibility of non-liberal constitutionalism, thus minimizing not only the scholarly and normative significance of the term but also the long and rich constitutional history of authoritarian regimes (e.g., like those of Latin America).

Constructively, some propose to replace 'authoritarian constitutionalism' with 'constitutional authoritarianism' since its main features: ill-defined limits, lack of accountability, execution and concealment of violence by the ruling elite, belong to the conceptual category of **authoritarianism** and not to the category of 'constitutionalism' (Lachmayer 2017; Niembro Ortega 2017). *"Constitutionalism is also not a characteristic of authoritarianism, but authoritarianism can be constitutional, in the sense, that it applies the strategy of (mis-)using constitutional law to pursue authoritarian ideas."* (Lachmayer 2017)

As a distinct *regime type* (A), Mark Tushnet (2015) designed a classification that distinguishes 'authoritarian constitutionalism' (i) from 'absolutist constitutionalism' (ii) and mere 'rule-of-law constitutionalism' (iii) by examining elites' degree of normative commitment to constitutional principles and the extent of political freedoms and constraints:

Absolutist constitutionalism (ii) involves a single decision-maker, such as a monarch, who rules with absolute authority but consults widely and generally protects civil liberties. Decisions are made at the ruler's discretion, without formal mechanisms for challenging them once made. This system lacks institutional checks on power but allows some public discussion and criticism. (Tushnet 2015: 396; 415-416).

Mere *rule-of-law constitutionalism* (iii) satisfies core rule-of-law requirements like publicity, prospectivity, and generality but does not constrain rulers with substantive rules regarding civil liberties. Decisions conform to procedural requirements (and are thus technically 'legal') and are implemented through independent courts, yet rulers can change laws at will while maintaining procedural legality. (Tushnet 2015: 396; 416-418) Often, security doctrines adopted in constitutions can 'legally' trump civil liberties.

Authoritarian constitutionalism (i) then is characterized by a system that combines reasonably free and fair elections with a moderate degree of repressive control over expression and personal freedoms. It operates under a constitution that has a modest normative commitment to constitutional principles, but these principles are often manipulated to serve the regime's interests. The judiciary may appear independent, but it typically aligns with the government's strategic goals. (Tushnet 2015: 439).

Tushnet's analysis highlights that while these systems differ in their adherence to constitutional principles, they all use constitutional frameworks to maintain control, with varying degrees of normative commitment and strategic manipulation. There is a clear overlap of authoritarian constitutionalism with **hybrid regimes**, operating at intermediate levels of liberal freedoms and resorting to low to intermediate levels of force and fraud during elections. (Tushnet 2015: 397) Tushnet's ideal-type conceptualization is exemplified foremost through the case of Singapore.

Such regimes can transform in two ways. First, they might evolve into fully constitutionalist systems by gradually increasing tolerance for dissent and expanding co-optation mechanisms. As dissent grows, regime insiders may feel less threatened and more inclined to abandon authoritarian practices, especially if new leaders assure them of safety during the transition. Alternatively, they can autocratize further if leaders fail to instill a 'normative commitment to consultation and responsiveness' in successors, leading to repression and violence in response to dissatisfaction. Leaders may also resort to repression if they fear bad **leader fates**, thus maintaining their grip on power. (Tushnet in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014: 47-48)

Still, there are some limits to Tushnet's design: his type only matches civilian regimes and does not account for other factors of intra-regime variation, e.g., the level of **personalization**. Pozas-Loyo and Ríos-Figueroa (2019b: 343-344) also point this out and criticize such oversimplification of authoritarian regimes, providing the example of Mexico, where *"powerful presidents under the authoritarian hegemonic-party rule could not (neither de jure nor de facto) alter art. 83 of the Constitution that establishes a six-year presidential term without re-election, despite the fact that the president was the head of the party that controlled supermajorities in both houses of the federal congress as well as states' executives and legislative branches."* This challenges Tushnet's (2015: 438) claim that dismisses constitutional 'institutional constraints' as effective in limiting executive power in authoritarian regimes. (His typology of pluralistic constitutionalism does not account for effective institutional limitations).

As a *practice* (B), Roberto Niembro Ortega (2016; 2017) considers authoritarian constitutionalism as a method by which ruling elites (either with clear authoritarian tendencies or operating in not fully democratic states) exercise power. In such cases, the liberal democratic constitution, rather than limiting state power and empowering the powerless, is repurposed for practical and authoritarian ideological functions. This approach does not stipulate a specific regime type where this practice may occur, nor equates the practice with **hybrid regimes** (although they do overlap).

In his classification, Niembro Ortega (2016) distinguishes systems that have authoritarian constitutions and those that merely use constitutional mechanisms to achieve authoritarian goals (cf. 'democratic backsliding' as a stage in **autocratization**). He explains that in (i) *authoritarian constitutionalism*, while a liberal constitution may be in place, it fails to deliver on the promises of constitutionalism. By contrast, in (ii) *constitutional authoritarianism*, the constitution itself contains authoritarian elements and is aimed at authoritarian consolidation

by entrenching the ruling regime and providing it with some **legitimacy** of **legal-rational rule** (cf. Max **Weber**), in line with 'authoritarian consolidation' as a (final) stage in autocratization. Note that Elkins et al. (in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014:162) found that blatantly authoritarian constitutions actually do not survive the tooth of time and are likely tossed out entirely with regime change.

Pozas-Loyo and Ríos-Figueroa (2019b: 344-346; 351-352) offer a similar classification of practices as Niembro Ortega but expand upon it and switch some of the labels. *Authoritarian constitutionalism* (a) refers to the presence of effective institutional constraints on power within (collegial) authoritarian regimes that effectively limit executive power, in Chile under Pinochet or Brazil's dictatorship, where courts played significant roles, or under Mexico's PRI, where **term limits** applied. Under *constitutional authoritarianism* (b), provisions merely serve as symbolic 'parchment' barriers (e.g., Trujillo in the Dominican Republic). Here, authoritarian regimes freely manipulate constitutional mechanisms for authoritarian ends. In democracies with authoritarian behaviors, one finds *abusive constitutionalism* (c) as a distinct type. The latter knows two main practices: Using bludgeoning majorities to approve a series of constitutional amendments that (taken together) effectively remove restraints on the executive and thus erode democracy – like in Venezuela when Chávez came to power after 1998; or the reliance on 'emergency powers,' designed as a *"means of saving democracy from a threat, however well or ill designed."* Faced with social unrest and insurrection, the Columbian exclusionary government spent 35 years between 1949 and 1991 (so about 83% of that time) under a 'state of exception.' The fourth type of practice is *democratic constitutionalism* (d).

As a *stage* (C), authoritarian constitutionalism reverse mirrors the evolution of the concept of **hybrid regimes**. Initially, the latter were also treated as transitional stage 'in between' but were later re-conceptualized as a stable regime type because of their permanence and observed universal features. Treating authoritarian constitutionalism as a phase in regime transitions allows for a closer study of the role of constitutions during regime changes, either as populism erodes democracy or hybrid regimes consolidate their rule. Angela Di Gregorio (in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014) expands upon the phenomenon as an intermediate political system, linking it to the literature on 'democracies with adjectives' and illiberal democracy.

Regarding classifications of constitutions, D.S. Law and M. Versteeg (in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014) offer a typology based on the relationship between their formal *(de jure)* and actual *(de facto)* constitutional commitments. It distinguishes countries along two dimensions: whether they respect rights in practice and how ambitious their constitutional promises are. Countries with *sham constitutions* (i) have documents that promise extensive rights but fail to uphold them in practice, such as Sudan, where the formal constitution overstates actual governance. On the opposite side, countries with *modest constitutions* (ii) understate their true commitments. For example, Australia's constitution contains fewer formal promises, yet the government respects more rights than are explicitly outlined. *Strong constitutions* (iii) refer to countries that deliver on broad promises both on paper and in practice. Finland is an example where constitutional commitments are met both *de jure* and *de facto*, aligning with democratic governance. On the other hand, *weak constitutions* (iv) describe countries that uphold their constitutional promises because the constitutions impose few constraints or demands. Saudi Arabia exemplifies a regime where constitutional commitments align with practice, but the standards are low, making them easy to meet.

The larger gap between constitutional promises and actual behavior in autocracies is not surprising, as they often make constitutional promises just for appearances. However, not all authoritarian regimes resort to sham constitutions. Many opt for constitutions that candidly acknowledge their limited respect for rights, leading to the classification of weak constitutions, which explicitly offer low levels of rights protection. Law and M. Versteeg find this tendency statistically significant among monarchical and military regimes, which are more likely than civilian regimes to adopt such weak constitutions. This pattern arises from strategic constitution-writing behaviors that align with the specific characteristics of each regime type. For more oppressive regimes, adopting a weak but accurate constitution can facilitate internal coordination and reduce backlash compared to a sham constitution filled with empty promises, which might unite opponents against the regime. Civilian regimes, in contrast, may prioritize ideological legitimacy, prompting them to promise a broader array of rights, even if they are not fully realized. (Ginsburg & Simpser 2014: 187-188)

LITERATURE The edited works (Ginsburg & Simpser 2014; Alviar García & Frankenberg 2019; Belov 2021) contain core works that explore different shades of constitutional authoritarianism. Tom Ginsberg's (2012) edited work looks at the process of constitutional design. The article by Tushnet (2015) triggered most conceptual debates, presented in detail by Niembro Ortega (2016) and Pozas-Loyo and Ríos-Figueroa (2022). Zoltán Pozsár-Szentmiklós (in Belov 2021) delves deeper into the nuances of the separation of powers.

MEASUREMENT The *Comparative Constitutions Project* (CCP) database can be used to make basic comparisons between authoritarian and democratic constitutions. The CCP collects data on over 600 features of constitutions, covering aspects such as government structure, rights, and forms of governance. (Elkins et al. 2009)

EXAMPLES Examples of authoritarian constitutionalism include Turkey's use of its constitution to prioritize state security over individual liberties (Tushnet, 2015; Isiksel, 2013), but most of all, the 'Singapore model' of 'rule by law' is heralded. By blending democratic processes with strict control over political



freedoms, the *People's Action Party* (PAP) maintains power through regular elections yet employs tactics like gerrymandering and libel laws to suppress **opposition**. The legal system, rooted in British common law, supports economic efficiency while curbing dissent through laws that restrict free speech. Constitutional amendments are used to limit judicial power, ensuring that the courts cannot challenge government authority. This selective application of the rule of law facilitates economic prosperity and social stability but at the expense of genuine democratic freedoms. (Ratah 2012; Tushnet 2015)

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The primary purpose of authoritarian constitutionalism is pragmatic. It provides a veneer of legitimacy to the regime by maintaining the appearance of constitutional governance while allowing the ruling elites to exercise significant control over political processes and institutions. Scheppele (2018: 581-582) finds that the "*new autocrats look like democrats playing hardball, not like dictators playing softball.*" The de-liberalization of constitutional systems involves complex changes that are difficult for the general public to understand. These changes include adjustments in judicial appointments, jurisdictional rules, parliamentary procedures, and the structure of independent commissions, all crucial for maintaining liberal constitutionalism. However, most people only perceive the continuity of institutions like the constitutional court, parliament, and election commission without recognizing the deeper implications.

Tom Ginsburg and Alberto Simpser (2014: 1-8) argue that constitutions in authoritarian regimes serve multiple functions. They act as 'manuals' to facilitate coordination within the ruling group. Constitutions serve as 'billboards' to communicate messages to both domestic and international audiences and as 'blueprints' that offer guidance to officials and citizens on the actions they are permitted or required to take.

Gandhi (in Belov 2021: 204-206) also finds that constitutional constraints on the executive affect the **elite pacts** of opposition forces. *De jure* limitations for supreme office holders on appointing cabinet positions (e.g., enforcing legislative participation) increase the likelihood that any future head of government will respect the pre-election coalition agreement regarding the distribution of cabinet posts among coalition parties. This affects the ability of opposition movements to band together and settle on a champion to challenge an incumbent, trusting that the compromises involved will be honored post-election (if they win).

REGIONAL VARIATION Latin America and the former Soviet Union dominate the case studies, besides the various authors covering Singapore (see 'examples' higher).

Indo-Pacific For Southeast Asia consult: Bünte & Dressel 2017; for South Asia: Bajpai & Kureshi 2022; for East Asia: Ginsburg 2002; 2008; Croissant 2010. For a comparison of both Chinas, see Lin (2016).

Latin America Pozas-Loyo & Ríos-Figueroa (2019b) compare various Latin American and Caribbean examples. Barros (2002) is a classic for Chile. The edited volume by Hübner Mendes et al. (2022) is the best recent comparative overview of constitutions.

Eurasia For Russian constitutional legacies, see W. Engelking (in Belov 2021). Galushko (2021) covers Ukraine and Belarus, their (Soviet) constitutions, and related **authoritarian legacies**. For Hungary, Moldova and Romania as case studies, see Pozsár-Szentmiklós (in Belov 2021); on Hungary's concept of rule of law, see Z.J. Toth (in Belov 2021); on the roots of Polish and Hungarian's illiberal institutionalism, see Szente (2023); Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała (in Belov 2021). On Poland under *Law and Justice,* see the chapters by Tacik and Bień-Kacała et al. (in Belov 2021). Scott Newton (2021) compares Central Asian legal systems and constitutions in particular (also: Newton in Alviar García & Frankenberg 2019).

For other cases, consult Davis (2020) investigates post-Apartheid South Africa. For Egypt's constitution, see Stilt (in Ginsburg & Simpser 2014); for Syria and Turkey, see El Manfalouty (in Alviar García & Frankenberg 2019) and Isiksel (2013). Hartmann (2022) traces constitutional legacies on **term limits** in Africa, differentiating authoritarian spells (cf. Box 2.4).

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Co-optation

If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
– African proverb

Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good.
– Mahatma Gandhi

Co-optation is a central tool in the survival strategies of authoritarian regimes, functioning alongside repression to maintain control and stability. While **repression** involves the use of force or coercion to suppress **opposition**, co-optation refers to the intentional distribution of benefits to potential challengers in exchange for their loyalty (Frantz & Kendall-Taylor 2014). This strategy is particularly effective in dictatorships, where the regime seeks to neutralize threats by incorporating rivals into the political system, often through the establishment of institutions such as political **parties** and **legislatures** (Geddes 2006; Gandhi & Przeworski 2007). These institutions provide a credible framework for exchanging benefits for loyalty, reducing the incentives for opposition groups to challenge the regime and thereby extending autocratic survival (Gandhi 2008; Magaloni 2008).

One of the primary functions of co-optation in dictatorships is to create a network of loyal supporters who have a vested interest in the regime's continuation. This is achieved through selective benefits that are distributed exclusively to proven supporters of authoritarian rule. For example, ruling parties in authoritarian regimes often monopolize access to social and economic privileges such as land titles or educational opportunities, ensuring that these benefits are available only to party loyalists (Magaloni & Kricheli 2010). This conditional distribution of resources allows regimes to exploit natural career aspirations and create an enduring stake in the regime's survival (Svolik 2012).

There are two ways how autocrats can dole out **rents** to co-opt strategic groups (**patronage**): Formally or informally. The former explains one of several functions why dictatorships have **legislatures** and hold **elections** and why even personalist rulers end up creating their political **parties**. Such formal institutions facilitate the co-optation of **opposition** and rivals, who can then 'select' to what degree they want to be associated with the ruling regime (Gandhi 2008). Such formal institutions have other functions like information-gathering, consultation platforms, and applying divide-and-rule tactics. Informally, dictators adhere to the same techniques, but usually covertly, for regime insiders and allies through **systemic corruption**, **neo-patrimonialism**, and creating patronal networks (cf. **patronalism**).

Scholars have extensively studied co-optation as a key mechanism of authoritarian control. Research highlights how dictators balance repression and co-optation depending on the nature of the opposition and the external environment. For instance, **Wintrobe** (2000) presents a theory suggesting that dictators maintain power through a combination of repression and loyalty-building strategies like co-optation and was one of the first to suggest that these two practices complement each other. **Elections** also serve as mechanisms for co-optation; in Egypt under Mubarak, vote-buying transformed elections into decentralized distribution systems for patronage, incentivizing voters to support regime-sanctioned candidates (Blaydes 2011 in Tanneberg 2020: 13).

Similarly, Frantz and Kendall-Taylor (2014) developed a framework showing how institutionalized co-optation influences repressive strategies. Their work emphasizes that while repression may be necessary for dealing with radical opposition groups



Box 3.1 Constitutional Hardball

Every strike brings me closer to the next home run.
– (George Herman) 'Babe' Ruth (Jr.) (1895-1948), baseball legend.

The word 'hardball,' with its undertones of fierce competition, always leads my mind to 'dodgeball' – and inevitably to the memorable line from the absurd comedy *Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story* (2004): "If you can dodge a wrench, you can dodge a ball." From there, I cannot help but think of a twist: "If you can dodge precedent, you can play constitutional hardball."

'Constitutional hardball' refers to the use of legal and procedural mechanisms by political actors in ways that push the boundaries of established norms for partisan advantage, often straining or violating long-standing constitutional conventions without necessarily breaking formal laws. The term was coined by legal scholar Mark Tushnet in 2004 and has since been used to describe tactics that, while technically legal, undermine the spirit of democratic governance by destabilizing shared norms and expectations that help maintain a functioning political system. Constitutional hardball is characterized by high-stakes maneuvers designed to entrench political power or shift the balance of power in a way that could have long-term consequences. Examples include tactics such as court-packing, filibustering judicial appointments, using the debt ceiling as a political bargaining chip, voter suppression, and refusing to accept electoral outcomes or peaceful transitions of power. For example, after losing the 2020 US (re)election, incumbent Donald Trump rallied 147 Republicans (eight senators and 139 representatives), who voted to object to the certification of the Electoral College results on 6 January 2021, citing unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud. Such actions are often seen as undermining democratic principles because they prioritize short-term partisan gains over the stability and fairness of the political process.

The concept has been applied to various political contexts, including shifts toward authoritarianism in countries like Argentina and Venezuela, where leaders like Juan Perón and Hugo Chávez used constitutional hardball tactics to consolidate power. For the US, Fishkin and Pozen (2018) have noted an increase in such practices, particularly in recent decades, with some arguing that these tactics have contributed to an erosion of democratic norms.

In essence, constitutional hardball exploits gaps between what is legally permissible and what is democratically acceptable, often leading to a breakdown in mutual trust between political actors and encouraging reciprocal escalation of such tactics.

How to cite:

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that cannot be easily bought off, co-optation is often more effective for managing moderate opponents who can be integrated into the regime's political apparatus. This balance between repression and co-optation is crucial for maintaining stability in dictatorships.

The effectiveness of co-optation lies not only in its ability to neutralize opposition but also in its flexibility. Autocrats can manipulate political institutions to fine-tune co-optation strategies without threatening regime stability (as Malesky & Schuler (2010) show for Vietnam) by offering opposition real but limited policy influence in a national legislature. By adjusting how benefits are distributed and who receives them, dictators can manage internal tensions while maintaining control over key constituencies. However, there are limits to this strategy. Co-optation primarily addresses material incentives for loyalty but may fail to account for non-material motivations such as ideological commitments or grievances against the regime (Tanneberg 2020). Additionally, selective co-optation can exacerbate social divisions if benefits are distributed unevenly among different groups (cf. **hoarding**).

Co-optation is thus a multifaceted tool used by dictatorships to maintain power by extending benefits in exchange for loyalty. It operates alongside repression but offers a more subtle means of control by incorporating potential challengers into regime structures. Johannes Gerschewski (2013; 2015) with his colleagues (2013) reframed co-optation as one of three communicating vessels of regime behavior alongside **repression** and **legitimacy**, which was blended into a middle-range theory calling these the 'three pillars of regime stability.' This so-called 'WZB-model' is being tested in empirical cases (Kailitz & Tanneberg 2015; Lueders & Croissant 2015; Schneider & Maerz 2017), but with mixed results. (It is called WZB after the institute where it was invented, the *Wissenschaftzentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung* or Social Science Research Center Berlin).

Lueders and Croissant's (2015) empirical findings

suggest that the WZB model may only partially apply to electoral autocracies. Additionally, they question whether election outcomes (victories or defeats) are valid indicators of regime stability, arguing that elections occur at the end of a process where the pillars have already weakened, making them more a symptom of instability rather than a direct cause of regime change. Gerschewski (2017) acknowledges that the model is a heuristic tool and not a definitive explanation for all autocratic regimes. He sympathizes with Schneider & Maerz (2017) their suggestion to focus on the complementarity and interaction between the three pillars rather than viewing (and testing) them in isolation.

Scholars have demonstrated that institutionalized forms of co-optation – such as political **parties** and **legislatures** – are particularly effective at reducing opposition incentives and prolonging autocratic rule. However, while co-optation can stabilize regimes by creating networks of loyal supporters, it also has limitations when it comes to addressing non-material grievances or managing deeply divided societies.

How to cite:

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Coup-Proofing

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?
(Who guards the guardians?)
– Juvenalis

When the going gets tough, the tough get going
– American saying

Because the most common mode of exit of any autocratic ruler is a **coup d'état**, dictators have taken steps to prevent coups from happening. Scholars have termed the actions governments take to reduce the chance of such a violent ouster by regime insiders as 'coup-proofing.' Several studies have found that while coup-proofing strategies reduce the likelihood that a coup will take place, these strategies also have the unintended consequence of reducing a country's military capacity and efficiency (Reiter & Stam 1998; Biddle & Long 2004; Pilster & Böhmelt 2011). The scope of coup-proofing frameworks varies: some scholars focus exclusively on the military, and others include 'palace coups' as well.

DEFINITION Peter Feaver (1999) tackles the definition of coup-proofing from the perspective of the ruler's intent to raise a coup's organizational costs, stating that *"coup-proofing efforts attempt to lower either the willingness or ability of militaries to attempt*



a coup." However, when broadening the purview to palace coups, the definition should be modified to coup-proofing efforts attempt to lower either the willingness or ability of militaries or other elites to attempt a coup. (Van den Bosch 2021: 31-32)

SEE ALSO To study the dynamics of coup-proofing, it is foremost required to have a good understanding of the **coup d'état**, its actors, drivers and execution. Coup-proofing has both 'carrot' and 'stick' aspects, and this set of techniques partly overlaps with **co-optation**, **patronage** and **clientelism** ('carrots' to foster loyalty), and **repression** ('sticks' to discourage coups). While repression is usually aimed at opposition figures, journalists, and the people as a whole, coup-proofing also targets elites within the regime.

CLASSIFICATIONS The wide range of coup-proofing techniques used in modern regimes can be broadly categorized with the following short-hand terms: ethnic stacking, **purges**, game-of-chairs, counterbalancing, spoiling, and starving – which are the best known. Lesser-known techniques could consequently be labeled as: 'versailling,' hiding, **indoctrination**, and **personality cults**.

Most of these tactics boil down to the same age-old principle of 'divide-and-rule' by fostering an atmosphere of resentment and competition between and within groups, resulting in a selected, outnumbered elite tied to the ruler in order to safeguard their livelihood (and lives), hence securing their loyalty; and with a larger, fragmented group of armed have-nots vying amongst themselves for favor and **patronage**. This ongoing balancing act by the ruler aims to prevent elites from linking up with the have-nots and simultaneously preoccupies the have-nots with competition amongst themselves to preclude collective action.

Ethnic stacking A common coup-proofing technique is to fill the top posts in the security apparatus with family members or members of the same ethnic (or religious) group or sect. The idea is to recruit from a community of trust and that 'loyalty trumps competence.' In Syria, the Alawite community enjoyed positions of power in the military, regardless of their experience. (Quinlivan 1999) This has proven critical to ensuring that the military remained loyal to the al-Assad regime during the protracted civil war (2011-2024) triggered by the **Arab Spring**. The military may also use **mercenaries** from other nationalities, which would have a low likelihood of ever staging a coup, such as in the case of Libya under al-Qaddafi and currently in the case of Bahrain. A somewhat related tactic is to place civilian personnel, such as party members, in military command units to ensure that there is oversight of the security services, known as a shadow command. In other cases, civilians were appointed to important positions in the military because they were deemed more loyal. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein never appointed any commander who had a military background. Instead, dependable but incompetent soldiers were promoted while capable but possibly disloyal officers were demoted (Ezrow & Frantz 2013; Albrecht 2015).

Glass ceilings regarding promotions and preferential treatment of kith and kin effectively divide the military, resulting in feelings of discrimination and other grievances. Promoting loyalty over merit makes militaries (and other institutions) more corrupt – and therefore less disciplined, incompetent (Frantz 2007: 9), and fragmented, thus reducing their coup potential as well as their combat efficiency. Matthews (2022) finds that political commissars within armies are incredibly effective at snuffing out coup plots but cannot stop them once they are initiated.

Purges This technique entails the systemic exclusion of potential (political) rivals and the purging of the military or party. P. Roessler (2011: 314-315) considers it a short-term strategy by the ruler to terminate the internal security dilemma. This technique is also a form of **repression** (cf. **purges**) and does not resolve the underlying power conflict but merely displaces it from within the regime to society. A purged army will be less willing to stage a coup, and its capabilities and operative cohesion will be reduced by the expulsion of many competent (and therefore dangerous) members. (Van den Bosch 2021: 32; Powell 2012b: 59; Biddle & Zirkle 1996; Sudduth 2014) Its counterinsurgency capabilities will be lower as well because it cannot tap into local networks. (Roessler 2016) At times, purges are symptoms of a ruler's **personalization** process – acquiring unchallenged, supreme power within a regime.

Keep in mind that firing undesirables is one thing, but violent **repression** against regime insiders is generally counterproductive for the survival of autocratic leaders. According to Bove & Rivera (2015: 462): *"This is because repression against members of the supporting coalition shapes actors' views with regards to the leader and their own prospects for life. Indeed, when actors within the ruling coalition perceive that resort to repression by the leader is unfair or even unpredictable, they are more likely to consider their safety at high risk and hence will be more prone to lead or support a plot against the dictator."*

Game-of-chairs This technique – also called 'musical chairs' – is to continuously shuffle around elites in the security services to prevent any one individual from developing a large enough support base that could challenge the incumbent. This is a common tactic under **personalist rule**, who engage in a similar strategy with civilian elites as well (Pollack 2002).

Every new appointee to a position will occupy the post temporarily, lack experience, and not share any corporate identity with the institution they are in charge of. Knowing they will move on soon, they are more focused on self-enrichment than on their responsibilities. In armies, the military officers below their command may soon feel that they alone are competent to judge on such matters as size, organization, recruitment and equipment for forces, leaving them at odds with the political control and, at times, willing to intervene, especially during wartime. (Van den Bosch 2021: 34)

Counterbalancing Another strategy is to counter-

balance the regular armed forces with numerous rival forces that check and balance one another. (Belkin & Schofer 2003) Such parallel units are usually charged with protecting the regime. Examples include the *Islamic Revolutionary Guard* balances the regular military in the case of Iran, and the *National Guard* in Saudi Arabia. This tactic can sometimes backfire if the regular military becomes concerned that their institution is under threat. Parallel armies with better weapons, training and greater prestige can effectively thwart a regular army's ability to take over. Although a higher number of paramilitary organizations does not contribute to more stability, so *"leaders (...) would be better served by increasing the resources of a single paramilitary body."* (Powell 2012a: 1036) Lutscher (2015) finds a U-shaped relationship between armed forces fragmentation and the likelihood of defection during nonviolent mass uprisings. De Bruin (2020a) stresses that such measures can also increase the grievances of troops (competing for resources) and, thus, their willingness to intervene in politics.

In rare cases, **mercenaries** are used as coup-proofing units. Among subtypes of **personalist rule**, Van den Bosch (2021: 250-251) found that civilian dictatorships are more likely to do so than personalist rulers with a military background. Gentil-Fernandes et al. (2023) find that rulers with high coup risk and low international accountability are especially likely to hire mercenaries.

Such parallel security agencies, each with their line of communication and command structure, of course, do have an overlay of responsibilities, and thus, together form a market with multiple sellers of 'security services' and a single demanding buyer (the ruler). (Quinlivan 1999: 148-149) The result is that various actors constantly monitor the regular army's central command and communication lines for any suspicious activity, which seriously impedes its effectiveness and (speed of) intercommunication when officers are afraid to act autonomously within their respective purviews of command, preferring to get approval higher up first before issuing orders.

Spoiling This technique includes overpaying the security services by offering higher salaries, a much bigger budget, purchasing more equipment, or providing the military with access to lucrative business deals, etc. – all meant to buy the loyalty of the armed forces. By doing so, the security apparatus is more vested in the incumbent regime and is less likely to want to stage a coup to change the *status quo*, but only in the short term, as Sudduth (2017) notes, because this increases a military's capabilities to stage a successful coup in the future.

This technique, however, works very well when combined with ethnic stacking. (Albrecht 2015: 43-44; White 2023) In contrast, Choulis et al. (2023) find that a higher level of mechanization in militaries structurally reduces the risk of a coup because, in more mechanized military organizations, the coup execution and coordination costs become more complex.

Starving This one is aimed at cutting budgets, reducing training, and depriving an army of the capability and tools to launch a coup successfully. Quinlivan (1999: 142) finds that in such cases, even a navy or air force will possess restricted reserves of fuel or ammunition, so their units do not have the range or firepower to commit a coup. Mostly applied in underdeveloped countries with (weak) regimes, unable to coup-proof the army by other means, this is a foolhardy technique that contains many risks and undesired consequences, not to mention a plummet of the combat-readiness and discipline: The widespread grievances felt by the rank-and-file over time result in illegal activities (smuggling and trafficking) destabilizing local economies, and even predatory behavior like widespread looting, extortion or bullying of the general population by soldiers.

Versailling While not researched comparatively, this understudied technique involves a consultative, plenary institution and the imposition of theatrical, ritualistic power politics over regime insiders who are required to attend in person. France's Louis XIV's (1638-1715, *Le Roi Soleil* – the Sun King) especially-constructed palace at Versailles near Paris serves as the blueprint for such a 'royal' court, the stage for top-level political intrigue. By regularly demanding the physical attendance of **inner circle** elites (sometimes for extended periods) to participate in court ceremonies, a clear but fluid hierarchy among elites is established and continuously signaled to the inner sanctum. Under the umbrella of palace ceremony, the wheel of fortune turns as the leader bestows praise and honors on followers or doles out rants of public humiliation for real or perceived offenses.

This tactic is only common in highly centralized regimes (cf. **personalist rule** and Box 1.7 on Mobutu) where elites have public, ritualized audiences with the ruler, routinely praising the supreme leader *in plenum*, always signaling devotion and deference – and arbitrary judgment (reciprocation or rebuke) is received. It is an intimidation tactic involving an arbitrary system of reward and punishment. These cringey (to outsider observers) regime theatrics position the ruler as the ultimate giver of **patronage** and supreme judge. A fall from grace can caused by a bad performance review, the indifferent necessity of setting an example (finding a scapegoat), but also the slightest breach of protocol or hint of disloyalty (even by family members). Such palace politics distract elites and erode their collective identity by actively fostering discord, sycophancy (cf. Box 6.5) and denunciations among the elites. Through fear and humiliation, collective agency is reduced. Note that falls from grace can be undone in time (through increased loyalty) and are seldom fatal (else elites would be unwilling to participate in this 'game').

The system is closely entwined with the game-of-chairs technique, and for this reason, a big aspect of 'Kremlinology' (see Box 3.2) is based on detangling these palace politics in extremely secretive and opaque regimes (e.g., Stalin's Russia, North Korea, Turkmenistan, Laos, etc.). Analysts fall back on official (state) footage of public events, ranging from where one stands at military parades or sits at state



dinners (an honorary position; how far located from the leader?) to who is allowed to attend which official visits (factory inspections, product launches, etc.); or which elites are invited for top-level audiences or designated with special tasks or missions? (acting as an emissary on behalf of the ruler).

Hiding A ruler barracking themself in a palace is one thing, but hiding in a fortified bunker to ride out a coup attempt raises an additional hurdle for prospective coup plotters. Coups, by definition, have to be executed quickly, and a ruler hiding behind heavy fortifications can slow down the process critically, especially if dictators have ongoing access to media and rally for popular resistance, reinforcements from allies and international condemnation. Many dictators construct these, while some even have a habit of turning them into the locus of power and ruling from them. Historically, sultans were known to hide in their harems (cf. Box 5.11), acting as a 'palace within a palace' during mutinies and coups.

Indoctrination This is one of the few coup-proofing techniques that is posited not to have a negative effect on an army's effectiveness. D. Reiter (2020: 6) identifies three types of **indoctrination**: (a) education about the difficulties of successfully executing a coup (to discourage actors), (b) to have militaries accept the norm of civilian (or party) control, and (c) to cultivate loyalty to specific rulers and their mission to lead or defend the nation. A regime's revolutionary origins (cf. **revolutionary legacies**) are known to reduce the coup risk significantly. A coherent **ideology** can strengthen military obedience to the party but can also be a source of **legitimacy** for the leader. (Van den Bosch 2021: 255)

Personality cults Closely related to 'versailling' but not identical is the **personality cult**. Besides having different purposes (like nation-building and boosting **legitimacy**), such cults also signal that nobody matters aside from the ruler. Other officials fade into anonymity, and top officials are only portrayed when revering the leader. The message is that there is nobody else to follow or credible enough to take over. Of course, this deterrent technique can only be applied in regimes where leaders have already obtained a position of absolute power. (Svolik 2012: 80-81; Van den Bosch 2021: 38)

LITERATURE The older works did not call it coup-proofing but analyzed aspects of the same phenomenon under the scope of civilian control. (Perlmutter 1969; Welch 1976; Nordlinger 1977) The term 'coup-proofing' appeared somewhere in the late 1990s. Note that the field of civil-military relations is much broader in scope and that while regime type is known to be a crucial factor determining this relationship (Bland 1999), most scholars in this field only distinguish between democratic, democratizing or autocratic regimes. (Brooks 2019).

Most scholarly work aims to assess the efficiency of coup-proofing on regime survival (see: **longevity, stability & resilience**). Does the practice really prevent coups (from happening and/or from succeeding?), and when and how do they fall short? (Belkin & Schofer 2003; 2005; Powell 2012a/b; Albrecht 2015a/b; Böhmelt & Pilster 2015) Furthermore, there is a large body of literature that (A) focuses on the causal link between coup-proofing and rebellion or civil war (Driscoll 2008; Murphy 2015; Braithwaite & Sudduth 2016; Powell 2014, 2019); or (B) on the effects of coup-proofing on military effectiveness during interstate wars (Pilster & Böhmelt 2011; Narang & Talmadge 2018) and how regimes try to mitigate these negative effects: for instance, overcompensating by pursuing chemical, biological or nuclear weapons and forging alliances (Brown et al. 2013; Boutton 2019; McWard & Yoon 2021); by carefully selecting coup-proofing techniques in the face of rebel threat (Sudduth 2016; Paine 2021) or when coping with foreign threats (Florea 2018); by soliciting nonstrategic development aid for post-conflict regimes (Girod 2015; Binetti 2021).

The literature on coup-proofing originates from contrasting civil-military relations in democracies and non-democracies and comparing their combat efficiency and readiness (in the Cold War context). The existing literature barely connects with polychotomous **regime classifications** to distinguish between autocratic regime types and coup-proofing practices. (Geddes 2009; Escribà-Folch et al. 2020) A few do extend the same frame to study how democracies today are still coup-proof (Pilster & Böhmelt 2012), e.g., on democratic India (Joshi 2015). Nordlinger (1977) looked at military regimes exclusively when these were still prevalent. Most scholars find that **personalist rule** or **sultanism & neo-sultanism** – by principle – rely most on coup-proofing and are, therefore, most affected by it if dictators maladjust their threat perception. (Talmadge 2013; Van den Bosch 2021) A few studied the impact of **democratization** on coup risk (Tang & Li 2021).

Overall, the relationship between the drivers of coups and coup-proofing is complicated: Sudduth (2017) finds that rulers become less likely to initiate coup-proofing efforts as the coup risk increases (in order not to trigger the army in acting). The choice of parallel security forces also plays a role: Carey et al. (2016) focus on the role of militias in coup-proofing schemes and the security risks this entails during civil wars. Böhmelt and Clayton (2018) compare the reliance on paramilitary forces and pro-government militias.

MEASUREMENT To our knowledge, no comprehensive dataset of regimes' coup-proofing techniques exists. Although one can find data on 'counterbalancing' and 'ethnic stacking.' Several datasets on intra-regime military actors can verify if they are used for this purpose by rulers. For instance, the *Pro-government Militias Database Version 2.0* covers 504 pro-government militias (and their details) across the globe between 1981 and 2014. (Carey et al. 2022) The *State Security Forces (SSF)* dataset, which includes 375 security forces in 110 countries, 1960-2010, tracks how each security force is commanded, staffed, equipped, and deployed, as well as the number of security forces and potential counterweights in each state's security sector as a whole. (De Bruin 2020b) Zooming in on another coup-proofing tech-

nique, the *Ethnic Stacking in Africa Dataset* provides the first comprehensive data on the ethnic stacking practices of all African countries from independence to 2018 (with 95.7% of leaders and 98.3% of country years recovered) (Harkness 2022). While not specifically gauging the ethnic constellation of paramilitaries, the *Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Data Set (version 3)* by A. Wimmer et al. (2009) identifies all politically salient ethnic groups in political regimes (1946-2010, global coverage) and their respective access to state power.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE & IMPACT ON POLICY The study of coup-proofing matters greatly to assess the military threat of foreign nations or explain the breakout of civil wars, but it has also been paramount to understanding a country's descent into chaos after autocratic (especially personalist) **ousters** (e.g., Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003 or Muammar Qadaffi in Libya in 2011) Western allies supporting 'emerging' democracies after such ousters, were forced to contend with the limited effects of their military training programs, because of the stubborn coup-proofing policies of their protegees. This became very visible when al-Maliki's Iraqi army crumbled against the much smaller ISIS troops in 2014. Similarly, the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in 2021 was facilitated by the Afghan army because troops were routinely stationed in provinces far away from their homes and families, resulting in high desertion rates (Hoekstra 2020; Matisek 2021).

EXAMPLES The most prominent example of an ongoing assessment of the combat effectiveness of an autocratic military is Putin's Russia. Since his regime's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the military superpower was bogged down within a month of its surprise offensive, despite its numerical overweight and large stockpiles of weaponry, and this is down to coup-proofing:

"The leadership culture is dictatorial and enforced by fear. Corruption is structurally encouraged by the Kremlin so that the civilian authorities have the threat of legal action against military commanders. Corruption, however, wreaks havoc on Russian logistics. Fear of punishment has created a military in which soldiers will doggedly implement orders even when they no longer make sense." (Watling 2022)

Russian troops turned out to be demoralized, under-equipped and under-trained, with sporadic evidence of mutinies among the rank-and-file (at times even going as far as murdering their own officers), large-scale defections, and (at times) unseen infighting of parallel security services (with open animosity of their respective commanders) vying for influence in the Kremlin.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The main challenge in the study of coup-proofing is the general secrecy clouding the inner circle and security service politics. Scholars unable to rely on classified intelligence obtained by foreign secret services have few inroads to gauge the internal hierarchies of a regime save from puzzling together fragmented evidence or interviews with defectors. Another issue is that there is not so much transcontinental comparative research. The bulk of the case studies are drawn from MENA (see: 'regional variation' below), and few studies actually distinguish between monarchic, military, party-based and personalist regimes, even when these differences matter greatly. Van den Bosch (2021) accounts for different coup-proofing techniques in (African) **personalist regimes** with a civilian or military institutional outlook and even finds some distinctive patterns for civilian personalist regimes run by (former) military officers.

Keep in mind that works probing military efficiency and the impact of coup-proofing use different standards of how the former should be measured. For frameworks relating to coup studies, see Finer 1962; Brooks & Stanley 2007; Reiter 2020. When assessing coup-proofing by counter-balancing security forces, note that the mere presence of a military actor (paramilitary, militia, mercenary group, etc.) in a regime does not mean they are actually engaged in coup-proofing. They might have other functions (denunciations, strike-breaking, punishment campaigns, etc.)

REGIONAL VARIATION Not all area studies have equally contributed to research on coup-proofing, but this field is relatively new, so new insights are expected from these still under-explored regions.

MENA Due to the high geopolitical stakes in this region, most scholarship analyzing coup-proofing has been applied there. Although the tradition traces back to the works of K.M. Pollack (1996, 2002) and R.A. Brooks (1998), the **Arab Spring** really kickstarted the study of coup-proofing in MENA. (Albrecht 2015b; Al-Hamdi 2020) Many works deal with several specific case studies: Libya (Gaub 2013; Nassif 2021a); Tunisia (Brooks 2013; Nassif 2014, 2021a); Egypt (Quinlivan 1999; Brooks 2006; Nassif 2014, 2021a/b; Albrecht 2015a); Syria (Quinlivan 1999, Nassif 2014, 2021a; Florescu 2017) Yemen (Makara 2013); Turkey (Bacik & Salur 2010; Kaynar 2022); Saddam's Iraq (Quinlivan 1999, Kiyani 2021); post-war Iraq (De Bruin 2014; Nassif 2014; Bausch 2018; Hoekstra 2020); Iran (Roush 2022); Bahrain (Louër 2013); the Gulf states (Hertog 2011; Barany 2021); and Saudi Arabia (Quinlivan 1999; Mabon 2012).

Sub Saharan Africa This region has, strangely, received far less attention despite its higher number of recorded coups, but there are some older comparative works (First 1970) and new ones (Khisa & Day 2022) available, as well as some selected case studies, like Uganda (Rwengabo 2012; Murphy 2016); Guinea-Bissau (and its alliance politics) (Boutton 2019); and the Ivorian conflict (Murphy 2016). Van den Bosch (2021) features comparative overviews backed by in-depth case studies but exclusively focuses on this practice under **personalist rule**. Rabinowitz and Jargowsky (2018) look at how African dictators – instead of buying off urban consumers – forge alliances with rural elites to (successfully) thwart coups. Very interesting is the analysis by Mehrl & Choulis (2021) looking at French colonial legacies (setting up paramilitaries for control) that translate into contemporary coup-proofing styles afterward.



Latin America This infamous coup-prone region (before and during the Cold War) is similarly ignored by coup-proofing scholars (although general works on civil-military relations abound). The few available works, in particular, tackle the regimes of the radical, populist side of Latin America's 'New Left' (Rittinger & Cleary 2013; Rittinger 2020), such as Evo Morales of Bolivia, Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Manuel Zelaya of Honduras, and Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela (Martin 2017; Norden 2021).

Indo-Pacific After independence, this world region hosted a large mix of civilian, military, revolutionary and personalist regimes with widely diverse civil-military traditions. Few comparative works exist, with J.S. Hoadley (1975) covering the years 1933-1975 and A. Croissant (2013) comparing different coups (and their success and drivers) for five countries: Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji. Other case studies cover the Philippines (Marcum & Brown 2017) and (democratic) India (Joshi 2015).

Eurasia Eurasia is very much overlooked when it comes to coup-proofing because there are so few coups. Its long legacy of revolutionary indoctrinated militaries precludes a culture of 'coup traps' (see Box 5.2). Georgia (1991-1992) is a rare example. Emerging research is mostly focused on Russia, for instance, Matveev 2022. Europe and the West consists mostly of consolidated democracies, which are inherently more resistant to coups due to their diffused political power. In the US, Donald Trump's 'coup attempt' (the 6 January 2021 US Capitol attack) did trigger some debate if the country (and others like Brazil) would be resilient enough to withstand such (attempted) populist *autogolpes* (Golby 2021; Gramer 2022).

NEW FRONTIERS Interesting is the impact of military academies on coup-plotting cultures and how Western foreign interventions coupled with military training programs (establishing military schools) can actually increase coup risk in non-democratic regimes or emerging democracies. (Böhmelt et al. 2019) Also Mehrl & Choulis (2021) deserve a mention for their exploration of colonial legacies regarding this topic. Another outlier is a rare historical example of early-modern Spain (1850-1915) and its coup-proofing legacies (Sabaté et al. 2022).

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Disinformation

Falsehood flies, and the truth comes limping after it
– Jonathan Swift

Disinformation refers to the deliberate dissemination of false or manipulated information with the intent of misleading or deceiving. It includes spreading various types of inaccurate content for political advantage or financial gain. Disinformation, rooted in **propaganda**'s history, became more accessible, affordable, and effective with the spread of social media. Using false information helps non-democratic leaders stay in control, as autocracies with high levels of disinformation are less likely to undergo democratization.

DEFINITION Intentionally disseminated false information is designed to mislead or deceive (Fallis 2014; Hernon 1995). This includes all forms of inaccurate, misleading, or false information designed, presented, and promoted to cause public harm or for profit on purpose (Kapantai et al. 2020). Its circulation poses a threat to the notions of fact and truth when citizens believe and give credibility to false, inaccurate, or misleading messages (Pérez-Escolar et al. 2023). According to D. Fallis (2015), the term 'to disinform' denotes an activity close to lying.

Disinformation is characterized as *"intentional falsehoods spread as news stories or simulated documentary formats to advance political goals"* (Bennett & Livingstone 2018: 124). E. Humprecht's definition (2019) introduces a profit motive, describing disinformation as information intentionally created and posted on various websites, subsequently disseminated via social media for either profit or social influence. Disinformation can also be seen as a form of political communication (Freelon & Wells 2020).

SEE ALSO Disinformation is closely associated with fake news, **propaganda**, manipulation of individuals and groups, and information warfare. Disinformation can be labeled as 'black propaganda' because it operates covertly and depends on spreading false information. Both **democracies** and **autocracies** spread disinformation, both internally and externally. Autocracies that are willing to manipulate information extensively and spread false narratives are likely to employ traditional forms of **repression** as well. Disinformation relates also to the rise of **cyber warfare** and **digital authoritarianism.**

KEY SIGNIFICANCE At its core, disinformation represents an assault on the integrity of knowledge. When false information circulates and is accepted as truth by members of society, it contaminates the information environment (Tsipursky 2017). Disinformation can erode public trust in science, experts, elites, and politicians, with some of these figures possibly being the originators and spreaders of false information (Pérez-Escolar et al. 2023). Usually, disinformation is perceived as a threat to democracy. According to Bennet and Livingstone (2023: 1): "*The intentional spread of falsehoods and related attacks on the rights of minorities, press freedoms, and the rule of law all challenge the basic norms and values on which institutional legitimacy and political stability depend*."

The dissemination of false or inaccurate information has been a phenomenon present in human soci-

Box 3.2 Kremlinology: The Dark Art of Arcane Comparative Politics

Kremlin political intrigues are comparable to a bulldog fight under a rug. An outsider only hears the growling, and when he sees the bones fly out from beneath, it is obvious who won.
– Winston S. Churchill
Kremlinology (…) arose not at Harvard but in the Soviet Union. It was how the regime itself operated, and in some ways it was what everyone living there did, to varying degrees, at varying levels, from their immediate environment up to the Kremlin. Kremlinology was, one could say, a way of life.
Stephen Kotkin (2002: 49)

Kremlinology is the study and analysis of closed and opaque autocracies with particular focus on the leadership, domestic elite politics and its foreign policy executive by aid of intelligence, the critical induction of official documents, and other sources. The goal is to explain or predict policy initiatives using a range of techniques employing methods from sociology, political psychology, and critical readings of political biographies of elites, combined with insights from game theory. Like the FBI's psychological profiling of serial killers in the US in the early 1970s, Kremlinology is afflicted by the problem of data scarcity. As an approach, it is far from perfect, but when applied rigorously, supported by middle-range theories, it is more than just intellectual speculation.

The concept derives from the 'Kremlin' (Кремль – *Kreml'* in Russian) in Moscow, the most (in)famous of all fortified citadels of this type, and the seat of power in the USSR and the Russian Federation. Historically, a *kremlin* is any fortified palace complex in a major town, but this impregnable 'information black box' inside Soviet Russia's closed society became a symbol of secretive 'byzantine court' politics at the height of the Cold War.

As a set of analytical frameworks, kremlinology has been applied to other autocracies out of necessity, because of their extreme secrecy. Obvious objects of study are contemporary Russia and China because of their high stakes in the world order, but two other cases with long kremlinologist traditions are Turkmenistan and North Korea (due to their extreme isolation at the international level). Cuba and Laos (Sayalath & Creak 2017) are still communist, and thus kremlinologists can rely on old tools to analyze their shared socio-political practices of signaling and **propaganda**. In the same fashion, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also share such legacies (and **censorship** models).

The term emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Jacobson 2016), but the approach was increasingly criticized and ridiculed by the end of the Cold War. In a witty satire on Cold War kremlinologists, Patrick Cockburn (1988) derisively noted that *"the perceptions of* [visiting journalists] *were conditioned less by the interviews they conducted than by the quality of the hotels in which they stayed. In the absence of concrete information, visitors regarded the particular virtues or failings of their hotel as a symbol of the condition of Soviet society as a whole."* Cockburn does have a point, observing that the old kremlinologists missed the fact that by Brezhnev's time there was no longer a small group of top officials who wholly determined policy and that society can fundamentally change (even under **totalitarianism**), despite the reactionary mindset of the leadership. Cockburn and others rightfully criticize the intentional fallacies, confirmation biases, selection biases that did creep into mainstream kremlinology by the 1980s. As Russia became more open and chaotic after Gorbachev's reforms, some kremlinologists failed to acknowledge this and stuck to their old ways. Urging a new journalism in the post-Cold War world, H.A. Grunwald (1993) wrote that *"gone are the days when clues to Moscow politics could be read in the lineup atop Lenin's tomb and between the lines of the official press."* (Similarly, the reputation of criminal profiling has been damaged by rogue pundits, overestimating its limits and boasting that their insights will directly lead to arrests.)

Kremlinology's reputation seems to have clearly made a comeback around 2020 with the unabashed title of Alexander Baturo and Johan A. Elkink's book: *The New Kremlinology: Understanding Regime Personalization in Russia* (2021); especially after Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine and the renewed journalist focus on ongoing power struggles within regimes in Russia (Osborne 2023) and China (Ferreira Marques 2022)

Note that most case studies are characterized by **personalist rule**, which allows for simpler analytical models of game theory (with one leader versus subordinate elite factions) in contrast to more collegial regimes (with their ebb and flow of various ruling elite coalitions). Many such rulers also revert to 'versailling' (see **coup-proofing**) referring to the theatrical, ritualistic power politics in which domestic elites are forced to partake to profess their loyalty and which can be used by analysts to gauge regime hierarchy. Key topics for kremlinology are **personalization**, **succession** and **transitions**, but also the understanding of dynamics behind **purges**, actual or attempted **coups d'état**, or reforms.

Kremlinology draws on the collection of fragmented sources to induct changing power relations among elites. Observers look at the relationships of top officials with the supreme power-holder and other leaders of the regime, their policy influence, rhetoric, and career trajectories (Baturo & Elkink 2021: 20). Continuously, dedicated country experts come up with innovative techniques, even if they would never label themselves as kremlinologists. A (temporary) opening of archives is considered to be a unique moment of truth, but even here there are limits to what the surviving 'everyday' paperwork of top regime officials can reveal. Barros (2016) and Kotkin (2002) provide some excellent critical thoughts on how to approach such sources.

Most famous is the study of altered footage of the Russian Revolution, with pictures and films portraying



its leaders. As time went on, first Lenin purged ideological dissidents from the politburo (Box 8.4), then Stalin eliminated rivals on his path to supreme power. Russian historiography, tightly controlled by the state, evolved alongside these events to reflect the current official narrative, resulting in the careful removal of disgraced fellow revolutionaries from famous pictures and films, and literally rewriting Soviet history.

The critical study of discourse is of course key in these studies – not only what is said and how it is said, but also what is omitted. Elites operating in these regimes are adept at deciphering small nuances in official discourse, but then again, their life sometimes depends on it. For instance, where the study of foreign policy is concerned, Urbansky and Trecker (2018), in their treatment of state media as intra-bloc diplomatic tools, explore the official portrayal of Communist China in the East German, Hungarian and Polish press, looking for disparities that not only highlight the uncertainty surrounding the Sino-Soviet split, but also finding that satellite states opportunistically used their national media to pick sides, e.g. during the Sino-Indian conflict.

The public displays of court politics (entwined with **personality cults**) can yield important information as well. For North Korea, Ishiyama (2014) studies the changing composition of the leadership networks around both Kim Jong-Il and Kim Jong-Un, using data from the entourages that accompanied these rulers on their "on the spot guidance" inspection tours of factories, government facilities and other public events. Similarly, Newson and Trebbi (2018) track the specific biographical information of North Korean cadres to map their co-appearances in official public events, broadcast by the state propaganda agency, inducting clear factional jousting as Kim Jong-Un consolidated his rule.

Kremlinology is a crude tool, but lacking authentic or reliable sources it remains a necessity in order to study the most opaque regimes.

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eties for centuries (Kapantai et al. 2020). However, digital media technology, particularly social media, facilitated the swift production and widespread distribution of incorrect information through decentralized and distributed networks (Benkler et al. 2018). In non-democratic regimes, the proliferation of disinformation represents a formidable challenge to the pursuit of truth and the functioning of an informed citizenry. **Digital authoritarianism** is on the rise, bolstered, i.e., by the widespread and relatively unrestricted dissemination of disinformation on social media platforms, accompanied by the seemingly ever-expanding market of accessible and affordable ICT tools.

While social media serves as 'liberation technology' for democratic mobilization (Diamond 2012), playing a crucial role in the arsenal of activists (Pospieszna & Galus 2019), it simultaneously provides authoritarian regimes with a means to enforce **censorship**, control information dissemination, promote pro-regime **propaganda**, manipulate both domestic and foreign populations, and monitor and **repress** citizens (Polyakova & Meserole 2019; Morozov 2011; Pearce & Kendzior 2012; Aday et al. 2010; Kendall-Taylor et al. 2020). Consequently, digital authoritarianism is reshaping the power dynamics between democracies and autocracies (Polyakova & Meserole 2019).

In autocracies, the manipulation of information becomes a key instrument for consolidating power, as state actors exploit media channels to disseminate **propaganda** that aligns with their narratives. The findings of Y. Sato, F. Wiebrecht and S.I. Lindberg's (2023) global comparative study on disinformation and episodes of regime transformation indicate that in authoritarian regimes, the use of disinformation aids rulers in maintaining their grip on power, as regimes characterized by elevated levels of disinformation are less prone to democratization episodes. Conversely, in democracies, disinformation raises the likelihood of **autocratization** onsets, but disinformation itself is unlikely to lead to a complete democratic breakdown. G. Schleffer and B. Miller (2021) observed in robust authoritarian regimes an inten-

sifying effect of social media, suggesting that autocrats can effortlessly disseminate disinformation and fake news both domestically and internationally, fortifying their hold on power. Critiquing the disinformation strategies as instances of authoritarian efforts to manipulate new media platforms may seem straightforward. However, it is equally plausible to identify similar tactics used by democratic governments (Mejias & Vokuev 2017).

L. Hunter's (2022) findings from a cross-national analysis of 158 states from 2000-2019 indicate that social media disinformation, the utilization of social platforms for coordinating offline violence, and online political polarization diminish the overall levels of democracy.

Social media has various political effects on both democratic and authoritarian states, with a weakening effect on strong democratic regimes, a radicalizing effect on weak democratic regimes, an intensifying effect on strong authoritarian regimes, and a destabilizing effect on weak authoritarian regimes (Schleffer & Miller 2021). Disinformation plays a significant role in the weakening of strong, liberal democracies by amplifying extreme views and conspiracy theories, increasing polarization, sowing doubts, and weakening people's trust in democratic institutions and processes. In weak democratic regimes, the utilization of social media platforms to spread fake news and disinformation during an election process results in a radicalizing impact by deepening domestic polarization, exacerbating politics, and embracing nationalism. In both weak and strong democracies, the malign, disinforming use of social media as a part of 'perception management' can be orchestrated both by domestic populists and external, usually authoritarian forces like Russia (see 'examples' below).

In non-democratic regimes, the proliferation of disinformation represents a formidable challenge to the pursuit of truth and the functioning of an informed citizenry. The deliberate spread of false or misleading information, often orchestrated by authoritarian governments, serves as a potent tool for maintaining control, suppressing dissent, and shaping public perception.

ORIGIN The notions of 'dis-' and 'misinformation' have a history as long as that of communication itself (Pérez-Escolar et al. 2023). False information existed long before its wide circulation became facilitated by the invention of the printing press (Aïmeur et al. 2023). In Roman times, Octavian's **propaganda** campaign against Mark Anthony, which deployed slogans etched onto coins to smear Antony's reputation circa 44 BCE (Posetti & Matthews 2018), can be seen as evidence of early disinformation campaigns.

The term 'disinformation' originated in the Russian language as *desinformatsiya* (десинформатсия) in 1923, denoting "*false, mistaken, or misleading information in an intentional, deliberate, or purposeful effort to mislead, deceive, or confuse*" (Fetzer 2004: 231). Initially, it was closely associated with spies and **intelligence services**. For decades, various entities, including individuals, groups, and governments, have attempted to manipulate public opinion by disseminating falsified and forged information to influence political alignments.

G.S. Jowett and V. O'Donnell (2012) characterize disinformation as 'black propaganda' due to its covert nature and reliance on false information, drawing a connection to the historical KGB division, *desinformatsiya*, dedicated to such **propaganda**. Political forces have long employed deception and disinformation to gain an advantage over adversaries, with *Operation Bodyguard* during World War II serving as a notable documented instance of successful deception (Shu et al. 2020). *Operation Bodyguard* was the code name for a WWII disinformation campaign implemented by the Allied states and aimed at misleading the Germans about the intended location of the D-Day invasion of northwest Europe in 1944; the strategy involved the transmission of false radio signals and the fabrication of deceptive military reports regarding the landing site (Farquhar 2005). The notion of disinformation has been in widespread use since the 1950s (Manning et al. 2014).

Examples of prototypical disinformation include misleading advertising in both business and politics, government **propaganda**, manipulated photographs, forged documents, fictitious maps, Internet scams, fraudulent websites, and even edited Wikipedia entries (Fallis 2014).

LITERATURE Most of the scholarship on disinformation has focused on definitions, the social spheres where disinformation is recognized as problematic, and the sources responsible for creating or disseminating disinformation along with its channels. Despite the plethora of scientific studies on the field, many of them introduce *ad hoc* and isolated approaches, resulting in a fragmentation problem (Kapantai et al. 2021). Scholars across various disciplines, including communications, political science, and psychology, are paying attention to the creation, consumption, and spread of disinformation.

The literature offers a rich picture of the *what*, *who* and *of* the channels, with rather a modest picture of the *effects* of disinformation (Pérez-Escolar et al. 2023). While studies generally recognize disinformation as a significant challenge for democracies, certain scholars contend that its reach and influence are limited (Lanoszka 2019; Allcott & Gentzkow 2017; Grinberg et al. 2019; Guess et al. 2019). The major themes in research on disinformation pertain to the field of health, politics and democracy, and conspiracy theories. Studies on dis-informative sources examine social network users, mainstream media outlets, anonymous online personas, and political actors (Pérez-Escolar et al. 2023). Scholars have concentrated also on fact-checking – a process of debunking false and manipulated information. A wide range of journalistic and non-profit organizations currently engage in different practices and procedures to correct false information (Graves & Cherubini 2016; Walter et al. 2020).

A diverse array of actors, including trolls, bots, fake news websites, conspiracy theorists, politicians, highly partisan media outlets, mainstream media, and foreign governments, play overlapping and sometimes competing roles in generating



and amplifying disinformation in the contemporary media landscape. Across various disciplines, research has delved into the motivations and functions of these actors in the creation and dissemination of disinformation (Faris et al. 2017; Linvill & Warren 2020; Tsfati et al. 2020).

Considerable disagreement exists in both academic research and policy circles regarding the classification of the terms *disinformation* and *fake news* (Aïmeur et al. 2023; Kapantai et al. 2021). Disinformation is different from misinformation, which relates to unintentional behaviors that inadvertently mislead (Chadwick & Vaccari 2019). *Disinformation* and *fake news* are often unjustifiably used as synonyms. The latter is a broad and ambiguous label encompassing various forms of communication containing some degree of falsehood. Furthermore, it has been manipulated by far-right political entities as a strategic tool in their efforts to undermine media outlets that stand in opposition to them (Farkas & Schou 2018; Koliska & Assmann 2021). The Collins English Dictionary defines *fake news* as false and frequently sensational information presented as news reporting; however, the term has evolved and now commonly refers to the dissemination of false information (Cooke 2017). It does not have to be spread with the intention of causing harm, as in the case of disinformation.

When reflecting on this expanding field of study, according to L. Ha et al. (2021), covering the scholarly development for the period 2008 to 2017, nearly half of the analyzed 142 journal articles about fake news and misinformation over the past decade were written by communication scholars and psychologists. The authors did not distinguish information in terms of intent to cause harm or lack thereof, but when mapping the literature, they also included disinformation.

Key research topics identified include the causes and motivations behind the production of fake news and misinformation; sources of such content; how audiences identify or recognize fake news; the effects of fake news and misinformation; the content, attributes, and characteristics of fake news; strategies and solutions to combat or reduce misinformation; and the consumption, processing, and memory of fake news and misinformation. (Ha et al. 2021). The influence of American scholars on the topic remains evident, particularly in terms of author affiliations and study settings. To highlight this, the authors included tables comparing research topics studied in the US with those examined in non-US contexts. (Ha et al. 2021: 304-305).

CLASSIFICATIONS A widely accepted framework (Wardle & Derakhshan 2017) classifies information disorder into three types: mis-, dis-, and mal-information, as shown in Figure 3.2. This conceptual framework hinges on the dimensions of harm and falseness. Misinformation involves unintentionally sharing false information, while dis-information entails knowingly spreading falsehoods to cause harm. Mal-information, in contrast, involves sharing authentic information with malicious intent, often exposing private details publicly (similar to 'kompromat' in Box 8.3). This framework offers a concise understanding of the diverse manifestations and motivations behind information disorder.

C. Wardle and H. Derakhshan (2017) delineate seven categories of dis- and misinformation, illustrating the extensive range of problematic online content. These categories encompass satire or parody, misleading content, impostor content, fabricated content, false connection, false context, and manipulated content. Satire and parody, which, although artistic expressions, can transform into misinformation when audiences misinterpret the intended message, to outright fabricated content.

Distinct typologies have been proposed by researchers, offering valuable frameworks for classifying and comprehending the diverse manifestations of misinformation. S. Zannettou et al. (2019) delineate categories such as fabricated content, **propaganda**, impostors, conspiracy theories, hoaxes, and biased or one-sided information. S. Kumar and N. Shah (2018) propose a classification encompassing misinformation, disinformation, opinion-based, and fact-based content. V. Lemieux and T.D. Smith introduce categories including disinformation, hoax, bias in fact selection, rumor, hyperbole, and misinformation. These typologies provide researchers and scholars with structured approaches to categorize the multifaceted nature of false information.

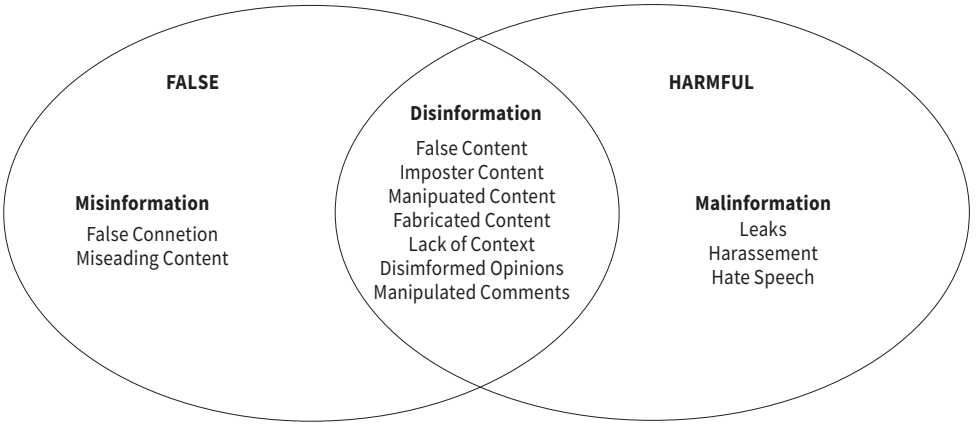
D. Fallis (2014) proposes a classification of intentionally misleading information in general: misleading about the accuracy of the content; misleading about the source believing the content; misleading about the identity of the source; misleading about an implication of the accuracy of the content.

MEASUREMENT The absence of a unanimous definition for disinformation has fueled disagreement on how to measure it. Disinformation can be measured by examining false or manipulated pieces of information or disinformation narratives through content analysis and/or qualitative discourse analysis (Al Khaja et al. 2018; León et al. 2022; Patra & Pandey 2021; Punziano et al. 2021; Scannel et al. 2021; Xia et al. 2019). Actors of disinformation can be explored by implementing social network analysis (Guarino et al. 2019; Luo et al. 2021; Shrivastava et al. 2020; Sivasankari & Vadivu 2021). Data can also be scrapped directly from fact-checking organizations' websites (Lee et al. 2023).

Scholars try to measure the scope of disinformation (Golovchenko 2020; Fletcher et al. 2018), its effects as well as resilience to disinformation. The dimensions that could be measured regarding disinformation are motive, 'facticity,' and verifiability (Kapantai et al. 2021). To understand the emotional impact of disinformation and its effects on individuals exposed to or sharing it, in-depth interviews or similar qualitative research with small, purposeful samples are necessary (Pérez-Escolar et al. 2023).

Certain authors highlight the inconclusive nature of empirical evidence regarding the rise of online disinformation and its societal consequences, particularly noting a limited understanding of the situation outside the US. This underscores the need for a framework conducive to cross-national com-

Figure 3.2 – A Typology of Disinformation in the Social Media Environment



Source: Author's own work, adapted from: Wardle & Derakhshan (2017: 5); Humprecht et al. (2020).

parative work. To address this issue, E. Humprecht et al. (2020) developed a predictive framework for cross-country assessment of exposure to disinformation, comprising multiple indexes: a populism index (inverted), polarization index (inverted), media trust index, shared media, the strength of PBS (public broadcasting services), social media index (inverted), and market size (inverted).

Created using the **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem) infrastructure, the *Digital Society Project* (DSP) offers data from 2000-2021 for 179 countries that can be utilized to investigate disinformation. Available indicators include government dissemination of false information domestically and abroad, party dissemination of false information domestically and abroad, foreign governments dissemination of false information and foreign governments' (misleading) ads (Mechkova et al. 2022). Data are coded by experts and describe different aspects of 'coordinated information operations' (Mechkova et al. 2022: 14-16). V-Dem/DSP's data proved valuable as variables in global comparative studies (Sato et al. 2023; Chang et al. 2023) and provided concise insights into selected cases (Walsh 2020; Wiebrecht 2022; Köhler 2023).

To obtain data from social media, researchers created *NewsGuard ratings*, *CrowdTangle* and *comScore* (Altay et al. 2022; Edelson et al. 2021; Recuero et al. 2022; Sanderson et al. 2021; Théro & Vincent, 2022). *CrowdTangle*, a public insights tool (owned by *Meta*), is commonly used by scholars to derive data on public content spread on Facebook and Instagram (CrowdTangle 2021). An application of content analysis to *CowdTangle* data is also possible (Punziano et al. 2021).

There are several thematic databases regarding disinformation/misinformation/fake news (depending on the incorporated definitions) available:

EUvsDisinfo database An open repository of disinformation cases originating in pro-Kremlin outlets. The database uses data analysis and media monitoring services in multiple languages and is updated every week, currently containing 16303 cases of Russian disinformation (as of 26 November 2023). Data can be filtered by country/region, language, data and thematic tags. *EUvsDisinfo* is led by the EU *East Stratcom Task Force*.

CIC Truth Seeker Dataset 2023 The Canadian Institute for Cybersecurity's (University of New Brunswick) benchmark datasets with more than 180,000 labeled tweets (posts on Twitter/X) related to 700 real and 700 false information. The data for the *Truth Seeker* and *Basic ML* datasets were generated through the crawling of tweets related to Real and Fake news from the *PolitiFact Dataset*.

PolitiFact Fact Check Dataset This comprises 21,152 fact-checked statements between 2008 to 2022 coming from the *PolitiFact* website, categorized into six levels of truthfulness. Records include sources of appearance and links to the fact-checked article published by *PolitiFact* – a fact-checking organization.

The Fact Checker's database documents 30,573 false or misleading claims made by US President D. Trump while in office (2017-2020). The dataset filters the statements by topic, source, frequency, and date and provides fact-checks.

CHECKED This Chinese COVID-19 misinformation dataset based on the *Weibo platform* provides a total of 2,104 verified suspected news information ('microblog' posts) related to COVID-19 from December 2019 to August 2020, identified by using a list of keywords. The dataset contains information on reposts, comments, likes and multimedia information (Yang et al. 2021).

ESOC COVID-19 *Misinformation Dataset* records 5,613 stories on misinformation/disinformation efforts on social media and news outlets from different countries from the early days of the pandemic through the end of December 2020. It features a listing of select URLs carrying disinformation based on *ESOC, AFP,* and *NewsGuard* data. The dataset was created by



ESOC Empirical Studies of Conflict at Princeton University.

PolitiFact-Oslo Corpus A dataset for false information analysis and detection; contains samples of both fake and real news in English, collected from the fact-checking website *PolitiFact.com*. The main application of the dataset is automatic fake news detection (Põldvere et al. 2023).

FakeCovid A multilingual cross-domain dataset of 5,182 fact-checked articles concerning COVID-19, collected from 4 January 2020 to 15 May 2020 (Shahi & Nandini 2020). Data are available in 40 languages from 105 countries.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES studies focusing on citizens usually have smaller sample sizes compared to those examining social networks (Pérez-Escolar et al. 2023). The former, often using experimental designs, explores how ordinary people consume and respond to disinformation. On the contrary, the latter concentrates more on identifying and describing the spread of disinformation, employing larger samples through methods like tweets, *Facebook* likes, *WhatsApp* messages, or *Instagram* interactions.

M. Pérez-Escolar, D. Lilleker and A. Tapia-Frade (2023) examined 756 publications on disinformation and found 74.6% of articles to be empirical and the remaining 25.4% to be essays. In empirical studies, there is a leaning toward descriptive studies (69%) rather than causal (1.9%) and experimental studies (29.1%). In terms of research methods, the majority (72.1%) of studies preferred quantitative methods rather than qualitative (26.3%). Other conclusions come from a review of fake news studies. It uncovered that the methodologies and data-gathering techniques employed in fake news research were distributed as follows: 64.1% qualitative, 28.2% quantitative, and 7.8% mixed methods (Arqoub et al. 2020).

Comparative cross-national studies on disinformation are rare (Chang et al. 2020; Sato et al. 2023). In the example of Sub Saharan Africa, D. Madrid-Morales and H. Wasserman (2021: 41) summed up that methodological challenges remain "*the difficulty to identify the most appropriate unit of comparison, and the importance of taking proactive steps to guarantee research outputs that are inclusive of the diverse range of individual experiences with disinformation.*"

EXAMPLES Disinformation is pervasive globally, encompassing various contexts. It manifests in issues ranging from health concerns like the safety of childhood vaccinations to environmental challenges like global warming and even extends to consumer topics (Tsfati et al. 2020). In the realm of disinformation literature, three pivotal thematic areas stand out. The initial focus revolves around COVID-19, which was accompanied by intense efforts by scientists all over the world to understand the mechanisms of creating, disseminating and believing in false information on the pandemic, vaccines and health in general (Ball & Maxmen 2020; Das & Ahmed 2021; Siwakoti et al. 2021). The authors of UNESCO's policy brief on Deciphering COVID-19 disinformation coined the term *disinfodemic* and pointed out nine key themes of it (Posetti & Bontcheva 2020: 1).

A notable illustration of deliberately propagated misinformation surfaces in the domain of climate disinformation (Gwiazdon & Brown 2023; Lewandowsky 2021; Treen et al. 2020). Climate change disinformation involves spreading false or misleading information to downplay the severity of climate change, often driven by vested interests seeking to undermine public awareness and policy efforts. The third overarching theme that commands attention in the literature is disinformation orchestrated by political entities, spanning both democratic and authoritarian regimes.

Democratic regimes Scholars generally concur that the campaigns during the 2016 US presidential election and the UK referendum on EU membership (Brexit) heightened conversations regarding the possible impact of intentionally misleading content disseminated to target audiences (Humprecht et al. 2020; Pérez-Escolar et al. 2023). Donald Trump, the former and current president of the United States, leads with an unprecedented frequency of distortions, misleading statements, and outright lies, contributing significantly to a substantial erosion of trust among Americans (Brenner 2020). The *Washington Post* Fact Checker team cataloged Trump's 30,573 false or misleading claims over four years of his first presidency (Kessler et al. 2021). Trump's loss in the presidential election in 2020 and the subsequent disinformation campaign #StopTheSteal, falsely claiming Joe Biden had stolen the election, can be seen as the inciting incident in the Capitol attack that took place on 6 January 2021 (Jeppesen et al. 2022). His 2024 electoral campaign and current presidency continue this trend.

Similar events related to the spread of disinformation took place two years later in Brazil when supporters of the country's far-right former president, Jair Bolsonaro, stormed the country's congress, presidential palace and supreme court in Brasilia (Sullivan 2023). Both Trump and Bolsonaro were found to spread disinformation related to COVID-19 and presidential campaigns (Brenner 2021; Ferreira & Alcantara 2023; Froehlich 2021; Ricard & Medeiros 2020; Ozawa et al. 2023) to obtain political advantage. GSP's data show a notable surge in Brazil's and the US's domestic spread of false information (Köhler 2023). Those two examples illustrate how public figures can utilize disinformation as a weapon to undermine democratic standards and mobilize the electorate and supporters. In the aforementioned research conducted by G. Schleffer and B. Miller (2021), the impact of social media on robust democracies, considering disinformation, is illustrated through the weakening influence observed during the 2016 US Trump presidency. Additionally, the radicalizing effect is exemplified by the rise of Bolsonaro in Brazil.

Authoritarian regimes Russia and China have emerged as leaders in **digital authoritarianism**, developing and exporting technology-driven strategies for non-democratic governance (Polyakova & Meserole 2019). Disinformation tools are central to both coun-

tries' propaganda efforts (Huang 2015; Rozenas & Stukal 2019). Beyond influencing their populations, autocracies like China, Russia, and Iran use disinformation campaigns to expand their geopolitical influence by either attacking or supporting other nations (Chang et al. 2023). Data from the GSP highlights a steady rise in the spread of false information abroad by China, Iran, Russia, and Turkey since 2000 (Wiebrecht 2022). China's disinformation efforts are particularly evident in its extensive attacks on Taiwan, a frequent target of its neighboring autocracy (Chang et al. 2023; Dickey 2019; Walsh 2020).

In recent decades, Russia has adeptly employed **propaganda** and disinformation to influence public opinion internally and externally (Polyakova & Meserole 2019; Lucas & Pomeranzev 2016; Schleffer & Miller 2021), with social media platforms amplifying their impact. Ben Nimmo (2015) characterized Russia's disinformation tactics as dismissing the critic, distorting the facts, distracting from the main issue, and dismaying the audience. Randolph et al. (2023) added, causing distrust. Importantly, Russia has been found to directly interfere in democratic elections in liberal-democratic states through social media, most notably in the US (Davis 2018; Linvill & Warren 2020; Guess & Lyons 2020; Polyakova & Meserole 2019). For these reasons, Russia is referred to and analyzed by both scholars and policymakers as a notable example of utilizing disinformation on multiple fronts.

Russian disinformation campaigns are known for their strategic use of information to deceit and manipulate public opinion domestically and internationally – the war in Ukraine highlights all of this. Examples of such disinformation can be found in, for instance, the *EUvsDisinfo database,* EEAS (2023) report on foreign information manipulation and interference, The Atlantic Council's (2023) *Digital Forensic Research Lab*'s report on Kremlin information operations aimed at eroding global confidence in Ukraine and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's (2023) report on defense against Russia's disinformation campaigns. The latter includes case studies of tactics targeting Europe as well as African and Latin American countries. Most common disinformation narratives regarding the war in Ukraine are outlined in a few reports issued by the European Digital Media Observatory. Russian and Chinese disinformation and propaganda about the war in Ukraine were compared by Legucka and Szczudlik (2023).

While some authors suggest that the turning point for the global epidemic of disinformation started with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 (Khaldarova & Pantti, 2016), others highlight that the phenomenon of coordinated political disinformation campaigns, propaganda and rumors have long been a part of the social fabric, even before disinformation has become an important subject of scholarly debate in the Global North (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales 2022). Many non-democratic countries are experiencing a growth in routine disinformation by authoritarian governments (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales 2022).

According to Jones (2021), the utilization of deception (including disinformation) for public opinion control and as a tool in aggressive foreign policy is increasingly favored by authoritarian regimes in the MENA region. COVID-19 disinformation has been instrumentalized by regional actors in the Persian Gulf and beyond to attack rivals or bolster the legitimacy of their regimes (Jones 2020). Researchers also draw attention to the presence of disinformation in the media, paying attention to contextual differences from country to country. (Al-Kaisy 2021; Bebawi 2021). M.-C. Chang, C.-C. Chang and T.-H. Lin (2020) provided empirical evidence on how Arab countries, including Qatar, Bahrain, and Yemen, found themselves caught between Saudi Arabia and Iran, bearing the brunt of their neighbors' disinformation attacks. The West also became another target.

IMPACT ON POLICY An example of the direct impact of disinformation operations on policies is the sanctions introduced by the EU in 2022 on Russia. As outlined by the EU (2024): "*The Russian Federation has engaged in a systematic, international campaign of disinformation, information manipulation and distortion of facts in order to enhance its strategy of destabilizing both its neighboring countries and the EU and its member states. To counteract this, the EU has suspended the broadcasting activities and licenses of several Kremlin-backed disinformation outlets.*" European sanctions were also imposed sanctions on media and individuals responsible for **propaganda** and disinformation.

A vibrant discussion in the literature centers on Russian **cyberwarfare**, shifting the focus of interest from political regimes to cybersecurity. Numerous works specifically focus on Russia's information warfare in the EU (Čižik 2017; Hellman & Wagnsson 2017; Bokša 2019; Clarke 2022), offering the potential for further analysis within the context of disinformation, encompassing strategies, narratives, impact, and countermeasures, for instance.

REGIONAL VARIATION Most existing studies have focused on the individual-level effects of disinformation (Sato et al. 2023). The literature is replete with case studies from all over the world. Little attention has been paid to geographical variations of disinformation – either in the use of disinformation by various actors or citizens' susceptibility to it. Scholars placed the main geographical focus of this study field on Western countries, Russia, and China (cf. 'examples' above). The externally-driven dissemination of false information has been evidenced as a contributing factor to Russia's regional influence in Eurasia and extends across continents, reaching Africa, the United States, and Latin America (Lucas & Pomeranzev 2016; Cristóbal 2021; Siegle 2021). Chinese disinformation and propaganda reach into Taiwan, the Indo-Pacific region, African countries and Latin America (Dickey 2019; Bergengruen 2023; Cristóbal 2021).

Works going beyond case studies are less common on Latin America, Africa, MENA and Indo-Pacific, but worth acknowledging (Mare et al. 2019; Garbe et al. 2023; Salgado & Ferreira 2023; Madrid-Morales et al. 2021; Matei 2023; Rodríguez-Virgili et al. 2021;



Znojek 2020; Madrid-Morales & Wasserman 2021; Bebawi 2021; Jones 2021; Abrahams & Leber 2021).

What is crucial from a regional perspective on disinformation is the issue of **authoritarian promotion**. There is empirical evidence that democracies with a neighboring authoritarian regime that adopted a higher degree of Internet capacity are exposed to a higher risk of suffering from foreign disinformation than other countries (Chang et al. 2020). It means that autocracies have adopted information weapons to infiltrate the politics of nearby democracies and are doing it in practice, pursuing 'iWars' (Chang et al. 2020). Some geographical insights can also be derived from Y. Sato, F. Wiebrecht and S.I. Lindberg's (2023) comparative study of the systemic effects of disinformation on political regimes. However, determining regional characteristics was beyond the scope of the study and thus requires further research.

NEW FRONTIERS In addition to the previously mentioned lack of comparative research on disinformation, there are at least several understudied areas worth exploring to broaden the understanding of various aspects of disinformation. Studies on pre-bunking demonstrate an innovative approach that combines insights from psychology and medical studies to address the challenge of countering misinformation and disinformation (Lewandowsky & Van Der Linden 2021; Roozenbeek et al. 2022). Based on the medical inoculation theory, pre-bunking serves as a psychological vaccine against misinformation, aiming to immunize citizens against manipulated narratives. In contrast to the post-factum debunking of fake news, pre-bunking suggests that individuals should initially have controlled exposure to misinformation, allowing them to navigate real-life instances more effectively when encountered online.

Second, research is emerging that focuses on automating the detection of disinformation and fact-checking, leveraging AI as well (Alsuliman et al. 2022; Ozbay & Alatas 2020; Lahby et al. 2022; Chorąś et al. 2021). This latter aspect may also align with studies on **digital authoritarianism**, so it is worthwhile observing whether and how digital dictators will utilize artificial intelligence to influence both internal and external audiences.

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Elections & Electoral Malpractice

It's Not Who Votes That Counts, It's Who Counts the Votes
– Refrigerator magnet quote, wrongfully attributed to Stalin

How can you vote for anybody who'd run for office?
– Doug Larson (1926-2017)

Though it may seem counter-intuitive, almost all authoritarian regimes hold elections. This was not always the case. Going back over five decades ago, only 59% of autocracies regularly held elections (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz 2015). However, as of 2023, only a handful of countries do not hold elections, including China, North Korea, Eritrea, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Eritrea, Cuba and Brunei (IDEA International).

There are good reasons for this trend. Authoritarian regimes hold elections because they help prolong their rule (Geddes 2005). There are times when elections lead to a turnover in power, such as was the case in Mexico in 2000, when the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* (PRI) regime finally allowed the opposition *(National Action Party)* to win the presidential election. There are also times when authoritarian regimes hold fraudulent elections, which then trigger regime-ending protests, such as was the case in Georgia's rigged 2003 elections that led to the Rose revolution (cf. **color revolutions**), which ousted Eduard Shevardnadze from power (Fairbanks 2004).

DEFINITION An election is a formal 'group decision-making' process by which a population (an electorate) chooses an individual or multiple individuals to hold public office or some other position of authority. It is the standard method by which a democracy selects its representatives. Elections are typically held at regular intervals as prescribed by a state's laws or constitution, and those elected may fill offices in the legislature, executive, judiciary, or local and regional governments. The process involves eligible candidates who are usually predetermined, proposed, or preselected, and voting rights are exercised by the electorate to choose among them. Today, elections are considered the most important form of political participation in democratic systems, providing **legitimacy** to elected officials and the policy decisions they make and serving as a tool for voters to ensure the accountability of their leaders. From the viewpoint of **political regimes**, elections can re-vitalize polities and adapt policies to a changing world, allowing new generations and new groups into politics and giving them agency. This is in stark contrast to long-lived authoritarian regimes, where policies often stagnate, and any real reform is considered taboo. From the perspective of political (especially authoritarian) control, the electoral process embodies an element of precariousness with regard to public order. Elections, at least in theory, open up the possibility of a transfer of power and often coincide with violence and **repression** as **incumbents** see their authority weakened during elections.

SEE ALSO Elections and their malpractice under 'electoral authoritarianism' (**Schedler**) diverge across regimes, and this variation has – among other factors – been captured by categorizing their **parties** and regime types. **Trichotomous classifications,** in particular, study the dynamics, effects and trajectories of these electoral hybrids. Elections are an arena of interaction with **opposition** forces, where **co-optation** and **repression** become communicating vessels to achieve **legitimacy** through electoral victory on an uneven playing field while impeding challengers from mustering too much support while at the same time dissuading them from high-jacking or boycotting the whole process.

ORIGIN Electoral history is long and varied and too often monopolized in popular discourse as a European invention, with its origins attributed to the Athenian practice (sixth century BCE) of 'direct democracy' where some leadership positions were elected by the 'Assembly' (ἐκκλησία – *eccleseia*) of free, male Athenian citizens (a small substrate of the classical city state's total population – cf. **selectorate theory**). Note that most other Athenian offices were filled through the practice of 'sortition' (random selection). (Britannica 2014) Almost all officials in ancient Athens were selected by random lot after 487-486 BCE, even the top positions of the three 'archons' (*árchontes,* singular: *árchōn*, ἄρχων) or main magistrates. Historically, the *Boule* (βουλή, the council) of 500 (preparing the agenda for the Assembly) and the juries for legal cases were selected in the same



way. Sortition avoided competitive elections; short ruling spans ensured regular turnover in office, and the whole process subscribed to (free) citizen equality. There were practices in place to keep officials accountable (similar to a vote of no confidence) and remove (and banish) them if needed. This latter procedure of 'ostracism' (ὀστρακισμός – *ostrakismós*) was to prevent **tyranny** but also to break up political deadlocks by imposing compromise on politicians (by threatening a ten-year-long exile) (Węcowski 2022).

A key work that exposes the Western bias on the origins of democracy is *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (three volumes 1987-1989) by Martin Bernal. It argues that Greek civilization was significantly influenced by Afroasiatic civilizations, particularly Egypt and Phoenicia. Bernal was one of the first to challenge the widely accepted notion that ancient Greece was the sole source of Western civilization and argues that historical contributions from African and Semitic societies have been unjustly overlooked and marginalized due to deep-seated prejudices and biases. Yves Schemeil (1999; 2000) similarly contends that the concept of democracy was not solely invented by the Greeks as traditionally thought and explores proto-democratic practices in Egyptian and Mesopotamian polities. Note that 'consultation' as a practice (at the local or regional level) was much more prevalent in polities across the globe than the practice of elections and thus not limited to the West (Isakhan & Stockwell 2012).

From the perspective of how elections (as an institution) fared after the demise of Athenian democracy, unfree and unfair elections were predominantly the norm throughout history, although not always at a local level. Just like in **monarchies** and **oligarchies**, the republics disenfranchised non-elites by law, and **patronage** politics were the bread and butter of any political alliance. When these elite democracies started moving toward popular democracy in the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries, cautiously extending the right to vote to all adult males and (much) later to women as well (by the mid-twentieth century), elections gained different functions. However, these often remained unfair due to unequal power relations (e.g., the power of landlords, the clergy and government officials over voters), electoral fraud (e.g., the manipulation of the electoral register), and the use of intimidation or bribery in politics, the increase of the electorate made elections increasingly more difficult to control or manage.

Still, even with such widespread malpractices, elections were important consultative rituals that socialized elites into parliamentary politics. Frank O'Gorman's (1989) work on England posits the limits of patronage in early-modern electoral orders: While he finds that local families had a significant grip on the electoral system, widespread political engagement habits moderated their power. The effectiveness of **patronage** varied across different constituencies, indicating that patronage alone was insufficient for securing electoral victory. O'Gorman notably highlights the importance of electioneering and canvassing activities, pointing out that political allegiance was not automatically granted based on status but needed to be actively pursued. Moreover, the process of electoral canvassing turned into significant communal events, making electoral politics a more inclusive, engaging, and participatory affair over time. Additionally, the active participation of the elite in elections led to their deeper commitment to parliament, thereby endorsing representative forms of government (Posada-Carbó 1996: 3).

LITERATURE & KEY SIGNIFICANCE The historical functions of elections predate **democracy** as a regime type, and it is thus no surprise that contemporary electoral authoritarian regimes implement them for similar purposes. Elections in dictatorships are often seen as tools for incumbents to maintain power, but holding them is not without risks: in some cases, serial multi-party elections can pave the way for democratic **transitions** (Lindberg 2008; Teorell 2010). Although Donno (2013) nuances that **hybrid regimes** tend to do so only when domestic and international actors choose to pressure the regime. In the absence of pressure, elections are no more likely to lead to democracy than elections in closed regimes.

Analyzing dictatorships through the logic of democratic elections can obscure their unique functions and dynamics within authoritarian regimes. While democratic elections are generally seen as mechanisms for expressing the popular will and facilitating peaceful transitions of power, elections in dictatorships serve different purposes; as tools for maintaining control rather than transferring power, they can serve to legitimize the regime both domestically and internationally, co-opt opposition, and manage elite relations. Elections can be a means to distribute patronage and maintain the loyalty of elites by providing them with opportunities to gain office and its associated benefits (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009).

Unlike the relatively standardized process in democracies, authoritarian elections vary significantly across regime types. They differ in terms of competitiveness, levels of repression, and the degree to which they allow genuine opposition participation. This diversity means that applying a democratic framework can overlook these nuances and lead to misinterpretations about their role and impact (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009).

Also, the dynamics of voter behavior, candidate strategies, and incumbent manipulation in authoritarian elections are distinct from those in democracies. Voters may participate due to coercion or patronage rather than genuine political competition. Candidates might run not to win but to gain visibility or negotiate power within the regime's constraints (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009).

In this part, we lay out the main topics of how elections in autocracies are studied. Part A covers their functions for the rulers; Part B discusses how elections structure and affect interactions with **opposition** forces; and Part C looks inside the toolkit of electoral manipulation.

(A) Functionality The role of elections and other

institutions in autocracies was once dismissed as window-dressing, mimicking democracy for external legitimacy. In the last 30 years, however, this 'democratic-biased' gaze has been abandoned in favor of a deeper look to evaluate their real and alternative purposes in authoritarian polities – as mechanisms to help tackle the dual challenges for dictators: authoritarian power-sharing and authoritarian control (cf. M. **Svolik**). Below, we describe these main functions as recorded in the literature.

Legitimacy Rigged elections provide authoritarian leaders with a *façade* of **legitimacy**, both at home and abroad. This perceived legitimacy helps justify their grip on power and reduces domestic opposition while also potentially gaining recognition and support internationally (if there is no widespread evidence of fraud). Blatant rigging of elections, such as widespread fraud and suppression of opposition, can erode legitimacy by undermining the credibility of the electoral process and results. This can lead to public anger, protests, and international condemnation. (Dawson 2022; Rød 2019) Elections can thus be a powerful tool for enhancing regime stability, but they also carry significant risks. The outcome ultimately depends on the regime's ability to manipulate the electoral process effectively. For this reason, Higashijima (2022) finds that dictators aim to mobilize public support through economic means rather than overt manipulation.

International legitimacy In the first two decades after the Cold War, holding elections could enhance a regime's **external legitimacy**, especially for regimes tied to Western democracies economically and considered to be 'in transition' (cf. Box 5.3 on transitology). This can enhance the regime's reputation, attract foreign investment or aid, and reduce international pressure for **democratization**.

Since 2010, authoritarian regimes, especially global powers like Russia and China, have set up their own institutions (affiliated with their own international organizations – IOs) to monitor and validate elections, a prerogative previously exclusively managed by Western IOs like the OSCE or the EU. While in the early 2000s, even closed autocratic states like Uzbekistan would still go through the motion of inviting Western election observers, today, many of the latter are now barred entry in favor of observers from Allied organizations, like the *Eurasian Economic Union* (led by Russia) or from the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (a Chinese-Russian led IO) that will not raise any concerns about the validity of rigged elections (Ambrosio 2008). See **authoritarian regionalism** for other benefits of such **authoritarian collaboration**.

Normally, authoritarian regimes hold elections because they enable the incumbent regimes to solidify their support, but other factors play important roles as well, depending on specific local contexts.

Information-gathering Elections can serve as a gauge of public opinion, revealing the geographical distribution of regime support and opposition strongholds (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009). They offer insights into the distribution of support within society and among the elite, aiding leaders in making policy adjustments and identifying threats to their rule. They allow regime actors to verify opinion polls and surveys regarding regime popularity. (Ananyev & Poyker 2022: 14) They also help monitor local officials' performance and assess governance strategies' effectiveness. Elections in authoritarian regimes are also important for providing the regime with information about which regions and localities are most effectively delivering patronage to voters and which are not. What areas of the country should the regime target with additional support? (Lust 2009). The PRI in Mexico used elections to identify areas where they had less support. To rectify this, they provided these areas with greater resources to ensure victory (Magaloni 2008).

Elite Cohesion Autocracies also hold elections because they help to maintain elite cohesion (Geddes 2005; Blaydes 2008). Autocrats can use the results from the elections to reward or punish individuals who are competing for state resources less controversially (Blaydes 2010). Elections help to motivate elites to support the regime's objective of winning elections, and this also ensures that it is only the most competent and committed individuals who win seats. Moreover, Magaloni (2006: 46) argues that ballot stuffing was also aimed to discourage elite defections and demonstrate the party's willingness to use all means to stay in power.

Elite Loyalty & Co-optation Authoritarian elections engage elites in the regime's electoral process, fostering their loyalty and mobilizing their resources for regime benefits. Local elite support is crucial for regime stability and longevity. When local elites control substantial political resources like established patronage networks, economic leverage, or traditional authority, autocrats often see a strategic need for **co-optation**. In such scenarios, permitting local elections can serve as a strategic concession to these elites, offering them a degree of autonomy and a platform to build their own power bases within the regime's structure (Reuter et al. 2016).

Once integrated into the regime's power structure, their dependence on **rents** for political survival and economic gains ensures that elites remain loyal to the regime (Geddes 2005; Magaloni 2006). Additionally, by allowing some degree of electoral competition at the local level, regimes can placate subnational elites and prevent potential dissent by providing them with a controlled avenue for political participation (Boix & Svolik 2013).

Furthermore, local elections serve as a tool for monitoring elite performance. Successful vote delivery in these elections is often a criterion for promotions or continued appointments within the regime's hierarchy. Conversely, failure to secure votes can lead to demotion or removal from power (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009; Egorov & Sonin 2006). Thus, local elections are instrumental in maintaining elite loyalty by aligning their interests with those of the central regime through a combination of rewards and accountability mechanisms. There is some evidence that if many local districts in a region are currying



favor of the supreme ruler by manipulating turnout and generating pro-regime votes, this creates a competition effect, and the trend spreads to nearby districts. (Moser & White 2017)

(B) Interactions There is a complex and dynamic relationship between regimes and opposition groups in authoritarian contexts. Elections are a key arena where this relationship plays out, and **repression** is a strategic tool that regimes use to shape the dynamics of this interaction. The level of competition allowed in elections (cf. **parties**), the opposition's strategies (cf. regime & repertoires – Box 5.8), and the regime's use of information control all play a role in determining whether elections serve to stabilize or undermine authoritarian rule.

State capacity is also a factor: Seeberg (2021) explores how state capacity supports authoritarian regimes during elections. Control over territory through the state apparatus is crucial for autocrats to achieve large electoral victories. High-capacity rulers use local agents and institutions to subtly manipulate elections by controlling media and restricting domestic election monitors, avoiding overt tactics like election violence. Analyzing multi-party elections from 1946 to 2017, her study finds that state territorial control correlates with large victories and subtle manipulation strategies, such as media bias, while negatively associating with election violence, indicating a preference for less overt methods.

Finally, S. Michalik (2015: 132) sees the introduction of competitive elections when regimes are dealing with a split in the ruling coalition. These institutional reforms aim to dissolve the current coalition and ensure that at least one faction remains in power. A new ruling coalition emerges, comprising some members from the previous government and others from the formerly excluded opposition. Legalizing opposition parties aids in redistributing government resources. Empirical evidence suggests that an authoritarian ruling coalition is more likely to resolve internal conflicts if it has already established a power-sharing mechanism, such as a (collegial) ruling **party**. Consequently, it is less likely to transition to a competitive authoritarian regime.

Aside from the myriad ways of **protest & uprisings**, and state **repression**, electoral processes can directly structure interactions between regimes and opposition in these three areas:

Signaling & intimidation Elections can also enable authoritarian regimes to deter potential rivals by signaling to the opposition how dominant they are (Geddes 2005; Magaloni 2006). Autocracies can have access to much more funds to spend on campaigns to ensure that they win without having to resort to blatant fraud. True, some authoritarian regimes hold elections that are a complete farce, but others allow the opposition to run, though there is little doubt about the outcome. The regime, the opposition and the public know that there will be a large victory for the incumbent. A landslide victory for the incumbent, even with rigged elections, might be demotivating for the opposition and a form of intimidation to the electorate (like **personality cults**). The intimidation theory, however plausible, remains thus far unproven, as there is no evidence that higher victory margins in some precincts reduce protests (Ananyev & Poyker 2022).

Divide-and-rule Elections in authoritarian regimes can also undermine the opposition. It is often difficult for the opposition to coordinate and work together, and they often end up competing against themselves when regimes apply a divide-and-conquer strategy to encourage splits (by co-opting some parties in order to break up (emerging) coalitions). Autocracies can also bar some opposition parties from running and then co-opt those that are allowed to compete, as was the case in Jordan (Lust-Okar 2004; Schedler 2002).

Boycotts Opposition groups in authoritarian regimes must strategically decide how to engage with elections. They can choose to participate in an effort to gain influence and legitimacy, or they can boycott elections that are seen as rigged, risking further repression but potentially highlighting regime illegitimacy (Bernhard et al. 2020). The decision to boycott elections is strategic, influenced by the 'unlevel' playing field established by incumbents. Scholars have found that opposition parties are more likely to withdraw from elections perceived as unfair, marred by violence, or in majoritarian systems where the incumbent wins a disproportionate number of seats (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009).

Mageloni (2010) finds that even when opposition parties lack the military capability to succeed in a revolt, their unity and the potential for widespread civil disobedience can pressure autocrats into conducting fair elections and stepping down. This pressure can cause divisions within the state apparatus and lead to defections from the armed forces. Opposition unity can be driven by elites, with parties coming together before elections to support a single presidential candidate, or it can be driven by voters, where elites remain divided, but voters collectively resist electoral fraud.

(C) Manipulation toolkits 'Malpractice,' in a general sense, refers to improper, illegal, or negligent professional activity or treatment, especially by a medical practitioner, lawyer, or public official. In the context of electoral processes, as defined by Sarah Birch, electoral malpractice is *"the manipulation of electoral processes and outcomes to substitute personal or partisan benefit for the public interest."* This definition highlights the deviation from democratic norms where elections are intended to serve the public good. Malpractice relates to other terms such as misconduct, manipulation, corruption, and abuse. 'Misconduct' can refer to any inappropriate behavior that may not necessarily involve intent to deceive or harm. 'Manipulation' involves influencing processes or outcomes but may be legitimate in some contexts. **'Corruption'** generally implies a broader scope of unethical behavior for personal gain. 'Abuse' indicates misuse of power or resources. (Birch 2011) Such malpractice can take place through 'electoral fraud' or 'institutional bias.' Electoral fraud involves illegal activities like forging voter IDs or ballot-box stuff-

ing, which distort citizen preferences and violate democratic equality. Institutional bias, on the other hand, manipulates representation rules, such as gerrymandering, to favor incumbents without overtly breaking laws. While fraud directly alters election outcomes through illegal means, bias subtly skews the electoral field within legal frameworks to maintain power.

For theoretical overviews of autocratic toolkits, see Schedler 2013; Lehoucq 2003; Alvarez et al. 2009; Birch 2011; Consult: Tolstrup (2015) for foreign interference – **black knights**. Below, we describe several dimensions of electoral malpractice to provide an overview of these ever-adapting practices. This list is not exhaustive but does capture the most common spheres of both electoral fraud and institutional bias in modern electoral authoritarian regimes.

Electoral rules Regimes can manipulate electoral rules to their advantage, making it harder for the opposition to win even if they enjoy significant popular support. They often play with the fairness of the rules of how votes translate into seats. In Turkey, to prevent the Kurds from gaining too much power, all parties had to reach a 10% threshold in order to gain seats in the parliament (Alkin 2011). Other authoritarian regimes maintained their dominance by redistricting to ensure that the incumbent regime had a huge advantage, such as when the *Fidesz* party in Hungary won 67% of the seats based on only 45% of the votes in 2010 (Kovács & Vida 2015). These types of manipulation include (i) gerrymandering, (ii) malapportionment, (iii) manipulating the electoral system to favor the ruling party, and (iv) removing term limits for the supreme office.

Gerrymandering (i) involves manipulating electoral district boundaries to favor a particular party or candidate. This can be achieved through techniques like packing, where opposition voters are concentrated into a few districts to reduce their influence, and cracking, which spreads them across multiple districts to dilute their voting power. Other methods include kidnapping, which forces two popular incumbents from the opposing party to compete against each other, and hijacking, which places a rising opposition leader into a district with a strong incumbent from the ruling party. Famously, the term 'gerrymandering' originates from the early nineteenth century in the US. It is named after Elbridge Gerry, a Massachusetts governor and vice president under James Madison, who in 1812 signed a bill that redistricted the state to benefit his *Democratic-Republican Party*. One of the districts was said to resemble the shape of a salamander, leading to the coining of the term 'gerrymander' (Cox & Katz 2002).

Malapportionment (ii) occurs when districts have unequal populations, giving more weight to voters in certain areas. This can be intentional, often over-representing rural areas where regime support is stronger, or result from population shifts over time if boundaries are not updated. (Schedler 2002)

Changing the electoral system (iii) is another tactic used to benefit the ruling party. For example, shifting from proportional representation to a majoritarian system can allow a party to win a majority of seats without a majority of votes. Manipulating district magnitude, or the number of representatives per district, can also skew results in favor of the regime's party. (Higashijima 2022)

Another common tactic of authoritarian regimes (especially **personalist rule**) is to simply get rid of **term limits** (iv) for the executive or extend them considerably. This ensures that the **incumbent** will not be considered a 'lame duck' (Box 3.14) and effectively can serve as a president for life. This is crucial for autocrats to remain in charge of their regimes. Term limits were extended by a national referendum in Rwanda for Paul Kagame in 2015, which enabled him to stay in power until 2034. Term limits were also extended in Russia after the 2020 amendments were made to the Constitution, which ensures Vladimir V. Putin remains in power until 2036, though any successors would be limited to two presidential terms.

Scheduling elections Electoral manipulation may also entail making changes to the electoral calendar to benefit the incumbent. In Senegal, President Abdoulaye Wade repeatedly used his power to alter the dates of the elections to leave the opposition in the dark as to how and when to prepare (Mbow 2008). In Madagascar, Didier Ratsiraka employed imaginative diversionary tactics to keep the opposition fragmented. In the 1982 elections, he postponed the parliamentary elections to 1983, preventing the opposition from uniting behind a single presidential candidate. He did so a second time, in the late 1980s, when he used an official visit by the Pope as a pretext to delay the 1988 legislative elections to 1989 and move the presidential elections forward from December to March 1989. These maneuvers ensured his victory, securing over 80% of the vote in 1982 and 62% in 1989 (Mukonoweshuro 1990: 394).

Voting obstacles Authoritarian regimes can also try to influence the ease of voting. Voters can be suppressed and intimidated through tricky laws or by being physically and emotionally harassed. In Zimbabwe, voters for the opposition have been regularly harassed and, in some instances, killed (Bekoe & Burchard 2017). This has had the effect of depressing voter turnout for the opposition. Even Donald Trump has tried to both undo (2020) and encourage (2024) absentee and mail-in (early) voting, depending on the chosen electoral strategy (Rinaldi 2024).

Election campaigns Authoritarian regimes also have an advantage when it comes to promoting their campaigns. As they usually exercise control over the media, there is usually a large imbalance of media coverage. In Venezuela, Chávez acquired the major television stations, more than 145 local radio stations, 75 newspapers and dozens of pro-Chávez websites (Corrales & Penfold 2007). He also used his weekly chat show *'Alo Presidente'* to connect with voters (Frajman 2014). In Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe's regime prevented the opposition from having access to the media at all.

Disqualification Using legal or extra-legal means to prevent opposition parties or individual candidates from participating in elections. This might involve



arbitrarily banning parties or creating specific legal provisions to disqualify opponents, such as 'nationality clauses' used to target specific individuals (Schedler 2002). Another 'legal' method is to raise the threshold criteria for registering political parties to absurd heights: demanding improbable ethnic or gender balances, national representation, or an enormous number of (publicly) registered party members.

Targeted repression Bhasin and Gandhi (2013) highlight the strategic use of repression around elections. They argue that regimes often moderate violence against ordinary citizens before elections to enhance legitimacy and encourage participation. However, in free but unfair elections, they may target opposition leaders and activists to undermine their ability to campaign effectively. In more serious cases (unfree elections), authoritarian regimes simply do not allow viable members of the opposition to run in elections, preferring to allow only token parties to run instead. In Iran, presidential elections take place, but the candidates must be vetted by the *Guardians Council* (Raisi 2021). It is only candidates who are supportive of the regime that are allowed to run for office. In Nicaragua, under Daniel Ortega, just before the 2021 elections, the regime arrested and imprisoned seven key members of the opposition, including his main rival, Christiana Chamorro (Thaler & Mosinger 2022). Autocracies can also restrict the opposition by preventing them from organizing rallies. In Russia, doing so could violate extremism laws, and the opposition and their supporters could face fines, losing their jobs or jail time (Sanovich et al. 2018). Voter intimidation and pre-electoral violence have also been commonplace in Uganda (Kagor 2016).

Vote buying There are numerous other strategies that authoritarian regimes have at their disposal to ensure a victory. Vote buying is a common tactic. In the case of Venezuela under Hugo Chávez, cash transfers were given to people experiencing poverty (Corrales & Penfold 2007). In Taiwan before it democratized, the ruling *Kuomintang* regime (KMT) used to regularly give its supporters red envelopes before elections that were filled with cash to remind them of who to vote for (Rigger 2000).

Voter lists Voter registration roll manipulation always echoes images from N. Gogol's work *Dead Souls*. In Argentina, as early as 1886, a significant source of electoral fraud involved adding the names of ineligible males to the voter registry. In a society experiencing a large influx of immigrants from the Old World, political parties were strongly motivated to register any male aged 18 or older – who all had suffrage rights – regardless of whether they had been naturalized as Argentinian citizens (Sambruccetti 1980, cited in Lehoucq 2003: 238).

Stealing the votes In other cases, electoral malpractice is much more obvious. Autocracies can hold elections but can interfere with how votes are counted, known as fraud. Regimes can refuse to count votes in opposition strongholds. Ballot boxes can be stolen or stuffed with the votes of phantom voters. Ballots can be falsified, or an exact percentage of victory can be specified, such as when Bashar al-Assad of Syria won with 95% of the vote (Repucci & Slipowitz 2022). The key to accomplishing all of this is to ensure that the regime loyalists are in control of the Election Commissions, as is the case of Russia under Putin (Trochev & Solomon 2018). In Zimbabwe, the electoral commissions were packed with regime loyalists, which could guarantee that no matter what the outcome, Mugabe's party would win (Makumbe 2002).

Post-election disputes Dictators use a combination of strategies to manage post-election disputes, especially after fraudulent elections. These strategies aim to control the narrative (downplay the scale of the irregularities), suppress dissent, and selectively appease or co-opt potential challengers. As concessions, they can promise future reforms or minor power-sharing arrangements. Most often, disputes are referred to electoral commissions, tribunals or constitutional courts, which are then pressured to rule in the regime's favor. By the time a verdict is (finally) issued, the protests have petered out. The success of these strategies, of course, depends on various factors, including the regime's capacity, the scope of judicial control, the level of public discontent, the mobilization capacity of the opposition, and the presence or absence of external support.

MEASUREMENT Elections are so central to democracies that there is no shortage of organizations, NGOs and think tanks that scrutinize their validity and fairness across the globe. Here, we listed a handful of the most renowned institutes:

The **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem) dataset is a comprehensive resource for studying elections and electoral fraud. It provides various indicators based on expert assessments, covering aspects like reiterated elections and election-day irregularities. V-Dem includes measures for election fraud through indicators such as 'irregularities' and 'repression,' offering insights into procedural and coercive efforts to influence election outcomes. Its scope is broad, covering over 200 countries from 1789 to the present (Bernhard et al. 2020).

The *National Elections Across Democracy and Autocracy* (NELDA) dataset focuses on elections in authoritarian regimes. It provides information on various aspects of elections, including post-election protests and types of fraud employed. NELDA is particularly useful for constructing measures of electoral misconduct intensity by examining factors like media bias and pre-election restrictions. Its methodology involves analyzing the political environment before, during, and after elections to assess integrity (Hyde & Marinov 2012).

International *Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* (IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to supporting and strengthening democracy worldwide. It has the status of a UN observer. Its 'Electoral Processes' workstream focuses on enhancing the quality of legal and institutional frameworks, building the capacity of electoral institutions, and promoting inclusivity in electoral processes. IDEA also supports civil society and the

media in ensuring accountability and integrity in elections. They compile data on elections, electoral violence and constitutions (among other things) (IDEA 2024).

The *Electoral Integrity Project* (EIP) dataset offers a comprehensive assessment of electoral integrity across various dimensions, including laws and procedures. Based on expert surveys, their *Perceptions of Electoral Integrity* (PEI) dataset offers a detailed analysis of how countries' electoral processes align with international standards of electoral integrity. It generates an overall score for each election, ranging from 0 to 100, and provides comparative rankings of countries based on these scores (Garnett et al. 2024). Their *Electoral Management Survey* (EMS) collects information from electoral authorities worldwide on how elections are conducted in their countries, providing data not easily accessible through laws or websites. One representative from each national electoral management body is asked to complete the survey on behalf of their organization.

Lastly, the *Database of Political Institutions* (DPI), supported by the *World Bank Group,* contains information on election results, including votes and seat shares for government and opposition parties. While not as comprehensive as other datasets for certain analyses, it measures checks and balances, tenure and stability of the government, identification of party affiliation and ideology, and political fragmentation in the legislature, covering about 180 countries for 40 years.

Other entities include the *Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors* (GNDEM), which facilitates nonpartisan citizen election monitoring to enhance electoral integrity and governmental accountability across over 100 countries. The OSCE *Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights* (ODIHR) conducts election observation missions to assess compliance with democratic standards, focusing on campaign activities, legal frameworks, and media coverage. The *International Foundation for Electoral Systems* (IFES) provides technical assistance to build resilient electoral bodies capable of conducting credible elections worldwide. The *Kofi Annan Foundation* and *National Democratic Institute* (NDI) aim to advance democracy by promoting electoral integrity and also offer insightful reports.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES While some scholars argue that elections in authoritarian regimes can lead to **democratization** by exposing regime weaknesses or fostering opposition unity, others suggest that these elections often reinforce authoritarian rule by creating an illusion of competition without threatening the regime's control. The conditions under which elections might lead to democratization are complex and contingent on factors like international pressure and the strength of opposition coalitions (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009). Elections are also sensitive moments for authoritarian regimes. They are likely to control media content, manipulate public opinion (to their ability) and restrict the activities of spoilers. By definition, election fraud is illegal, and even long after elections have passed, scholars struggle with the scarcity of data when assessing how widespread the manipulated vote actually was.

As a study object, viewing authoritarian elections through a democratic lens can lead to a misunderstanding of their function as instruments for regime consolidation rather than democratization. This perspective can obscure the strategic use of elections by dictatorships to manage internal challenges and enhance regime stability (Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009). The same goes for delineating electoral malpractice solely from a democratic viewpoint.

We know that structural factors like social and economic inequality, ethnic polarization, electoral systems, and media freedom play a role. Also, institutional factors, such as the strength of oversight bodies, the independence of the judiciary, and the presence of international observers (Box 3.3), are important. (Dawson 2022) Still, regime-type differentiation has mostly been limited to dimensions of plurality and competitiveness, which inform most **trichotomous classifications** covering **hybrid regimes** or **electoral authoritarianism**; other dimensions (like tutelary bodies, state capacity, threat perception, political culture, etc.) remain understudied when it comes to election dynamics and outcomes.

As a concept, Birch (2011) explains that 'electoral malpractice' can be understood through four primary approaches: (a) legal, (b) perceptual, (c) best practice, and (d) normative. The *legal approach* (a) defines malpractice as any violation of electoral law or regulations. However, this approach is limited by the variability and potential corruption of laws across different jurisdictions (laws differ significantly across countries). The *perceptual approach* (b) considers malpractice based on societal norms and perceptions, which can vary widely within and between societies (cultures permit, tolerate or condemn different actions). The *best practice approach* (c) aligns with international norms and standards for democratic elections, such as those outlined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* are considered the 'gold standard' for international law regarding elections. Accordingly, elections must be conducted periodically and adhere to five key criteria: they must be conducted by secret ballot, ensuring voter privacy; under universal and equal suffrage, allowing all eligible citizens to vote equally; in a non-discriminatory manner, ensuring no bias against any group; allowing for direct choice, enabling voters to select their representatives directly; ensuring the free expression of the electorate's will, and allowing voters to express their preferences without coercion or interference. Lastly, the *normative approach* (d) defines malpractice as deviations from ideal democratic models that prioritize policy accountability and public trust. (Birch 2011: 11-14). This latter approach brings the concept closer to M. Glasius (2018) and her concept of authoritarian practices (which also centers on lack of accountability).

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Hoarding

A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul.
– George Bernard Shaw

In the context of **personalist rule** or **sultanism & neo-sultanism**, 'hoarding' refers to the strategic accumulation and control of resources, privileges, and opportunities by the ruling faction, typically led by an unconstrained leader who controls not only the military and state apparatus but also the coalition-building process. This centralization gives the leader significant leverage over how resources are distributed among factions within the regime. The term was coined by Barbara Geddes (2004) in her original game-theoretical model designed to distinguish between the authoritarian regime types.

Hoarding in this context can be understood as a deliberate choice by the leader's faction to limit or exclude rival factions from access to **rents** (political or economic benefits derived from control over resources, see also: **resource curses**) and other perks associated with being part of the ruling elite. The leader's faction has the initiative and can decide whether to share these spoils with rivals or to 'hoard' them, which means concentrating benefits within a smaller circle of loyalists. By doing so, the leader's faction increases its share of resources while minimizing what is available to potential rivals.

The rationale behind hoarding is rooted in both political survival and economic considerations. By keeping the ruling coalition small and exclusive, the leader's faction can maximize its gains without having to distribute too many resources across a broad group. This concentration of benefits not only strengthens loyalty within the inner circle but also helps maintain regime stability by ensuring that enough resources are available to keep key supporters satisfied.

Hoarding has been broadened as a concept to denote **kleptocracy** and the 'sultanization' of the state by the regime or the process of increasing centralized control over state sectors (cf. **rent-seeking**, **neo-patrimonialism** and **systemic corruption**) by the ruling network (cf. **patronalism**). Van den Bosch (2021) lists it as one of the defining behavioral characteristics of **personalist rule**.

However, hoarding comes with risks. If it becomes too extensive, it may alienate rival factions or weaken their support for the regime. Nevertheless, as long as the rival factions perceive that they are better off remaining within the regime – because leaving it would mean losing all access to power and resources – they are likely to continue cooperating despite being (cyclically) excluded from the spoils of office. This dynamic creates a delicate balance where hoarding (and rotating **patronage**) is a common practice, but it must be calibrated carefully to avoid triggering defections or destabilizing the regime.

In essence, hoarding in personalist dictatorships is a strategy of resource control that serves both to consolidate power and manage internal competition among elites in the **ruling coalition**. It reflects how leaders in such regimes manipulate economic incentives to maintain their grip on power while keeping potential rivals in check. It is a 'Faustian bargain', however, as underdevelopment and exclusion are bound to create different (violent) challenges to rulers down the line; see also: **development in authoritarian regimes**.

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Box 3.3 Electoral Observers: A Cat-and-Mouse Game?

If voting made any difference they wouldn't let us do it.
– Mark Twain

Election observers can deter blatant forms of electoral manipulation, such as ballot stuffing. For instance, a study in Russia showed that independent observers reduced the ruling party's vote share by 11 percentage points, highlighting their deterrent effect. (Ananyev & Poyker 2022) However, while observers may prevent some forms of manipulation, they can also prompt a shift towards subtler tactics that are harder to detect. This shift is influenced by civil society's organizational capacity, which can affect both fraud levels and protest activities.

Since the end of the Cold War, election observers have boomed (Carothers 1997). This is actually a peculiar thing. Previously, elections were always considered a domestic affair. So, why do countries invite monitors and nevertheless cheat? Kelley (2008) and Hyde (2011) find that the end of the Cold War clearly freed Western countries to push more vigorously for democracy and increased the use of democratic conditionality. The norm then spread through a complex interplay of incentives, normative shifts, and geopolitical changes. Initially, as more honest governments invited monitors, refusing to do so increasingly signaled electoral manipulation, raising the costs of non-compliance. This created a feedback loop intensifying domestic and international pressure. However, focusing solely on incentives overlooks the normative underpinnings and the impact of the post-Cold War power shift, which enabled Western democracies to promote democratic legitimacy unchallenged by an ideological counterpart.

However, this evolution also created unintended side effects. Simpser and Donno (2012) find that, on average, high-quality election monitoring has a measurably negative effect on the rule of law, administrative performance, and media freedom as dictatorships start targeting the courts, administrative bodies and the media instead of playing the cat-and-mouse game with observers.

Despite their contributions, election observers often still have a limited impact on the overall integrity of elections in authoritarian contexts. Target regimes possess a variety of tools for **electoral malpractice**, including control over electoral administration and candidate restrictions. Furthermore, there is always the risk that regimes or external actors might instrumentalize observers to legitimize fraudulent elections. This phenomenon is known as '**black knight** election bolstering,' where foreign autocrats support domestic allies. In this case, Kelley (2009) finds that having multiple agencies engaged in electoral monitoring is a mixed bag. United, they can boost their individual legitimacy as well as the legitimacy of the international norms they stress, divided they end up outright contradicting each other or working at cross-purposes. The emergence of **authoritarian regionalism** and increased **authoritarian collaboration** regarding (rigged) election monitoring has definitely contributed to the latter.

There are several potential drawbacks to relying on international observers. One major issue is partisanship; observers can be influenced by political interests, leading to biased assessments that may legitimize flawed elections. Additionally, international observers often lack deep knowledge of local contexts, languages, and cultures and miss instances of fraud or manipulation, especially subtler actions. Moreover, the focus on election day procedures routinely overlooks irregularities occurring during the preparation phase. Observers' limited resources and time constraints mean they cover only a small percentage of polling areas, potentially missing widespread issues as regimes can shift their illegal activities. Lastly, the presence of international observers may sometimes lead to diplomatic pressures that affect their impartiality, as powerful states or donors may influence their evaluations to avoid destabilizing relationships (e.g., required for peacekeeping) or allied regimes. (Lynge-Mangueira 2012; Aceproject 2006; Kelley 2012)

Traditionally led by international organizations, election observation has seen a surge in domestic initiatives since the 1990s. Domestic groups, often civic organizations or NGO networks, now organize and support these efforts, handling logistics, training observers, and analyzing election data. Crucially, they determine and report whether elections are 'free and fair.' (Nevitte & Canton 1997) Domestic election monitoring remains under-researched (cf. Grömping 2017) but still covers half of all observed elections globally.

Ananyev and Poyker (2022) suggest that regimes are more likely to carry out electoral manipulations where it is easier to achieve the desired vote margin. This 'efficient allocation theory' aligns with the observed practices of electoral fraud in developing countries. For instance, Asunka et al. (2019) examined the 2012 parliamentary elections in Ghana and found that electoral manipulations were more likely to occur in precincts without observers. Similarly, research from Russia by Enikolopov et al. (2013) showed that polling stations with randomly assigned observers recorded fewer votes for the pro-regime party in the 2011 elections. (Ananyev & Poyker 2022: 14) However, it is important to note that **opposition** parties may be more motivated to boycott elections due to concerns that international observers might legitimize them (Beaulieu & Hyde 2009).

Overall, while election observers can deter certain types of fraud, their impact is mixed and complex within the framework of comparative authoritarianism. Elklit and Svensson (1997) question the expected verdict of 'free and fair' in the context of developing nations, arguing that more nuance is needed to benchmark electoral quality.

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Indoctrination

Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously.
– G.K. Chesterton

Indoctrination refers to a process of inculcating a specific ideology, values, or worldview in a way that suppresses alternative perspectives and discourages critical thinking. Often associated with authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, indoctrination serves to enforce compliance and loyalty through a range of methods, from educational systems to media influence. This process is distinguished from regular education by its manipulative intent, aiming to create uncritical acceptance of doctrines and shaping individuals to serve the interests of the regime.

DEFINITION Indoctrination is a persuasive process by which ideologies, values and practices are deliberately inculcated at the expense of all other competing worldviews or principles. (Brandenberger 2014) Indoctrination involves teaching someone to accept doctrines uncritically regardless of evidence. Indoctrination closes down alternatives through the promotion of a single view that is to be universally accepted (Sears & Hughes 2006). Indoctrination is also enduring. Indoctrination is a process by which a subject irreversibly learns an attachment (Eibl-Eibesfeldt & Salter 1998).

The indoctrination process involves an authority relationship, where the instructional agent – often directed by a regime – tries to shape the views and beliefs of the public. The public must accept the instructor's guidance without criticism. By doing so, this is important to attaining full compliance of the population to authoritarian regimes.

Indoctrination can take place in all types of regimes but has been especially noted under **totalitarianism** and **authoritarianism**. The educational system is the most commonly used route to indoctrinate individuals. Indoctrination may also take place at youth camps, through youth groups and mass organizations and to a lesser extent through the state-run media and entertainment industry (Dinas & Ball 2016).

SEE ALSO Indoctrination is also associated with brainwashing, **propaganda**, political **education**, domination, and manipulation of individuals and groups, often using a coherent political **ideology**. **Totalitarianism** is the regime type most associated with the practice, and its effects are observed to linger, as shown in **authoritarian nostalgia**. This entry relates to **digital authoritarianism** and **disinformation**.

ORIGIN Originally, the term indoctrination had a neutral meaning, having its roots in the Latin word *doctrina* – and was equivalent to educative teaching. The term indoctrination was first noted in French literature, originally meaning to disseminate a doctrine (Hemánus 1974). William Heard Kilpatrick introduced the term 'indoctrination' into the debate on education in the 1920s (Kilpatrick 2010). During the early twentieth century, it became much more pejorative (like the term propaganda) and was associated with a coercive style of teaching in totalitarian regimes such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (Gatchel 2010; Lott Jr. 1999).



LITERATURE Most of the literature on indoctrination has focused on how to define it (and distinguish it from other forms of teaching), what its role is in the educational system and what impact it may have. There is no consensus on the exact definition of indoctrination, and scholars concur that there is some sort of indoctrination that takes place in all educational systems (Cuypers & Haji 2006; Dahlbeck 2021; Zrudlo 2021). Nevertheless, Michael Merry (2005) points out that arguing that all forms of education are tantamount to indoctrination is problematic because it trivializes indoctrination. We focus on indoctrination in authoritarian regimes, and there are several aspects of the definition that have been consistently highlighted.

One of the biggest debates is how to distinguish between indoctrination-serving socialization and other forms of teaching (Copp 2016; Zembylas 2021). In contrast to educative teaching, indoctrination is negatively valued because it promotes adopting beliefs without understanding (Snook 1972). Indoctrination means to learn without understanding rationally what is being taught. Indoctrination may also be used to incite emotions and inculcate hatred toward others (Momanu 2012). The recipient believes the content being indoctrinated is true to such an extent that nothing can shake this belief (White 1972). An indoctrinated person holds their conviction despite the counter-evidence (Hemánus 1974).

The content of indoctrination is also important. The content is not based on evidence or merely misuses evidence. For some scholars, the content also has to be based on some sort of doctrine or dogma and, therefore, has a political, ideological component to it, as Anthony Flew claimed, "No doctrines, no indoctrination" (Flew 2010). However, beyond teaching doctrines, indoctrination takes place when only the positive side of a doctrine is taught and teaching something as if it is scientific when it clearly is not.

Indoctrination also entails the abuse of authority. For James McClellan, indoctrination subverts educational institutions in their activity of teaching and learning (McClellan 1976). Indoctrination is a one-sided way of teaching (Puolimatka 1996). The indoctrinator has extensive control over the learning process (McClellan 1976).

Ivan Snook (2010) also argues that indoctrination is connected to an authoritarian teaching style, where teaching content is drilled into students' minds, and free discussion is forbidden. Teaching involves rewards and punishments (Benson 1975; Green 2010). Students who provide correct answers are rewarded, while students are punished for providing the wrong answer.

The method of teaching is not meant to generate critical thinking – or thinking for oneself (Crittenden 2010; Huttunen 2003). The educator encourages the student to think for oneself, while the indoctrinator watches out for signs of trouble and is ready to intervene to suppress critical thinking (Smart 1973). The indoctrinator is disregarding the individuality and rationality of the person being taught. Harold Metz and Charles Thompson (1950) wrote that indoctrination was about stifling imagination, depriving people of their individuality, and dulling the tools of thought. This contributes to enslaving the individual to the state.

Studies of **totalitarianism** examined the role of indoctrination of children in the educational system and how this was used to strengthen stability in these regimes (Arendt 1979; Ford & Kwon 2008; Spector 2016; Zembylas 2020). Children were indoctrinated with information in order to transform them into loyal subjects of the state, depressing the development of their personalities (Cathala 1986).

At the personal level, there can be educators who have an agenda that they which to imbue in their students, but much of the literature on indoctrination is concerned with the role of the state using the educational system to indoctrinate values, beliefs and political ideologies that are supportive of the regime (Snook 2010). In totalitarian systems, the state is trying to create a 'new man' in order to transform society (Krylova 2000). Some studies of indoctrination in non-democratic regimes have noted that the content may also focus on convincing individuals that there is a need for some suffering to achieve the mission of the regime (Adler 2012; Gerschewski 2012). Memoirist Yeonmi Park (2015: 67) stated, *"We were taught that it was an honour to suffer for our leaders."*

There has been a wide body of literature that has looked at the long-lasting impact of indoctrination that has taken place during the educational system (Alwin & Krosnick 1991; Burke & Stets 2009; Diwan & Vartanova 2020; Inglehart & Welzel 2010; Krosnick & Alwin 1989; Sears 1983; Sears & Valentino 1997). The indoctrination process in North Korea was so extensive that individuals who defected had to undergo a process of unlearning years of education by brainwashing (García 2017).

Indoctrination has the most impact when experienced directly through the educational system (Dinas & Ball 2016). In particular, the importance of the **ideology** makes education an important activity to help diffuse the ideology. Education can have policy-prescribed ideologically correct curricula. Subjects are infused with ideological messages at schools, universities, the media and the arts. Teachers, textbooks and students toward the leaders directed ritual praise and expressions of love. Images of the leaders are everywhere, as are symbols of the state (Eibl-Eibesfeldt & Salter 1998).

CLASSIFICATIONS There are different conceptions of indoctrination, which vary in terms of how negatively the term is interpreted. In the broad sense of the term, indoctrination can simply constitute the production of content that serves the purpose of a political regime. More specifically, indoctrination requires manipulative intent of the instructor, the suppression of alternative views and a style of learning that discourages critical thinking.

Past work has identified different types of indoctrination based on its objectives. The works of Olivier Reboul (1977) highlighted that *sectary indoctrination* replaces pre-conceptions while *conformist indoctrination* strengthens pre-existing conceptions. The former is more akin to brainwashing, relying on

psychological abuse to create a fully pliant population, while the latter plays on confusion to inculcate new values that are almost invisible to the consumer and take a longer time to materialize (Momanu 2012).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES & MEASUREMENT There is no consensus about how to measure indoctrination in the absence of a consensus on its definition. Indoctrination can be measured by examining the content of the curriculum, the method of teaching, whether or not there is **academic freedom**, the centralization of the educational system and the scope of educational penetration.

Qualitative studies have looked at case studies, specifically exploring the textbooks and the ideology in the curriculum, updates to the curriculum, or whether certain academic fields are eliminated for students starting as young as primary school. Studies can also look at how teachers are trained, teaching methods, and whether teachers have been fired for disobedience. (Hare 2007; Qi-quan 2006). Studies can also look at learning methods, whether students are taught to memorize information or are allowed to engage in critical thinking, whether students are given obedience training, whether students are given any civic training, or whether de-politicization is taught. (Sigauke 2011) Studies may also look at academic freedom at universities and whether academic staff members are free to think and teach freely, encouraged to publish and elaborate on the ideology of the regime, and produce scholarship that is inspired by the ideology. Data can be drawn from observing lessons, interviewing students and staff, and looking at curricula directly (Qi-quan 2006).

EXAMPLES Indoctrination in North Korea was to make people loyal supporters of the regime, and the ideological training was meant to reinforce a brand-new identity (Hassig & Oh 2009). Ideological indoctrination starts the moment the child enters the classroom. The walks are painted with scenes of children performing gymnastics alongside images of North Korean soldiers stabbing American, Japanese and South Korean soldiers. Propaganda seeped into every subject, including math, science, reading and music. The principles of the regime are drilled into students' minds through rote learning. Books detailed what a terrible and disgusting place South Korea is. No deviation from the norms is permitted. By secondary school, the guiding principles of the regime are completely ingrained in the minds of students, such as myths that all Chinese imported goods on the black market were dyed red using human blood. Public executions are shown as a teachable moment in schools, with children forced to witness victims shot by firing squad in plain view. Violence is part of the educational process (García 2017).

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Patronage

Lack of money is lack of friends; if you have money at your disposal, every dog and goat will claim to be related to you.
– Yoruba proverb

As a global phenomenon, patronage is the exchange of goods or services between two unequal parties in a hierarchical relationship. Both patron and client depend on one another, but the more powerful is able to coerce the latter. More than **clientelism**, patronage is conceptually linked to public office and the political and mostly concerns high-level politics in political regimes, but note that both concepts are often used interchangeably (Piattoni 2001: 4).

ORIGIN 'Patron' is derived from Latin (*pater* – father, *patrone* – protector, also from *patria* – homeland, i.e., the institution that protects its members/citizens). In some contexts, the word retains a positive and non-political meaning, such as in the case of the Italian *padrone* (the owner of a coaster (small ship) or property owner of an eatery or hotel). Patronage can also refer to the word 'support' or 'sponsorship' in the contemporary sense. In the past, the rulers and nobility patronized religious missions, artists, warriors, athletes, and sports teams (royal patronage, *patronato real, padroado*). In a less positive meaning, a patron could be a person who employs others' services and labor in exchange for legal or illegal fees. The latter brings us closer to the meaning *patronus*, i.e., the person who controls something or, particularly, somebody.

DEFINITION Patronage is closely connected with **informality** in societal relations. Although the formal institutions could define the patron and client (i.e. patron holds a specific (public) position), informal relations determine real patronage. As Oksana Ismailbekova (2017: 6) writes in her book on patronage and kinship in Kyrgyzstan, patronage denotes *"a social institution whereby two or more actors enter into a relationship characterised by trust, exchange, and mutual benefit that is nevertheless asymmetrical in the sense that the patron benefits more from the relationship than do the clients."* Patronage provides safety for clients in times of uncertainty; a patron selectively distributes employment and exchanges favors with their clients. The latter offer their (vocal and exclusive) loyalty (thus enhancing a patron's reputation), information (about others), various services, and political support. Patronage is contradictory: it combines inequality with the promise of reciprocity and voluntarism with coercion.

Depending on the context and (political) culture, some forms of patronage are tolerated and legal, even if they are covert, like using political discretion to appoint trusted individuals to non-elective positions in the public sector. See, for instance, W.C. Müller (2000) for patronage in West European governments; Kopecký & Spirova (2011) for post-communist Europe; Kopecký (2011) for Sub Saharan cases; and Panizza et al. (2018) for Latin American cases.

Wolf (2001: 179) offers an interesting anthropological perspective: *"When instrumental friendship reaches a maximum point of imbalance, so that one partner is clearly superior to the other in his or her capacity to grant goods and services, we approach the critical point at which friendship gives way to the patron-client tie."* However, the minimal charge of affect (trust) remains the basis for such lop-sided "instrumental

friendship," and beyond the material gain and protection received from patrons, there is the clients' strive to fight against anonymity – to know 'someone' higher up – (especially in urban settings), and pursue such primary personal relationships, to belong in a 'faction,' and, maybe, in turn, become 'somebody' themselves, as brokers or smaller patrons (Wolf 2001: 179-181).

SEE ALSO The term almost overlaps with **clientelism** – as explained below. The exchange of goods or services for political gain is the glue that ties political and other elites together into ruling networks structured by informality and loyalty. It is at the heart of tribal, **clan politics** or **ethnic politics** and a cornerstone for the ideal types like Weber's **patrimonialism** and its derivatives (**neo-patrimonialism**, **sultanism, & neo-sultanism**). When its effects are detrimental to the functioning of states and societies, one enters the realm of **state capture** and **systemic corruption**. It is the focus of theories like **patronalism** and is also covered by larger frameworks like **informality**.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Because the concept is used so interchangeably with clientelism and neo-patrimonialism, depending on the region under observation and personal preferences of the researchers, there are no unanimously accepted definitions.

Origins Like **clientelism**, a society's patronal system is created when informal structures play a significant role compared to the formal (i.e., legal) management of public and private affairs. Often, such lack of legality in society is compensated for by the emergence of networks that help people to achieve their demands (Radnitz 2010: 24). People use these connections to make payments to higher-positioned people in exchange for some (otherwise) inaccessible goods or service. The payments can be made through official bribery using money, gifts or mutually advantageous exchange of goods or services, including, for example, sexual services, typically in the case of men's patronage toward women. Clients in one dyad often act as patrons in other networks. Nested in broader frames of **informality** and **systemic corruption**, once the gains for the patron become political (vote-buying, political support, etc.), one can apply the specific frames of 'patronage' and 'clientelism.'

Scope Unlike clientelism, patronage is somewhat more narrowly defined and mostly associated with the exchange of public goods (not private resources) at the top level of a polity. Also, its clientelistic recipient base is rather a group (and not another individual), meaning that the redistributed gains are subordinated to the (symbolic) political influence the patronal relationship yields (Erdmann & Engel 2007: 107). More than clientelism, patronage has an integrative function, tying elites together. Clientelism is more associated with **hoarding**.

Delineation Patronage is thus rather considered a vertical exchange between a patron and a network of clients. Nevertheless, this is only one interpretation, and exchanges can proceed horizontally using kinship or personal connections – the latter, specifically, is called 'блат' *(blat)* in Russian. Although clientelism can be linked to kinship, often it is not, while patronage (e.g., under **personalist rule)** often blurs with nepotism (see Box 1.1) because of its heavy reliance on kinship ties. So, the closest patron-client connections are those based on family, clan, friendship, classmate group or other informal affinities. Kinship can partially erase the superiority and subordination in patron-client relations and makes arrangements more hassle-free. Even then, kinship ties or *blat* do not necessarily mean the relations are horizontally equal. In effect, most of the demands are satisfied on vertical and asymmetric systems of patronage (Hale 2015: 21).

Patronage differs from **prebendalism**, where clients are given a public office in order to acquire access to state resources (for personal gain) in exchange for loyalty (van de Walle 2007: 51). According to M. Weber, 'prebends' and 'fiefs' (as in feudalism) are standard forms of rents to reward or solicit loyalty from followers under **patrimonialism**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The study of patronage is key to understanding elite cohesion, regime consolidation and survival in autocracies. Patronage can link rural areas to urban centers (cf. Hutchcroft 2014), integrate various ethnic groups (**ethnic politics**), and serve to convince opposition parties to ally themselves with the ruling party. In democracies and **hybrid regimes**, patronage, like other forms of **informality**, is often studied for its corrosive effects on democracy, electoral processes, and development.

MEASUREMENT For African politics, Arriola (2009, following van de Walle 2001) gauged the size of ministerial cabinets as proxies to measure the number of elite clients sustained by a ruler. See also the sections on 'measurement' in the entries: **state capture** and **systemic corruption**.

CLASSIFICATIONS D.A. Bearfield (2009) distinguishes four styles of patronage for American political realities, thus foremost, relating to political appointments: (a) *organizational patronage* is used to strengthen or create political organizations; (b) *democratic patronage* seeks to achieve democratic or egalitarian goals using patronage; (c) *tactical patronage* uses the distribution of public offices to bridge political divisions or cleavages as a means of achieving political or policy goals; and (d) *reform patronage* emerges when those committed to reforming the existing patronage system themselves engage in the practice as the means of replacing the corrupt political regime that preceded them.

Kenny (2015) finds that (i) *centralized* and (ii) *decentralized* patronage systems differ mainly in control distribution and reform potential. In centralized systems (i), like nineteenth-century Great Britain, patronage control is concentrated within the central government, making reform easier due to fewer veto points. This centralization allows a reformist coalition to implement changes more effectively.



Conversely, decentralized systems (ii), such as in the United States, distribute patronage control across multiple local levels, creating numerous veto points where local elites can block reforms. This makes decentralized systems more resistant to reform efforts. Decentralization often arises from historical state-building processes that involve concessions of patronage powers to subnational entities during critical junctures like decolonization. This results in a fragmented political structure where national leaders must negotiate with subnational elites for control over state institutions (Kenny 2015: 162-164).

LITERATURE & REGIONAL VARIATION For the study of political regimes, it is impossible to separate the literature on clientelism, patronage and neo-patrimonialism neatly. As a specific subtype of the first, find the key works on the mechanics of patron-client interactions under **clientelism**. As the bread and butter of the last, find several works covering regional variation under **neo-patrimonialism**.

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Personality Cult

A cult following is a nice way of saying very few people like you.
– Martin Mull

Je suis le drapeau Haïtien
(I am the Haitian flag)
– François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier, Ruler of Haiti (1907-1971)

Wherever a leader gains authority and exaggerated devotion from the public by manipulating the tools of the mass media and educational system, such systems of veneration are called personality cults or leadership cults.

DEFINITION A personality cult is a deliberately constructed system of mass veneration of a political leader, where the political system is integrated around the leader's persona (Rees 2004). Personality cults emerge when leaders create a heroic image of themselves through the erection of objects that glorify the leaders, such as statues or portraits everywhere (Tucker 1977). Leaders immortalize themselves with ostentatious architecture, cult imagery and objects, and written, visual and performance arts. As citizens are confronted with images of the leader everywhere in everyday life, they may become mesmerized by the leaders' power and mystique and come to believe that a leader is superhuman and possesses exceptional *"personal, intellectual, oratorical, diplomatic, or other abilities"* (Brooker 2013: 133). These leaders are romanticized and believed to be saviors for the masses. Personality cults use physical displays to portray the leader as a deity.

Personality cults entail a powerful psychological and emotional identification between the leader and their followers (Kinne 2005). Followers of a person-

ality cult are willing to defend the leader unconditionally and provide blind obedience and unqualified emotional support (Post 1986). Their allegiance to this leader goes above party or policies (Edwards 2002; Madsen & Snow 1991). In personalized charismatic relationships, followers identify directly with the leader based on the leader's attributes rather than identifying primarily with the values and ideas that the leader represents (Sankowsky 1995). Nevertheless, personality cults tend to create an **ideology** around themselves and their charisma.

In personality cults, the leader also becomes the sacred carrier of important narratives about the country, endowing them with substantial cultural meaning (Moghaddam 2012). These narratives help sustain important values that can be sustained over time. The narratives that are attached to these sacred carriers are often unchanged.

Because charismatic styles of authority are inherently unstable, they require routinization. The most likely way in which **charismatic rule** becomes routinized is through **patrimonial** forms of governance (Weber 1978). Personality cults are institutionalized through inserting practices of the cult into the daily lives of the followers. Institutionalization would include commemorative events and rituals of devotion to the leader, which are embedded into the institutions of society and eventually become engraved into the minds of the public.

SEE ALSO Personality cults are synonymous with cults of personality and are also associated with **charismatic rule** and **legitimacy**. Some consider them a **coup-proofing** technique and a form of mass intimidation (**repression**).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Personality cults are a very important part of most totalitarian systems and some authoritarian systems. These cults constitute an important element of the process of legitimation of totalitarian power (Żyromski 2019), but they are almost as old as human history and can be found in all inhabited parts of the world. To dismiss the practice of leader veneration as a mere 'personality cult' is essentially orientalist, and therefore, it is important to study its functions in **political regimes**.

ORIGIN The notion of personality cults has factored into academic research on authoritarianism for decades. Early studies find that personality cults are synonymous with what sociologist Max Weber termed 'charismatic authority' (Weber 1978). A charismatic leader, according to Weber, owes their position not to legal or traditional authority but to the *"virtue of which he is set apart from other men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities"* (Weber 1978). Supporters perceive these leaders as *"superhuman, blindly believe them, follow them unconditionally, and give them unqualified emotional support"* (Post 1986).

While authors such as Weber have conceptualized charismatic forms of authority, the term 'personality cult' was popularized after Nikita Khrushchev's so-called 'Secret speech' on 25 February 1956 at the twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (formally titled: *On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences*), in order to highlight adulation of Stalin and his abuse of power. This was the start of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign (Box 3.4). The term has had a largely negative connotation and has been associated with leader-centric totalitarian dictatorships (Tucker 1968).

Though the term personality cult was popularized in the twentieth century, there are many examples of personality cults from ancient history. In ancient Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome, living and dead emperors were also deified, and many Roman emperors also developed sophisticated personality cults, like the first emperor, Octavianus Principate 'Augustus' (63 BCE – 14 CE, the 'Restorer' of the Republic) or Caligula (12-41 CE) and Nero (37-68 CE) as living gods (Rees 2004; Zanker 1999). For example, Benito Mussolini modeled his cult after Augustus. A more modern example of a cultivated personality cult emerged in mid-nineteenth century France under Napoleon III, 'Emperor of the French' (Plamper 2012).

Relatively more recent personality cults originated from totalitarian regimes, such as in the former USSR under Joseph Stalin (1922-1953), Germany under Adolph Hitler (1933-1945) and in China under Mao Zedong (1949-1976). A cult of personality also emerged in North Korea under Kim Il-Sung, which has continued to this day as part of the Kim dynasty. **Totalitarianism** in the twentieth century generated personality cults, which embodied Weber's characterization of charismatic authority. Careful campaigns were set up to mold the public perception that the leader possessed exceptional powers or qualities and was not solely in charge due to their formal political position (legal-rational) or hereditary title (cf. **traditional rule**).

Personality cults can also exist under **authoritarianism** like Saddam Hussein in Iraq ('the New Nebuchadnezzar'), Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo ('Guide of the People') and Saparmurat Niyazov of Turkmenistan ('*Türkmenbaşy*' – 'Father of the Turkmen'). Xi Jinping is currently creating a personality cult in China, reminiscent of Mao Zedong ('Chairman Mao'). Dikötter (2019) has many descriptions of famous personality cults.

LITERATURE The literature has focused on what constitutes a personality cult, when they develop, how effective they are for maintaining control over the masses and how they become routinized. Postoutenko and Stephanov (2021) provide an excellent diachronic overview of ruler veneration from ancient times to today.

Daniel Leese (2016) finds that personality cults are also deeply imbued with **nationalism**, so the fate of the nation coincides with the fate of the leader. Others similarly see them primarily as a connective force, bridging past and present, the familiar and the elevated, with the aim of establishing a deep-seated bond between the leader and their followers. By linking the ruler to revered historical figures, heroic deeds, and the promise of a golden age, these cults position the leader as a modern embodiment of tradition. They reimagine traditional symbols and sacred rituals for contemporary purposes, portraying the leader as a protective father figure devoted to



the 'nation family.' Xavier Márquez (in Postoutenko & Stephanov 2021) describes this as both a performance of the charismatic relationship between ruler and ruled and the deliberate production of symbolic artifacts – from monumental statues to public praise – that project the leader's superhuman qualities and normalize this portrayal. Such imagery resonates especially in totalitarian systems, where active public participation is essential.

For Jan Plamper (2012), a personality cult was not possible without a mass audience, the mass media on an enormous scale and the confines of a dictatorship. Thus, for Plamper, a personality cult could not fully develop in a democratic regime. Exercising total control over the media and other forms of information dissemination is critical (Tucker 1968). Total control over mass communication allows a regime to engage in a nationwide process of brainwashing to achieve total ideological integration of its people. Modern communications can help project the image of the charismatic leader to a far greater number of people by repeatedly disseminating images and information portraying the leader as a messianic figure (Tucker 1968).

Edward Shils (1965) claimed that the public has a strong need for a charismatic leader due to the challenges of everyday life and the universal need for order. The power of charisma is that it links the individual's sense of hope and security to the leader. For these reasons, charismatic leaders obtain unusually high levels of intense support. The support the charismatic leader receives is stable and easy to mobilize, as subordinates have a fairly durable emotional identification with the leader (Edwards 2002; Bass 1999).

A number of factors facilitate a leader's creation of a personality cult. According to Weber, charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge during times of physical, psychological, economic and political distress and profound upheaval (1978). A wide range of stressors can foster conditions that are conducive to the emergence of a personality cult (Tucker 1968). The leader takes advantage of this by presenting himself as the savior to lead the people out of this distress, making the masses feel completely dependent on him. This leads to an intense and unquestioning loyalty on behalf of the public (Tucker 1977). Hitler emerged at a time when Germany faced rising unemployment, inflation and poverty. He exploited the stress and anxiety of German citizens and resentment following the harsh terms of the Versailles Treaty following World War I. Leaders who are able to exploit these moments and convince followers that they are uniquely qualified to lead them out of their predicament have the opportunity to develop personality cults (Tucker 1968).

Many scholars have noted that personality cults emerge when there is a perception of a crisis that the current political institutions seem unable to cope with (Pinto et al. 2007). Possibly more important than a crisis may be the opportunities, such as when there is a relative weakness in the regime's institutions (Gill 1984; Pinto et al. 2007; 2014). The Soviet Union was ripe for the emergence of personality cults as through much of Russian history, it was ruled by a system where the tsar enjoyed unlimited powers (Plamper 2012). In China and the Soviet Union, the personality cults of Mao and Stalin, respectively emerged at a time of relative weakness of their communist parties (Gill 1984). Furthermore, the urgency to ensure their political survival and the lack of rules on political ascent enables personality cults to develop (Leese 2016). For this reason, personality cults are, unsurprisingly, most pervasive in **personalist regimes**.

Finally, the media can play an important role in fostering personality cults. Writing in the 1960s – long before the advent of social media and other information communications technologies – Tucker (1968) asserted that *"modern communications media make possible the projection of a charismatic leader (…) to a far greater number of people than ever before"* (Tucker 1968: 733). Modern media facilitates the repeated dissemination of images and information portraying the leader as a god-like figure incapable of wrongdoings (Tucker 1968: 389). The erection of objects that glorify the leader, such as statues and omnipresent portraits, also cultivates support for the leader. In Turkmenistan, for example, Saparmurat Niyazov's picture appeared in the upper right-hand corner of every TV screen, his name was given to thousands of places throughout the country, and monuments such as a golden statue of him that rotated to face the sun were pervasive throughout the country.

For some, personality cults could develop in democracies as well, as a crisis evokes an emotional response to leaders that enables them to exert strong influence over followers (Madsen & Snow 1991). Whoever is able to take the lead and create 'order' will naturally generate a response of awe and reverence (Geertz 1977). Studies have shown that during stressful times, more charismatic candidates in democracies are more likely to be elected (Halverson et al. 2004). Perceptions of charisma are heightened when contextual circumstances cause followers to look to political leaders for a solution.

There is no consensus as to whether the strategy is to gain *legitimacy* or just compliance. Leader worship takes place in mass spectacles and rituals, but this does not indicate that everyone truly believes in the personality cult. All that matters is that charismatic leaders are perceived by their followers as charismatic (Weber 1978). Those who fail to adhere to the personality cult in dictatorships face serious consequences. Misspelling Mao's quotations or inadvertently defacing Mao's image would lead to serious consequences (Leese 2011). Letting on that you were aware of fabrications surrounding Stalin's personality cult would lead to a death sentence (Tucker 1990).

For Lisa Wedeen (2015), in her study of Hafez al-Assad in Syria ('the twentieth-century's Saladin') the main objective was compliance through enforced rituals of participation. Though these rituals were obviously a farce to those who were orchestrating them and to those taking part, the cult of Assad aimed to habitualize citizens to behave as if they believed in all of the hype of the rhetoric and imagery. Victor Chung-Hon Shih (2008) sees personality cults playing a similar role. Attempts to foster a personality cult may not legitimately transfix the

public, but it may foment competition from both elites and supporters to see who can be the most sycophantic (Box 6.5). In the case of China, Chung-Hon Shih observed nauseating displays of flattery as supporters aimed to outdo one another. Haifeng Huang (2015) concurs that personality cults do not actually mesmerize citizens, but serve another purpose to signal the strength of the regime, which in turn causes citizens to communicate their loyalty. This intimidates the masses and prevents any legitimate challenge to the incumbent.

In this way, personality cults serve as a tool for intimidation and coup-proofing. Through constant repetition of the leader's central role, they suppress any potential for rivals by stripping other elites of visibility and discouraging resistance among the public. In Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire (Box 1.7), for example, news outlets would withhold the names of ministers, identifying them only by position, ensuring the leader's supremacy remained unchallenged. (Svolik 2012: 80-81) This also extends to elites, who legitimize their positions through allegiance to the leader, effectively hiding behind their image and insulating themselves from opposition.

Many scholars of dictatorships argue that personality cults emerge due to the need for the political survival of rulers and to maintain themselves in power indefinitely (Friedrich & Brzezinski 1956). Nevertheless, political and psychological approaches counter that leaders, such as Stalin, needed a personality cult to satisfy the needs of their psyche, not just to maintain themselves in power. Saddam Hussein, Stalin, and Hitler, in particular, were diagnosed as ego-maniacs, malignant narcissists and sadists who needed to have unrestricted control over human beings (Glad 2002; Post 1993). While these studies have been criticized for making psychological diagnoses from afar, personality cults are such grandiose displays of extravagant adulation that future research may need to explore in more depth the psychological components of personality cults.

MEASUREMENT There is no precise way to measure a personality cult, but there are elements in each case that can be identified. This includes the extent to which a leader's image exists everywhere. Does the media propagandize the leader's messianic qualities regularly? Are there songs, books, poems, statues, buildings that commemorate the leader? Is the leader romanticized and commemorated in the educational system? Is there an outpouring of grief after the leader dies?

Studies can also engage in content analysis of the leader's speeches. Does the leader himself refer to his messianic qualities? Does the leader refer to himself as synonymous with the state and/or regime? V-Dem data record if (personalist) political parties portray their leader as having exceptional leadership qualities (Frantz et al. 2021).

EXAMPLES One of the most extensive personality cults was created by Kim Il-Sung in North Korea. Kim Il-Sung (the 'Eternal President') claimed he could use a gun to shoot down an enemy warplane, while his son, Kim Jong-Il (the 'Dear Leader'), supposedly knew how to control the weather and create rainbows during a snowstorm (Hassig & Oh 2009: 33-34). Kim Jong-Un is known as the 'Respected Supreme Leader' or 'Great Successor.'

In the Soviet Union, Stalin's image was omnipresent, as the state-controlled mass media projected his image everywhere (Lu & Soboleva 2014). Cities, schools, factories, roads and many different kinds of prizes were named after him. Stalin's birthday was celebrated as the most important day of the year. Newspapers often featured stories of workers sending in letters expressing their undying gratitude to Stalin (Heller & Plamper 2004). Nevertheless, as much of the public was illiterate at the time (roughly one-third of males and two-thirds of females), the personality cult was mostly visual through sculptures and paintings, but also through film, poetry and music (Plamper 2012). Portraits of Stalin, in particular, dominated the landscape – and Stalin approved every picture before it was published. All non-fiction writing had to stress Stalin's genius, omniscience and omnipotence. From history to politics, geography to chemistry, physics to genetics, all disciplines had to incorporate his guiding ideas (Crabtree et al. 2020).

In China, Mao Zedong also fostered a personality cult around his mystique. He supposedly knew how to cure diseases, and the masses were encouraged to gather in front of his portrait. Mao also published his *Little Red Book* in 1964, filled with over 400 of his quotations (cf. Box 1.18 on 'holy books' and Box 3.5 on 'infernal books'). The *Little Red Book* served as a bible for the masses during the Cultural Revolution (Luqiu 2016).

A more modern personality cult outside of the communist context could be observed in Venezuela under Hugo Chávez. Chávez rose to power after a massive crisis of **corruption** and public frustration with **rent-seeking** by the traditional elites. In this tense environment, Chávez convinced the public that he alone had the power to deliver and help put Venezuela on the right path. Surveys of Chávez's capacity and abilities revealed a disconnection between public perception and reality (Weyland 2003). Chávez had an approval rating of almost 92% (Gil Yepes 2004). Statues of Chávez are all over Venezuela. His image is on T-shirts, murals, banners and billboards, while portraits of his image hang from the walls of every important public building.

IMPACT ON POLICY Personality cults are formidable to contend with. More scholarly attention is needed to investigate the role of charismatic leadership in explaining electoral performance in democracies as well as gray zone regimes (Caprara et al. 2008). Polling data indicates that perceptions of leadership and character are growing increasingly important to voters. Candidates who are perceived to be strong leaders, caring, compassionate, moral, determined, reliable and trustworthy have a strong influence on voting (Bartels 2002). Studies have shown how something as simple as a candidate's appearance can affect a candidate's chances (Todorov et al. 2005).



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Personalization

The higher the monkey climbs, the more he shows his tail.
– African proverb

Absolute power does not corrupt absolutely, absolute power attracts the corruptible.
– Frank Herbert

As a process, personalization refers to the series of actions necessary to achieve personalist power within a political **party** or a **political regime**. This process – the tug-of-war for power between a leader and his inner circle – can manifest itself in all regime types, even democracies, but the tension and stakes derived from this struggle for dominance rise exponentially when regimes do not possess institutions to

mitigate or arbitrate such conflicts.

As mentioned in the entry on **personalist rule**, the academic study of the exact dynamics of this *process* within political regimes is relatively new and has concentrated on three main areas (I-III):

First, the personalization *within* political parties (I) in democratic and electoral contexts, often linked with **populism**; and second, the personalization in (fully) authoritarian regimes (II), which can occur through *executive takeovers*, either gradually or via self-coups. Both scenarios represent forms of **autocratization** but at different starting points (and levels) in the process.

The first two approaches study 'executive aggrandizement:' either as a risk in democratic settings where such personalist regimes are associated with democratic backsliding once they gain power or as a specific process in already authoritarian or hybrid settings, where a collegial ruling coalition becomes dominated by the *primus inter pares*. In settings without higher authority to solve conflicts and where violence is thus the ultimate arbiter, such processes are vicious power plays, usually with bad outcomes for the losers.

Third, the final process of 'personalization' actually refers to 'sultanization' (III) (cf. **neo-sultanism**) and denotes a form of **state capture**, the takeover of a polity or state by a (personalist) regime. In particular, this refers to the process of **neo-patrimonialism**: How a regime network dominates the most important economic sectors through **systemic corruption** and hollows out other state institutions, modeling the latter to its needs as organs for societal control or for doling out **patronage**. This third process is *not* covered in detail in this entry but different angles in the mentioned related entries tackle the phenomenon.

(I) Personalization of political parties Kostadinova and Levitt (2014b: 492) find that the presence of a dominant leader and a weakly structured organization (by design) are the two defining features of a personalist party. *"Within such a group, we argue, interactions between the leader and other politicians are driven mainly by loyalty to that leader rather than, for example, organizational rules, ideological affinities, or programmatic commitments."*

This topic and its related literature are covered by Alberto Lioy (2023), who provides a comprehensive examination of the definitions and classifications of *personal* (pertaining to a leader), *personalist* (being and acting as such), and *personalized* (having become so) political parties. Lioy critiques the narrowness of existing definitions and highlights the limitations of defining personalist parties merely 'as electoral entities with minimal organization,' as this fails to capture their complexity and diversity.

Lioy (2023: 827-829) identifies five key analytical distinctions used in the literature to differentiate personal parties: (a) *personalist* vs. *personalized*, (b) large vs. small, (c) ideological vs. non-ideological, (d) centralized vs. decentralized, and (e) institutional vs. mediatic (when a politician behaves as a party's owner, but the party itself is not necessarily insti-

Box 3.4 De-Stalinization: Ideological Exodus after Apostasy

Comrades!... quite a lot has been said about the cult of the individual and about its harmful consequences.
– First line of Nikita Krushchev's 'Secret Speech' in 1956.

De-Stalinization refers to the various policies and measures undertaken in the years after the death of Joseph V. Stalin (1878-1953, real name: იოსებ ბესარიონის ძე ჯუღაშვილი – Ioseb Besarionis dze Jughashvili, in Georgian), the longstanding leader of the USSR. The process was an attempt to restore the 'betrayed values' of the original project and revert and abolish the legacy of Stalin's policies. (Tismaneanu 2013: 67)

After Stalin's death on 5 March 1953, by the end of the same year, amnesty was given to the prisoners of the GULAG (*Glavnoe Upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovykh LAGerei* – Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps) systems, and the entire GULAG prison system would be truly abolished by the early 1960s. The crucial element in de-Stalinization, however, was Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' at the twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, where he addressed in a closed session the representatives of the Party and where he openly spoke about Stalin's crimes. Khrushchev denounced Stalin's violent politics, his **personality cult**, as well as the mass **purges** committed on his orders. Khrushchev also criticized Stalin for his purges of old Bolsheviks, who were important members of the party prior to the October Revolution. In these processes, many squares and towns that had been named after Stalin had their names soon reverted to their original ones. Hundreds of Stalin's monuments were destroyed. Stalin's body was removed from Lenin's mausoleum on the Red Square in Moscow. In addition to these domestic changes, foreign policy was adapted as well, and a more peaceful coexistence with the Western capitalist world was promoted (for a while).

Thus, de-Stalinization represented a clear break from the past; however, the internal Party structure, particularly during the Brezhnev era, remained intact, and many of the de-Stalinization processes were halted during this time. It was only with the Perestroika and Glasnost reforms (cf. Box 3.10), implemented by Mikhail Gorbachev, that de-Stalinization resumed – though with a very different outcome: the eventual fall of **communism**.

The Stalinist era, de-Stalinization and the denunciation of Stalin led to significant shifts within the broader communist bloc. In China, there was a specific adaptation to this new process. Mao Zedong feared that de-Sta-



linization could threaten his rule and thus refused to implement any similar policies. In 1956, Mao launched the *Hundred Flowers Campaign*, encouraging intellectuals, workers, peasants, and students to critique Party politics. However, following Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' and Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe, the campaign was abruptly ended in the summer of 1957 and replaced by an 'anti-Rightist' campaign, followed by the *Great Leap Forward* (大跃进 – *Dà yuèjìn*, an economic campaign aimed at rapidly transforming China from an agrarian society into an industrialized socialist nation), as a means to consolidate Mao's leadership.

Crucially, after Mao's death, the CCP never undertook a similar process of de-Maoization. Instead, there was a discursively mild but practically radical negation of his economic policies through the introduction of market reforms, while his political decisions and campaigns were never denounced (Kramer 2013; Tismaneanu 2013). As Naimark et al. (2017: 2) note, *"Soviet hegemony did not overcome the test of de-Stalinization. The breakdown of the Sino-Soviet alliance was of key importance in putting an end to international communism as a unitary actor in world politics."*

In North Korea, the de-Stalinization processes in the Soviet Union led to even greater isolation and the further closing off of the country. This also created the context for the development and stabilization of the Juche (주체 – 'self-reliance') ideology (cf. Box 4.9). Additionally, the Sino-Soviet split (Box 3.9), which was partially ideologically driven and followed de-Stalinization in the USSR, played a crucial role in securing strong domestic ideological **legitimacy** for North Korea within the Cold War context of the Communist bloc (Armstrong 2013; Gray 2023).

In Hungary, encouraged by the de-Stalinization in the USSR and the Secret Speech, they attempted a **revolution**. Similar attempts were made in Poland, but the Soviet Union brutally suppressed both. *"Soviet leaders feared that political unrest and instability in an East European country, if left unchecked, would prove 'contagious' in the Soviet Union. Concerns about this prospect played a salient role in the Soviet Politburo's deliberations during the crises in 1953, 1956, 1968, and 1980-1981"* (Kramer 2013: 150).

On the other hand, de-Stalinization and the Secret Speech were crucial in thawing relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia after Tito's 1948 rejection of Stalin and the *Informbiro* split. This split refers to the political and ideological rift between the USSR and Yugoslavia after Stalin attempted to exert greater control over the latter's foreign and domestic policies through the *Communist Information Bureau* (Cominform), an organization created to coordinate communist parties across Europe. This was opposed by Tito.

The de-Stalinization in 1956 led to a temporary thaw, despite initial steps toward reconciliation taken as early as 1955 with the *Belgrade Declaration*, signed by Tito and Khrushchev. However, this rapprochement was only a prelude to a new distancing between the USSR and Yugoslavia, leading to Yugoslavia's isolation from the Eastern Bloc and its pursuit of what would later become known as the strategy of the *Non-Aligned Movement* (Banac 2017).

The impact of de-Stalinization was evident in the significant shift within the international communist movement, as the revelations of Stalin's crimes led to widespread fractures. The strong ideological pressure and monopoly that had maintained party control were severely undermined by these revelations, particularly in the West. De-Stalinization resulted in numerous splits and factions among Western leftist intellectuals, with many distancing themselves from communism and Marxism during this period. Additionally, it contributed to divergent paths within the global communist camp (Anderson 1976).

How to cite:

Hočevar, Marko, 2025. De-Stalinization: Ideological Exodus after Apostasy, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Box 3.5 Infernal Books: The Top Ten – The Editors' Pick

As with monotheism, philosophy or classical music, the great peaks have already been formed and everything that now follows will exist in their shadow. (…) Today's dictators offer us only lesser, derivative works.
– Daniel Kalder, *The Infernal Library,* 2018

A window into the minds of madmen, tyrants, despots, revolutionaries, and fanatics – our fascination for the literary ambitions of dictators never seems to fade if one can stand their style. For most of these tyrannical authors, it is more prudent to relish their creative offspring in small doses (*amuse-bouche*-size) instead of chowing down their dreary bookshelves one by one.

When it comes to style, talent and originality, any critical reader reappraises the importance and need for a solid editorial process when confronted with their scribbles. Most works would not go beyond a polite desk rejection and the majority that do are bound to be retracted later for not disclosing ghostwriters.

A good title is key: For instance, *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*, 1925) by Adolf Hitler is probably the most infamous of works. He wrote it while jailed for treason after his failed Munich *Putsch* (before succeeding the second time). It is his autobiographical manifesto outlining his racist (foremost antisemitic) and fascist political ideology. His original title would have been *Viereinhalb Jahre (des Kampfes) gegen Lüge, Dummheit und Feigheit (Four and a Half Years (of Struggle) against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice)* if his like-minded editor, Max Amann had not suggested something shorter. (Bullock 1991: 121) One can only wonder if his posthumous book sales and popularity among contemporary fascists would have been affected if Amann had not dissuaded him. Still, with his ascent to power in the 1930s, the book became a best-seller, generating generous royalties. A second part was already published in 1926, but his sequel on foreign policy (1928) never emerged, as the early draft went out of date too soon. (Bullock 1991: 133) Despite the long ban on this publication in Germany, the expiration of the copyright term now makes it widely available.

While many proto-rulers dabble in poetry (especially when young), few excel. A notable exception would be the Japanese Emperor Meiji (1852-1912), who recently had a collection of his *tanka* poems translated into English: *Bridge on the Shikishima Way* (Wright 2022). Of course, even constructive editorial feedback is dangerous when the author can have you shot with one command, so sycophancy is the optimal survival mode since editors are replaceable.

Regarding ghostwriting, eventually, every final product is guaranteed to be heralded by public applause in the national literary community. However, under normal circumstances few artists experience the anguish of coerced ghostwriters handing in their manuscripts for inspection and approval to the supreme leader. While Stalin was notorious for his personal micro-management of line editing (Kalder 2018), North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung must have had a whole publishing house at his disposal since he is credited with authoring hundreds if not thousands of works.

Works by rulers (themselves), when (actually) written before their ascent to power, provide an interesting testament to their ideological worldviews that drove their revolutionary action. When published during the pinnacle of their power, these serve to justify their rule and boost their **personality cults**, but also to consolidate or formulate a coherent vision for their political projects and sometimes **succession**. Regimes with a political **ideology** can actually be constrained policy-wise if the guiding doctrine is a comprehensive canon unbudging to reinterpretation or manipulation – cf. Box 1.18 on 'holy books.'

Below are ten colorful and infamous (non-ideological) works by autocrats that each stand out in one way or another. They are presented in chronological order because topic, genre and quality vary too much to list them otherwise. Note that this overview is far from complete, and there is much more joyful scraping from the literary barrel for this genre if one feels inclined to do so. Not included are legal treatises (e.g., Napoleonic code), poetry bundles, or works fully (and indisputably) ghost-written by others.

I – Rewriting history: From the stylus of Julius Caesar, the Roman archetype of a dictator-for-life *(dictator perpetuo)* until his assassination on the Ides of March (15 March 44 BCE), the *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (*Commentaries on the Gallic Wars*, 58-49 BCE) uphold a glorified image of his victories and military carnage during his conquest of Gaul (in Western Europe), brought in simple Latin prose, ideal for classrooms, where it is often still a curriculum classic. Caesar knew he had enemies in the senate who wanted him removed for becoming so powerful. His commentaries served to solicit support and boost his image among other political forces in Rome, especially the masses.

II – Lost in translation: Columbus' original journal, first reconstructed as *Libro de la Primera Navegación y Descubrimiento d'estas Yndias*, is a logbook of his first journey to the Americas, but no example survived to common knowledge. His narrative has been recreated from fragments of (badly transcribed) copies and chapter abstracts by, e.g., Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566), Columbus' contemporary, and there were fewer than ten translations by 1900. (Morison 1939) The work remains of primary importance for historians, archaeologists of the 'New World' and biographers of these conquistadors, some very inaccurate but still very influential in national and European historiographies and collective memory. It is no surprise that Columbus remains such a controversial topic (as does 'Columbus Day') since his colonial regime was (rightfully) accused of abuse of power even in his own time and of systemic violence, **racism**, slavery, and even genocide (Box 1.19) today.

III – Much to say: When it comes to famous speeches, Ghazi Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was a real trailblazer. Now simply known as *Nutuk* (*The Speech*, 1927), his most famous one was a 36-hour literary barrage (read by the leader himself over a six-day session) guiding his followers through his version of recent historic events, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the struggle



for Turkish independence, thereby paving the path for future Kemalist interpretation of the new nation's historiography.

IV – Give yourself a movie-deal: In fascist Spain, Francisco Franco published his 1942 novel *Raza* (*Race*) under the pseudonym Jaime de Andrade. Unsurprisingly, the novel shores up the image of the current regime on its victory path during the Spanish Civil War. It swiftly got a movie deal and won awards (also unsurprisingly). It is a typical piece of totalitarian kitsch, erasing "every display of individualism" (M. Kundera, cited in Yarza 2004), but at the same time, it is also a unique work because it was meant to be adapted for film from the start, and it is unusual that a ruler justifies his victory in an autobiographical fiction where he is represented through the eyes of fictional authors (Utrera Macías 2009).

V – The influencer: The *Little Red Book* (real title: *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* – 毛主席语录 – *Máo Zhǔxí Yǔlù*, 1964-1976) was a must-have, literally – one could get in trouble for not having one in your possession. Illustrated with iconic pictures by Hou Bo, the 'court' photographer, the booklet started out in 1964 to aid the indoctrination of the *People's Liberation Army* (PLA) with a mere 200 selected citations of the supreme leader on 23 topics. By 1976 it had bloated to 427 citations and 33 chapters. Its many translations and attractive concise format inspired many a dictator, but not exclusively. For instance, in 1969, two Danish schoolteachers published *Den Lille Røde Bog For Skoleelever (The Little Red Book For School Pupils),* challenging prevailing norms on the topics of sex, drugs, smoking and alcohol. It raised quite the scandal and was as often translated as banned. Today's People's Republic of China has an App for everything. Designed by *Alibaba Group,* the App 'Study and Strengthen the Nation' (学习强国 – *Xuéxí qiángguó*) has boasted record downloads. The name of the App is a pun: *Xuéxí* can mean 'Study' or 'Learn from Xi (Jinping)' and offers options for personal organization, official news and updates, together with history and ideological courses, while at the same time tracking your data and activities (Kuo & Lyons 2019; Zhong 2019).

VI – Genre crossover: The well-known *Green Book* (الكتاب الأخضر – *al-Kitāb al-Aḥḍar*) by Muammar al-Qaddafi of Libya comprises a series of political treatises in simple prose, finally amounting to a book with three slim parts: One (1975) on the ideal governing system: a third way between divisive democracy and the dominance of single-party rule, so-called 'direct democracy;' The second (1977) on the best economic system (the abolishment of wages to eradicate slavery) and Qaddafi's take on **Socialism**; and a third book (1980) propagating a 'third universal theory' – a third path between Socialism and Capitalism for nation states – an ideological smoothie of Nasserism, (Syrian Ba'athist) Arab Socialism, Africanism, with a splash of Quranic scripture, later applied to the identity of the individual. His later works, however, comprise short stories and satire – appraised by objective reviewers as 'surreal gibberish' and 'sarcastic rants' – bundled as *Escape to Hell* (1993) and *Illegal Publications* (1995); in English, these are published together as *Escape to Hell and Other Stories* (1999) (Chapin Metz 1987; Kalder 2010).

VII – A manual for life: Rukhnama (*Book of the Soul*, officially published in 2001) by Saparmurat Niyazov (1940-2006) of Turkmenistan can aptly be described as *"a hodgepodge of revisionist history, pedantic moralizing, petty philosophizing, and unsubstantiated claims. Its style was a blend of sermonizing and a call to exploration."* (Hiro 2009: 215). As a philosophical, historical and political Chimera, this fusion epic tale combines a decolonized revision of Turkmen history with spiritual prescription. The book became a sacred text of the young nation and also a key pillar of Niyazov's **personality cult**. In the years before Niyazov's death, it had attained the status of universal obligatory reading, and correct citations were required to pass a driving test or obtain government employment successfully.

VIII – Fifty Shades of Kitsch: Zabiba and the King (زبيبة والملك – *Zabībah wal-Malik,* 2000) by Saddam Hussein is a *Thousand and One Nights*-styled romantic tale about an enamored pagan king, Arab (actually Saddam) instructed in the art of leadership has intimate conversations about love, God, family, loyalty, etc. with a wise, young, unhappily-married, Muslim woman, Zabiba (representing Iraq, and symbolically wedded to the USA). A grandma tells the story, but it is absolutely not for children's ears, including scenes of rape and bestiality. Also, the king talks a lot about his death. (Saddam did have a traumatic childhood.) A year later, it was adapted into a television series and a musical. (Note: the cover art of the Arab version constituted a copyright infringement of an oil painting made by Canadian artist Jonathon Earl Bowser.) Three more works in the same genre followed: *The Fortified Castle* (2001), *Men and the City* (2002), and *Begone Demons* (2003). (Sciolino 2001; Bengio 2002)

IX – The starving artist: Dictators do not only publish at their pinnacle of power. Italian general and revolutionary Guiseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882), a mercenary who temporarily found himself in charge of Sicily after his invasion of May 1860, a phase in the unification of Italy, ended up writing books to support himself and his family after he was removed from his command. His novels *Clelia, Il Volontario (The Volunteer),* and *I Mille (1 Thousand)* were not well received. For his fourth one, *Manlio*, he could not even find a publisher (White Mario 2010).

X – Painful regrets: Benito Mussolini, on the other hand, actually published a full novel *before* entering politics. His deeply anti-clerical, *L'amante del Cardinale: Claudia Particella, romanzo storico* (*Claudia Particella, The Cardinal's Mistress,* 1910) was a romantic novel he co-authored with Santi Corvaja. After his political views had shifted to the far-right and he had struck a pact with the Vatican, Mussolini tried to get the book out of circulation to salvage his reputation (Delzell 1971: 3).

How to cite:

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tutionally personalized). These distinctions help to understand the varying characteristics and dynamics of personal parties across different contexts. For instance, the distinction between *personalist* and *personalized* parties is crucial for understanding whether a party serves primarily as a leader's electoral vehicle or if a leader takes over an existing party structure.

Narrow definitions also obscure the reality that while some personal parties may initially appear weakly organized or short-lived, they can evolve into more institutionalized entities over time. Lioy (2023) also challenges the notion that personal parties must be non-ideological by citing examples like the *Dutch Socialist Party* and the *Swiss People's Party*, which maintain strong ideological stances despite their personalized nature.

The impact of such personalized parties on political systems is not to be underestimated and strongly contributes to democratic erosion. Frantz (et al. 2021) note that leaders who establish their own parties are associated with greater polarization than leaders from established parties. The latter tend to reduce polarization after being in office for around four years, while personalist parties in power for a longer period continue to increase it.

Personalist parties are a significant driver of democratic decline, as they often reduce or eliminate internal resistance to leaders' power expansion efforts. Unlike members of established political parties, who usually gain experience with democratic processes through local government or internal party roles, politicians in personalist parties are often outsiders with limited exposure to democratic institutions. This lack of experience in democratic norms, such as negotiation, compromise, and coalition-building, means they are generally less committed to upholding these values. Personalist leaders themselves are focused on centralizing authority rather than preserving democratic checks and balances. Over time, this undermines democratic resilience, increasing the likelihood of an enduring shift away from democratic governance (Frantz et al. 2021; 2024).

If they come to power, such personalist parties are notably more prone to preside over governments that see marked decreases in democratic practices as they try to rule their countries like they manage their parties, and they frequently oversee the collapse of the democratic regimes they control. By consolidating control within their parties, personalist leaders weaken democratic norms and facilitate incremental moves toward authoritarianism (Frantz et al. 2021; Rhodes-Purdy & Madrid 2020).

The study of personalized parties has received new interest due to the overall rise of **populism** in the West and several regional great powers, accompanied by an increased rise of **personalist rule** worldwide. With the rise of electoral dictatorship as a result of the 'Third Wave' (Box 6.3) combined with the rise of digital and social media, the importance of **disinformation** and **propaganda** has never been so salient. Technology makes it easier for leaders to personalize politics and appeal to followers directly. They can use technology to amplify traditional media narratives that cause societal divides, endorse the ruling party, and support cultural conservatism. Criticism can be deflected with counterclaims or be buried in the noise. When trying to win elections, leaders in personalist parties share many characteristics with social media influencers. Once elected, they fall back on other forms of **digital authoritarianism**, and they continue the personalization of the regime (II).

More research is needed to understand the intricate interaction between technological advancements and the global rise of personalist parties in democratic systems. What we do know is that personalist rule has various points of origin and can emerge from democratic polities. Personalist parties are the first step in such a long process of personalization, hence the current interest in this topic. Future research should concentrate on institutional elements that encourage the emergence of outsider candidates and the formation of weak parties. It is also important to understand the conditional impacts of institutional factors versus cultural legacies and political attitudes. (Kostadinova & Levitt 2014a: 488) Their variation needs to be explored, and



in-depth case studies are one of the ways forward: Levitt & Kostadinova 2014; Resmini & Abbott 2024).

Veenendaal (2020) finds that for the smallest of states, informality and personalization generally do not translate into political volatility or government collapses and that, even if such concentration of power sometimes results in dominant or even repressive leadership, formal democratic institutions survive, and many of these small states have extremely stable political regimes.

(II) Personalization of political regimes As the previous part covered the effects of intra-party personalism on democratic and electoral systems, this part covers another piece of the puzzle by taking a wider perspective. It groups the available literature into several questions, but only regarding the process of personalization. For the literature on **personalist rule**, its behavior and significance, consult the dedicated entry in the section '**concepts & archetypes**.'

What is it? The personalization of power is a phenomenon that can emerge across all types of regimes. It is not limited to party-based regimes and can take place in military regimes and (technically) even monarchies. The personalization process is a growing power imbalance between a ruler and the inner circle. Rulers want to reduce their dependence on those groups that helped them seize power and are thus in a position to replace them. These elites, logically, abhor the idea of being sidelined and work toward increasing their influence. (Escribà-Folch & Timoneda 2024: 79) This fear of being sidelined can drive the most ambitious in inner circles to actively work toward becoming the *primus inter pares* themselves.

For rulers, several practices can increase their power and enhance their survival chances. Ironically, the less they rely on institutions to mitigate and resolve elite conflicts, the more unattractive **exit options & leader fates** become. (In contrast, by trusting in regime institutions, rulers accept they are bound by institutional constraints, distributing power among the inner circle in a collegial fashion). Van den Bosch (2021) identifies four behavioral practices that define personalist rule and enable personalization: **coup-proofing**, **gatekeeping**, **repression** and **hoarding**. (**Purges** as tactics are considered both a form of repression and coup-proofing).

When using concepts from **selectorate theory**, personalization can be theorized as the process where **incumbents** weaken the cohesion and organizational capacity of their **winning coalition** (inner circle) by rotating, exiling, purging and replacing members to (i) increase the personal loyalty of its members; (ii) tie them to the ruler in a patron-client relation and cut them off from their independent bases of support; and to (iii) impede this group to act collectively to disobey, veto policy or remove the incumbent (either formally, e.g., politburo-vote or illegally through a **coup**).

The framework developed by Baturo & Elkink (2021) outlines four key pillars of regime personalization. They look within and beyond the intra-regime dynamics (as explained in the entry of **personalist rule**) and identify four features: (a) personalization through the ruler's patronage network, (b) de-institutionalization, (c) media dominance and (d) the perception of permanence. These components interact to consolidate personalist rule. Their book examines these pillars in detail, using Vladimir Putin's regime since 1999 as a case study to explore this personalization process.

Their first pillar, *patronage personalization* (a), refers to the ruler's establishment of a dominant patron-client network within institutions (cf. 'sultanization' under **neo-sultanism**). Since directly measuring a ruler's power is challenging, this pillar looks for observable effects that indicate power, such as the appointment of loyalists to crucial roles and positions within the polity. The second pillar, *de-institutionalization* (b), involves weakening or circumventing formal institutions to strengthen the ruler's authority. Tactics may include capturing institutions through **patronage** or modifying constitutional frameworks to ensure the ruler's supremacy. The third pillar, *media personalization* (c), focuses on the ruler's growing control over the media to craft their image and foster a **personality cult**. (Note: Brunkert & von Soest (2023) study the effects of personalist legitimation strategies). This can involve employing tactics like **propaganda**, **censorship**, and **disinformation** to maintain a favorable public perception. Finally, *permanency in office* (d) pertains to efforts aimed at prolonging the ruler's tenure, often by manipulating or removing **term limits** to secure their position indefinitely (Baturo & Elkink 2021).

Why does it occur Scholars initially thought that the causes of regime personalization were structural; currently most agree it is a process driven by a combination of structure and agency (and serendipity). Early on, Tullock (1987) suggested that non-democratic regimes would quickly devolve into personal rule due to weak institutions. However, many (military) non-democracies are governed by multi-member **juntas**. Using a dynamic game of coalition formation, Acemoglu et al. (2009) model that in such environments, juntas remain stable because members cannot credibly commit to not eliminating each other. In a three-person junta, members avoid eliminating one another to prevent becoming the next target. Larger juntas may reduce power to maintain stability, making them more inclusive than democratic coalitions.

Milan **Svolik** (2009; 2012) contends that in dictatorships, this is a structural process: in the absence of an independent authority to enforce mutual agreements among the ruling elite, 'violence is the ever-present, ultimate arbiter.' A dictator may start as 'first among equals' but gradually amasses enough authority to establish one-man rule. This process is often gradual, and due to imperfect information and concealed motivations, other factions within the ruling coalition fail to counter the dictator's power moves in time. Eventually, they may find themselves too weakened or divided to halt the progression. For dictators, gaining more power also means becoming a larger target for a **coup**, compelling them to secure additional tools of control and eliminate rivals.

So, Svolik (2009; 2012) theorized that most autocracies possess a tendency to turn (more) personalist over time. However, then, his next observation has been even more significant: *"there is no return from established to contested autocracy. Once a dictator is established, he may, of course, still lose power, but such instances should be rare and occur primarily by a process that is politically divorced from the interaction between the dictator and his ruling coalition. Hence, rather than by the hands of their inner circle, established dictators should more often lose power by popular uprisings (…) or by foreign interventions"* (Svolik 2019: 63). So, the dynamic is thus self-sustaining and effectively irreversible, as no personalist dictator would willingly re-empower those within the inner circle after taking risks to neutralize them as potential threats. (Van den Bosch 2021:12)

When does it occur? The size of the **winning coalition** matters: Small inner circles, like in military regimes, allow a dictator to consolidate power more easily, as the group dynamics can easily tilt in a ruler's favor after replacing some key members with loyal followers. Also, a small coalition can be closely controlled, minimizing internal threats, but it is harder to co-opt rivals (cf. **co-optation**). Conversely, a larger, more diverse winning coalition can restrict personalist tendencies. In such cases, particularly when the coalition is structured by a (pre-)established institution like a functional political party (predating the ruler) or a type of traditional tutelary body (e.g., religious council), the dictator may need more time (sometimes decades) to achieve personalization (if ever). Smaller winning coalitions do not mean that co-optation is no longer possible. Svolik (2009) discovered that when the winning coalition is small but the **selectorate** is large (**patronage**), elite loyalty to the dictator will be higher.

Moreover, regarding the timing of **personalization**, Ishiyama et al. (2024) find that personalizing rulers tread lightly at first but purge more freely once established. Jun Koga Sudduth (2017) models that dictators are more likely to eliminate rivals (purge) when elite capabilities to remove them are temporarily weakened. There seems to be a concerted dance between coup attempts and purges – a lethal tango that seems to drive personalization in bursts. Optimal moments thus seem to be either right after a failed coup (Easton & Siverson 2018: Bokobza et al. 2022; Timoneda et al. 2023) or just after their own power grab (Sudduth 2017).

To quote Timoneda et al. (2023: 880) at large: *"Failed coups alter the information environment and create both incentives and opportunities for the dictator to escape the elites' control. First, by signalling the existence of inside threats, failed coups incentivize rulers to take action to prevent further challenges and avoid costly post-exit punishments. Second, surviving a coup attempt undermines, at least temporarily, the credibility and deterrent effect of elite threats. By revealing information about the loyalty of members and factions in the ruling coalition, failed coups allow dictators to identify and eliminate rivals while also limiting the remaining elites' motives to challenge their position."*

Sudduth (2017) finds that successful coups installing new dictators temporarily reduce elites' capacity to launch a new coup and oust the new ruler, offering such dictators a strategic window to personalize power just after they came to power.

How does it occur? Escribà-Folch and Timoneda (2024) are the first to map the pathways of personalization across dictatorships. The absolute majority of rulers (over 80%) make a personalizing move, and most do so in the first two years of their tenure. Leonid Brezhnev in the USSR and Sangoulé Lamizana (cf. Box 3.6) in Burkina Faso are rare exceptions. Regarding the sequence, the first move is to control appointments to the highest office in order to install loyalists and only then conduct a purge. They find that new dictators tend to focus on the military apparatus. Rulers with the longest tenures did so, too, before dealing with civilian constraints (to a large extent). In any case, in the first two decades of personalist rulers, military and civilian personalization (on average) go hand-in-hand.

Is it reversible? As Svolik (2009) found, de-personalization during a ruler's lifetime is an anomaly. The only (rare) examples can be attributed to external 'shocks' or strategic retreats, or so-called 'autocratic troubleshooting' (Van den Bosch 2024: 279-281). However, de-personalization is much more common after **succession**, especially after sudden power vacuums (e.g., **assassination** of the incumbent), and anticipated, orderly (first) hereditary succession where appointed heirs are *"either handed the keys to the party or the armory, but usually not both"* (Van den Bosch 2024: 282-288). De-personalization after (orderly) succession is explained by Leber et al. 2023, who find that the 'old guard' – retired leaders, party elders, and other elites of the outgoing generation – retain oversight capacity over their incoming successor.

How to measure? Escribà-Folch and Timoneda (2024: 78) concede that the task of benchmarking personalism still possesses conceptual and measurement challenges. Initially, scholars used proxies to capture the phenomenon, either relying on the **Polity Index** dataset criteria for formal institutional constraints on the executive (thus missing all informal constraints) or using the duration of tenure (which is endogenous with regime consolidation regardless of the level of personalism).

Svolik's (2012) classification developed indicators to measure the presence of institutional constraints by the military or parties on rulers. His **continuous measures** are broader than just personalism.

One of the first comprehensive attempts to measure latent levels of personalism was by Gandhi et al. (2014), who used the typology of **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** (GWF) and combined it with other variables available to measure intensity.

In 2018, the GWF dataset introduced its own '*latent measure of personalism*' (LMP) with refined criteria derived from the original classification. For its details, see 'measurement' under **personalist rule**.

Gandhi and Sumner (2020) created a *power consolidation index* based on factors like the number of



political offices held by a dictator and their autonomy from party and military constraints. Their measure is probability-based because it directly observes the behavior of dictators toward elites, particularly in terms of personnel decisions and institutional control, to gauge the latent level of personalism.

Frantz, Kendall-Taylor, Nietsche and Wright (2021) compiled new data covering 106 democracies from 1991 to 2020 to create a new 'index of personalism' in democracies, also using indicators from the **Varieties of Democracy** (V-Dem) dataset, such as the personalization of the party and government legitimation strategies. It examines whether the party primarily serves the leader's political career and if the leader is portrayed as having exceptional leadership qualities. Their latent index of personalism ranges from about -2 to +2 (with an average around zero). Higher values suggest greater personalism and lower values suggest less personalism. The index can be used to compare levels of personalism across leaders and within their tenures over time.

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Box 3.6 Sangoulé Lamizana – Burkina Faso's Good Dictator?

We must dare to invent the future
– Thomas Sankara

In the former French West African colony of Upper Volta (*Haute-Volta*) – before Thomas Sankara's regime renamed the country Burkina Faso ('The land of 'Tall' (upstanding) People') in 1984 – Aboukabar Sangoulé Lamizana (1916-2005, reign: 1966-1980) initially seemed as any military dictator. However, his rule was marked by a complex interplay of military governance, attempts at democratization, and economic challenges. Lamizana came to power through a military **coup** in 1966, which (peacefully) pressured the first (corrupt) president, Maurice Yaméogo, to relinquish power to the **junta**, amid widespread social unrest and economic difficulties. Initially, Lamizana's rule was declared as a provisional measure to stabilize the country, but it eventually extended over 14 years, during which he played a pivotal role in navigating Upper Volta through periods of drought, famine, and dire economic hardship.

One of the defining features of Lamizana's controversial rule was his approach to governance, which oscillated between military rule and efforts towards **democratization**. In the early years of his presidency, Lamizana dissolved the National Assembly and suspended the constitution, ruling by decree. However, in a first attempt to move towards democratization, Lamizana consulted with political and traditional leaders to draft a new constitution, which was approved in a referendum in 1970, leading to the establishment of the Second Republic. Lamizana's initial attempts to transition the nation to multi-party civilian rule faltered due to persistent corruption and a legislative political deadlock, leading him once again to resort to military rule (i.e., *autogolpe* – self-coup) in 1974, thereby ending the Second Republic.

During the second attempt to restore a multi-party system, Lamizana agreed to complete civilian rule. He retired from his military position to contest presidential elections. Most puzzling was that he actually allowed free and fair elections in 1978 – considered amongst the most democratic elections ever held in West Africa – which he won, thus becoming the first, and (probably) only personalist dictator to willingly democratize without external pressure. Together with L. Brezhnev (USSR) he is one of the few dictators that seemingly did not attempt to increase **personalization** during his tenure. (Escribà-Folch & Timoneda 2024) Since his short democratic rule ended rapidly in November 1980 when Colonel Saye Zerbo overthrew him in a bloodless military coup, this rare case often disappears in Large-N statistical research.

It is hard to untangle the real motivations behind Lamizana's decision to embark on democratization. Was he personally convinced this would be the right path for 'his' country? Was he tired of ruling alone? Or was the reason his regime's ongoing dependency on foreign aid to battle the effects of drought and famine on Burkina Faso's economy?

Lamizana's rule is overall remembered positive. He navigated the country through troublesome economical times (the Sahelian droughts of the early 1970s), saw efforts to address the ethnic and regional disparities within Upper Volta by balancing the plethora of ethnic and regional groups to uphold stability. Nonetheless, state capacity and socio-economic development remained low, nor did the former colony truly emancipate from France under his reign. His regime did face criticism for its suppression of political opposition and limited civil liberties. There were instances of human rights abuses, including the use of **censorship** and occasional crackdowns on dissent, but overall, his rule was less harsh than under later dictators: Only a select few dissidents faced imprisonment. Those who posed a challenge from within the trade unions were bribed with lucrative positions to secure their silence. Failing that, they were relocated to remote areas. Troublesome student activists were whisked away with government scholarships to study abroad. (Englebert 2018: 26)

After Zerbo's coup, Lamizana retreated from public and political life and kept a low profile under the instability that followed. Unlike most dictators, he had not amassed visible personal wealth during his tenure. He was shortly put on trial during the 1984 revolution, but acquitted. He died on 26 May 2005, aged 85.

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Propaganda

Those who are capable of tyranny are capable of perjury to sustain it.
– Lysander Spooner

The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.
– George Orwell

Propaganda is information, which could be factual, misleading and/or biased, that is disseminated in order to promote a particular aim or agenda and influence public opinion.

DEFINITION Propaganda is a deliberate attempt to transmit social and political values to affect how people think and feel, shape their perceptions, manipulate their cognitions and achieve a favorable response (Jowett & O'Donnell 2018; Kenez 1985, 4; Marsden 2013).

SEE ALSO Propaganda also refers to brainwashing, **disinformation**, persuasion, manipulation, advertising, political marketing, **indoctrination**, **personality cult**, and **soft power**. It is traditionally associated with **totalitarianism** and **fascism** but currently also with **digital authoritarianism**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE In addition to being commonly used to mobilize the public to action during times of war and conflict, propaganda is a critical tool in the toolbox for regimes to maintain authoritarian rule. While most dictatorships also censor and repress their populations, propaganda is used to drum up support for a regime and to justify it. Propaganda may also have a lasting legacy for citizens who consume propaganda. These citizens may hold onto the emotions conjured up by propaganda, creating **authoritarian nostalgia** for the previous form of rule or, at best, indifference toward democracy (O'Shaughnessy 2004).

ORIGIN The use of propaganda for political aims goes back centuries and centuries, though the term propaganda was not used until the seventeenth century (Jowett & O'Donnell 2018). Some early interpretations of propaganda were more benign – that it simply was the presentation of facts to influence people's opinions (Schumpeter 1942). Nevertheless, with the rise of Adolph Hitler and Joseph Stalin, propaganda earned a negative connotation for spreading false information to exercise social and political control (Marsden 2013). Technological developments in the field of mass communications led to a growth in propaganda. In particular, fascist and totalitarian regimes were known for their sophisticated propaganda techniques and desire to arouse popular enthusiasm for the regime and create mass compliance (Edmond 2013).

LITERATURE There is a large body of literature that has looked at the role of propaganda in sustaining authoritarian rule (Guriev & Treisman 2019; 2020). For authoritarian regimes, propaganda may be even more significant than the use of force and repression to gain control. Joseph Stalin claimed that *"the production of souls is more important than the production of tanks"* (Davies & Harris 2005: 14).

Empirical studies have also demonstrated that propaganda in authoritarian regimes can affect the political attitudes and behavior of a target audience in ways that are beneficial to the regime (Adena et al. 2015; Bleck & Michelitch 2017; Cantoni et al. 2017; Chen & Shi 2001; DellaVigna et al. 2014; Enikolopov et al. 2018; Esarey et al. 2017; Jowett & O'Donnell 2018; Kern & Hainmueller 2009; Stockmann & Gallagher 2011). Theoretical studies have also looked at the various mechanisms by which propaganda can help sustain authoritarian rule (Chen & Xu 2017; Gehlbach & Sonin 2014; Guriev & Treisman 2015; Little 2017).

Early works argued that the role of propaganda in authoritarian regimes was more to stabilize the regime, compared to totalitarian regimes that aimed to transform society (Cassinelli 1960). However, propaganda can have a more serious impact on all non-democratic regimes. Propaganda, even in moderate or partial doses, is often potent enough to sway subjects and convince them to adopt beliefs and commit actions that they would not otherwise consent to without the influence of mass persuasion (Auerbach & Castronovo 2013). Laboratory experiments have also found that subjects tend to believe what others say – even if the sender has clear incentives to distort the truth (Cai & Wang 2006; Patty & Weber 2007).

Various case studies have looked at the role of propaganda more in-depth. A study of Nazi Germany showed that there was more support for the Nazis in Germany after the exposure to propaganda on the radio (Adena et al. 2015). Another study found that exposure to Serbian media in Croatia increased ethnic animosity and behavior, with growing nationalist sentiment for Croatians and voting for more extremist nationalistic parties in Croatia (DellaVigna et al. 2014). A study looking at the *World Values Survey* shows that media exposure in China increased satisfaction with national leadership among Chinese citizens (Kennedy 2009). This same study also shows that Chinese citizens who have only completed compulsory education are also more likely to respond to political news positively and display high levels of political support. Another survey of Chinese citizens using a 2004 natural survey found that media exposure increases trust in the administration in China (Yang & Tang 2010).

Case studies have also demonstrated that citizens are well aware of government propaganda and are able to simply ignore government efforts to persuade in countries like China (Chen & Shi 2001), the former Soviet countries (Havel 1985), Syria (Wedeen 1999); and the United Arab Emirates (Bush et al. 2016), propaganda is not solely used to socialize citizens.

More recent literature argues that propaganda in the twenty-first century is used to disincentivize joining a protest (Crabtree et al. 2015; Dimitrov 2014; King et al. 2017; Shadmehr & Bernhardt 2011). More specifically, propaganda is not meant to brainwash people but to communicate how strong the government is (Huang 2015). Propaganda may deter political action against the regime if it appears as though many citizens believe it – since they can be easily mobilized to support the regime in the event of protests against it. Manipulated citizens may mobilize, further deterring possible actions from those who disbelieve, doubt or are against the regime (Little 2017). A related view is that propaganda makes citizens less informed and less able to take on risky anti-government action (Gehlbach & Sonin 2014; Shadmehr & Bernhardt 2015).

CLASSIFICATIONS Propaganda can be classified as soft (i) and hard (ii). Soft propaganda (i) is more subtle and sophisticated while still aiming to influence public opinion. Soft propaganda produces positive content to support a government agenda without necessarily resorting to overtly name enemies of the state. Soft propaganda may try to distract the public to cheer for the regime. Non-democratic regimes today understand that to be effective, propaganda must harness a rich range of sentiments beyond negative emotions such as hatred, fear and envy to include more positive feelings such as pleasure, joy, belonging and pride.

In contrast to soft propaganda, hard propaganda (ii) is more heavy-handed and obvious and may rely on stereotypes, lying, repetition, and appealing to authority (Huang 2018). Some hard propaganda is simply blunt and only focuses on blatantly praising the regime. For authoritarian regimes like China, the political system is legitimized through myths that bestow constant praise on its leadership without focusing as much on potential enemies (Chen & Xu 2017). However, there is also an aggressive type of hard propaganda that glorifies the regime while also constructing enemies in order to justify the repression of subversives. The leaders are elevated to a cult-like status while opponents are defamed (Schneider 2014). Hard or aggressive propaganda is also called 'exhaustion propaganda,' because there is a barrage of false claims which cannot be verified for those living under the confines of authoritarian rule (Horz 2017).

MEASUREMENT Propaganda is not simple to measure because there is no consensus about exactly how to define it. While some see it as a value-neutral term, others see it as premeditated and deliberately manipulative. Many of the studies of propaganda have looked at the content of state-produced television, film, radio, newspaper articles, books and, more recently, social media to determine the content and quantity of propaganda being disseminated. To identify propaganda, studies look to find pro-regime messages (as well as messages that critique an enemy) produced by the state and are not able to distinguish between information that is deliberately meant to deceive and information that simply aims to garner more support for the regime.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Most studies that examine propaganda are interested in what its impact may be. To do so, studies of propaganda have used experimental surveys, hypothetical designs and selective history designs (Huang 2018; Little 2018; Pan et al. 2020). A study might take different groups and expose them to hours of videos or newspaper articles. Studies may also identify individuals who have been exposed to a particular course to see what impact this had on those who took the course (such as 'Principles of Marxism' and 'Modern Chinese History') compared to the control group that had not (Pan et al. 2020). However, measuring how an individual is impacted by propaganda presents different methodological challenges as confounding factors may affect how individuals respond, and it is difficult to replicate the real work in a survey environment.

EXAMPLES One of the most notable propaganda states is China. The propaganda system in China continues to be an important tool for maintaining stability and control though some of the content and modes of dissemination have changed.

In the past, the propaganda system was used to justify the Communist revolution of 1949 (Dittmer 2020). Under Mao Zedong (1949-1976), a steady onslaught of propaganda was disseminated through the state-run media, books, newspapers, television, radio, and films. Films were used both to entertain and promote the regime's agenda. In these movies, a hero would fight against a cruel bourgeois landlord or show the victory of the Communist Party. The propaganda film *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* had over seven billion viewers (Ma 2016).

Today television has become another key tool (Wang & Klein 2021). In 1978, there was only one television per thousand people in China; by 1997, there was an estimated one set for every four people and roughly one billion people had access to television. By 2007, coverage was virtually 100%, and even nomad communities had access to television as a result of a government project to donate televisions and extend satellite coverage to all corners of China (Brady 2009).

In the years since the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, the goals of the regime focused more on instilling nationalism, patriotism and collectivism to guide public opinion in ways that are conducive to regime and social stability (Huang 2015; Brady 2009). The sophisticated patriotic education campaign has led to high levels of satisfaction and trust in the regime (Zhao 1998).

The Chinese propaganda apparatus has been revitalized in other ways as well in recent years (Shambaugh 2017). China controls the Internet, and mass media uses **censorship** and political mass communications to spin narratives about the regime, its successes and the dangers of Western influence and democratic forms of governance (Holbig 2013). The Chinese government uses social media to pay government employees to generate about 448 million comments every year (King et al. 2017).



IMPACT ON POLICY The use of propaganda by authoritarian regimes was commonly used to prop up their rule. While this may have dissipated with the end of the Cold War, today, the use of propaganda has been reinvigorated by non-democratic regimes. Authoritarian regimes have been highly effective in using information warfare to cast doubt on Western models of democracy and to promote their accomplishments. In particular, authoritarian regimes have been able to harness social media in ways that sow divisions in other regimes while also bolstering their support at home. This has led to policy support for regulating social media more vigorously, offering more intensive support in media literacy for citizens while also pushing for press freedom to counter false narratives.

NEW FRONTIERS An interesting review of contemporary propaganda techniques, 'spin dictators', and current practices can be found with Guriev & Treisman (2022). The *Sage Handbook of Propaganda* (Baines et al. 2020) provides a splendid contemporary overview. Goldstein et al. (2023: 2024) find that AI-generated propaganda is convincing. Large language models (LLMs) can create highly persuasive text, and a person fluent in English could improve the persuasiveness of AI-generated propaganda with minimal effort.

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Purges

Смерть решает все проблемы. Нет человека, и нет проблем
(Death is the solution to all problems. No man – no problem)
– Artistically attributed to J.V. Stalin by Anataliy Rybakov

Saboteurs disguise themselves by over-fulfilling the plan.
– J.V. Stalin

Within comparative authoritarianism, purges have resurged as a research topic and are currently being mapped, compared and theorized. There is still quite some disagreement on their definition and which variations to include, e.g., can purges be non-violent? In general, purges are considered a politically motivated, strategic removal of a set of individuals or a large group that was previously considered part of the elite, affiliated with them, or at least tolerated in state structures.

Their exact motivations are also debated. Earlier theories meandered between **hoarding**, **coup-proofing** and the personal preferences of the leadership (**racism**). For instance, Yu Xiao and Ji Zeng (2023) revisit Stalin's reputation for antisemitism regarding his mass purges of Jews, finding that political reasons prevailed: *"The political purge of Jews was predominately caused by his fear of the growing national sentiments of Soviet Jewry following the establishment of the State of Israel (to which he gave decisive support), and driven by his paranoiac desire for internal subservience and political conformity in the context of the early Cold War."* (Xiao & Zeng 2023).

DEFINITION A purge is when national leaders attempt to remove members (as a group) from the elite, armed forces, or other state institutions or sectors that they consider politically undesirable. Those seen as treacherous or disloyal to the leaders or the state are especially targeted. This definition does not include administrative personnel reforms designed to improve an agency's performance, disciplinary actions unrelated to perceived disloyalty, or changes in the politically appointed leadership following a democratic election (Gentry 2023).

SEE ALSO A purge can have many forms, but at its core, it is a form of (elite or mass) **repression** against groups associated with the regime. Purges follow the logic of **coup-proofing** and are one of their tactics, for instance, when they target undesired (ethnic) groups in the armed forces (cf. **ethnic politics**). Purges have other functions as well, like providing new opportunities for **patronage** or increasing performance.

ORIGIN The word 'purge' has its roots in the Latin word *purgare,* meaning to cleanse or purify. In the context of Soviet history, however, the term took on a specific and nuanced meaning that differs from its broader Western usage. In Soviet terminology, a 'purge' (Russian: чистка – *chistka*, literally meaning 'cleaning' or 'sweeping') referred to periodic membership screenings within the Communist Party. (Initially, it was called перерегистрация – *pererегistratsiya* or 're-registration' in 1919, and each subsequent 'purge' was called проверка – *proverka* 'verification' after 1921 or *chistka*). These operations were designed to remove undesirable elements from the party ranks, such as nonparticipants, careerists, drunks, corrupt officials, and ideological enemies. The goal was to maintain the party's integrity and discipline by ensuring that only loyal and active members remained. (Getty 1985: 38-40)

Importantly, in Soviet usage, the term 'purge' did not refer to political trials, police terror, or mass arrests of non-party citizens. For example, the intense period of political – and mass arrests during 1937-1938, known as the *Ezhovshchina* (after NKVD chief Nikolai Yezhov), was never referred to as a 'purge' in Soviet discourse. The distinction is significant because Western scholars often apply the term 'purge' broadly to describe various forms of repression during Stalin's rule, including show trials and terror campaigns. However, within the USSR, purges were strictly internal party affairs focused on membership regulation rather than public political repression (Getty 1985: 38).

The origins of this practice date back to early Bolshevik ideas about maintaining a disciplined revolutionary vanguard. Lenin's vision for the Communist Party emphasized a small, professional cadre of revolutionaries who would be rigorously selected and monitored. This idea was formalized after the



Bolsheviks came to power in 1917 when they faced the challenge of managing a rapidly growing party membership (a large influx of unknown members during the Civil War). Several 'purges' were conducted throughout the 1920s and 1930s to ensure that only ideologically committed individuals remained in the party. These purges were seen as necessary to protect the party from infiltration by bourgeois or counter-revolutionary elements (Getty 1985: 39-41).

CLASSIFICATIONS Purges are often classified on some dimensions but not others. Scholars often focus either on elite or mass purges from a comparative perspective, but seldom both. Table 3.1 is an attempt to map purges according to their scope and intensity, distinguish their main targets and formulate some potential motivations for each combination. These are drawn from the literature on coup-proofing and purges and fragmented case studies. More research is needed to study purges from a full comparative perspective and untangle the causal factors behind them with nuance based on solid data.

(I) Intensity & Scope Most classifications look at the level of violence and the breadth of purges, but when accounting for different target groups, their scope automatically overlaps with the dichotomy of elite vs. mass purges (see below). So, more salient is the difference between 'soft' and 'hard' or 'mild' (i) and 'violent' (ii) purges.

Mild purges (i) are those with clearly defined targets (their performance is taken into account), usually adhering to means of removal like demotion to low-level positions (but still part of the regime), marginalization within institutions (e.g., sometimes masked as promotion to honorary positions, but effectively removed from real decision-making), termination or non-renewal of employment, sometimes combined short detainments and questioning, and with the ultimate goal of replacing or rotating individuals or groups within existing organizations (Montagnes & Wolton 2019).

Technically, those purged might be disgruntled and aggrieved but still free (and alive). While some may remain loyal and keep serving (often trying harder), others, in theory, become likely candidates for defection or mobilizing against the regime (if they have the required skill sets, like soldiers). Disgruntled intelligence officers who were purged or feared being purged might leak sensitive information or defect, creating counterintelligence challenges and potential costs. However, this seems to be relatively rare (Gentry 2023).

Violent purges (ii) are reserved for undesired elites, and they target disgraced groups regardless of their performance (indiscriminately). The logic behind them is foremost associated with regime survival and **coup-proofing** of the inner circle and coup-prone agencies. Such purges coincide with restructuring or abolishing whole organizations or agencies. The removal or replacement of the target group members often coincides with arrest (sometimes including brutal questioning with torture), and the ultimate fate of those 'on the list' ranges from imprisonment and exile to execution.

Beyond the immediate political consequences, violent purges have profound and lasting psychological effects on both the individuals targeted and the broader society. They foster an 'atmosphere of terror' through imprisonment and execution, which serves to intimidate potential challengers and solidify the dictator's control. Combined with mass terror (and even random **repression** – Box 3.13), this atmosphere of fear and uncertainty can permeate all levels of society, discouraging dissent and fostering tyrannical obedience to the regime.

(II) Target As mentioned, scholars either focus on elite targets (A) or the victims of mass purges. (B) Angiolillo and Matthews (2024) study their combination in coordinated campaigns (C). Within these categories, scholars have started to differentiate between groups and sectors within the state architecture. As for now, this image is still fragmented, and more research is needed.

Elite purges (A) Target selection is both strategically and personally motivated in regimes where rulers can issue policy unrestrained. Still, even in personalist dictatorships, leaders often target less powerful and less unified elite groups to avoid backlash rather than influential institutions like the military. For potential targets, factors like educational background and foreign experience also affect purge risk, as shown in Taekbin Kim's study of North Korea. Similarly, networks from prestigious schools can influence the dictator's choice of purge targets. Interestingly, repeated demotions during one's career may actually decrease purge likelihood, as they reduce an elite's power without outright removal (Kim 2021: 90-91).

This category of elite purges can target various specific groups within the inner circle: (a) first-generation elites, (b) civilian elites, (c) military elites, and (d) ideological rivals.

Dictators are more likely to purge *first-generation elites* (a), their peers, fellow coup-plotters, brothers-in-arms, original revolutionaries, and fellow visionaries. Dictators are right to fear them. These individuals hold greater power by negotiating their roles in the new regime from a strong position and maintaining valuable connections with other elites. They usually have their loyal followers. For example, Fidel Castro purged a significant portion of his first cabinet. Of the original 21 ministers appointed immediately after the Cuban Revolution, only six remained in office two years later (Easton & Siverson 2018). Because of their real and symbolic roles in the regime's origin story, dictators also tend to imprison these purged elites – rather than executing, exiling, or merely dismissing them – to prevent backlash from other elites or to stop the purged individuals from continuing to cause unrest (Goldring & Matthews 2023).

Regarding *civilian elites* (b), Bokobza et al. (2022) find that after coups, dictators are more likely to purge higher-ranking ministers and those who occupy strategic positions like ministers of defense while holding on to more loyal and veteran minis-

Table 3.1 – Mapping Purges, Their Targets & Rulers' Main Motivations

Type of purge		**Mild**	**Violent**
Elite purges	***Faction:***	***Discriminate purges***	***Discriminate purges***
	Inner circle rival factions (military & civilian)	Coup-proofing (musical chairs)	Personalization (remove rivals or constraints) Mobilization (increase obedience) Coup-proofing (preemptive or retributive)
	First-generation elites	Coup-proofing (musical chairs)	Personalization (remove rivals or constraints)
	Ideological factions	Ideological softening (easing out hardliners and radicals)	Ideological radicalization (weeding out moderates)
Mass purges	***Sector:***	***Discriminate purges***	***Indiscriminate purges***
	Party	Mobilization (promote loyalty and competence) Coup-proofing (musical chairs) Patronage (make new positions available)	Mobilization (zeal & dedication) Coup-proofing (lower mutual trust by fueling rivalry)
	Bureaucracy	Mobilization (promote loyalty and competence) Restructure regime institutions Patronage (make new positions available) Ideological radicalization (promoting zealots)	Mobilization (boost obedience but not competence) Ideological radicalization (promoting zealots)
	Army	Coup-proofing (ethnic stacking) Ideological radicalization (promoting zealots)	Coup-proofing (preemptive or retributive) Ideological radicalization (promoting zealots)
Coordinated purges (Elites & mass)	Party	Remove rivals (elites – discriminatory) and their networks (mass – indiscriminatory). Such combined purges are likely to provoke coup attempts, especially if they are done bottom-up (meaning first networks, then the elites).	

Source: Author's own work, based on: Goldring & Matthews 2024; Angiolillo & Matthews 2024; Idrizi 2022; Kim 2021; Montagnes & Wolton 2019.

ters. This means that dictators make rational calculations even in post-coup retributive contexts.

Military elites (c) as targets vary a lot. Historically, using biographical data on subordinates of the founding emperors across seven ancient Chinese dynasties, Wong and Chan (2021) reveal that military experience significantly predicts political purges. Emperors were less inclined to execute officers who had extensive battle experience yet more likely to execute commanders with established military credentials predating the empire's founding. Political purges also intensified in an emperor's later years, suggesting a concern for protecting designated successors. Blood relatives of emperors frequently faced milder purges, such as title deprivation (Wong & Chan 2021).

In contrast to autocrats who cast aside a disliked predecessor through a 'leader reshuffling coup' (a palace **coup**) within the same regime, those rulers who come to power in a (regime-changing) coup face different dilemmas. They tend to take a long, hard look at their fellow ruling elites and often conclude that some of their peers who helped them to power might not be best-suited for prominent positions in the new regime or they may pose too significant a threat for the new leader to tolerate their inclusion in the regime's top ruling body. Goldring and Matthews (2024) verify who gets purged in such a situation and find that military usurpers are more inclined to target civilians rather than coercive elites as the proverbial low-hanging fruit since the costs of purging civilians are lower. However, these same rulers do target coercive elites if these individuals played key roles in the coup. They view them as potential rivals, cynically recognizing that their participation in the coup signals both possible disloyalty and a readiness to initiate regime change. (This compiles the evidence that first-generation elites (a) are at greater risk).

Ideological rivals (d) do not get much specific attention in the literature. They summarily fall under strategic rivals and risk the ruler's authority due to their (different) claims to ideological legitimacy. A ruler, especially when constrained by **ideology** when deciding on a specific, controversial course of action, may fear ideological condemnation. Such criticism may come from ideological moderates and ideological hardliners. When the goal is to radicalize the regime, purify the ideology and implement the ideological vision, the moderates have to be dealt with



harshly. If the goal is to build bridges and alliances with non-ideological or different political actors, resolve conflicts or negotiate ceasefires, hardliner criticism can undermine these processes, and thus, the latter must be sidelined, preferably quietly.

A different reason to target ideological elites is that they can tap into alternative alliances (as part of 'transnational ideological networks,' cf. **regime promotion**), and they thus possess preferential access to these relations with foreign actors and foreign powers. Cleaning up such networks through purges can insulate dictators from foreign intermingling and diversion and cut off foreign support of domestic rivals. (**gatekeeping**).

This is usually part of larger regime **personalization**: In North Korea, Kim Il-Sung's purges of rival factions were crucial for his consolidation of power, occurring from the late 1940s to the late 1960s. Initially, Kim eliminated the *South Korean Workers' Party* faction by accusing its leader, Pak Hon-Yeong, of treason in 1952. In 1956, the 'August Faction Incident' saw Soviet and *Yan'an* factions (those that had returned from China) attempt to oust Kim, but he preemptively crushed them, purging many Soviet Koreans and *Yan'an* members by 1958. Ideological campaigns like the *Chongsan-ri* Spirit in the early 1960s further centralized his authority by subordinating party structures to his leadership. The final major purge occurred in 1967 when Kim turned against his own loyal *Gapsan* (anti-Japanese) faction, accusing them of individual heroism. This completed his consolidation of power, eliminating all internal opposition and transforming North Korea into a **personalist rule** centered around his leadership, with no remaining pluralism or political competition.

Mass purges (B) Large-scale purges in authoritarian regimes serve as a tool for top-down accountability, allowing autocrats to motivate and screen their subordinates, such as party members or state bureaucrats. The primary function of these purges is to ensure that agents remain loyal and perform their duties effectively despite the autocrat having limited information about their true loyalty or competence. By purging individuals deemed disloyal or underperforming, the autocrat can replace them with new subordinates, ideally improving the overall performance and loyalty within the regime (Montagnes & Wolton 2019).

Note that mild and violent purges have different effects. The former is discriminatory, meaning that under-performance is a selection criterion for removal. Such purges will increase loyalty and overall competence in the purged institution. The latter type is indiscriminate, meaning talented and untalented are arbitrarily chosen and removed. As a result, such purges will boost obedience but not the overall performance or the efficiency of the purged institution (Montagnes & Wolton 2019).

In the USSR and the People's Republic of China (PRC), the frequent occurrence of mass purges was not incidental but rather a deliberate system of governance. Leaders in both countries sought to regulate the periodicity of these purges to maintain control and ensure the functioning of their regimes. The purges had two primary objectives. First, they provided the necessary momentum to carry out the grand designs of these totalitarian regimes, helping to sustain a high level of activity and engagement within the party and state apparatus. Second, they were intended to 'cleanse the system in anticipation' of future challenges or inefficiencies. By removing a proportion of party members, these purges allowed for the influx of new members to refresh party ranks and ensured that new members were ideologically aligned or more competent than those purged (Brzezinski 1956; Teiwes 1993; Montagnes & Wolton 2019: 1047).

Coordinated purges (C) *Coordinated purges* are defined as the sequential elimination of both elites and mass supporters within a short period, targeting entire factions or networks within a regime. These purges aim to consolidate power by removing potential rivals at all levels, thereby neutralizing opposition both from within the ruling elite and among their broader support base. By purging elites, dictators eliminate direct threats to their authority, while mass purges dismantle the patronage networks that sustain these elites (Angiolillo & Matthews 2024).

However, coordinated purges can provoke coups because they create widespread insecurity among regime insiders. When elites and their supporters are purged in rapid succession, those who remain may perceive the purge as an existential threat. The sudden and comprehensive nature of coordinated purges signals that no one is safe, prompting surviving elites to preemptively organize a coup in self-defense before they, too, are targeted. This dynamic is particularly strong in bottom-up coordinated purges, where mass purges precede elite purges, leaving powerful elites with time to react and strike back against the autocrat before they are removed themselves (Angiolillo & Matthews 2024).

(III) Motivation Every purge is a calculated risk. Overreach can risk a coup, mutiny or an insurrection. Rulers that have not obtained a high level of *personalization* usually go about them carefully, waiting for the right time to remove rivals and selecting targets (and numbers) that are unlikely to cause much opprobrium:

"Stalin tolerated Trotsky for years before he could grind his reputation down and find enough support in the Politburo to oust him. At the same time, Stalin did not deal fatal blows to all adversaries right away when he had the chance: Before the October Revolution, Stalin intervened in an early fallout between Lenin with Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev. Lenin wanted to kick them out of the party, Stalin convinced him otherwise. Demoted, the latter two became unthreatening allies for Stalin to counter Trotsky's influence. Later the dynamic would change and he would pick them off one by one in a long series of intra-party intrigues." (Khlevniuk 2015, cited in Van den Bosch 2021: 22)

Once dictatorships consolidate and rulers face a lower risk of coups, purges can then be used to enhance the efficiency and *performance* of dictatorial rule. In these cases, purges are employed to demonstrate the leader's political superiority and ensure

elite obedience, making governance easier by deterring both active resistance (such as coups) and passive forms of disobedience or non-cooperation (Kim 2021).

Another key motivation is **coup-proofing,** and here, purges are but one tactic in that larger toolbox, albeit with different purposes. If there is an imminent risk of a coup d'état, violent measures of expulsion are required, but when a ruler intends to act preventively, mild purges (demotions) can create the effect of 'musical chairs' or 'game-of-chairs' where elites are shuffled around to disorientate them and cut their ties with their subordinates. When purging the army or other security apparatuses, the goal can be ethnic stacking to fill the ranks with loyalists. 'Cleaning' house by removing suspected groups or under-performing (complacent, opportunistic) members from organizations provides regimes with available options for **patronage** to loyal staff (Montagnes & Wolton 2019).

Purges can also be *retributive*, especially after a regional rebellion or a coup attempt. Easton and Siverson (2018) find that between 1950 and 2010, slightly over 60% of all coup conspirators were either executed or imprisoned; the remaining 40% suffered lighter punishment or escaped retribution altogether. Moreover, in autocracies, the more severe the post-coup purge, the longer the tenure of autocrats.

(IV) Timing Jun Koga Sudduth (2017) models that dictators are more likely to eliminate rivals when elite capabilities to remove them are temporarily weakened. She posits that dictators are more inclined to purge fellow elites when the risk of a coup is low rather than high. Additionally, she argues that successful coups installing new dictators temporarily reduce elite capacity to oust them, offering dictators a strategic window to personalize power.

Ishiyama et al. (2024) find that not all personalist regimes purge equally, and many favor the co-optation of rivals instead. More research is needed to assess *when* rulers feel confident to purge, what are their main *motivations* at different stages of their tenure, what *type of purge* they prefer, and how *regime type* interrelates with all these variables.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Purges have different effects on political regimes and their societies. In addition to the insights listed above, Sudduth (2021: 876-879) finds that purging members of the security apparatus actually reduces a regime's ability and willingness to repress civilians. Cyclical purges and middle- and low-rank officer rotations prevent the latter from developing leadership skills and building strong ties with their troops, which are essential for coordinated repressive actions. Additionally, purges can increase resentment among officers, leading to a reluctance to follow orders or even prompting defection from the regime.

Another effect is that military purges disrupt intelligence-gathering structures and a military's organizational capacity. To counteract this, military leaders outsource the task of control and repression to Allied militias that have the local intelligence skills necessary to manage the civilian population. This challenges the protectionist attitude of militaries toward maintaining their monopoly on violence (Eck 2015).

In common usage today, purges are conflated with broader acts of state repression, but in Soviet practice, purges were specific administrative processes aimed at maintaining party discipline and ideological purity.

LITERATURE The characteristics of military purges also vary significantly depending on the type of authoritarian regime. **Personalist regimes** exhibit the highest rates of military purging as leaders seek to consolidate power by eliminating potential rivals within the military. (Approximately 50% of leaders who purged their militaries more than seven times are coded as personalist regimes in the **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** dataset.) Leaders such as Saddam Hussein and Idi Amin frequently conducted large-scale military purges involving imprisonment or execution of high-ranking officers.

Regarding early works, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1956; 1958) was among the first to explore the function of purges and the motivations behind them under totalitarianism. Rigby (1968) and Conquest (1968) analyzed the dynamics of the Communist Party in the USSR and the role of purges. Höhne (1972) did the same for Hitler's *Schutzstaffel* (SS – ᛋᛋ), his protection squadron. Getty (1985) revisited the topic of Soviet purges; Teiwes (1993) did so for China.

The primary motivation in personalist regimes is personal survival (**coup-proofing**). (Sudduth 2021; Escribà-Folch et al. 2020) Although, Ishiyama et al. (2024) nuance this, finding that not all personalist regimes purge, and many favor the co-optation of rivals instead. They posit several explanations, rulers that are still in an early process of **personalization** might not overplay their hand by risking purges. Established, consolidated personalist rule is much more likely to do so. Maybe the **psychological profile** of the ruler is a deciding factor.

Military regimes tend to engage in more frequent but less intense purging compared to personalist regimes. Purges in these regimes are often non-violent and involve dismissals or forced retirements rather than executions. The motivation behind these actions is typically related to maintaining cohesion within the military hierarchy (filtering out ideological dissidents) rather than eliminating personal rivals and their allies. (Sudduth 2021; Escribà-Folch et al. 2020; Ishiyama et al. 2024) They may perceive purges as a necessary tool to maintain discipline and order among the rank-and-file.

Single-party regimes tend to have lower rates of military purging compared to personalist regimes because they rely on institutional mechanisms for managing elite competition. Within the ruling party, however, leaders often lack reliable information about who is truly loyal, so they use purges to test loyalty by forcing subordinates to denounce others or participate in repressive actions. This creates a culture of complicity where officials are incentivized to remain loyal out of fear of being next. Purges can also serve to 'cleanse' the party by removing opportunists or those who have grown complacent. This



allows for the promotion of new, more loyal members who owe their positions to the leader. Purges in these regimes are less likely to be violent and often involve demotions or transfers within state structures rather than outright eliminations. The motivation for these purges is typically ideological conformity or maintaining party unity. (Sudduth 2021; Escribà-Folch et al. 2020; Montagnes & Wolton 2019)

Monarchies engage in fewer military purges compared to other regime types due to their reliance on traditional legitimacy rather than coercion for maintaining power. (They employ other coup-proofing tactics.) When monarchies do conduct purges, they tend to be non-violent and involve reshuffling positions within the royal family or security apparatus rather than executions or imprisonments. The primary motivation for these purges is ensuring loyalty among elites rather than preventing coups or eliminating rivals, although elites able to block a preferred **succession** often end up as purge targets. (Sudduth 2021; Escribà-Folch et al. 2020)

Democracies – While not really associated with purges, there are instances where democracies purge. The first scenario is after a **transition** from autocracy when a new democratic order is cleaning house within the state bureaucracy. Here, purges involve the removal of individuals from positions of power, often more aggressively than lustration (cf. Box 3.7), and are used to eliminate the remnants of the previous regime. While they can help in dismantling undemocratic structures, purges can also be controversial if they are perceived as politically motivated or if they undermine stability. When conducted with transparency and fairness, purges can aid in the establishment of democratic norms by ensuring that those who have committed abuses are not in a position to repeat them (Nalepa 2022).

A second scenario is explained by Gentry (2023), where democratic leaders may purge intelligence agencies when they perceive that the agencies have failed in their duties, such as in the aftermath of major intelligence failures (e.g., failure to prevent attacks or provide accurate intelligence). Additionally, democratic leaders may act if they believe intelligence services are acting independently or disloyally, especially when agencies resist government policies or exhibit excessive autonomy. The 'political' motivation of such purges is thus sometimes open to interpretation (when applying the criteria from our 'definition' above), as objective performance criteria also play a role in such decisions.

MEASUREMENT Recently, scholars have invested much time and effort to gather data on purges, either for country-years or, in some cases, about the individual elites that were purged.

The *Military Purges in Dictatorships* (MPD) dataset by Jun Koga Sudduth (2021) provides systematic data on military purges in authoritarian regimes, covering 566 political leaders across 116 countries from 1965 to 2005. A military purge is defined as the removal of individuals from the military or security apparatus by a political leader. The dataset includes detailed information on the dates and characteristics of these purges, such as whether they were peaceful or involved arrests, imprisonment, or killings, as well as the positions and number of officers purged and the reasons behind the actions. MPD is available in both event data and leader-year panel data formats, allowing for analysis of individual purges and broader trends. Unlike other datasets that focus on country-year observations, MPD carefully codes cases where multiple leaders ruled within the same year, providing more precise data. This resource aims to support research on the causes and consequences of military purges in autocracies. (Sudduth 2021) Note, as the author herself admits, due to the unequal availability of data, some regimes are underreported, which could bias the data in favor of well-known dictatorships.

Bokobza et al. 2022 compiled an impressive new global data set, which covers over 23,000 cabinet members in 115 autocracies from 1967 to 2016. This dataset lists the most detailed individual-level evidence available.

An older work by Roessler (2011) updated the *Ethnic Power Relations* (EPR) dataset (Cederman et al. 2009; Vogt et al. 2015) with instances when a particular ethnic group is excluded from the central government and how this affects coup probability.

Goldring and Matthews (2024) compiled an original individual-level dataset sampling both civilian and military autocratic elites, their background and their fates, holding offices within sixteen ruling institutions between 1922 and 2020.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As current research is doing now, it is important to study purges not just at the regime level over time but at the individual level to understand better who is at risk and why in order to understand the strategic calculations of rulers when removing rivals, preempting coups or just 'cleaning house' to improve performance (Goldring & Matthews 2024: 1916-1917).

Gathering data on purges is an ongoing process with much promise. Earlier works relied too much on personal accounts of purge victims (memoirs or autobiographies), often written many years later and often deemed unreliable by historians. Getty (1985: 4) explains: *"It is not clear what the Great Purges memoirs can reveal about why the terror happened, or even about exactly what happened. In general, they provide more heat than light: They can tell us how their authors felt but not how Stalin felt."*

Historical studies (e.g., Wong & Chan 2021) with Large-N data can be useful in exposing broader diachronic patterns of purge behavior to strengthen middle-range theories. In-depth case studies like Kim (2021) on North Korea or Idrizi (2022) on Enver Hoxha's last purge are excellent for nuancing popular beliefs and raising new questions.

REGIONAL VARIATION Military purges vary significantly in their intensity, nature, occurrence, and motivation across different world regions. Sudduth (2021) provides insights per world region over the period 1965 to 2005, but solely for how dictators deal with their militaries. (There are currently no systemic data for political purges of civilian elites, intelligence services, etc., comparing world regions).

Latin America Latin America has experienced fewer military purges compared to other regions (0.18 per country-year). While military intervention in politics was common during the Cold War era, the frequency of purges has declined since. Historically, Latin America used violent purges to weed out political opponents within the armed forces who might challenge their authority or align with leftist movements (Sudduth 2021).

Sub Saharan Africa This stands out as the region with the highest number of military purges, typical for **personalist rule**. The probability of a purge occurring in any given year is approximately 0.26 per country-year in this region. Purges here often involve both violent and non-violent methods. These purges are frequently motivated by **ethnic politics** or factionalism within the military, with leaders targeting officers from rival ethnic groups (ethnic stacking, see **coup-proofing**) to prevent coups or ensure loyalty (Sudduth 2021).

MENA The frequency of purges for this region is comparable to Sub Saharan Africa, with an average probability of 0.25 per country-year. The region's history of military coups and civil-military tensions contributes to this high frequency. Purges in this region are often violent, involving arrests or executions, as leaders seek personalist power by eliminating potential rivals within the military. **Monarchies** and **personalist regimes** in this region are particularly prone to using purges as a tool for regime survival (Sudduth 2021).

Indo-Pacific The Indo-Pacific also experienced a high number of purges, with a similar probability of 0.25 per country-year. In countries like China, purges have historically been large-scale and violent, targeting top military officials through imprisonment or execution. The motivation behind these purges is often ideological, particularly in communist regimes where leaders seek to eliminate those deemed politically unreliable or ideologically deviant (Sudduth 2021).

Eurasia In contrast, Eastern and Western Europe have seen fewer purges since the fall of Communism. The probability of a purge occurring is lower (0.24 per country-year), and the nature of purges has shifted from violent actions under communist regimes (e.g., Stalin's Great Purge) to more restrained methods in post-communist states. During communist rule, military purges were driven by ideological conformity and the elimination of perceived counter-revolutionaries (Sudduth 2021).

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Regime Promotion

The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.
– Winston S. Churchill

Ideology is the most powerful tool created to protect a power structure.
– Srilatha Batliwala

This entry provides a universal model to explain why, when and how political actors promote regimes. In doing so, it scrapes together fragmented pieces of literature to present a universal framework to explain the phenomenon, which is currently still dichotomized between democracy studies (A) and comparative authoritarianism (B), each with its own canons.

DEFINITION Regime promotion refers to the efforts by an actor, typically a state but sometimes non-state entities, to influence the political regime of another actor in a manner that aligns with its own preferences. This influence can take several forms, including (a) promoting regime change, (b) preserving an existing regime, or (c) shaping specific characteristics of a regime.

In promoting regime change (a), the actor seeks to replace the existing regime with a different one, such as transitioning from an authoritarian to a democratic system or vice versa or replacing one authoritarian regime with a different type of dictatorship (e.g., overthrowing a monarchy to establish a Leninist single party regime or ousting a civilian oligarchy with a military coup).

When preserving an existing regime (b), the actor supports and stabilizes the current political system, especially if it faces internal or external challenges. In this case, the actor behaves like a 'guardian.' Depending on the respective viewpoints of two (foreign) actors in the context of geopolitical or ideological competition for enabling or halting regime change in a target state, each promoting actor considers the other a '**black knight**' or disrupter from its own vantage point. For this reason, Van den Bosch (2020: 81) distinguishes between regime promoters and regime guardians.

Shaping regime characteristics (c) involves modifying aspects like institutions, practices or policies to align with the promoter's preferences without fundamentally changing the regime type. From the study of regime promotion, this latter approach only applies if the promoter and target regime are already compatible in many options, but specific regime differences stand in the way of full congruence. An example may clarify. After the Sino-Soviet split (Box 3.9), Moscow and Beijing competed for influence in African Socialist regimes, which already were anti-colonial, single-party regimes. This rivalry manifested in various ways, including China's efforts to counter Soviet influence by hosting leaders of African liberation movements in Beijing and offering support that was perceived as less intrusive than Soviet aid. Meanwhile, the Soviets criticized China's approach as overly radical and accused Beijing of interfering in internal affairs (Scalapino 1964).

The methods employed in regime promotion are diverse and can be either peaceful or coercive. Peaceful methods include diplomatic pressure, economic incentives, technical assistance, and support for civil society organizations. Coercive methods may involve military intervention, sanctions, or backing armed groups within the target state.

The motivations behind regime promotion are varied. Security interests often drive actors to promote regimes that align with their foreign policy goals or counter perceived threats, such as rival ideologies or hostile states. Ideological beliefs can also motivate actors committed to specific values like democracy or human rights to promote regimes that embody these principles. Economic interests might lead an actor to support regimes that create favorable conditions for trade, investment, or resource access.

SEE ALSO When surveying the literature, this field of study is split between two camps, each of them with established traditions and canons: (A) democracy scholars and policy-experts studying **democracy promotion** and (its more politically-correct, less ideologically-tainted or ambitious) **democracy support & assistance**; and (B) or those comparativists analyzing **authoritarian promotion** and **authoritarian collaboration**.

The first group (A) is foremost motivated by improving our knowledge about how to foster **democratization** in target countries. How to pressure authoritarian governments, appease and convince **hybrid regimes**, boost general respect for **human rights** and cultivate a political culture with 'meaningful' **elections** and political, economic and civic freedoms that might consolidate one day as a (liberal) democracy. The focus is limited to interactions along a democracy-non-democracy dyad, where the recipient or target states are usually electoral authoritarian regimes but do not meet the standards of liberal democracy. The promoting actors then aim to impose, improve or standardize norms so the former regime types would transform and become more similar to the promoters.

The second group (B) is often motivated by concern. Along the paradigm of the liberal democratic West locked in a decades-long struggle to promote its values, sometimes the tide turns, as shown in our framing of this process through 'waves' of democracy and authoritarianism (Box 6.3). Whenever democracy is on the retreat, scholars muster in a search for domestic and external culprits and try to untangle the dynamics and mechanics of how autocracies (with low legitimacy) are still able to sabotage democratization processes and convince foreign elites to 'join the dark side.'

Western post-Cold War enthusiasm regarding democratic superiority was inflated with the **color revolutions** and then brutally extinguished in the

Box 3.7 Lustration: Purification with a Naughty List

You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs
– Robert Louis Stevenson (1897)

Lustration typically occurs during periods of political transition (**democratization**) and its aftermath (**democratic consolidation**), particularly in post-authoritarian or post-totalitarian societies. As with de-Nazification in Germany, it is a process typically associated with (Central) European post-communist regimes (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and even Ukraine – after V. Yanukovich's ouster), but also Argentina (after military rule), Tunisia (after the **Arab Spring**) and Iraq (the de-Ba'athification after Saddam Hussein's fall in 2003 – cf. Box 4.5) are recent examples of similar processes. (Letki 2002; David 2006) Tellingly, Croatia and Serbia did not comprehensively implement such processes after the Yugoslav civil wars, and this has significantly hindered democratization and EU integration.

Lustratio was an ancient ritual in which a newborn was purified from evil spirits through a ceremonial procession and sacrificial offering. It also applied to cleansing locations, such as crime scenes, or protecting cities and fields from evil. After purification, the child was named, its future predicted, and recorded in the census. In Christianity, baptism replaced *lustratio* as a cleansing ritual, though the term later referred to an inventory of people and property. After 1989, Czechoslovak Interior Minister Richard Sacher used 'lustration' to describe the political cleansing of the elite, specifically targeting secret agents through the use of lists derived from the secret police (*Státní bezpečnost* – StB) card files. This process maintained two core elements of the original ritual: purification and lists. (Paczkowski 2023)

Lustration laws often involve the mass disqualification of individuals associated with the prior regime from holding public office. The laws are intended to prevent the restoration of the old regime and to mark a break from the past. Alongside the process of purging individuals who were associated with the previous regime, especially those who held positions of power, were involved in human rights abuses or collaborated with the secret police forces (as informers or enforcers), the aim of lustration is to ensure that individuals who were complicit in the old regime's injustices are unable to obtain or hold positions of influence in the new political order.

The decision to implement **purges** or lustration laws can significantly affect (and break) **elite pacts** during **transitions**. Lustration can disrupt these pacts by (suddenly) displacing former regime members from their positions of power and influence, cutting them off from **rents**, and dissolving their immunity (provided by their political mandate), which might lead to resistance or destabilization if those individuals feel betrayed, threatened or marginalized. The decision to implement lustration and its scope can vary widely depending on the specific historical, political, and social context of the transition.

In some cases, lustration is seen as necessary for justice and reconciliation, while in others, it may be viewed as a form of political retribution that could hinder the process of democratization and reconciliation. The policy is controversial and has yielded mixed results. While it aims to build social trust between the new regime and society and provide **legitimacy** through accountability, it has sometimes led to unintended negative consequences, such as decreased trust in social institutions like trade unions and the church. In Poland, for example, lustration has been criticized for being politically misused by right-wing parties as a political weapon of retribution and a demagogic electoral discourse; and has failed to improve **trust** in political elites and state institutions. (Letki 2002; Williams 2005; Szczerbiak 2002)

To quote Monika Nalepa (2022: 256) at length: *"In democracies recovering from authoritarian rule or civil war, politicians trying at all costs to prevent their skeletons from coming out of the closet fail at being effective representatives and betray the interests of their voters. In an effort to bury the truth about skeletons in the closet they succumb to blackmail. The advice to 'let bygones be bygones,' 'forgive and forget,' or 'let sleeping dogs lie' especially when applied to crimes committed secretly under the authoritarian regime may be deadly for a new polity. At the same time, new democracies' temptation to punish 'known' members and collaborators of the former regime is a form of 'ritual sacrifice.' Although it signals to some voters a clean break with the former regime, it has little beyond symbolic significance and may be equally crippling as the decisions to let sleeping dogs lie."*

Purges, depending on the skills and loyalties of those who are being purged, may or may not contribute to **democratic consolidation**. In **transitions** from authoritarian rule to democracy, a careful balance between purges and transparency is crucial. Purges should be used sparingly to avoid destabilizing the new government and losing valuable expertise. Transparency, however, should be widely applied, taking the form of either lustration or truth commissions, depending on the context. Truth commissions are effective in the short term, as they apply to everyone, not just those seeking office, and help reveal hidden collaborators, prevent blackmail, and undermine authoritarian networks.

Overall, lustrations and truth commissions (Box 5.7), their social costs notwithstanding, make new democracies healthier. The choice between them depends on the duration and control methods of the former regime. Short-lived, violently repressive regimes may have fewer collaborators to lustrate, whereas long-standing regimes with extensive surveillance networks may require more comprehensive transparency measures. Paradoxically, these processes can seem unfair, as high-ranking officials from repressive regimes might retain their positions due to their expertise, while ordinary citizens or dissidents who made minor compromises may face severe consequences. This paradox underscores the complexity of transitional justice and the need for nuanced approaches that balance accountability with societal reconciliation. (Nalepa 2022: 253-260)



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aftermath of the **Arab Spring**. Since democracy is no longer ideologically challenged in the global post-Cold War order – save for some region-specific and regionally-bound forms of **political Islam** and the odd ideological firebrand (like Hugo Chávez – Box 3.8) – such a democratic rollback after 2010 was unsettling. Beside a new interest in **populism** and extreme parties in the West (the proverbial mutiny on board), scholarly attention shifted to international actors involved to map these disturbing trends. Resulting research coalesced around the topics of **authoritarian promotion**, **authoritarian regionalism** and **authoritarian learning**.

Admittedly, there is a third group (C) or those scholars who have been working on democratic diffusion since the late 1980s. On the tailcoats of the 'Third Wave of democracy,' they have gone beyond actor-agency to dissect the more passive (systemic) mechanisms of how a regime type spreads from country to country, checking a whole laundry list of potential factors (like economic development, regional influences, international organizations, the role of media and technology, etc.) that facilitate the spread of (democratic) norms and ideals. Around 2010, this group flipped their focus to analyze the 'reverse diffusion' (**authoritarian diffusion**) of authoritarian practices and influences.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The balkanization of political science subfields has hindered progress to come comprehensive understanding of regime promotion at an analytical level that raises above **democracy promotion** and **authoritarian promotion**.

Scope Almost all democracy studies (A) and comparative authoritarianism (B) follow the same dyad but in different directions: For A, 'democracy' is the normative promoter, and for B, 'non-democracy' has the agency to disrupt, damage and erode democratic progress. Authoritarian promoters are often seen as **black knights** subverting ongoing democratization processes. They usually do not target consolidated democracies (although the recent **disinformation** and interference in the UK and US elections are exceptions) but target states that the West has been 'supporting and assisting' in their democratic development. So, A is primarily occupied with fostering democratization, while B has the end goal of aiding the cause to 'protect democracy' and counter autocratization (Leininger 2022).

This black-and-white, 'good vs. evil' narrative between democracy and non-democracy is, of course, relevant from a Western perspective, where policy makers living and educated under democratic rule sincerely hope to extend such political order to populations beyond the democratic bloc. Still, such frames obscure an important observation: authoritarian regimes sometimes differ more from one another than they do from liberal democracy. For instance, in a world before democracy, monarchies and republics were embraced in a similar stand-off, promoting their form of rule abroad, often violently. Lumping all target states (or authoritarian agents) together as non-democracies severely limits our understanding of when and why regimes succeed in influencing and changing regimes abroad.

Arguably, the scholars working on democratic and authoritarian diffusion (C) similarly routinely gloss over the heterogeneity of dictatorships, but their focus beyond actors and active policies did shift attention to the circulation of practices, norms, and procedures, as well as the salience of institutional and bureaucratic legacies.

Disciplinary fragmentation The study of regime promotion is intricately positioned at the intersection of various subfields within political science, primarily comparative politics, International Relations (IR), and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). Each subfield offers unique perspectives and methodologies that contribute to understanding the complex dynamics of regime promotion. Both A and B approaches do not fully embrace an IR perspective. They analyze regime promotion in terms of democratization or autocratization and the role of domestic actors and institutions in facilitating or resisting change. Comparative politics provides insights into how different political systems respond to external pressures for regime change and how internal factors can either support or hinder such efforts.

IR examines regime promotion from a broader geopolitical perspective, considering how states interact within the international system. This subfield explores the motivations behind foreign-imposed regime changes, such as strategic interests or ideological conflicts, and how these actions impact global stability and international norms. IR theories

often address the implications of regime promotion for international peace and conflict, analyzing how power dynamics and alliances influence state behavior in promoting or resisting regime changes. However, few IR approaches go beyond the binary democracy vs. non-democracy regime labels. (The political history of IR does, of course, and here, there is much untapped potential for studying regime promotion in a systemic matter).

For instance, Owen IV (2010: 8) finds that realism (as an IR theory) fails to justify why states should impose regimes on others, as it typically ignores domestic properties like regime type, focusing solely on military power. This omission means realism cannot predict or explain the costs states incur when using force for regime change, making such actions anomalous within its framework. Realism suggests that forcible regime promotion should *only* occur when states are secure enough to indulge domestic interests in exporting regimes (the data contradict this).

FPA bridges the gap between domestic and international politics by focusing on the decision-making processes of states regarding regime promotion. FPA examines how different regime types influence foreign policy choices and how these choices are implemented through diplomatic, economic, or military means. It also considers how domestic political considerations shape foreign policy strategies aimed at promoting specific regimes abroad. While this is crucial to understanding their motivations and preferred methods, this does not provide systemic evidence of how successful such attempts have been in specific contexts or in the long run.

To recap, too few bridges have been built to cross from FPA (the motivations, means and perspectives of promoters) to comparative politics (the impact of and reactions to foreign pressures by governments and subnational actors in target states) or combine these with applied IR frames to understand systemic patterns, with the goal to formulate middle-range theories to explain and predict them.

Selection bias Regime changes, especially sudden power transfers, are fairly evident in most cases. If states apply violent methods to achieve such foreign policy goals, these also do not go unnoticed. For these reasons, our systemic research is still too biased on the visible and successful patterns of regime change, overlooking subtle, non-violent attempts, failed attempts, but also aborted attempts of regime promotion while including cases caused by serendipity that were embraced and supported by foreign powers *after* a regime change (with domestic causes) took place. As we go back in time, the nuances of failed and non-violent regime promotion events are often lost, skewing those data as well.

Great power bias There are also biases for big states. It is assumed that **power** is required to influence political behavior in the international system. For logical reasons, great and regional powers are scrutinized better, so data-collection is also in their favor. This obscures some dynamics of regime promotion, shown below.

ORIGIN There is no consensus on how old the phenomenon is, but the literature is riddled with isolated (seemingly non-related) observations like this one: The Romans strategically employed kingship among barbarian tribes to establish stable and manageable conditions along their borders. For instance, the Cheruscans had a king who benefited from Roman military support, while the Romans actively imposed kingship on the Bructerans. Tacitus noted that the power of these kings was heavily reliant on Roman authority, receiving either military or financial assistance from Rome, both of which were equally influential. This Roman influence serves as a caution against overly idealizing ancient Germanic tribes and ideological Germanism. (Ehlers 2004: 6-7)

So, in Ehlers' (2004) pursuit of the origins of kingship and the historical development of governance systems in the first century CE, he noted that the Roman empire engaged in regime promotion to secure their frontiers, where 'barbarian' political regimes had multiple coexisting kings rather than a singular monarchy, which posed challenges for making sustainable alliances or rendering vassals.

EXAMPLES That the Soviet Union gained and lost much in the Global South as a result of coups is beyond dispute. David (1986: 3-4) found that in terms of gains, the USSR recognized that virtually the only way pro-Soviet governments come to power in the Global South is through violence and that the **coup d'état** is the most frequent form of violent regime change among the developing states. Fourteen coups in 13 countries resulted in a pivot toward the USSR, placing a regime in power that (immediately or over time) proved more supportive of Soviet interests. The Soviets have also lost influence in the same way, following successful counter-coups or abortive coups. Historically, the USSR initially believed decolonization would naturally lead to pro-Soviet regimes. However, setbacks in the 1960s, where pro-Soviet leaders were overthrown by coups, prompted a reassessment. Consequently, the Soviets developed tactics such as military assistance to instill a pro-Soviet ethos in Third World militaries and supported vanguard parties to centralize power and mobilize support for pro-Soviet regimes. Several motivations drove the USSR's shift toward using coups during the Cold War. Pro-Soviet governments could realize their strategic interests such as establishing military bases, controlling raw materials, and countering Western and Chinese influence. The ideological motivation was also significant. The emergence of regimes proclaiming loyalty to Marxism-Leninism validated Soviet ideology and demonstrated the perceived decline of the West. This ideological alignment was crucial for the Soviets to perpetuate their own rule and maintain legitimacy despite domestic challenges (David 1986).

LITERATURE John M. Owen IV's model (2010) for analyzing forcible regime promotion, as detailed in his work *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics*, examines the historical and ideological contexts in which states attempt to impose their political regimes on others through force. This model is rooted in the



understanding that such actions are not anomalies but rather recurrent features of international politics, driven by ideological conflicts and transnational networks.

Why? States engage in forcible regime promotion primarily to secure their interests, both domestically and internationally. Owen argues that governments may perceive the spread or maintenance of a particular regime type abroad as crucial to their own security and ideological alignment. This is particularly true when there is high ideological polarization across nations, meaning that elites and societies are sharply divided along ideological lines, such as liberal democracy vs. Communism or secularism vs. Islamism. In such polarized environments, states may feel compelled to act to prevent the spread of **ideologies** they oppose or to support those they favor.

How? The process often involves direct military intervention or support for coups and revolutions that align with the promoting state's ideology. Owen identifies two main incentives for such actions: external security, where a state seeks to influence the international balance of power by ensuring friendly regimes abroad, and internal security, where a state aims to prevent ideological threats from gaining traction domestically by suppressing them abroad. These interventions can be triggered by events like regime crises within target states or large-scale wars involving major powers, which can polarize regional politics and create opportunities for forcible regime promotion.

When? Historically, such promotions tend to occur during periods of intense ideological conflict and are often clustered in waves: *"forcible regime promotion tends to happen more when international security is scarce, as in hot or cold war, rather than when it is plentiful. (...) typical are promotions and counter-promotions by states seeking to increase their security and extend their power"* (Owen 2010: 8). Owen identifies three major waves over the past five centuries: the religious conflicts of early modern Europe, the struggles between **republicanism** and **monarchy** in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the ideological battles of the twentieth century involving **Communism**, **Fascism**, and liberal democracy. A series of interventions characterize these waves as states react to ideological shifts and alignments across borders.

Overall, Owen's model highlights that forcible regime promotion is deeply intertwined with transnational ideological contests. States act not just out of strategic interests but also due to pressures from *transnational ideological networks* (TINs) that advocate for specific political ideologies. These networks can intensify polarization and create conditions where states see regime promotion as necessary for their survival and ideological coherence.

TINs play a pivotal role in facilitating regime change by spreading ideologies and mobilizing support across borders. These networks are composed of various actors, including NGOs, social movements (**civil society**), and even parts of governments, which collaborate to promote their preferred regime type. This collaboration involves sharing resources, strategies, and information to influence public opinion and political outcomes in different countries.

Moreover, transnational networks create demonstration effects; successful regime changes in one country can inspire similar movements elsewhere. Networks amplify these effects by highlighting successes and offering blueprints for action. They often engage in contentious politics by organizing protests, lobbying international bodies, or even supporting insurgencies to destabilize regimes they oppose. Overall, TINs act as catalysts for regime change by exploiting ideological divides and leveraging global connections to support domestic actors seeking political transformation (Owen 2010).

Owen's 'clash of ideas' is, of course, inherently linked with incompatible worldviews and **legitimacy**. His diachronic study of three historical waves of ideological confrontation (between 1520 and 1650, 1770 and 1850, and 1917 until today) about the nature of 'just rule' goes so much deeper than the democracy-non-democracy divide which dominates contemporary scholarship about democracy 'promotion' and 'protection.'

Note that Owen's frame is limited to forcible regime promotion between sovereign states. He does not cover institutional transformation as a result of imperialism or colonization. Data on non-coercive regime promotion is harder to find and qualify. However, scholars of democratic and **authoritarian diffusion** (group C) did develop some models to qualify these more covert and incremental changes.

S. Levitsky and L. Way's (2010) model for democracy promotion, **linkage & leverage theory**, rendered 'neutral' by J. Tolstrup (2014) to account for authoritarian promotion, who updated the theory with the concept of **gatekeeping**, is often applied to measure regime promotion within wider diffusion and interaction patterns between regimes. Van den Bosch (2015) provides a list of examples of how this middle-range theory can be applied to study regime promotion.

CLASSIFICATIONS The diverging focus on democracy studies (A) and comparative authoritarianism (B) persists, and each has a large canon with models dedicated to **democracy promotion** or **authoritarian promotion**, respectively. Below, I list several frameworks (or elements of them) that are more universal or at least transferable to analyze 'regime promotion.' Note that the overall literature remains fragmented.

Actors (I) Kurt Weyland (2017) distinguishes between two ideal-types of interest-driven and ideology-driven cooperation and diffusion (to account for non-democracies in their collaboration in international relations).

Interest-driven autocracies prioritize self-regarding goals, focusing on economic and political interests to maintain regime stability and protect against external threats, particularly from democratic forces. These regimes, such as Russia and China, mainly react defensively, aiming to secure their

influence within geographically close regions to reinforce their political control and resist democratic encroachment. Their cooperation is primarily regional and focused on regime preservation.

In contrast, *ideology-driven autocracies* pursue other-regarding goals and proactive expansion. These regimes, exemplified by Mussolini's Italy (**Fascism**) and Chávez's Venezuela ('*Bolivarismo*' – Box 3.8), actively promote their ideological models, seeking to inspire emulation beyond their borders. Motivated by missionary zeal, they aim to spread their ideologies globally, often attempting regime change and ideological conversion in foreign states. This form of cooperation and diffusion is expansive, targeting distant allies who share similar ideological goals. Therefore, ideology-driven autocracies have a broader geographic scope, extending beyond regional influence to spread their values and reshape foreign regimes in alignment with their ideological vision.

Instruments (II) Fabio Fossati (2017; 2022) compiled a simple but universal framework for analyzing the promotion of regimes abroad. It encompasses four modes: (a) control, (b) conditionality, (c) rewards, and (d) emulation.

Control (a) involves direct interventions, such as military actions, to change or maintain regimes. An example is the US intervention in Iraq in 2003, which aimed to establish a democratic government through military means. Political *conditionality* (b) uses negative incentives, like **sanctions** or exclusion from international bodies, to pressure regimes into adopting certain behaviors. This approach is often applied against authoritarian regimes that violate human rights. Alternatively, it can be economical blackmail by autocrats to pressure target states. *Rewards* (c) involve offering positive incentives to encourage regime change or support existing regimes, including economic aid, diplomatic support, or assistance to civil society groups. *Emulation* (d) refers to an indirect process where countries adopt similar governance models due to cultural or ideological influence without direct intervention. This often occurs through regional or global waves of democratization or authoritarianism (Fossati 2020).

Fossati's (2020) model provides a clear framework that encompasses both direct and indirect methods and considers both positive and negative incentives. Its flexibility allows for a mix of strategies, acknowledging that states may use a combination of these four instruments depending on the context and their objectives. A tally of methods used by states can be turned into a matrix to evaluate (authoritarian) regime promoters (hard vs. soft; flexible vs. rigid). A rigid interaction is characterized by support exclusively for authoritarian regimes. In contrast, a flexible relationship allows for a 'plan B,' which includes promoting **hybrid regimes** as well. Hard power relations are rooted in direct military interventions, whereas soft power relies on diplomatic, economic, indirect military inducements, and blackmail (Fossati 2022: 20).

However, there are also limitations to consider. The model oversimplifies complex international interactions by categorizing them into (just) four distinct processes. Regime promoters are pigeonholed regarding their empirical behavior, not their motivations. Additionally, the model might not fully account for cultural and ideological differences that can significantly affect the success or failure of regime promotion efforts. Fossati's early works (1999; 2004) are available in Italian.

Linkages (III) Marianne Kneuer and Thomas Demmelhuber (2016) then discern between *intentional* and *unintentional* modes of external autocratic influence. The former is subdivided between *coercive* and *voluntary*. (The latter can logically only be voluntary.) Note that the more similar the promoter and the target regimes are, the more likely that innovation will travel without the need for coercion. (Bunce & Wolchik 2006: 287).

Based on Dolowitz's (2000) model of policy transfer, Kneuer and Demmelhuber (2016: 787-789) identified four arenas to analyze the ways in which autocratic governance characteristics may be imposed, diffused, and transferred among states. These include the institutional (i), policy (ii), ideational (iii), and administrative (iv) arenas, each targeting different aspects of governance. They integrated this frame with their middle-range theory of 'authoritarian gravity centers,' shown in Box 6.2.

The *institutional arena* (i) involves modifications to political and constitutional structures (e.g., **term limits**) to reinforce autocratic control. These changes may include abolishing democratic institutions like independent **judiciaries**, altering electoral systems (**elections**) to sidestep parliamentary oversight, expanding executive powers, and limiting civil liberties. The purpose is to weaken opposition and secure regime longevity.

In the *policy arena* (ii), regimes may adopt policies that align with autocratic ideals and challenge democratic norms. Economic policies, especially in resource-rich regimes, play a significant role in achieving **legitimacy** and can include nationalizing resources and managing distribution selectively. Security policies are also prioritized, exporting models for **repression** or **patronage** models that ensure regime stability. Additionally, media control is critical, with autocratic regimes curbing alternative voices and controlling digital media to stifle opposition.

The *ideational arena* (iii) focuses on promoting ideologies, values, and attitudes that legitimize the regime. These elements are instrumental in rallying domestic support and forging regional solidarity by building transnational networks. Such networks enable the dissemination of ideas (**propaganda** and **indoctrination**) that foster a shared regional identity, which is essential for the legitimacy of autocratic regimes.

Lastly, *administrative techniques* (iv) operate at an informal level, enabling subtle control methods such as surveillance, electoral fraud, media license revocations, and property seizures. These measures often avoid international scrutiny but effectively maintain regime control. Collectively, these arenas illustrate the varied, layered approach autocratic



regimes use to sustain power and influence their geopolitical surroundings.

Patterns (IV) By borrowing concepts from economic cluster theory, Van den Bosch (2020) introduces 'Regime Cluster Theory' (RCT), a framework aimed at analyzing the dynamics of regime promotion and diffusion within regional clusters. RCT emphasizes how political regimes interact based on three primary cluster types: (a) ideological, (b) hegemonic, and (c) biotopical. Each cluster type influences regime promotion differently, shaped by unique drivers and patterns of interaction.

Ideological clusters (a) are grounded in shared values and norms, where regime promotion occurs through ideological influence, such as the historical spread of Marxism-Leninism or liberal democracy. *Hegemonic clusters* (b), on the other hand, are dominated by powerful states or coalitions that promote regimes primarily through military and economic power, as seen with countries like Russia and China. *Biotopical clusters* (c) differ from both by lacking a unifying ideology or a dominant power; instead, they are shaped by regional structures, such as historical legacies and geopolitical factors, which are prominent in regions like Sub Saharan Africa and Central Asia.

The implications of this theory go beyond the conventional democracy-autocracy framework, suggesting that regime stability in regions may be affected by the emergence of alternative ideologies but also hegemony, which can stem waves of opportunistic regime promotion in biotopical clusters. For example, the rise of Nigeria as a regional power around 2000 ended the wave of foreign-backed rebel takeovers in Western Africa.

The paper further explores how each cluster type employs different mechanisms of regime promotion, including coercion, voluntary cooperation, bounded learning, and contagion, highlighting the varied diffusion dynamics across clusters. RCT shifts the analytical focus from individual regimes to the interactions within clusters, providing insight into how regimes cooperate, compete, and adopt survival strategies within these regional contexts.

Patterns of forcible regime promotion (not limited by proximity) can thus be explained as a clash between two ideological clusters or the reactionary behavior of a hegemonic cluster trying to stem the inroads of a nearby ideological cluster – like Russia countering Western values and closer linkages (EU or NATO membership) in what it considers its own 'near abroad.'

To summarize, this entry proposes to bridge the existing islands of scholarship by puzzling together some parts of a broader, universal framework for the study of regime promotion and its patterns over time. As shown in 'methodological issues,' there is still a long way to go to integrate the most useful frameworks and establish the back-and-forth between regime collaboration, promotion and learning and distinguish these from more incremental and elusive diffusion processes.

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Rent-Seeking

But the cruelest of our revenue laws, I will venture to affirm, are mild and gentle, in comparison to some of those which the clamour of our merchants and manufacturers has extorted from the legislature, for the support of their own absurd and oppressive monopolies. Like the laws of Draco, these laws may be said to be all written in blood.
– Adam Smith, Scottish economist and philosopher

Making is not the same as taking. It is not inequality itself that is unfair but rather the process that generates it.
– Angus Deaton, American microeconomist

Rent-seeking refers to the process of individuals or firms attempting to obtain economic profit by manipulating the social or political environment rather than by creating new wealth or goods. The term is widely used in economics as well as in political science, where it is often associated with the behavior of interest groups, politicians, and bureaucrats who seek to capture economic rents by influencing public policy.

DEFINITION In her seminal article on rent-seeking, Krueger (1974: 291) did not provide an explicit definition of this phenomenon. She just conceptualized it as a competition for **rent**, which can take a number of forms, both legal and illegal. This conceptualization is the core of most definitions of rent-seeking, and there are no major differences in this regard between definitions provided by individual scholars. They mostly differ in how complex they are, i.e., if their authors just attempt to capture the general logic of rent-seeking or if they also specify the actors, activities, or consequences. An example of a complex definition is the one provided by Hartle (1983: 539): *"Rent seeking can be defined comprehensively as investments of real resources undertaken by individuals or groups (coalitions) of individuals with similar interests in the expectation of obtaining an increase (avoiding a decrease) in their income wealth as a result of securing (blocking) changes in legal rights; or maximizing the benefit (minimizing the cost) of earlier policy changes that created non-exclusive rights."* An example of a simple definition is provided by Khan (2000: 70), who defines rent-seeking as *"the expenditure of resources and effort in creating, maintaining or transferring rents."*

SEE ALSO Related concepts such as **systemic corruption** and **clientelism** refer to an informal institution or practice typically present in rent-seeking societies; on the other hand, **state capture** describes the systemic penetration, privatization, or appropriation of the state by economic or political actors. If countries collect windfalls of **rents** from natural resources (i.e., **resource curse**) or other steady sources of income, they can become **rentier states**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Rent-seeking refers to a process of creating, maintaining, and transferring rents. Furthermore, because this can be realized by a number of means, both legal (lobbying, contributions to political parties, etc.) and illegal (bribes, illegal political contributions, expenditure on private mafias, vote buying, etc.), the research on rent-seeking is inevitably closely connected with research on **corruption**, **informality**, etc. (Khan 2000) Most of the literature on rent-seeking comes from the field of economics. For example, an influential account of relations between rent-seeking and corruption was provided by Lambsdorff (2002) and Aidt (2016); a major contribution on rent extraction and political extortion was written by McChesney (1997); and Svensson (2000) claimed that foreign aid is typically associated with higher corruption and rent-seeking in developing countries.

In political science, the concept of rent-seeking has been used mainly in the context of the redistribution of wealth. While Kitschelt (2000: 863) claimed that *"countries with a small public sector yield fewer opportunities for rent-seeking groups and clientelism than do large public sector countries,"* Olson (1982: 37-42) stressed that it is democratic countries that are plagued by redistribution and coined the term 'distributional coalitions' in order to describe parochial self-serving vested interests of groups seeking for rents. However, as Wintrobe (2000; 2003) convincingly shows, rent-seeking is even more typical in dictatorships. While in democracies, rent-seeking involves individuals or groups seeking to use political influence or regulatory power to gain economic rent or special privileges that are not available to others, in dictatorships, rents frequently stand at the very core of the regime (Tullock 1986). They may serve as a concession to other important actors or segments of society when dictators distribute some of their spoils to them in order to avoid rebellion. As Gandhi (2010) convincingly demonstrates, the share of rents distributed among the **opposition** can play a major role in the survival or ousting of a dictator. A similar argument on a dynamic game between oligarchs and a dictator who contains rent-seeking was provided by Guriev & Sonin (2009).

Resource-dependent dictatorships may even take the form of **rentier states**, i.e., countries that derive a significant portion of their revenue from the rent generated by their natural resources, such as oil, gas, or minerals (cf. **resource curse**). In a rentier state, the government typically controls the natural resources and uses the revenue to fund the state's activities, including public services and infrastructure, as well as to maintain political power and control over the population. The concept was developed by Mahdavy (1970) and later elaborated by Beblawi & Luciani (1987) and Skocpol (1982). Recent contributions to



Box 3.8 Chávismo: Rebranding Bolivarismo

Huid del país donde uno solo ejerza todos los poderes: es un país de esclavos.
(Flee the country where a lone man holds all power: It is a nation of slaves.)
– Simón Bolívar
El águila no caza moscas.
(The eagle does not hunt flies.)
– Hugo Chávez

Chávismo is a political movement that emerged in Venezuela with the rise of Hugo Chávez, a figure whose charismatic leadership and populist rhetoric redefined the country's political landscape. At its core, Chávismo combines elements of **populism**, **socialism**, and Bolivarian **nationalism**. However, the movement is more than just a collection of ideological tenets – it is deeply rooted in the personal appeal and political strategies of Chávez himself. The extent to which Chávismo is defined by Chávez's **charisma**, its populist nature, and its revolutionary aspirations has been a central focus of political science scholarship.

From the outset, Chávismo was characterized by Hugo Chávez's extraordinary charisma. Similar to Jerry Rawlings in Ghana, his rise to prominence began not with electoral politics but with a failed military **coup**. Chávez's televised address following his 1992 coup attempt – where he took responsibility for the failure but urged his followers to stand down – captured the imagination of many Venezuelans who were disillusioned with the country's political elite. This moment marked the beginning of Chávez's transformation from an obscure military officer into a national figure capable of mobilizing mass support. His subsequent electoral victory in 1998 was largely due to his ability to position himself as an outsider challenging Venezuela's corrupt political establishment. (Hawkins 2003)

Chávez's charisma was central to his ability to build a direct relationship with 'the people,' bypassing traditional party structures and institutions. In this sense, Chávismo fits squarely within the framework of **populism**. Populist leaders often rely on their personal appeal to create an unmediated connection with their supporters, presenting themselves as the embodiment of the popular will. Chávez did exactly this by framing his movement as a struggle between 'the people' and a corrupt elite, which he blamed for Venezuela's economic woes. He frequently used Manichaean (good vs. evil) rhetoric to polarize society into two camps: those who supported his Bolivarian Revolution and those who were aligned with imperialist forces seeking to undermine it. (Hawkins 2003; Hellinger 2003)

While not all charismatic leaders are populists, most successful populists rely on charisma to sustain their movements. Chávez's ability to inspire loyalty among Venezuela's poor and marginalized populations was unmatched by any other political figure in recent Venezuelan history. However, Chávez himself did reject the label of 'populist,' likely because of its negative connotations in Latin American politics. Instead, he preferred to describe his movement as revolutionary or Bolivarian.

'Bolivarismo' or Bolivarianism refers to the nationalist ideology inspired by Simón Bolívar, the nineteenth-century Venezuelan leader who played a key role in Latin America's wars of independence against the Spanish colonizers. Bolívar's vision for Latin America included not only independence but also regional unity and social justice. On the whole continent, Bolívar has long been revered as an international hero, and various political movements have invoked his legacy over the years.

Chávez co-opted Bolivarianism as part of his broader nationalist project, renaming Venezuela 'The Bolivarian Republic' and frequently invoking Bolívar's name in his speeches. However, Chávez's interpretation was distinct from earlier iterations of the **ideology**. While traditional Bolivarianism had a militaristic bent and sought to make Venezuela a great power in Latin America, Chávez fused it with socialist principles drawn from guerrilla movements of the 1960s. This synthesis allowed him to present his government as both nationalist and anti-imperialist while also emphasizing social justice and wealth redistribution (Straka 2017).

The incorporation of Bolivarianism into Chávismo served several purposes. First, it provided historical **legitimacy** to Chávez's movement by linking it to one of Venezuela's most revered figures. Second, it allowed him to frame his policies – such as nationalizing key industries and redistributing wealth – as part of a broader struggle for national sovereignty against foreign (especially US) interference. Finally, Bolivarianism helped Chávez differentiate Chávismo from other left-wing movements in Latin America by grounding it in Venezuelan history rather than Marxist theory alone.

One of the key debates surrounding Chávismo is whether it should be classified as a revolutionary movement or merely as an example of populism. While both populism and revolution share certain characteristics – such as emerging during periods of crisis and mobilizing large numbers of people – they are distinct phenomena:

Populism is generally understood as a rhetorical strategy that occurs outside established institutions. Populist leaders claim to represent 'the people' against corrupt elites but do not necessarily seek to overthrow existing political systems entirely; instead, they often aim to reform or renew those systems from within. **Revolution**, on the other hand, involves more fundamental changes to a country's political and social order. Revolutionary movements seek not just reform but a complete break from the past.

Chávez often described his movement as revolutionary rather than populist. He saw himself as leading Venezuela toward socialism through what he called the 'Bolivarian Revolution.' This revolution aimed not only at redistributing wealth but also at transforming Venezuela's political system from a liberal representative democracy into what he called 'participatory democracy.' Under this model, power would be devolved to local communes where ordinary citizens could have

direct input into decision-making processes.

Many scholars argue that Chávismo did indeed have revolutionary characteristics – particularly its emphasis on mass mobilization and its efforts to create new forms of governance outside traditional liberal democratic institutions. For example, Chávez introduced mechanisms such as referendums and communal councils that allowed citizens greater participation in politics than under previous regimes.

However, other scholars are more skeptical about whether Chávismo truly constitutes a revolution rather than simply an extreme form of populism. They point out that while Chávez introduced significant changes – such as nationalizing industries like oil – he did not dismantle Venezuela's capitalist system entirely, nor did he abolish private property rights altogether (at least not initially). Moreover, while Chávez spoke frequently about socialism after 2005 (when he formally declared himself a socialist), there was little evidence before then that he intended Venezuela's economy or society to undergo radical transformation.

As its main ideologue, Chávez pushed for **authoritarian collaboration** and even **authoritarian regionalism** by creating the *Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America* (ALBA), founded in 2004. ALBA is a regional bloc that promotes social, political, and economic cooperation among its member states, with a focus on socialist principles and anti-imperialism. It was created as an alternative to US-backed free trade agreements, emphasizing solidarity and mutual aid among Latin American and Caribbean nations. ALBA's initiatives include cooperation in areas such as healthcare, education, and energy, with Venezuela providing subsidized oil to member countries through programs like *Petro-Caribe*. In particular, they were a lifeline for Cuba.

The decline of Chávismo can be traced to several key factors following his illness (cancer) and finally death in 2013 at the age of 58 (Parraga 2013). Chávez's successor, Nicolás Maduro, struggled to maintain the same level of popular support due to his lack of charisma and the worsening economic crisis. (Arenas 2016: Smilde 2015) Under Maduro's rule, Venezuela experienced hyperinflation, widespread poverty, and a sharp decline in oil revenues, which had been the backbone of the Chávista economic model. These economic difficulties severely undermined the government's ability to fund social programs that were central to maintaining popular support. At the international level, it has diminished Venezuela's **soft power** and ability to push for **regime promotion** abroad.

Additionally, Maduro held on to power through electoral fraud and appalling human rights abuses, further eroding domestic and **external legitimacy**. Protests against his rule met with violent **repression**, contributing to growing discontent among Venezuelans and deepening the country's political polarization. Still, Maduro has proved to be an adaptable autocrat, surviving coup and assassination attempts. (Smilde 2015; Freeman 2023)

Despite these challenges, Chávismo has not completely disappeared. Maduro continues to cling to power with support from international allies like Russia and China. In the 2024 presidential election, evidence of fraud surfaced again as opposition candidate Edmundo González Urrutia claimed victory but was denied by the government-controlled *National Electoral Council* (CNE), which declared Maduro the winner. This has led to ongoing protests and further international condemnation. Today, Chávismo survives more as an ideology for grasping political power than as a vibrant political worldview with widespread grassroots support. (Freeman 2023)

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Box 3.9 Sino-Soviet Split

When brothers fight to the death, a stranger inherits their father's estate.
– African proverb

The split between the USSR and China that started in the 1950s was one of the main events in the Cold War period, marking the biggest split within the communist world after Yugoslav leader Tito's 'No' to Stalin in 1948.

The split was initiated by the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and the de-Stalinization processes in the USSR by Nikita Khrushchev (cf. Box 3.4). Due to different interpretations of the true essence of Marxism-Leninism, the USSR's renunciation of Stalinism and Khrushchev's propagation of peaceful coexistence with the capitalist West (which meant the end of the idea of world revolution), Chairman Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) denounced the USSR as a revisionist country (Lüthi 2008; Li 2012).

There was also a clear struggle to gain political and economic influence in the developing world which was played out in the various liberation struggles against neo-colonial and colonial rulers. Both countries jockeyed to maintain or gain power over the global communist movement (cf. **regime promotion**).

Crucially, one should also not disregard the ambivalent and delayed support of Stalin for Mao and the contradictory 'advice' of the Soviet regime during the Chinese Civil War once the (unlikely but pragmatic) cooperation between the Communists and the *Kuomintang* (國民黨 – *Guómíndǎng*) ended with the conclusion of WWII (Lüthi 2008; Li 2012; Li & Xia 2018).

The 'perpetual revolution' advocated by Mao led to the denunciation of more moderate elements within the CCP, while he also went on and *"explicitly associated the Soviets with his domestic ideological enemies and viewed them as essentially the same threat"* (Ringger 2023: 108). Especially since the early 1960s, Mao began a struggle against domestic enemies, while *"the struggle against domestic ideological revisionism merged with his battle against its counterpart in the policy of the socialist camp toward imperialism"* (Lüthi 2008: 2).

The Sino-Soviet split was primarily driven by Mao Zedong's ideological struggle against internal opposition (**personalization**) and his efforts to assert China's leadership within the socialist camp, as well as the broader geopolitical rivalry between China and the Soviet Union over influence in the developing world (Lüthi 2008; Ringger 2023). Mao's radical ideological positions, such as his rejection of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization policies and his accusations of Soviet 'revisionism,' were central to the conflict. These positions were not only aimed at distinguishing China from the USSR but also served Mao's domestic agenda, where he equated Soviet policies with his internal ideological opponents, consolidating his control through **purges** and radical campaigns like the 'Great Leap Forward' (Ringger 2023; Lüthi 2008).

The split was unusual because it involved two revolutionary states in open conflict, challenging the expectation that such states would unite against 'reactionary' powers (Kissinger 1999; Halliday 1999). It demonstrated that ideological differences when combined with competing national interests and internal struggles, could fracture even ostensibly united socialist movements (Ringger 2023: 107).

In addition, many foreign policy issues widened the Sino-Soviet split: the Chinese border struggles with India and China's bombing of the *Kinmen* archipelago (金門 sometimes *Jinmen* or *Quemoy* – cf. the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis) are just a few examples. The most serious conflict occurred in 1969 on the Ussuri River (Zhenbao/Damansky Island).

The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict of 1969 on the Ussuri River was a series of violent clashes between the USSR and the PRC, rooted in territorial disputes and ideological rivalry. The conflict began on 2 March 1969, when Chinese troops ambushed Soviet border guards near Zhenbao/Damansky Island, leading to heavy casualties. A second major clash occurred on 15 March with the Soviets responding with overwhelming force. Both sides escalated militarily, raising fears of full-scale war, including potential nuclear strikes. The crisis was de-escalated after a ceasefire was negotiated in September 1969 by Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai.

After Mao's death, the relations between the USSR and the PRC became more pragmatic, but the Sino-Soviet split remains one of the most important elements of the Cold War period and can truly be considered a 'cold war' within the communist world (Lüthi 2008).

One significant outcome of the Sino-Soviet split was the unexpected rapprochement between China and the US, the leading capitalist power since WWII. Following the split, the US, under President Richard Nixon, sought closer ties with China to isolate the Soviet Union further. This shift culminated in China's admission to the United Nations in 1971, where it replaced the Republic of China (Taiwan) as a permanent member of the Security Council. The rapprochement also laid the groundwork for future economic cooperation between the US and China, which, combined with Deng Xiaoping's market reforms, fueled China's economic and political rise. This rise has since evolved into today's geopolitical and economic rivalry between the two nations. Thus, the Sino-Soviet split had far-reaching, unintended consequences that continue to shape global politics and power dynamics in the twenty-first century.

How to cite:

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the rentier state include, e.g., Weyland (2009) and Bjorvatn & Naghavi (2011) or the special issue of the *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* on rentierism edited by Yamada & Hertog (2020). An influential contribution to the tendency or resource-dependent rentier states toward authoritarian governments was provided by Wantchekon (2002).

However, distributing rents is not limited to 'capitalist autocracies.' As showed by Hillman & Schnytzer (1986), even in the Soviet economy, where the government had a monopoly on economic activity and the opportunity to buy goods in the official market was limited, officials had a strong incentive to engage in rent-seeking behavior in order to gain access to the resources controlled by the state. Illegal economic activities, such as bribery, black market trade, and embezzlement, were common ways for officials to extract resources from the economy for their own benefit. A similar argument was made by e.g. Belova & Gregory (2002) and Anderson & Boettke (1997). On the other hand, Nell (2011: 597) argued that it was only Perestroika that *"infused the [Soviet] system with rent-seeking and triggered the collapse of the planned economy."*

While rent-seeking is typically seen as negative, several authors, such as Bhagwati & Srinivasan (1980) and Samuels (1992: 111), challenge the widespread assumption that rent-seeking always leads to a social loss; instead, they suggest that rent-seeking theory's exclusive focus on negative or unproductive activities might overlook the potential positive contributions that certain behaviors which can be seen as rent-seeking (e.g., patents or other legal protections to gain exclusive rights to inventions) can make to the economy. Critics argue that a more nuanced approach is needed to differentiate between harmful and beneficial forms of rent-seeking and to consider the broader economic context in which these activities occur. In some cases, they argue, rent-seeking activities might help allocate resources more efficiently.

ORIGIN The theory of rent dates back to the early nineteenth century and was developed by economists Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo, who understood rent as an excess payment above the cost of production that owners of a resource in limited supply earn. In the words of Henry George, another nineteenth-century economist, rent is a form of unearned increment or income (Lackman 1976). The concept of rent-seeking originated in economics in the 1960s and 1970s and is closely connected with the development of public choice theory, regulation theory, game theory, and neoclassical economy. The systematic research on rent-seeking dates back to the seminal article by Tullock (1967), one of the major proponents of the Virginia School of political economy. In his article, Tullock elaborated on the previous work of Harberger (1954) and his concept of the deadweight loss and the Harberger triangle; however, the authorship of the term rent-seeking is attributed to Krueger (1974), who was unaware of Tullock's article (Tollison 2004).

According to Harberger, the deadweight loss occurs when the market is not operating efficiently and resources are wasted. The Harberger triangle is associated with government intervention in a perfect market and represents the loss of welfare that occurs due to distortions such as price floors, caps, taxes, tariffs, or quotas. In his article, Tullock demonstrated that various government interventions, monopoly costs, or mere theft create a Harberger triangle representing the loss of economic welfare that occurs when resources are diverted away from productive uses. However, Tullock also pointed out that the loss from rent-seeking is much larger than the deadweight loss because resources are not only diverted away from productive uses, but they also create further costs that others must pay in the economy.

A number of authors have contributed to the development of the theory of rent-seeking, such as Buchanan (1980), Tollison (1982; 2012), Hillman (Hillman & Riley 1989; Hillman & Schnytzer 1986), Appelbaum & Katz (1986; 1987), McChesney (1997), and many others.

LITERATURE Congleton et al. (2008) edited an authoritative two-volume compendium providing an excellent overview of theoretical debates as well as applied research on rent-seeking. Another large companion edited by Congleton & Hillman (2015) contains chapters on economic modeling of rent-seeking as well as a number of applications of theoretical models in different social and cultural contexts.

CLASSIFICATIONS There is no generally accepted typology of rent-seeking; however, a number of scholars have developed several economic models of rent-seeking, such as monopoly rent-seeking (Jadlow 1985), competitive rent-seeking (Krueger 1974), or efficient rent-seeking (Tullock 1980). A major contribution to the typologization of rent-seeking was provided by McChesney (1997), who claimed that politicians involved in rent-seeking may either extract rents they created or they can politically extort rents created by private enterprises (see also: Beck et al. 1992). In political science, modeling or typologizing rent-seeking is relatively rare. One of a few examples in this regard is Bussell (2013), who suggests focusing on the distribution of rents among different types of actors (high-, mid-, and low-level politicians and bureaucrats).

MEASUREMENT Like other phenomena based on informal practices, which are hardly observable or unobservable, rent-seeking is also difficult to measure. From the economic point of view, it is the social cost of rent-seeking, which can be measured. A general overview of measuring social costs of rent-seeking is provided by Hillman (2013: 311-317) or del Rosal (2011).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Most studies on rent-seeking are based on quantitative methodologies and modeling. Fewer studies follow the qualitative methodologies and aim at a narrative description of rent-seeking activities.



EXAMPLES Using a rent-seeking approach, Meissner (2011) analyzed the political system in Azerbaijan. Instead of measuring social costs, he demonstrates how the ruling elite embezzles public funds from the oil industry and other economic sectors.

IMPACT ON POLICY Rent-seeking has a significant impact on policy outcomes, potentially leading to inefficient and inequitable policies that benefit specific groups at the expense of the broader public. For example, when businesses lobby for tax breaks, subsidies, or other preferential treatment, they may divert resources from productive activities to lobbying activities. Rent-seeking by a particular industry can result in policies that protect that industry from competition, ultimately leading to higher prices and reduced innovation, inefficient allocation of resources and can ultimately harm economic growth and undermine support for democratic political regimes. In dictatorships, due to less transparency and accountability, rent-seeking activities can go unchecked, leading to even greater distortions in policy outcomes; it can lead to policies that benefit those in power or their cronies at the expense of the broader public. On the other hand, rent-seeking can also be used by those in power in order to compensate certain groups that are not part of the ruling elite. Case studies on the impact of rent-seeking on individual policies are provided, e.g., by Tan (2008) or Kwon (2015).

NEW FRONTIERS While a large portion of the rent-seeking literature focuses on the role of institutions (both formal and informal) in rent-seeking activities, significantly less is known about how culture affects rent-seeking. A pioneering study in this regard is Choi & Storr (2019: 104), who explore *"how culture affects the nature and level of rent seeking that a society pursues, and whether institutional shifts can strengthen or break down a culture of rent seeking."*

How to cite:

Kopeček, Vincenc, 2025. Rent-seeking, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism*, Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Box 3.10 Perestroika & Glasnost

Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien
Das Bessere ist des Guten Feind
Lepsze jest wrogiem dobrego
– French, German and Polish version of *'Leave well (enough) alone'*

After the death of Leonid I. Brezhnev in 1982, the elite of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) was faced with large contradictions and economic stagnation (the so-called 'Эпóха застóя' – *Epókha zastóya* or 'epoch of standstill'). Ideological splits within the Party leadership began to emerge. The Politburo (Box 8.4), after Brezhnev, was still dominated by older men, exemplified by the elections of Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko to head the USSR (cf. Gerontocracy in Box 1.12). In spite of changes in leadership, the Soviet economy was not able to recover from the economic malaise of the 1970s.

Mikhail S. Gorbachev was elected as secretary-general of the CPSU in 1985 (its *de facto* leader) and later (also) as the head of the USRR in 1988 (chairman of the *Presidium of the Supreme Soviet* – a formal position, with the presidium acting as the collective head of state under both the 1936 and 1977 Soviet constitutions). He focused his political program on liberalization and democratization reforms. Gorbachev launched four related reforms: *Uskorenie* (ускорение) – acceleration of reforms; the *Perestroika* (перестройка) – political and economic reforms, aimed at liberalization and commercialization of the economy; *Glasnost* (гласность – 'openness' or 'transparency') and *Demokratizatsiya* (демократизация), the intra-party democratization of the communist party electoral system with multiple candidates but without abolishing the monopoly of the party rule.

Perestroika was based on several important economic and political reforms. In 1987, the *Law on State Enterprises* was adopted, and it allowed enterprises to determine the output levels based on demand and the production of other enterprises. According to a decree from 1986, collective farms were now free to set the prices for their above-quota products higher than official prices. The *Law on Cooperatives*, implemented in 1988, for the first time, after the abolishment of the *New Economic Policy* (launched by Lenin from 1921 to 1928 as a temporary measure after the wars) that private ownership was allowed again for businesses in services, manufacturing and trade sectors (Dasai 1989: 32-43).

Glasnost, the second crucial new direction launched by Gorbachev in the mid-1980s, encompassed a set of policy changes aimed at liberalizing the political system, and more media freedom was granted. Its primary aim was to increase transparency in government and society, reduce **censorship**, and encourage public discussion of political, social, and economic issues. Gorbachev wanted more involvement of citizens in political affairs and also political liberalization fostering a freer flow of information.

The success and legacy of these reforms are still debated today. Gorbachev's reforms seriously undermined the existing *nomenklatura* (Box 1.11) recruiting system – Gorbachev wanted to change the bureaucratic obstacles and general ways of operating the clogged state machinery while also attempting to replace the ruling party elite (Hill & Löwenhardt 1991). Dimitrov claimed that Gorbachev's reforms, specifically Glasnost and Perestroika, have actually *"revealed to the general public that communism was moribund both as an economic system and as a political system"* (Dimitrov 2013: 25-26). Accordingly, this has led to an ideological delegitimization of the entire communist political-economic institutional arrangement.

Holmes (2013) claimed that the lasting influence of Perestroika was manifested in the economic boom in



the early 2000s and the rise of the domestic bourgeoisie in Russia, citing Barrington Moore, that if democracy was intended in Russia, then market reforms had to be implemented. Moreover, she also claims that Gorbachev's moves to introduce Perestroika were not the crucial ones that contributed to the disintegration of the USSR.

Contrary to these positions, Archie Brown (2022) argued that there had been a clear intention in Gorbachev's reforms. He claimed that the *"dismantling of the Soviet system was not an unintended consequence of Gorbachev's perestroika, as is too often assumed. It had become, rather, a conscious goal for Gorbachev, as his conception of what needed to be changed became more far-reaching"* (Brown 2022: 133). Although these claims have been rather rare among scholars, a shared view has been expressed by Di Palma that the reforms, which were initially aimed to save communism, actually *"triggered or perhaps accelerated a vast array of mechanisms that led to the end of a certain form of communism"* (Di Palma 2019: 2).

Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms were polarizing, celebrated abroad but criticized in Russia. Domestically, Glasnost exposed **systemic corruption** and historical abuses, shattering trust in Soviet institutions, while Perestroika caused economic chaos, shortages, and plummeting living standards. Many Russians blamed Gorbachev for the USSR's collapse and the hardships of the 1990s, viewing him as a leader who weakened Soviet power without securing stability. Among elites, his reforms faced resistance from conservatives, fearing loss of power and criticism from reformists for being too cautious.

Internationally, 'Gorby' was praised as a visionary who ended the Cold War peacefully, reduced nuclear tensions, and allowed Eastern Europe to democratize. Western leaders admired his embrace of democratic values and economic liberalization. However, in former Soviet republics, opinions were mixed; some saw him as a liberator, others as responsible for post-Soviet chaos. His legacy reflects success as a global statesman but failure as a domestic reformer.

A specific feature of the legacy of the political and economic reforms in the USSR has been their influence on the trajectory of the CCP and its political-economic system. In understanding today's developments, a comparison between China and the Soviet Union appears. Namely, China introduced market reforms (a form of Perestroika) even before the Soviet Union but has kept the monopoly power of the CCP intact and never introduced any sort of reform resembling Glasnost. China, after 1989 and the Tiananmen Square massacre, tightened its political control, as it did again after 2012 (Halper 2010; McGregor 2012, Kołodko 2021). Rupprecht has argued that the ideas of Gorbachev and Deng Xiaoping were similar in following the trends of 'market socialism.' However, the structural conditions were very different – in the USSR, they led to economic collapse, while in China, they led to an economic boom (Rupprecht 2023).

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Repression

The guerrilla is the fish.
The people are the sea.
If you cannot catch the fish,
you have to drain the sea.
– Guatemalan President General J.E. Rios Montt

You killed my ma, you killed my pa, I'll still vote for you!
– Unofficial electoral slogan for Liberian warlord and president Charles Taylor, 1997

Repression is difficult the theorize and compare across regime types. While there is a wide consensus that democracies are less repressive – their respect for political, economic and civil liberties is one defining aspect – dictatorships exhibit much variation across regime types, as well as through time. The comparative endeavor becomes even more complicated as scholars apply different definitions of repression, and its manifestation is also greatly contextual (cf. Box 5.8 – regimes & repertoires).

DEFINITION As mentioned, the relation between regime type and repression is not linear, nor is the concept of repression unambiguous. N. Rost (2011) captures the complex overlap between 'democraticness' and 'non-repressiveness' aptly: *"While repression is usually reduced as the level of democracy increases, democracy and non-repressiveness are conceptually and empirically distinct phenomena. Civil liberties and political rights may be suppressed without widespread violations of the most basic human rights. (…) the level of repression varies greatly in the most authoritarian regimes. The level of personal integrity rights violations ranges from absent and almost absent to widespread in the least democratic countries. Democracy – political rights and civil liberties – is often more a matter of political institutions, whereas repression is more a matter of government strategy and the behavior of its armed forces."* (Rost: 2011: 421-422).

If repression is reduced to its narrow definition, its scope is limited to personal integrity violations: extrajudicial killings, torture or similar physical abuse, disappearances, and political imprisonment (Wood & Gibney 2010: 369). This narrow definition is often synonymous with 'state terror.' Others like C. Tilly have defined repression more broadly as "*actions that increase the costs of protest*" (Tilly 1978), therefore including restrictions on civil liberties, or even surveillance/spying, and anti-riot policing.

Jennifer Earl (2003; 2011: 262) was one of the first to notice that most definitions either explicitly or implicitly focus on state action. She is one of the few scholars who argue that repression should not be limited to state action but should include private actors as well. Earl (2011: 263) then proposes to rephrase Tilly's definition of repression as: *"state or private action meant to prevent, control, or constrain non-institutional, collective action (e.g, protest), including its initiation."* Earl's broad, consensual approach allows for many nuances in the study of repression: elements such as 'fear among protesters from invigilation' or 'intimidation by counter-manifestations.' Davenport (2007b) distinguishes between 'restrictions' that curtail coordination among protesters and 'violence' (physical integrity rights violations) that reduce the willingness of protesters (through fear and intimidation).

SEE ALSO Within the frame of repression, its targets are usually the opposition and the population as a whole. Technically, repression that targets regime actors would fall under **coup-proofing** and **purges**. Alternatively, any action that divides the opposition by offering some fractions among them access to state rents in exchange for regime loyalty or breaking ranks with their peers is called **co-optation**, and technically, this falls under non-coercive repression (see below). A specific subtype of psychological repression would be **propaganda** and the **personality cult**. While these overlap, the onslaught of propaganda and the relentless demand of loyalty rituals, either to a ruling ideology or to the leader personally, create a situation where everybody either believes or pretends, making it very hard to trust fellow citizens for fear of denouncement. (Guriev & Treisman 2022)

CLASSIFICATIONS Typologies of repression have been as varied as their definitions: from a mere continuum of 'repressiveness' that orders various actions of political violence along their intensiveness, according to their basic goals (deterrence, incapacitation, and surveillance), etc. (Oliver 2008).

Bove et al. distinguish between 'vertical' repression (i.e., against citizens) and 'horizontal' repression (i.e. against elites). Their model identifies the underlying forces explaining the optimal mix between citizens' coercion, purges of elites, and public goods. *"On the one hand, the elites ought to be compensated by the dictator, thus making it costly to maintain a large body of inner supporters. On the other hand, elites are useful to the ruler since they increase the grip of the ruler on the population and therefore enhance his coercive ability. The dictator is thus facing a trade-off between purging the elites and thereby reducing their co-optation costs by having a smaller group of supporters on the one hand, and enhancing his coercive capacity on the population by reducing people's collective action capacity, on the other hand."* (Bove et al. 2017).

M.M. Ferree (2005: 141) rephrases types of repression in gendered terms. Ferree refers to 'hard' (male-gendered) government repression and 'soft' repression, encompassing different non-violent levels of civil society repression like micro-level silencing, meso-level stigma, and macro-level ridicule. However, putting all government repression in one basket of 'hard' repression does not help comparative research (Tanneberg 2020: 22).



Table 3.2 – J. Earl's Typology of Repression

Repressive Actor	**Coercion**		**Channeling**	
	Observable	**Unobserved**	**Observable**	**Unobserved**
Regime actors	Extrajudicial killings, arrests, imprisonment, torture, show trials, public executions, etc.	Surveillance, disappearances, blackmail, 'accidents,' harassment, etc.	Civil and political rights restrictions, censorship laws, propaganda, personality cults, etc.	Co-optation (bribing, patronage), special NGO regulations or taxation, anti-corruption laws, etc.
Paramilitary organization, militia or youth movement	Roadblocks, mass violence, ethnic cleansing, social banditry, strike-breaking, intimidation, etc.	Voter intimidation, harassment, etc.	Indoctrination	Club benefits, permission to plunder, etc.
Privileged (ethnic) group(s)	Counter-demonstrations, intercommunal violence, lynching, etc.	Discrimination of other groups, informants, denunciations, etc.	–	–

Sources: Earl 2003; 2011; Van den Bosch 2021.

J. Earl's (2003) typology classifies repression according to the nature of the repressive actor, whether the action is 'coercive' or 'channeling' and whether the repression is 'observable' or 'covert.' Coercive means are linked with violations of physical integrity, while channeling techniques are more structural methods to prevent contestation or to force it into a framework of interactions that can be more easily monitored or controlled. Observable methods are meant to be seen in order to dissuade others from organizing protests; unobserved methods are the opposite, meaning repressive actors will make an effort to keep them under cover.

Table 3.2 gives an overview of the most common agents and their respective repressive toolkits. The list of methods is far from exhaustive but serves to illustrate the complexity of this research object.

EXAMPLES Table 3.2 shows that regime actors have the most repression tools at their disposal due to their higher level of organization, instrumentalization of state organs and bureaucracy, control over military and police structures, as well as through their access to state funds. At the observable, coercive end, there is a long list of physical integrity violations of individuals and groups that are deemed a threat or a nuisance to the powerholders. With unobserved coercion, different state actors engage in surveillance (Box 3.11) and careful elimination, leaving doubts about the fate of the deceased or disappeared. Under this frame, we also find low-level harassment (named *Zersetsung* (corrosion) by the East German *Stasi*) that was aimed to grind down or distract dissidents from making them cease their political activities (Guriev & Treisman 2022). Such harassment included actions such as threatening letters and phone calls, disconnecting phones, heating, water or other appliances, breaking property (targeted vandalism), rearranging or stealing possessions when targets leave the house, killing pets, spreading awful rumors in the community, frequent searches, and bogus short-term arrests and fines (e.g., for speeding, being drunk, or fraud).

As powerholders, regime actors also have the most options when making laws to circumvent political, economic and civil rights. More subtly, they can wield repressive bureaucratic frames (forced registration, additional taxation, audits, withholding permits), like forcing NGOs to register as 'foreign agents' if they accept foreign funding is an excellent way to disrupt their organization. Their access to state funds allows them to co-opt (selected) opposition groups in order to impede the formation of large, dangerous coalitions.

Semi-regime actors include **paramilitary organizations**, militias but also **youth movements** or other groupings of followers (e.g., **mercenaries**). Those with a military component can be used for **coup-proofing** to balance the regular armed forces, but all such organizations can serve to bind and indirectly enlist groups of (young) men and women (sometimes even children – cf. Box 8.5 on child soldiers) to serve and protect the regime. Wherever these groups have a strong presence, they can be instrumentalized to provide the manpower to counter manifestations and boost up surveillance, or the regime can just bluntly empower them to terrorize and intimidate the population, especially during elections. Sometimes, their indirect (unobserved) link to the power holders allows the regime to escape blame for any excesses and atrocities committed by such groups. In some cases, these groups are 'paid' with plunder rights in the territories they occupy – like in Liberia under Charles Taylor in the 1990s, who offered such incentives to motivate his child soldiers to take frontline assignments (Gerdes 2013: 68).

The last category of privileged (ethnic) groups has a looser affiliation with the ruling power, sharing affinity and descent, but most of its members are not tied directly to the ruling elites. As the home base of the regime's power, they benefit through investments and prestige, redirected from the power center to their region. Such groups (and their diasporas) can more easily be mobilized as the ruling elite networks have some roots among these communities. They can be fierce defenders of the regime when it is threatened since regime change holds no advantages for them.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE & LITERATURE The topic of repression is fully entwined with a regime's ability to uphold authoritarian control over its population. However, leadership motivations, checks on policy-making, feasibility, and expected consequences are but a few variables that make detailed comparisons over time and space near impossible. When adding the other dimensions, such as the groups that contest regimes and third parties (both domestic and international), the picture becomes very complex indeed.

Motivation Starkly contested in the literature is the question of why governments repress. Davenport (2007a/b), Vreeland (2008) and Conway (2015) explain that repression is likely when regime power is challenged – so repression may be considered a pre-emptive or reactionary practice. The second approach denotes a switch of strategies (a shift from channeling to coercive techniques, cf. Earl's typology in Table 3.2), meaning that autocracies resort to coercion when co-optation does no longer suffice (Wintrobe 2000; Desai et al. 2007).

Both approaches put forward 'regime survival' as the main explanation for repression in autocracies, the effect when regimes perceive their authority is threatened. Of course, repression has other causes: during the **personalization** phases, repression usually increases and targets regime insiders (cf. **coup-proofing**). Phases of **succession** or **elections** also influence repression patterns. Boudreau (2005) finds that depending on their capabilities, states have to find a trade-off when to repress challengers and when to use their power to extend state hegemony.

Restraint Threat perception changes over time as regime capabilities themselves change. Regimes in their takeover phase may thus act very differently from those that are consolidating and those that are established.

V. Boudreau (2005) investigates the link between the degree of violence, its relationship to central state objectives, and the size of the social challenge. He identified match-up problems between the amount of state repression *vis-à-vis* the level of threat emanating from the challenger. He proposes to distinguish between two elements of power: 'breadth' – "how broadly diffused are forces across time and space?" and 'depth' – "how extensively, or deeply does the force control society." This dichotomy of power should be applied to the regime and challenger alike. Both elements of power are treated as broad categories (Boudreau 2005: 37, 39, 41), and the threat of challengers is most pressing when there is a mismatch between the power of the two actors. Thus, weak and insular states are expected to react to threats to their rule disproportionally. Keremoğlu et al. (2022) confirm such disproportional responses but find that regimes overreact when their regime legitimacy is challenged. Yuen and Cheng (2017) study the reverse image of authoritarian tolerance (attrition) in the case of Hong Kong.

Wallace (2013) finds evidence for an urban bias as well when it comes to threat perception. Christensen (2018) confirms this but nuances that while it is true that regimes are less concerned with rural protest, they are similarly less concerned with the backlash of lethal repression, resulting in more casualties. Here is evidence that younger populations are more subjected to repression (Nordås & Davenport 2013; Shadmehr & Haschke 2016). Platteau et al. (2018) discover a bias in favor of wealthy populations. This partly accounts for the higher levels of state repression under **personalist rule** compared to collegial authoritarian regimes. The former even reacted to international **sanctions** by increasing repression (Escribà-Folch 2012). Frantz et al. (2020b) provide statistical data that higher levels of **personalization** match an increase in repression and, thus, a decrease in respect for **human rights**.

Control over one's followers also matters: For instance, Jerry Rawling's (first) takeover in Ghana in June 1979 was quite violent, executing eight senior army, air force and naval officers (including three former heads of state), but most arrests were transmuted into prison sentences once his **junta** established some control over its followers (the regular rank-and-file of the Ghanaian Army) in the months that followed. His second takeover in 1981 was initially also marred by arbitrary killings, but these stopped after mid-1983 for the same reasons.

Regime type matters as well: From an analysis of 137 countries from 1976 to 1996, C. Davenport (2007b: 500) finds that **single-party regimes** *"are consistently the least repressive form of autocracy: that is, they are less likely to restrict civil liberties and violate personal integrity. In comparison, military governments are less repressive than other forms of autocracy when civil liberties restrictions are considered, but they are more repressive than other forms of autocracy when violent activities such as torture and mass killing are considered."* This has been explained that in **military regimes,** the powerholders from the armed forces undergo lethal training, impose self-isolation with indoctrination, and have direct access to weaponry, and single parties are more able to extend patronage and co-opt other groups, respectively.

Frantz and Kendall-Taylor (2014) nuance these findings and, like Gerschewski (2013), treat repression and **co-optation** as communicating vessels (cf. three pillars of stability). They provide statistical evidence that electoral regimes, which rely more on co-optation through the use of political parties and a legislature, supplement such control measures with targeted coerced repression. With better informa-



tion, autocrats thus target the specific individuals who pose the greatest threat to their rule and reduce their use of more indiscriminate repression through societal restrictions on speech and assembly rights, which have the potential to fuel popular discontent. Tanneberg (2020) builds upon these findings and develops his own model.

Threat perception is also higher for developing countries with an electoral component. (Regan & Henderson 2002) This overlaps with the findings for **anocracies** that similarly seem to be more politically repressive due to the combination of their lower state capabilities and open political landscape. In contrast, in 'closed' regimes, the population ends up rendered cowed and quiescent due to successful intimidation by the state apparatus.

Democracies, in contrast, are not only institutionally restrained to use repression, but democratic norms also favor dialogue when faced with opposition. Democracies are also less likely to perceive domestic dissent as a threat (Davenport 1999; Carey 2006) and have a lower willingness and opportunity to engage in repressive behavior when faced with contention (Poe et al. 1999: 293).

Among regime types, Jessica Weeks' 'audience costs' (see Box 7.1) is a theoretical frame that can account for measuring the level of restraint present (or not) in autocratic decision-making. In addition, there are costs from the international arena as well such as sanctions or political isolation (cf. Box 3.12 on the 'Mogadishu Line'). International **sanctions** and resulting budget constraints also influence a dictatorship's decision to resort to repression (Wood 2008; Escribà-Folch 2012) as funds for co-optation dissipate.

Contexts To paraphrase C. Tilly (2005: 222): *"It makes little sense to treat repression as something that authorities do by themselves and mobilization as something that dissidents do by themselves."* Moreover, that is why it is key to study the interrelation of these two elements. The perceptions of protesters matter as well. For instance, perceptions of ruler vulnerability can affect the relationship between state repression and collective action. Protesters might bear greater risks if they perceive that the regime could be overthrown or when the state is perceived as militarily weak. (Goodwin 2001: 26; Ortiz 2013: 291)

The timing of repression also matters beyond regime life cycles, and cyclical elections play an important role in this: in the months before **elections,** opposition candidates and potential challengers are targeted with gusto, but at the same time, incumbents refrain from oppressing ordinary voters, which support rulers aim to solicit (Bhasin & Gandhi 2013). Also, right after autocratic leadership **transitions,** some new powerholders increase repression to establish their reputation (Licht & Allen 2018).

Few regimes operate in isolation, and when, for instance, civil conflict breaks out in a neighboring country, this geographic proximity of unrest will solicit preventive repression at home to stop emerging rebellion in its tracks (Danneman & Hencken Ritter 2014). Even natural disasters can trigger preventive repression for the same reasons (Wood & Wright 2016). Grasse et al. (2021) posit proof for 'opportunistic repression' during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effectiveness Does repression actually work? The debate rages on. Hultquist (2013) found that collective repression is more cost-effective and easier to impose than selective repression. For the former, states simply need to finance security forces to monitor if citizens are adhering to the policies designed to increase the cost of dissent (such as limits on speech and mobility); for the latter, targeted violent repression requires sophisticated **intelligence services** (Conway 2015: 28). Therefore, wealthy states will be able to repress more selectively than poor states. (Hultquist 2013) Since most states cannot distinguish between actual insurgents, their supporters, and neutral civilians, and they must respond somehow, they rely on what they may consider to be the next best thing: collectively targeting the rebel recruitment pool. (Hultquist 2013: 7)

In any case, Escribà-Folch (2013) offers systemic evidence that repression does work. In his research, he limits repression to political terror and civil rights restrictions – so (only) as observable coercion and channeling by state actors according to Earl's classification in Table 3.2. Overt channeling of mobilization through civil rights restrictions proves to be more effective as it prevents both regular (non-violent) **ousters** and irregular and violent **exits**. Observable coercion (political terror), when applied selectively, can only reduce the likelihood of non-violent exits and coups. When violent repression is used to counter violent contestation, it leads to the escalation of protests and elite defections. It is not effective against uprisings once they have started (Escribà-Folch 2013: 556-557).

Zhukov (2023) takes the violent threshold approach to new heights and finds comparative evidence from Chechnya and other subnational conflicts that extreme, mass violence is effective in deterring rebellions but that, luckily, not all states have the stomach nor resources to apply state terror on such scale – cf. Box 3.12 on the 'Mogadishu Line.'

Nonetheless, even random violence can be effective in some cases. F. Herreros explains why dictatorships resort to such practices. He found that random political violence against citizens is less costly – instead of gathering evidence, it can be obtained by torture or falsified – and can be effective in deterring groups from mobilizing. Such arbitrary terror must be designed in such a way that it does not look random. As soon as the oppressed realize there is no advantage in *not* mobilizing (since deference will not protect them), this tactic ceases to be effective (Herreros 2006; Rozenas & Zhukov 2019).

Consequences Violence begets violence, and harsh state repression and violent contestation are locked in a positive feedback loop with a strong tendency to escalate in the short run, but not indefinitely. The most obvious barrier is the limited pool of potential protesters and the rising costs of coordination and communication once the group of protesters becomes too large (Carey 2006: 4). Every form of repression (whatever the motivation) comes at a

price, both in the form of 'audience costs' or the reaction of the population as a whole in response to state repression. Repression can have a backlash and fuel more protests (e.g., Martin 2007; Schulte & Steinert 2023), and more political violence increases coup probability (e.g., Bove & Rivera 2015) – while coups themselves increase state repression in their aftermath (Lachapelle 2020).

To summarize, repression has a long scholarly history that is difficult to navigate, but some recent works provide excellent overviews of the literature and its evolution. Dag Tanneberg (2020) explores how regimes have optimized the combination of vertical and horizontal repression (or against the population and fellow elites) in line with M. **Svolik**'s continuous measure of regimes and his distinction between 'authoritarian control' and 'authoritarian power-sharing.' Regimes aim to strike an optimal balance between restrictions and violence in order to prevent campaigns (sustained, mass collective action with maximalist demands for change) from emerging. Once anti-regime campaigns are set up, however, restrictions become inefficient to maintain authoritarian control. The resulting political instability from violence has repercussions for authoritarian power-sharing as elites question their loyalty when they witness the incumbent's dwindling capacity to reward supporters. In their work, *Spin Dictators* Guriev and Treisman (2022) focus on contemporary cases and track how the nature of repression has been refined over time since WWII, following the trend set by Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015). As shown in **digital authoritarianism,** the study on new and social media and their application for repression and **disinformation** are ongoing (e.g., Frantz et al. 2020a; Feldstein 2021; Earl et al. 2022).

MEASUREMENT Measuring political violence is a complex task that often requires multiple data sources and methodologies. Here are some well-known datasets commonly used for this purpose:

Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). This dataset has provided information on armed conflicts and political violence worldwide since the 1970s. It covers both state-based and non-state conflicts and includes data on conflict duration, intensity, and involved actors. UCDP also covers state repression, providing insights into governmental responses to dissent and political opposition. See: Hultquist 2015; Krause 2023; Svensson et al. 2022.

The *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project* (ACLED) collects data on political violence, including riots, protests, and armed conflicts, from various sources (Raleigh et al. 2010). It covers a wide range of countries and provides information on events, actors, and locations. For studies referring to repression and using ACLED data, see: Barceló et al. 2022; Lewis & Ives 2023.

The *Political Terror Scale* (PTS) measures state-sponsored political violence and repression. It assesses the extent to which governments engage in human rights abuses, including torture, extrajudicial killings, and political imprisonment. See: Wood & Gibney 2010; Wood et al. 2016.

The *Correlates of War Project* (COW) includes various datasets related to interstate and intrastate conflicts, providing information on the duration, intensity, and outcomes of conflicts, as well as data on the countries involved. See: Besley & Persson 2009.

The *Political Instability Task Force Dataset* (PITF). This is a US government-sponsored database on domestic political conflicts leading to **state failure**. This dataset includes information on various forms of political instability, including coups, civil wars, and insurgencies. See: Zhukov 2023; Anderton 2014.

The *Minorities at Risk Project* (MAR) focuses on tracking conflicts and political violence related to ethnic and religious minorities. It includes information on minority groups, their grievances, and various indicators related to violence. See: Gurr 2000; Caprioli & Trumbore 2003; Hug 2013.

The *Social Conflict in Africa Database* (SCAD) investigates the causes and outcomes of political conflict and protest events in Africa, offering data on demonstrations, riots, strikes, and other forms of political violence. Consult: Cullen & Salehyan 2017; Christensen 2018.

The *Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes* Data Project (NAVCO). This dataset tracks nonviolent and violent political campaigns and their outcomes, providing information on actors, tactics, and geographic locations. It is used to analyze the effectiveness of different forms of political activism in achieving goals and understanding the consequences of political campaigns. See: Chenoweth et al. 2018; Tanneberg 2020.

It must be noted that some (older) data used to measure political violence, like the *US State Department Country Reports*, used to have a tendency (during the Cold War) to bias against leftist countries (Poe et al. 2001).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Most research on the protest-repression nexus can be divided into two groups: One group uses repression as an independent variable, and the other employs repression as the dependent variable (Carey 2006). However, both variables influence and reshape each other as interdependent factors. Both are structurally constrained by each side's capabilities and resources, but in the socio-political world, perception plays an important role, too, and this is subject to change as regimes evolve (cf. Box 3.14 on lame ducks).

At the same time, local traditions of contestation and their dyads (cf. Tilly's repertoires – Box 5.8) render repression incredibly contextual with significant catalyzers emanating from the international system. The exact information on inner circle decision-making processes remains opaque and may come to light only after the regimes have broken down (Barros 2011). The same is true for protest movements. For this reason, shifting the focus away from the actors to the events (which are observable) allows their study through frames related to 'political opportunity structures' (POS) and 'transformative events' (cf. Hess & Martin 2006; Tilly 2010; Shultziner 2018). Bagozzi et al. (2021) track down the diversity of repertoires among types of regimes, also finding that, globally, repertoires of state repression are growing less diverse over time.



Delineation Defining repression and protest in clear, parsimonious terms is key to applying such concepts universally across research design. Currently, too many different approaches make it hard to merge and integrate findings and re-test their validity. Many works apply 'umbrella concepts' that combine multiple dimensions and hence carry too many attributes to relate unequivocally with any outcomes of interest (Tanneberg 2020: 18).

Quantitive bias There is definitely a bias toward coercive human rights violations because these are easier to measure and quantify than, say, voter intimidation. For this reason, statistical analysis is often a preferred method to test new hypotheses or find new general trends, but seldom is there a follow-up with qualitative works to evaluate such findings. The same goes for protests, with much more research going into violent contestation, while nonviolent forms (civil resistance) are barely integrated into the mainstream literature. (There are exceptions: Hess & Martin, 2006; Martin 2007; Kurtz & Smithey 2018; Chenoweth et al. 2017).

Causality bias For this reason, the inverted-U hypothesis – or the non-linear relationship between the level of democracy and repression, is still contested. While some studies find that both highly democratic and closed autocratic regimes tend to face less violent contestation and thus resort less to (coercive) repression, the weaker, more open regimes in the middle tend to face most (violent) protests and respond to them violently. On one side, in democracies, people still engage in protests regularly, and riots and other violent contentious actions are part of the repertoire used to confront legitimate authorities (Meyer & Tarrow 1998; Ortiz 2013: 291; Nam 2006). On the other side, autocratic states and closed regimes also have varied effects on the incidence of contentious actions. In the literature on **revolutions**, for example, scholars suggest that a regime's military infrastructure and the protester's threat perception matter (Ortiz 2013: 291).

Categorization Seldom do scholars use **categorical measures** to account for the differences in regime type, and too often, they rely on continuous measures, which sometimes incorporate 'the absence of political violence' as one of the indicators of their scales of 'democraticness.' Those who do apply categorical distinctions find robust evidence for such a differentiated approach, for example, Davenport (2007) and Escribà-Folch (2012; 2013), but most Large-N research relies on **continuous measures**.

Actor bias Not all theories of threat perception should be taken at face value: Government agencies within regimes also try to perpetuate their existence. When special security forces are put into place to protect the national executive and to control dissident groups, they usually try to maintain their status and are, therefore difficult to dissolve (cf. Davenport 1995). For example, once Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (DRC) had installed his *Garde Civile* in 1984, the members of this civil guard (militarized police) did not want to lose their position and continued to repress dissidents to preserve their interests (Carey 2006: 3). Mehrl and Choulis (2023) confirm that secret police are more (physically) violent when they establish their reputation and when they are in competition with other security services – thus tying these behaviors to the **coup-proofing** literature. Semi- or non-regime actors and their role in overall repressive strategies are also under-explored in favor of state actors. Eck (2015) investigates why regimes outsource repression to non-state militias (to mitigate the disruption caused by purges of the military).

IMPACT ON POLICY The prohibition of torture in international law is especially crucial for authoritarian regimes, where human rights violations, including torture, are prevalent tools of suppression. The *United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, in force since June 1987 (Danelius & Burges 1988; Wendleland 2020) and its *Optional Protocol*, effective since June 2006 (Nowak et al. 2019) along with the *Rome Statute* of the International Criminal Court, operational since July 2002, (Arsanjani 1999; Cassese et al. 2002) are fundamental in addressing abuses committed by autocracies. Despite the legal framework, challenges persist due to the secretive nature of torture in these regimes. The Geneva Conventions provide essential safeguards in armed conflicts and the protection of war victims (Pictet 2012). The *UN Special Rapporteur on Torture* plays a key role in documenting, investigating, and addressing cases of torture globally (Méndez & Nicolescu 2020). However, the struggle against torture in authoritarian contexts remains ongoing, as these regimes frequently resist international scrutiny and accountability mechanisms.

The literature on international law is very rich, so it is worth pointing out research that concerns specifically dictators. J.R. Vreeland (2008) explores why dictatorships that engage in torture are more inclined to ratify the *UN Convention Against Torture* compared to those that do not, positing that this phenomenon is linked to the rationale behind torture and the power dynamics inherent in various political systems. C.R. Conrad and E.H. Ritter (2013) discuss the effectiveness of courts when they are free from manipulation and when domestic actors are willing and able to punish noncompliance, even in states that do not implement treaty terms into domestic law. International human rights treaties can increase the probability of leaders experiencing litigation, which changes citizens' expectations of leaders' behavior regarding repression. Domestic actors adjust their conflict behavior based on these expectations. J.R. Hollyer and B.P. Rosendorff (2011) modeled authoritarian governments' decision to sign the *UN Convention Against Torture* and showed that signatory regimes survive longer in office than non-signatories and enjoy less domestic opposition.

Autocracies frequently disregard international laws prohibiting torture, whether they are signatories to such agreements or not. Highly repressive regimes that engage in repression and torture may encounter international isolation manifested in several ways, including diplomatic actions such as

the revocation of ambassadors, the imposition of economic **sanctions** aimed at ruining the regime's financial resources, or a lack of support within international organizations. Other countries or international organizations stigmatize torture as a form of repression for various reasons. This approach is commonly referred to as naming and shaming. Naming involves a public act of identifying evidence of human rights violations, usually by a government or other entity, while shaming pertains to the strategic intention behind naming, which is the hope that by publicly identifying these violations, the target (an authoritarian regime or rebel group for example) will be persuaded to stop engaging in these widely condemned actions (Franklin 2015).

C.S. Hendrix and W.H. Wind argue that the impact of naming and shaming on respect for human rights varies depending on the regime type. In authoritarian countries, naming and shaming are associated with improved human rights outcomes, while in democracies and hybrid regimes, the practice either has no effect or worsens human rights outcomes. Analyzing the UN shaming of specific human rights violations, J.H. DeMeritt and C.R. Conrad (2019) posit that such a strategy may not lead to a reduction in government repression. Instead, the authors propose the concept of 'repression substitution,' wherein governments alter their human rights violations, either by shifting focus to other areas or targeting different groups, as a means of evading international scrutiny. However, the case of Latin American countries between 1981 and 1995 shows that human rights criticism can lead to a reduction in repression of subsequent challenges if there are strong economic ties to other countries (Franklin 2008).

On the level of policy, states also oppose repression in the form of **sanctions**. They may impose economic sanctions, travel bans, or arms embargoes against regimes known for engaging in torture and human rights abuses. These sanctions serve to pressure authoritarian governments to change their behavior and respect human rights standards.

Economic sanctions might have unintended consequences on political repression, reducing the level of political freedoms in sanctioned countries, enhancing the regime's coercive capacity, and creating incentives for political repression by the regime's leadership (Peksen & Drury 2009). According to M. Wood (2008), the imposition of economic sanctions contributes to increased state-sponsored repression, as incumbents increase repression to prevent the defection of core supporters and stifle dissent in the face of declining economic conditions or growing opposition support. Multilateral UN sanctions contribute to greater increases in repression compared to unilateral sanctions from states like the US. UN-backed weapons embargoes do not appear to be systematically related to changes in repression. The success of sanctions depends on various factors, such as the target country's level of economic interdependence, regime type, and domestic political dynamics (Perksen 2019).

REGIONAL VARIATION The repression literature is too large to summarize or recap, but below are some specific strands or trends per world region that have caught the eye of the authors.

MENA Specific attention has been given to repression patterns in the wake of the **Arab Spring** (Davenport & Moore 2012; Brownlee et al. 2015; Josua & Edel 2021), especially in the contexts of **authoritarian collaboration** (cf. Colombo 2016) and **authoritarian learning**. There are several studies devoted to promising cases (for lasting reform) that soon after 2011 reverted to full autocracy (El-Haddad 2020), like Morocco (Lawrence 2013) and Egypt (Sika 2019; 2023), as well as their legitimation strategies (Edel & Josua 2018). Tunisia and the Jasmine Revolution, the center of the uprisings, remains an interesting case (Louden 2015; Allusson 2018; Kuznetsov 2022). The topic of autocratic resilience, especially for monarchies, is also addressed: Bank et al. 2014; Berti & Guzansky 2015; Bischof & Fink 2015; Lawson & Legrenzi 2017; Korotayev & Khokhlova 2022).

Latin America The South American military regimes and their legacy likewise enjoy a long scholarly tradition. First of all, a careful reading reveals that older works also highlight these states' **authoritarian collaboration** (Pion-Berlin 1983; King 1998) before this topic became mainstream after 2010. Case studies bring up surprising insights: Esberg (2018) finds that the Pinochet regime in Chile (1973-1990) persecuted victims in high-support areas after experiencing a drop in popular support, meaning they used repression to legitimate their fabricated communist threat and muster support.

Sub Saharan Africa Hendrix and Salehyan (2017) nuance the threat perception of African military regimes and their sensitivity toward ethnic factionalism (see also: Beiser-McGrath 2019). Rudbeck et al. (2016) find that the use of paramilitary groups, death squads, vigilantes, gangs, and other irregular, non-state actors to suppress popular opposition is meant to reduce the transaction costs (ranging from international economic **sanctions** to strikes and boycotts).

NEW FRONTIERS Nudged by the similarity in repressive actions during the **Arab Spring,** Roman-Gabriel Olar (2019) is one of the first to combine the aspect of **authoritarian learning** and **authoritarian collaboration** to the comparative study of (coercive) state repression in the context of *Operation Condor*, in particular regarding the intense collaboration in dissident disappearances between the military regimes of Latin America (cf. Box 3.13 on terror). Olar (2019) aims to capture the transnational dimensions of state repression and authoritarian interdependence and finds that authoritarian regimes emulate and learn from regimes with whom they share similar institutions, but (surprisingly) regimes with similar dissent experience do not emulate and learn from each other. *Operation Condor* also included transnational **assassination** (McSherry 2010), a field that is also gaining more traction (see below).

Shen-Bayh (2018) finds evidence that when regimes persecute regime insiders, they tend to adhere more to judicial methods (using courts) than extrajudicial means. By manipulating **judiciaries** for this purpose,



the logic behind this is to signal (to other elites) that their repression is legitimate. A judicial strategy legitimizes punishment, deters future rivals, and generates shared beliefs regarding incumbent strength and challenger weakness – see also **patronalism**.

E. Schleutker (2021) explores the coercive-channeling relations between autocracies and religious groups, clustering cases that (a) restrict such groups' organization but at the same time support and endorse religion (**co-optation**) in order to gain legitimacy; (b) those that just restrict without co-optation, and a residual category (c) that neither restricts nor supports. Henne and Klocek (2019) show how past religious conflict is a salient context for repression patterns.

A fascinating new avenue is transnational repression. Dukalskis et al. (2023) constructed the *Authoritarian Actions Abroad Database*, tracking transnational repression between 1991 and 2019, in order to statistically probe the drivers of autocracies that repress populations beyond their state borders. Tsourapas (2021) expands a similar theoretical framework by including legitimation and co-optation (cf. Gerschewski 2013). Michaelsen and Ruijgrok (2023) take a stab at controlling for regime type (and dyads with host countries) regarding this type of transnational repression. Moss et al. (2022) expose how regimes 'go after the family' to punish dissidents abroad. Al-Jizawi et al. (2020) explore digital transnational repression.

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Term Limits & Extensions

The longer the visit, the less welcome the guest.
– English proverb

Know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, and know when to run.
– Kenny Rogers, *The Gambler* (1978)

Term limits are a major restraint on executive control in dictatorships. In party-based regimes, they can help enforce collegial rule within the inner circle, formally supporting rotation systems, but for personalist dictators, they are a real hurdle as active limits 'constitutionally' forbid a ruler from remaining in office for life. When dictators come closer to the end of their term limits, fellow elites can come to see them as 'lame ducks' (cf. Box 3.14) because they no longer believe that the ruler's position can be guaranteed in the near future, and thus they will lose their control over **patronage** or **repression** apparatuses.

DEFINITION Term limit extension constitutes removing limits or extending the terms of leadership. Term limits are in place for various positions of power, but here we look at how term limits and their removal or extension are used to prolong the rule of the executive. Most dictatorships use presidential systems. Grauvogel and Heyl (2021) find that term limits should also be understood within authoritarian regimes where they might not necessarily undermine authoritarian rule but could be adapted to it.

Term limits have been most often used in **single-party regimes**. Most single-party dictatorships have term limits in place and are better institutionalized when this is the case. China under Mao Zedong (reign: 1949-1976) did not have term limits, and his rule was personalist, leading to poor decision-making. When Deng Xiaoping (reign: 1978-1989) took over, he implemented term limits for all government positions and ensured that the president could only serve two five-year terms, along with an upper age limit of 70 years for party leadership posts (Dittmer 2003). This was eliminated under Xi Jinping (reign: 2012–present), and there are concerns that Xi is fostering a similar **personality cult** to Mao.

Mexico avoided having an all-powerful dictator after it institutionalized the turnover of the power of the president in 1928. As stipulated by the constitution, both the president and senators can only serve on a non-renewable six-year term of office, while deputies are elected for a single three-year term (Guliyev 2009). The six-year presidential term, better known as the *sexenio*, enabled the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* (PRI) to rule for over seventy years. Regular rules for **succession** meant that rivals within the PRI could wait their turn, disincentivizing the need for a **coup** or **assassination** (Flores-Macías 2013). Regular elections were held that gave the opposition an incentive to keep playing by the rules of the game, even though the odds were heavily tilted in favor of the PRI.

Personalist regimes rarely have a constitution that they are willing to adhere to and rarely have rules of **succession** in place. As a result, the regime seldom outlasts the death or exit of the leader. In rare cases where the regime survives, this is due to hereditary succession of some kind being used, such as in the infamous case of North Korea with the Kim dynasty or with Gabon and its power transfers from Omar Bongo to his son Ben in 2009.

Most **military regimes** did not have rules about term limits, partially because they do not tend to be in power for very long and also because true power lies in the hands of the **junta**. Some military regimes do have institutionalized formulas for turnover in power, which helped explain the longevity of the military regime in Brazil which ruled from 1964 to 1985. The first military ruler, Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco (reign: 1964-1967), set a pattern of stepping down and ensuring succession through officer consensus (Skidmore 1990). In most cases, the military either steps down from power (even announcing that their rule will be temporary), possibly leading to **elections**, or the military leader in charge manages to personalize power, resulting in **personalist rule** such as was the case of Pinochet in Chile and Sani Abacha of Nigeria (1993-1998).

SEE ALSO Term limits feature in the wider study of **authoritarian constitutionalism** and constitutional design (Ginsburg 2012). They hamper **personalization** and can render dictators 'lame ducks' (Box 3.14) when they are unable to get rid of them and are forced to appoint a real successor or a 'puppet' because they cannot stand in the upcoming **elections**.

EXAMPLES Examples abound of leaders getting rid of term limits. In Belarus, a referendum in 2004 removed term limits on President Alexander Lukashenko. In Rwanda, Paul Kagame ostensibly rules by decree, and a 2015 referendum was passed to keep him in power until 2034.

In contrast, both in the Philippines (Querubin 2012) and Kazakhstan, the legislature once voted to lift term limits, and in both cases, term limits were reinstated again; in the former, after Marcos' ouster; in the latter after the first president Nursultan Nazarbayev left office (Radio Free Europe 2022). The executive position in both countries is now bound by a single term (six and seven years, respectively), which is to prevent the concentration of power and ensure regular leadership transitions.

In Venezuela, Hugo Chávez won approval in the February 2009 referendum for a constitutional amendment that enabled him to run for the presidency when his term ended in 2012 (Corrales 2016). Uzbekistan held two referenda in 1995 and 2002 that extended President Islam Karimov's term.

Some leaders have been powerful enough to



Box 3.11 Informants, Snitches & Whistleblowers

Snitches end up in ditches
– American saying

Pavel Trofimovich Morozov (Павел Трофимович Морозов), known as 'Pavlik,' was a Soviet youth, born in 1918 in Gerasimovka, Russia. He became a symbol of communist loyalty after allegedly denouncing his father to Soviet authorities at age 13. His father, Trofim, was accused of forging documents and aiding Kulaks, the wealthier peasants resisting collectivization. As a result, Trofim was arrested and later disappeared in a labor camp. Pavlik's denunciation led to his murder by family members in 1932. The Soviet regime glorified Pavlik as a martyr and hero, using his story to promote loyalty to the state over family ties. Monuments were erected, and his tale was taught to generations of Soviet children as an example of ideal communist behavior. His story became a powerful propaganda tool, encouraging children to inform on their families if they opposed Soviet policies. However, after the USSR's dissolution, evidence suggested that much of Pavlik's story was fabricated. Still, he remains a controversial figure, representing the complex interplay between **propaganda**, **indoctrination**, and truth in authoritarian regimes. (Druzhnikov 2017)

Fitzpatrick and Gellately (1996) define 'denunciations' as *"spontaneous [often written and privately delivered] communications from individual citizens to the state (or to another authority such as the church) containing accusations of wrongdoing by other citizens or officials and implicitly or explicitly calling for punishment."* The related (but not synonymous) concept of 'informers' implies a regular (often paid) relationship with state authorities. Informers can be motivated by various incentives, including financial rewards or reduced penalties for their misconduct. Often, they are offered protection by authorities. 'Snitch' is a derogatory term for the latter, labeled from the perspective of those informed on (aggrieved by the betrayal or disloyalty) and foremost used in criminal contexts, not political ones.

In contrast, a 'whistleblower' is usually an insider, such as an employee or contractor, who exposes illegal or unethical activities within an organization with the aim of protecting the public interest or upholding ethical standards. Whistleblowers often act out of a sense of duty or moral obligation rather than personal gain. Mostly seen in a positive light, they are sometimes even protected by laws (in democracies) that shield them from retaliation by their employers and sometimes receive rewards if their information leads to significant legal action.

Informants are pivotal in maintaining control and suppressing dissent, and studying such networks provides significant insights into authoritarian governance. Such networks are carefully set up to tackle the famous 'dictator's dilemma' – the uncertainty about the level of popular support a ruler has.

The primary role of informers is to support surveillance and control: They monitor citizens and report on dissenting activities, fostering a climate of fear that discourages collective action against the regime. Informants are also crucial for information gathering, providing intelligence on potential threats such as political dissidents and opposition groups, which allows regimes to take preemptive actions to neutralize these threats. Comparing China and Soviet-era Bulgaria (with Cuba, East Germany, and the USSR), Dimitrov (2023) shows in remarkable detail how leftist **single-party regimes** obsessively collected information on dissenters, not just to target them but to preempt protest by targeting economic largesse to affected regions. Additionally, when working with **intelligence services,** informants can influence and manipulate opposition groups by infiltration, spreading misinformation or provoking internal conflicts, thereby weakening the opposition's organizational capabilities.

The use of informants has several consequences. It lowers the costs of information gathering for **repression,** and it leads to the erosion of trust within society, as citizens are encouraged to spy on one another, creating an environment of suspicion and paranoia that undermines social cohesion and the effective functioning of civil society. Fitzpatrick (2010) portrays this reality under Stalin: Bergerson (2004) in Nazi Germany; Bosworth (2005) in Mussolini's Italy; and Simpson (2020; 2021) for Salazar's regime in Portugal and the infiltration networks of the *Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado* (PIDE). Lüdtke's (2016) edited volume also contains precious case studies.

Bergemann (2017) compares the early years of the Spanish Inquisition (1486-1502) and Romanov Russia (1613-1649) to distinguish two models of interaction: top-down coercion and bottom-up volunteers. These orientations of potential denouncers have significant implications. In the coercion model, individuals often attribute citizen participation to state incentives, directing anger toward authorities. Denouncers may resent coercive tactics. In contrast, the volunteer model lacks authority-based incentives, leading individuals to see denouncing as a personal choice, potentially harming others or showing regime support. Denouncers might appreciate authorities for resolving private disputes. Here, blame or dissatisfaction with social control is shifted from authorities to the local community.

The reliance on informants routinely results in human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings. As a motivation, ideology does not play such a large role: The most common argument for why people denounce repressive regimes is self-interest (Bergemann 2017). Informants may provide false information due to coercion or personal vendettas, leading to unjust persecution. The higher the animosity and divisions between societal groups, the more effective the denunciations.

Furthermore, the deployment of informants can undermine the regime's **legitimacy** both domestically and internationally. It underscores the regime's dependence on coercion rather than popular support, which can fuel further dissent and attract international condemnation. Post-transition, infiltrated and divided societies

need to rebuild trust. Lustration laws (Box 3.7) and truth commissions (Box 5.7) can be instrumental to this purpose.

Studying informants in authoritarian regimes enhances our understanding of how these systems maintain power and control. Researchers employ various methods, such as covert research, ethnographic studies, and survey methods, to explore the dynamics of informant networks and their impact on society. These studies reveal the mechanisms of control used by authoritarian governments and contribute to the broader field of comparative authoritarianism by highlighting the complexities of regime stability and citizen behavior (and agency) under repressive conditions.

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Box 3.12 The Mogadishu Line: Fatal Loss of Domestic & International Legitimacy

Never open a door that you cannot lock again.
– Persian proverb

This concept has traveled from peacekeeping to dictatorship studies: it originally emerged from the international intervention in the Somali Civil War during the early 1990s. It refers to the critical juncture where a foreign involvement transitions from peacekeeping or diplomatic efforts to active combat operations, often with the aim of regime change. This term gained prominence following the Battle of Mogadishu on 3-4 October 1993, when humanitarian missions by international forces evolved into complex military engagements due to escalating violence and internal clan conflicts. The United Nations initially deployed troops under UNOSOM *(United Nations Operation in Somalia)* to facilitate humanitarian aid, but as the situation deteriorated, a larger US-led force (*Unified Task Force* – UNITAF) was introduced. Despite these efforts, progress was impeded by ongoing local power struggles between rebel groups. Consequently, the Mogadishu Line has become a metaphor in International Relations (IR), symbolizing the reluctance of foreign powers to escalate their involvement due to fears of becoming embroiled in protracted conflicts without clear political outcomes.

In IR theory, the Mogadishu Line represents a cautionary tale influencing foreign policy decisions. For example, its aftermath contributed to hesitancy in US interventions during crises like the Rwandan genocide and conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s. Scholars such as S. Larcom et al. (2014) have extended this concept metaphorically to denote a tipping point beyond which a **revolution** mobilizes against a dictator. This adaptation highlights a threshold moment when regimes can no longer suppress armed challengers, leading to critical security and capacity gaps.

In the study of dictatorships, the Mogadishu Line encompasses a tipping point resulting from extreme repression by dictators, leading to an absolute loss of domestic and international **legitimacy**. Once crossed, dictators face full rebellion domestically and cannot be rehabilitated by the international community. Three scenarios emerge: dictators might turn the tide with sufficient foreign (**black knight**) support; they may negotiate a **transition** or just flee into exile before reaching this point; or they continue fighting until one side is defeated (Van den Bosch 2021: 233, 247).

M. Siad Barre's regime in Somalia collapsed after he crossed his own Mogadishu Line. In the fallout of his failed Ogaden campaign (his foreign **invasion** of Ethiopia from July 1977 to March 1978), Barre resorted to extreme repression and purges in order to stay in control. Resistance was met with punishment expeditions

to clan homeland and 'clan cleansing' – pure state terror with indiscriminate violence against civilians of resisting clans. Somalia spiraled into endless violence and became a failed state. Eventually, Barre fled into exile into Nairobi, marking a complete loss of both domestic power and international legitimacy, as protests in Kenya forced him to move onward to Nigeria, where he died in 1995.

Charles Taylor's rule in Liberia ended when he faced mounting domestic rebellion and international pressure due to his long involvement in regional conflicts and human rights abuses. His criminal record traces back to his rebel invasion of Liberia in 1989, supported by M. Qaddafi (Libya) and B. Compaoré (Burkina Faso). Notorious for their wanton violence, looting and child soldiers, he ended up terrorizing the country to such a degree that he was allowed to run in the presidential elections in exchange for ending hostilities. Still in control of wide swathes of territory and wielding widespread intimidation, the war-fatigued Liberian population elected him president in 1997. Soon, old and new rebel movements took up arms against him. In 2003, a battered Taylor resigned and went into exile under pressure from both rebels and international actors. Taylor was later extradited and convicted for war crimes, illustrating his crossing of the Mogadishu Line. He currently sits out his sentence in *HM Prison Frankland* in County Durham, UK.

Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria presents a nuanced case. Despite extreme repression during the Syrian Civil War – including the indiscriminate use of chemical weapons in towns like Ghouta (21 August 2013) or Khan Shaykun (4 April 2017) – Assad did succeed in retaining power with significant support from allies like Russia and Iran and by ongoing state terror. While he evidently crossed the Mogadishu Line, diplomatic efforts by regional powers in the years before his domestic ouster (December 2024) seem to suggest a slow rehabilitation internationally, highlighting complexities in determining absolute loss of legitimacy. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was one of the first countries to embrace Assad back into the diplomatic fold, reopening its embassy in Damascus in 2018. (Hokayem 2023; Costello 2024; Holleis 2024)

These examples illustrate how crossing the Mogadishu Line can lead to varied outcomes for dictatorships influenced by internal dynamics and international interventions. While some regimes collapse entirely, others manage to navigate these critical junctures with external support or strategic concessions.

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Box 3.13 Terror – Transformative Violence

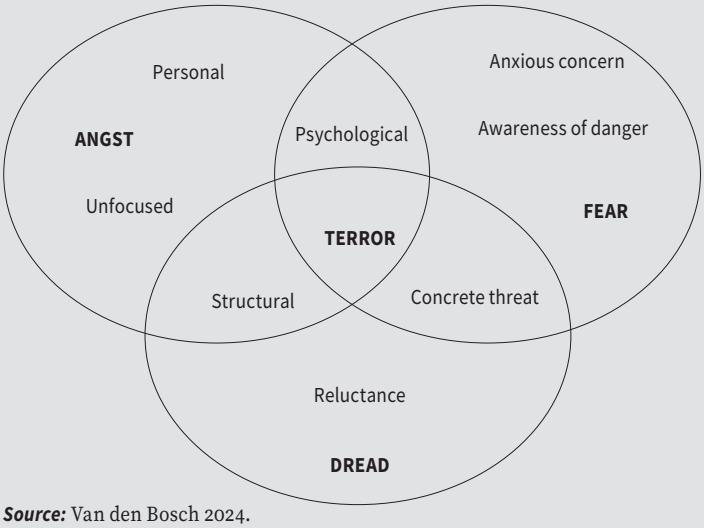
Violence is like a weed – it does not die even in the greatest drought.
– Simon Wiesenthal, Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter.

The few thousand deaths and injuries caused by 'terrorism from below' every year pales into relative insignificance besides the hundreds of thousands of people killed, kidnapped, 'disappeared', injured, tortured, raped, abused, intimidated, and threatened by state agents and their proxies in dozens of countries across the globe.
– R. Jackson et al. (2010: 1)

To understand political terror, one needs to start by disassembling the term 'terror' in its conceptual parts, as shown in Figure 3.2. To capture terror in all its aspects, one must foremost clarify its meaning beyond its etymological roots. (In Latin, *terrere* means 'to frighten' or 'to tremble.') In contemporary Anglo-Saxon contexts, *terror* is often equated with fear, dread, and angst, though each of these terms carries distinct nuances. *Fear* and *dread* are typically responses to specific, concrete threats. *Angst*, by contrast, is more diffuse, representing a generalized sense of impending doom without a clear source. Dread and angst are also more structural; they stem from familiarity with the cause of the emotion, whereas fear can be sudden and linked to unfamiliar threats. Dread often implies reluctance, fear involves awareness of danger, and angst is tied to a personal psychological state. Terror, as understood today, can be seen as a structural form of psychological fear that arises from the anticipation of a concrete evil. (Van den Bosch 2024)

This understanding of terror provides a foundation for defining political terror. Political terror involves using fear as a tool to achieve political objectives by manipulating the behavior of target groups. This is shown in the entries of **repression** and **purges**. It is a transformative force under **totalitarianism** and **Fascism**. As Paul Wilkinson (1974) noted, political terror typically involves extreme violence against individuals, creating destruc-

Figure 3.3 – A Conceptual Map of Terror



Source: Van den Bosch 2024.

tive harm. However, with the advent of cyber-terrorism (see also **cyber-warfare**) – though it has not yet claimed major loss of life – its psychological impact is expected to rival that of traditional terrorism (Gross et al. 2016). The fear generated by such acts is powerful enough to influence political outcomes.

In this context, political terror can be defined as *"the use of structural fear in anticipation of unexpected acts of premeditated, indiscriminate violence generated from specific threats or previous violent acts as a strategy to alter the behavior of other groups and achieve political aims."* (Van den Bosch 2024)

This definition emphasizes several key points: (i) The audience's fear does not necessarily imply that the violence itself is indiscriminate. The perception that anyone could be a target amplifies the effectiveness of terror. (ii) By avoiding specific references to agents or targets in this definition, it allows for the attribution of terror tactics to a wide range of actors – foreign armies, **political regimes**, guerrillas and **rebel groups**, community vigilantes, or even organized crime networks. (iii) The term 'strategy' underscores that terror is employed as part of a broader plan to achieve long-term political goals. It may be one of many tactics used by various actors. (iv) Finally, this definition is deliberately amoral; it separates the legal or moral judgments of the act from its political function.

While political terror has to be witnessed, it can technically be 'overt' and 'covert' at the same time. For example, during the 'Dirty War' in Argentina (1974-1983) or under Pinochet's rule in Chile, victims were systematically abducted, detained in secret locations, tortured and killed, with their bodies disposed of in ways that made them impossible to trace (such as being thrown from planes into the ocean during 'death flights'). Hence the term desaparecidos, 'the disappeared' for those persecuted. By making individuals disappear without any official acknowledgment or legal process, these brutal military regimes created an atmosphere of uncertainty and fear. Families did not know what had happened to their loved ones, and society at large was left in constant anxiety about who might be next. Still, it was not uncommon for individuals to be taken by government agents in broad daylight. This made such disappearances both overt and covert forms of terror, intending as much to intimidate an audience as to remove political opponents (Jackson et al. 2010: 22)

Political terror has many uses: It serves as often to intimidate, deter or destabilize as to mobilize, coerce and radicalize target groups. It can be instrumentalized to provoke actors. It can be a promise of retribution to mobilize followers. It is one of the most brutal ways to transform society and political systems. Its effects linger for generations.

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declare that term limits have been eliminated. The leader can refuse to schedule elections or unilaterally eliminate them. In the Central African Republic, Jean-Bédel Bokassa (1966-1979) nullified an earlier constitution and then declared himself president-for-life and later emperor (Titley 1997; Decalo 1985).

Most leaders, however, have used the legislative branch or popular referendum to give the impression that they are committed to democracy. Routinely, regimes try to eliminate term limits through standard legal channels, such as using the legislature or judiciary to get rid of them (McKie 2017). The constitution was amended in Equatorial Guinea in 1995. The parliament passed an amendment to eliminate term limits in Cameroon in 2008. An additional five-year term was granted to Sam Nujoma in Namibia in 1999. The National Assembly voted to eliminate term limits in Nicaragua in 2014. Turkmenistan also abolished term limits in 1999, making now deceased leader Saparmurat Niyazov, known as *'Türkmenbaşy'* – 'Father of the Turkmen,' a president for life (Schatz & Maltseva 2012). The Philippines' legislature under Ferdinand Marcos also promulgated a new constitution that allowed him to have an additional term (Choi 2001; Querubin 2012).

This does not always work, however. Denis Sassou-Nguesso of the Republic of Congo had a constitutional referendum passed that removed term limits in 2015, which led to the largest anti-government protests since 1992. When Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso tried to change the country's constitution in October of 2014 via referendum, this provoked huge popular protests and led to his ousting.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Extending term limits or eliminating term limits is a common way that would-be autocrats cement their power and ensure that they are able to lead indefinitely. This maneuver usually represents the death knell of democracy. Term limits in countries with little experience with democracy are one important way of maintaining the guardrails of democratic governance. Many countries have seen their leaders tamper and revoke term limits in order to consolidate power.

Eizenga and Villalón (2020) herald the (mentioned above) example of Blaise Compaoré in Burkina Faso, who was forced to adopt term limits as a result of the democratization wave in Africa in the 1990s. When his terms were running out, Compaoré increasingly frantically tried to undo these constraints. The debate about presidential term limits emerged as the key catalyst for the mobilization of popular disenchantment during the 2014 elections, and the regime proved unable to withstand the pressures. Compaoré was forced to flee in the face of mass protests once his regular military forces mutinied and his presidential guard sided with the protesters. See also S. Moestrop (in Baturo & Elgie 2019).

Grauvogel and Heyl (2021) suggest that the success or failure of third-term bids is influenced by factors such as ruling party cohesion, electoral competition, and societal responses. Strong institutions of accountability can reduce the likelihood of successful term-limit violations.

Violations of executive term limits can provoke constitutional crises when leaders attempt to extend their tenure by amending or ignoring the constitution, disrupting normal political processes and increasing tensions. For example, Niger President Tandja's bid for extended rule led to a **coup**, while the Constitutional Court blocked Colombia's Uribe from a third term. These violations destabilize political systems by undermining the rule of law, potentially leading to systemic instability and eroding democratic governance (Ginsburg et al. in Ginsburg 2012).

ORIGIN Term limits existed long before they were stipulated in constitutions. Similarly, getting rid of term limits and the absence of term limits or their extensions are not a new phenomenon.

The term *continuismo*, which originates from Spanish and is widely recognized beyond the language, refers to the practice of removing, extending, or circumventing presidential term limits. This practice is nearly as old as the concept of presidentialism itself (Fitzgibbon 1940, cited in Baturo & Elgie 2019: 75).

Another older concept that resonates with the practice of overcoming term limits is 'Caesarism' (in its later understanding), which is manifested in regimes where leaders use direct appeals to the public, portraying themselves as irreplaceable and beyond the typical checks of political systems. The term obviously originates from Julius Caesar's rise in ancient Rome, where he gained power by positioning himself as a leader who could directly serve and protect the common people, backed by military force, bypassing the Senate and other checks on his authority. In contemporary political analysis, Caesarism contains elements of charismatic rule, **populism**, **personalization**, and **electoral malpractice**. (For an overview of Caesarism in its original and modern meanings, see: Richter 2005).

By 1950 less than half of constitutions provided for term limits (Ginsburg et al. 2010). Around 87 out of 92 countries with presidential systems have adopted term limits since the 1990s (Maltz 2007), but these numbers fluctuate all the time as political systems change and dictators tweak legal frameworks to suit their needs.

CLASSIFICATIONS Heyl and Llanos (2022), comparing African and Latin American countries, develop a classification with five categories of term limits for presidential and semi-presidential systems as follows:

(i) Single Term Without Re-election This category allows only one presidential term with no possibility of re-election. Mexico is a classic example, where the *sexenio* system prevents personalism while enabling a dominant party's rule.

(ii) Single Term with Re-election After a Break Here, a president can serve one term but may be re-elected after a break from office. Countries like Chile and Panama follow this model.

(iii) Two Terms Without Further Re-election This category permits two consecutive terms but prohibits

re-election after these terms are completed. Ghana and Ecuador are examples of countries with such limits.

(vi) Consecutive Terms with Possible Return This allows for a set number of consecutive terms, with the possibility of returning to power after a specified period. Argentina and Mozambique exemplify this category, where conditions for non-consecutive terms may be explicitly stated or left ambiguous.

(v) No Restrictions on Re-election Except for an electoral veto, and assuming the elections are conducted freely and fairly, presidents can stay in power indefinitely. This situation is exemplified by countries such as The Gambia and Venezuela. (Heyl & Llanos 2022) Josip Broz Tito in Yugoslavia is another known example.

Technically, one could add a sixth category: declaring a ruler *'president for life'* without the need for re-election. This put presidents in the same category as absolute monarchs, which is what they actually became: President of France Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (1848-1852), afterward known as Emperor Napoleon III (1852-1870), became a monarch through a series of political maneuvers and a **coup**. Initially elected as the president of the French Second Republic in 1848, he capitalized on his popular support and the political instability of the time. In 1851, facing constitutional limitations that prevented him from seeking re-election, he staged a coup, dissolving the *National Assembly* and establishing himself as the ruler of France. The following year, in 1852, he held a plebiscite that resulted in public approval for the establishment of the Second French Empire, thus proclaiming himself Emperor Napoleon III. This move effectively transitioned France from a republic to an empire under his authoritarian rule (Euler 2024).

On the other side, Baturo (in Baturo & Elgie 2019) maps various methods by which rulers overcome term limits into a typology that includes (a) avoidance, (b) extension, and (c) removal of term limits. The practice of *continuismo* encompasses all these strategies: (a) *Avoidance* involves tactics such as discarding time already served through constitutional changes or using proxy leaders to maintain *de facto* control. Presidents might also suspend or postpone elections under the pretext of emergencies to extend their terms without altering the constitution. (b) *Extension* refers to modifying the length or number of terms through constitutional amendments. This can include introducing re-election clauses in previously single-term presidencies or adding *ad hoc* terms for specific circumstances. (c) *Removal* involves eliminating term limits, signaling an intent to remain in power indefinitely. This can include abolishing elections and establishing a presidency for life, although modern dictators often prefer to retain the appearance of democratic processes by holding elections without term limits.

MEASUREMENT & METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Term limits are measured by looking at the constitution of different countries and the number of eligible years held by each president, along with the length of the term.

The *Comparative Constitutions Project* (CCP) database collects data on over 600 features of constitutions, including term limits (Elkins et al. 2009).

REGIONAL VARIATION As it has some of the oldest presidential systems, Latin America has received considerable attention. The latest wave of abolishing term limits in Africa (observed around 2010) brought this continent under renewed attention as well (Tull & Simons 2017). Latin America was more of an exception and put some emphasis on term limits. After the region experienced many years of one-man rule, term limits were imposed in a few cases, such as Argentina in 1853 and Mexico in 1917 (Maltz 2007). There were not that many cases in Latin America where a leader was in power for long periods, with the exception of Cuba under Fidel Castro (reign: 1959-2008), Paraguay under Alfredo Stroessner (reign: 1954-1989) and Chile under Augusto Pinochet (reign: 1973-1990). By 1945, 95% of Latin American countries had implemented executive term limits, with most stipulating that a president can serve only one single term. By 2010, this had dropped to 85% (Ginsburg et al. 2010).

Earlier works by Corrales and Penfold (2014) compare how reelection rulers boost incumbents to the detriment of accountability. Corrales (2016) looks at what actors can effectively check the **personalization** process of presidents. Leiv Marsteintredet (in Baturo & Elgie 2019) provides a historical overview from ca. 1820 to 1985, showing that stable, republican, and democratic rule was only possible under a ban on immediate presidential re-election. Negretto (2022) extends the scope of analysis to institutional legacies.

Landau (2018) investigates the legal transplants (**authoritarian learning**) among Latin American cases and, in addition, sheds light upon 'the limits of tools limiting constitutional change,' or how political systems try (and fail) to block constitutional amendments that threaten liberal democratic **constitutionalism**. More experimental, I.A. Araya (2023) links **psychological profiles** (personality traits) of presidents to their overreaching behaviors.

Indo-Pacific In the Indo-Pacific, terms limits have rarely been adhered to – as most presidential systems found ways of eliminating them. In South Korea, first, Syngman Rhee (ruled: 1948-1960) and then Park Chung Hee (ruled: 1962-1979) got rid of term limits, as did Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines (ruled: 1965-1986).

Interestingly, the re-installation of term limits under the 1987 Constitution is considered to be directly responsible for the emergence of political **dynasties** in the Philippines (a president fields more family members in power) to retain influence (Mendoza et al. 2020, Querubín 2012; Labonne et al. 2019).

Regarding China, many scholars have studied term limits at the national level (see Dittmer 2007, Ma 2016; Wang & Vangeli in Baturo & Elgie 2019). Chinese term limits have been studied at the sub-national level, too: Zhan & Gao 2008; Liu et al. 2017



(on governors). For South Korea, see Fiona Yap (in Baturo & Elgie 2019); for Indonesia, see: Hendra et al. 2020; Mietzner & Honna 2023.

Sub Saharan Africa On the continent, leaders also did not adhere to term limits, and from 1960 to 1990, more than two-thirds of African leaders left power violently, usually through a coup or assassination (Posner & Young 2007). Very few African leaders agreed to step down voluntarily. By 2000, peaceful exits through electoral defeat became the norm. Still, institutional legacies matter and structure regimes (Hartmann 2022). Tull and Simons (2017) posit that, overall, term limits matter more as a legitimization of power than as a constraint for rulers. Heyl and Llanos (2023) provide several country case studies.

MENA For this region, there are only individual case studies: Bonci (in Baturo & Elgie 2019) covers Tunisia. Many countries are monarchies, have *(de facto)* abolished restrictions on term limits or have parliamentary systems (e.g., Israel).

Eurasia Here, term limits were implemented (two consecutive terms) for most of the countries in the post-Soviet sphere, such as Russia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, as these were considered to be best practices at independence (Baturo 2014). Of course, this was only a matter of time for some regimes: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. For instance, Azerbaijan removed limits in 2009 and then extended them from five to seven years in 2016 (Synovitz 2008; Fuller 2016).

Russia has received considerable scholarly attention focusing on term limits (See Chaisty in Baturo & Elgie 2019; Chaisty & Whitefield 2019; for the Russian subnational level, see: Paustyan 2023). This is not surprising given that Vladimir V. Putin initially adhered to term limits by switching places with Dmitry A. Medvedev due to constitutional constraints (a maximum of two consecutive terms) in Russia at the time. After serving two terms from 2000 to 2008, Putin thus stepped down and became prime minister under President Medvedev. This castling move allowed him to maintain significant political influence while respecting the constitutional term limits. Later, Putin abolished these term limits through constitutional amendments. In 2020, in the midst of the global pandemic, a nationwide vote – labeled as the 'most manipulative' in the country's history – approved changes to the Russian Constitution, allowing Putin to remain in power until 2036 potentially (Trudolyubov 2020). This amendment effectively 'reset' his presidential term count, enabling him to run for additional terms beyond the previous limit.

LITERATURE There has been some scholarly attention on extending term limits and its relationship with **autocratization**, stability and **succession**. Some of the best recent comparative works are: Baturo & Elgie 2019 and Heyl & Llanos 2023.

Whether a regime is democratic or autocratic, term limits are important for ensuring the stability of the regime. Leadership transitions are very dangerous times for dictatorships when they are unconstitutional, such as with coups (Frantz & Ezrow 2011; Svolik 2009). When power is transferred unconstitutionally, this creates an environment of uncertainty. This can lead to elite purges, chaos, coup attempts and possibly the end of the regime in violent ways. For example, from 1946 until 2009, 178 transfers of power were unconstitutional during this period; 101 led to the end of the regime, while of the 162 transfers of power that were constitutional, only 59 led to the end of the regime. Countries that do not have term limits are more likely to see coups, as has been the case in Benin, Ghana and Nigeria. When term limits are not adhered to this can also lead to coups, such as was the case with Honduras under President Manuel Zelaya (2006-2009) (Cassel 2009).

In contrast, term limits helped the *Tanganyika African National Union* (TANU) party, which merged to become the *Chama cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) in 1977, to ease the transfer of power from founding president Julius Nyerere to Ali Hassan Mwinyi in 1985. Changes were made to the constitution in 1977 to ensure that term limits were in place. Term limits are thus an important safeguard to preventing regimes from dissolving into **personalist rule**, which can lead to unbridled corruption and erratic economic and foreign policies. McKie (2019), however, found that such formalistic collegial single-party regimes like Tanzania's CCM or Mexico's PRI are increasingly difficult to sustain in multi-party electoral settings as factional intra-party splits emerge (cf. Magaloni 2008). They are truly outliers.

Term limits also ensure that there is fresh leadership so that countries are not being ruled by leaders who are well past retirement age (cf. Box 1.12 on Gerontocracy). Term limits may have a liberalizing effect, as they helped the opposition in Kenya get a foothold in the door in 2002. Finally, term limits can lead to less repression (Baturo 2014).

For collegial regimes, term limits play a crucial role in authoritarian power-sharing by ensuring leadership transitions. They involve a fixed term and a pre-appointed successor, which commits rulers to share power with elites and allows monitoring of any breaches. Successful adoption often requires balanced power among elites, initiating a dynamic bargain over political power across generations. Using a dataset from the Chinese Communist Party (1982-2012), Ma Xiao (2016) shows equal promotion chances for leaders and (rival) heir-apparent, highlighting equal influence over **patronage** when succession is institutionalized.

Scholars have noted that term limits are often initially agreed to in order to gain more legitimacy. Donor pressure may be partly responsible for the implementation of term limits (Posner & Young 2007). Authoritarian regimes that decide that they want to hold multi-party elections may also decide that term limits could prevent the accumulation and abuse of power by one leader. Term limits also ensure that elite conflict is diffused, minimizing power struggles that are very destabilizing.

The legislature and/or political party can work as an enforcement institution and possibly as a deterrent for unconstitutional seizures of power. Accord-

ing to one study, authoritarian regimes that do not have parties or a legislature were only able to have constitutional leadership transitions 19% of the time. In contrast, regimes with at least one political party and a legislature experience a leadership transition that is constitutional 58% of the time (Frantz & Ezrow 2011).

Adopting a long-term historical perspective on term-limit decisions reveals stable patterns in African countries shaped by the institutional legacies of pre-1990 authoritarian regimes. **Single-party regimes** often create conditions conducive to enforcing term limits, either by collapsing or surviving as dominant parties, which leads to formalized term limits. In contrast, **personalist regimes**, characterized by a lack of institutional constraints and reliance on informal elite accommodations, are more likely to circumvent these limits. A historical approach by Hartmann (2022) demonstrates that term limit trajectories are not random but are influenced by past political structures and practices. Understanding these patterns helps explain why some countries consistently enforce term limits while others do not, highlighting the enduring impact of historical institutional frameworks on contemporary political decisions.

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Box 3.14 Lame Ducks

If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck
– American proverb

Even a lame-duck president can be affected by a clear midterm message if he wants to see his vice president elected and preserve his historical legacy.
– Noah Feldman

The 'lame duck' effect in democratic systems usually considers the weakness of a political actor at the end of his/her mandate, either as an **incumbent** not running in the upcoming elections, or as a politician in the time period between the election result and the moment they transfer their mandate to a successor or victorious challenger. The lame-duck effect can be seen in US politics during presidential and congressional elections. In this period, the maneuvering space for a politician's important decisions is minimized. The lame duck avoids problematic, controversial or radical proclamations or actions (Schelker 2018; Sievert & Hinojosa 2022) and is unable to muster support for policies as former allies or coalition partners flock around the newcomer to establish working relations.

The 'lame duck' may pertain to the regime as a whole (A) or to the ruler in question (B). Its effect on authoritarian regimes (A) is the weakening of the regime regarding its capabilities of authoritarian power-sharing or control. It might come as the result of (a) the (overly) long ruling span of the ruler and regime structures (social class/party/military) in the country, (b) an economic crisis or long-term stagnation, (c) a short-term 'shock' (e.g. war, crisis, famine, disaster), and/or (d) the loss of the monopoly of violence, e.g. the decline of the supremacy of power structures (army, intelligence and secret services).

All effects mentioned usually contribute to the 'lame duck' effect in certain combinations and can lead to different results. Albrecht (2014: 673-674) considers the rising probability of a **coup d'état** following a long-lived presidential term or, on the contrary, the weakness of a newly established leader after the overthrown of the previous regime.

While in democracies lame ducks are elected official whose power is reduced because replacements have been elected (Cambridge Dictionary), the label applies to authoritarian rulers (B) even without a designated successor in play. It relates foremost to changing elite perceptions of the dictator. If regime elites expect a patronal president's imminent departure from power – due to **term limits**, old age, bad health (cf. **age & health**), a sudden drop in popularity, or simple because of their decision not to run – this can undermine the ruler's capacity to shape elite expectations as to how other elites in the system will behave even before the president actually leaves office. *"Elites anticipating the change begin thinking about a future without the old president, a future when the old president may not be capable of deciding who is punished and who is rewarded. The value of presidential promises and the gravity of her threats start to dissipate. The president can become a 'lame-duck'"* (Hale 2015: 84).

Incumbent rulers themselves are often intuitively aware of their 'lame duck' status (although they never admit this publicly) and often take measures to avoid or at least mitigate the situation, usually by internally tightening the regime cohesion or sometimes by involving the country in the fight against external threats (real or virtual) (cf. **conflict & authoritarian regimes**).

The appointment of a successor (**succession**) fosters acute uncertainty for other elites: Will the current power-sharing agreements be upheld under the new ruler? In absence of any guarantees, elites calculate the potential risks and gains: Is the cost of defection and expected punishment from the successor worth the risk to challenge and defeat the successor?

For regimes as a whole, appointing a successor can be as dangerous as the vulnerability that comes from the sudden death or incapacity of the ruler. For this reason, powerholders often tend to prolong their power by extending their mandates or getting rid of term limits altogether. Or, if possible, groom a (pool of) successor(s) that could be the guarantor of stability for the outgoing leadership (Hale 2005). Van den Bosch (2024) offers a systematic overview of succession scenarios for personalist 'lame ducks.'

In Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, in the **color revolutions** in the post-Soviet Area (Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgyzstan in 2005, 2010 and 2020), and in the

Arab Spring, unpopular 'lame ducks' were ousted through popular revolutions, demonstrations or uprisings (Hale 2013: 343).

The Soviet regime could be considered a 'lame duck' by all accounts by the end of its existence. The ideological content of the Soviet system based on communist ideas was exhausted and the economy started to slump downward, breaking the unwritten agreement with its social elites: i.e. the state secures relative social welfare, and people do not question the regime's character. Unavoidable political, economic, and social changes planned to be launched by Andropov and fully extended by Mikhail Gorbachev with his perestroika-reforms (Box 3.10) opened the road to even deeper changes in politics and society than initially expected (Olson 1990).

Soviet Perestroika also initiated similar dismantling processes in the Soviet bloc members, where similar 'social contracts' were often established. (The most typical was 'goulash communism' *(gulyáskommunizmus)* in Hungary, allowing regulated free market reforms on a limited scale for small private enterprises.)

The politics of 'openness' (*glasnost'*), economic hardships (for which the system was unprepared) and also the ambitions of other leaders, groups or ethnic groups within the federal Soviet Union led to the weakening situation in the country, rendering Gorbachev a 'lame duck' – see also Box 3.10 on Perestroika & Glasnost.

This triggered the (unsuccessful) 1991 **coup** against the last Soviet leader, which in turn pushed the whole empire even deeper into 'lame duck' status by autumn 1991, ending with the dissolution of the USSR by its own core members states.

Putin's regime in Russia attempts to avoid the lame-duck effect (Trudoyubov 2018). This fear lay behind (as one of its reasons) the gradual internal tightening of the regime and the initiation of several conflicts (Chechnya, Georgia and Ukraine) to foster elite cohesion, a 'rally-around-the-flag' effect, and tighten control over society.

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SECTION 4
IDEOLOGIES & WORLDVIEWS







1 Yuan, People's Republic of China (1999), depicting chairman Mao Zedong.

5000 Đồng, Socialist Republic of Vietnam (1991, issued 1993), depicting chairman Ho Chi Minh, founding president.

5000 Won, Democratic People's Republic of (North) Korea (2006), depicting chairman Kim Il-Sung, founding president, supreme leader and eternal president.



Absolutism

C'est légal parce que je le veux.
(It is legal because I wish it)
– Louis XIV, *Le Roi Soleil*, King of France (1638-1715)

As a God among men.
– Aristotle, *Politics*, 1284a, 3-1

Absolutism, as a set of theories, is conceptualized as a political system in which a single ruler, typically a monarch, holds all power and authority over the government and its people. This ruler's decisions are not subject to any legal or legislative constraints, and they often claim their right to rule by divine authority. Historical reality, of course, differed from any ideal types of divine kingship, and attempts at their empirical validation have turned absolutism is a highly contested concept. The scholarly debate whether absolutism is real or imaginary (see Thireau 1997; Henshall 2014) smolders on; however, contemporary scholars have found a middle way between *"the distortions created by both the hyperbole of its propagandists and the caricatures of its critics"* (Miller 1990: 1) by treating absolutism as a transgenerational philosophico-political set of discourses favoring and justifying supreme power. However, as an(y) ideal type, its end result *"was always in the making, but never made"* (Parker 1983: xvi; in Cuttica & Burgess 2015: 4). For this reason, Bjørnstad (2021) calls it a dream.

DEFINITION Absolutism can thus be many things: (A) an ideal **political regime** type in political philosophy from classical times to the twentieth century, (B) a political doctrine (**ideology**) justifying centralized one-person rule (usually monarchy), (C) a time period in (European) history – the so-called 'Age of Absolutism' (ca. 1610 to ca. 1789), and – unrelated – (D) a cognitive style or pattern of thinking (in psychology) characterized by a rigid, black-and-white, zero-sum perception of reality, dismissing nuances and complexities. Such thought patterns of over-generalization, dichotomous thinking, catastrophizing and perfectionism are associated with various mental health issues (Al-Mosaiwi & Johnstone 2018).

As an archetype (A) and worldview (B), absolutism is a form of governance characterized by the concentration of sovereign power in the hands of a single individual, who exercises ultimate authority over the state and its institutions. This ruler, often a monarch, is not bound by constitutional limitations or checks-and-balances, and their decrees are considered the highest law. The theoretical foundation of absolutism often includes the notion of the divine right of kings, which posits that the monarch's authority is granted directly by God and therefore cannot be questioned by earthly methods.

In terms of periodization (C), it is a transitional period marking *"the past's moment of becoming modern"* and is characterized by a *"long series of processual nouns, including modernization, secularization, rationalization, instrumentalization, bureaucratization, centralization – if not as a more abrupt transition, as in revolutions in communication, in the management of information, in the control of human life processes, in the waging of war, and so on"* (Bjørnstad 2021: 3-4). Overall, it is used to describe the 'sovereign' monarchical political systems that were increasingly centralized militarily and administratively after the peace of Westphalia (1648), and the breaking of the monopoly of the supranational Catholic Church (still recovering from the Reformation) (Braure 1963: 53-56).

EXAMPLES It covers the realms of rulers like Philip II of Spain, Austria under the Habsburgs, several 'Greats' like Frederick II of Prussia, Peter I and Katerina II in Tsarist Russia, and, of course, Louis XIV of France, who famously declared, *"L'état, c'est moi"* (*I am the state*), epitomizing the essence of absolutist rule.

SEE ALSO Absolutism is an ideal type that many historical **monarchies** have been said to approximate. The absolutist bias (see below under 'methodological issues') of earlier generations of scholars resulted in the concept being applied to **personalist rule** and **totalitarianism** as well. Although, earlier doctrines and theoretical works, clearly differentiate between **tyranny** (unconstrained by any law, custom, tradition or actor) and absolutism (unconstrained by the law of men, but expected to uphold natural law or God's natural order.) **Despotism** varies in its interpretation and can fall under either category.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Absolutism (as a time period – C) was a crucial phase in the development of modern nation-states (in Europe), centralizing power and reducing the influence of feudal lords and other competing (religious) authorities. There is some dispute whether the legitimizing doctrine (B) facilitated or merely justified the creation of more unified and efficient administrative systems that emerged in the seventeenth century, the precursors of modern bureaucracies and standing armies. Absolutism, as a political concept (A), did lay the groundwork for the later development of constitutional monarchies and democratic states by highlighting the need for checks on executive power.

ORIGIN Having origins in ancient Greek philosophy, Roman legal traditions, and Christian theology, an extensive canon of works exists that subscribe to a ruler's absolute and quasi-divine authority (Braure 1963). Note that not all early modern thinkers derived their arguments from religious contexts; there were diverse intellectual roots: patriarchalism, prudentialism, the insistence on order within the state, etc. The 'Age of Reason,' anti-monarchical discourses, and the establishment of new international norms after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) (especially

regarding sovereignty and religious tolerance) all influenced the evolution and reinvention of absolutism as a political concept and ideology in the centuries that followed.

The term 'absolutism' is derived from the Latin word *absolutus* meaning 'free from limitations' or 'complete.' It was first used by François-René de Chateaubriand in 1797 and gained prominence in the nineteenth century in both French and English to describe the centralized and unconstrained power exercised by monarchs in early modern Europe, particularly from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries (Bjørnstad 2021: 5). Politically, absolutism generally served as an opponent to subsequent developments such as the Enlightenment, **revolution**, modernity, or later forms of constitutional monarchy, and despite its heterogeneous origins, its proponents shared a concern with elevating royal authority to the highest degree, even if many theorists implicitly preferred 'monarchical sovereignty' to absolutism. The concept was also retrospectively applied to Byzantium's **autocracy**.

LITERATURE Absolutist rhetoric and policies were influenced by Renaissance, Baroque, Catholic, and Protestant ideologies. They were also entwined with new philosophical and scientific trends, actively contributing to the formation of a loosely defined 'modern world.' However, patterns of change were complex and multifaceted. Only the most relevant thinkers are presented below. Some solid overviews of the concept and its main theorists can be found in J.H. Burn's chapter in Miller (1990); Henshall (2014); Cuttica (2013; 2015).

Anastos (1965) explores the roots of Byzantine absolutism in ancient Greek philosophical ideas, particularly those of **Plato & Aristotle**, who advocated the rule of a wise and virtuous leader having absolute power: a philosopher-king. The idea was perpetuated and popularized by Alexander the Great through his adoption of Persian royal customs (e.g. προσκύνησις – *proskýnēsis*: the act of prostrating oneself to revere those of higher status, an act that was reserved only for deities in Greco-Macedonian customs), as well as through Alexander's belief in his own divinity, combined with his far-reaching centralization of power through military and administrative reforms (Walbank 2024).

These same concepts were later adapted by Christian theologians, notably Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260/265 – 339 CE), who transformed the Byzantine emperor from a god into God's vicegerent on earth, divinely appointed and inspired (Anastos 1965: 94-109). (See also Box 1.17 on Caesaropapism.)

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704), French bishop and theologian, similarly a prominent theorist of divine right absolutism and a court preacher at Versailles, argued that governments were ordained by God, and subjects were obliged to obey them. In his work *Politics Drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture*, he quoted St. Paul: *"Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God and the powers that be are ordained by God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God."* Bossuet believed hereditary monarchy was the most appropriate form of government, paralleling divine order and chosen by God for ancient Israel. Beyond biblical justification, he argued that people naturally desired paternal government, that absolutism prevented state division, and that hereditary rule was the most natural and self-sustaining kind (Birn 1977: 138).

As a political doctrine, absolutism was further developed during the early modern period, particularly in the seventeenth century. Thinkers like Jean **Bodin** (ca. 1530-1596) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) articulated the necessity of absolute sovereignty to maintain order and prevent civil war. Bodin's *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (1576), the work of a French jurist and political philosopher, argued that sovereign power must be indivisible and absolute to ensure stability. Note: Turchetti (2007) is especially vocal about pigeonholing Bodin as a sovereignty scholar, dismissing his support for absolutism.

Hobbes, in *Leviathan* (1651), posited that a strong, centralized authority was essential to avoid the chaos of the state of nature (Birn 1977: 138-141). According *"to Hobbes the single most important instant in human history [was when] people applied their powers of reason to their need for self-preservation. Among themselves they agreed to surrender their liberty and 'confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men.' This act of self-preservation created a 'mortal god,' the great Leviathan, the omnipotent state. Its sovereignty was absolute and its power unlimited. It defined justice, morality, and religion; it made no reciprocal concessions to subjects. Its purpose was wholly to maintain order and avert dissension. Mass rebellion against it was social suicide, for such activity incited a return to the state of Nature"* (Birn 1977: 139).

Natural law theorists were not a unified group. One faction believed that a strong government was the best means to express natural law and protect natural rights. Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694), a renowned Saxon professor and jurist, was a prominent advocate of this view. He served influential rulers like Frederick William, the 'Great Elector' *(der Große Kurfürst)* of Brandenburg and king Charles XI of Sweden.

Pufendorf, like Hobbes, argued that people formed political societies to constrain themselves. However, Pufendorf saw the government's role as protective rather than repressive. Consequently, subjects entered into a second (social) contract with their government, pledging loyalty to their ruler, who in turn promised to respect their natural rights. M. Seidler argues that Pufendorf was in essence a sovereignty theorist, and more flexible than his reputation suggests when it came to exploring alternative constitutional forms in which sovereignty can be exercised (Cuttica & Burgess 2015: 159).

Still, Pufendorf's absolutist perspective resonated with the princes of the Holy Roman Empire, who saw themselves as safeguarding their subjects from social chaos and the emperor's ambitions. In the mid-eighteenth century, the 'enlightened despots' (see **despotism**) of central Europe used Pufendorf's ideas to justify their absolutist rule (Birn 1977: 139-140).



By the early twentieth century the concept was adapted to fit non-monarchical forms or rule (e.g. Sturzo 1936; Smith 1939). The focus here was on administrative of bureaucratic absolutism aimed at describing cases that, by the 1940s, would come to be labeled **totalitarianism**. This focus on bureaucratic absolutism has also been re-applied to the German polities before the French revolution (Ertman 2010).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Besides the ongoing debate about whether absolutism ever existed or is a myth, propaganda or a dream (see 'definition' above), this essentially contested concept has been stretched to extend to totalitarian regimes and other modern autocracies, adding to the confusion.

Delineation Absolutism is seldom clearly defined. James Daly (1978: 250) remarked that the label was often retroactively applied to cases where seventeenth-century monarchs had more power than twentieth-century scholars thought they ought to have had. John Miller (1990: 1) finds that the term is routinely used interchangeably with **despotism** (Cuttica & Burgess 2015: 3-4), which clearly goes against the understanding of the original thinkers.

Bossuet, for instance, clearly distinguished between absolute and arbitrary government (**tyranny**), emphasizing that princes must respect fundamental state laws and subjects' property. While civil disobedience was intolerable, subjects could make respectful remonstrances against unjust rulers, with prayers for the tyrant's conversion being the ultimate recourse for a suffering populace (Birn 1977: 138).

While the exact boundary between despotism and absolutism remains uncharted, the true antithesis was actually **republicanism**, whose historical and theoretical ascendancy rests on an implied contrast with (monarchical) absolutism (Seidler in Cuttica & Burgess 2015: 159).

Absolutist bias Debate in the historical analysis of early modern government revolves around the misconception that the crown's authority was absolute and unchallenged. Recent scholarship has shown that the crown's power was significantly limited during the whole period considered the 'Age of Absolutism.'

The power of monarchs in the late medieval period was far from absolute, as evidenced by the diverse and fragmented nature of political and legal institutions across Western Europe. The practice of feudalism (see Box 1.14), where land and authority were granted in exchange for service, led to a dispersal of jurisdiction and political power. Many public functions were managed privately: landowners convened courts to dispense justice to their peasants; guilds and town corporations exercised similar functions within their jurisdictions; and church courts regulated significant aspects of daily life. This multiplicity of jurisdictions was accompanied by a variety of laws, particularly in northern Europe, where law was based on custom. Like the princes and cities of the Holy Roman Empire, whose allegiance to the emperor was often nominal, magnates developed distinct administrations and institutions within their states, raising the challenge of dispersed authority. To manage this, they created representative assemblies to facilitate governance and secure consent for taxation. The monarchs of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ruled over lands that were neither compact nor homogeneous, with fiscal, jurisdictional, and ecclesiastical boundaries often not aligned and frontiers uncertain, especially in mountainous regions. This complexity further diluted their power, making it clear that their rule was anything but absolute (Miller 1990: 3-4).

This perspective has enhanced our understanding of early modern governance, revealing that the crown often had to negotiate and compromise with its subjects. Despite this, some historians still imply an absolutist agenda, though evidence suggests that neither the crown nor its ministers aimed to create a centralized, bureaucratic state. Instead, the growth in government size and authority was a byproduct of practical governance and foreign wars, not a deliberate plan for absolutism (James 2006: 94-95).

OTHER LANGUAGES In German, the classic, comparative work of Duchhardt (1989) shows the various conditions under which absolutism thrived, was contested, or failed in Europe. In Russian, L.V. Landina explores Russian and Soviet scholarship on Western European absolutism and Russian autocracy over the past 150 years, highlighting research methodologies and how the meanings of concepts have changed and evolved (Ландина 2020).

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Anarchism

We are convinced that liberty without socialism is privilege, injustice; and that socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality.
– Mikhail A. Bakunin (1814-1876)

La tierra es tuya: trabajala!
(The land is yours: work it!)
– Catalan anarchist slogan (1936)

Anarchism, as both a Utopian political **ideology** and a **political regime**, presents a unique perspective on governance and societal organization. Anarchism arose as an explanation of the gulf between the rich and the poor in any community, and of the reason why the poor have been obliged to fight for their share of a common inheritance, but the doctrine also answers the radical question – 'What went wrong?' – when every **revolution** breaks its promises and reinstalls central state control over the masses who made it possible. For anarchists the state itself is the enemy, because every (new) state protects the privileges of the powerful (Ward 2004).

ORIGIN The term is, of course, derived from 'anarchy,' from the Greek *anarkhía* (ἀναρχία meaning 'without rule' or 'without authority'), a pejorative catch-all label for leftist, anti-establishment dissidents challenging the ruling order. As a neutral term, 'anarchy' remains a core concept in political science, especially International Relations (IR).

Social movements questioning the **legitimacy** of the ruling order have emerged in all places and at all times, even before the advent of the European Enlightenment. When such ideas were formulated into a comprehensive worldview, they are sometimes labeled 'early anarchism.' For instance, the main works on Daoism (Taoism) from around the Warring States period in China (ca. 475 BCE – 221 CE), attributed to Lao Zi (老子) the (mythical) sage and ascribed author of *The Way / The Path* (道德经 – *Daodejing* in Pinying, *Tao Te Ching* in the Wade-Giles transliteration), and to Zhuang Zi (莊子 – Chuang Tzu in the Wade-Giles transliteration) resonate with anarchist ideals. Rapp (2012) expands on this debate (but includes inaccuracies regarding Daoism). While Daoism criticizes (coercive) state authority and argues in favor of a natural order and individual freedom, its foremost focus was spiritual and philosophical, and cannot be considered political activism or as promoting an explicit anti-state agenda, due to these thinkers' acceptance of Chinese monarchy as a legitimate system of **rulership** (Pines 2012).

In the times of **Plato & Aristotle**, the father of Stoicism, Zeno of Citium (ca. 335 BCE – ca. 263 CE) has also been credited for anarchist ideas (see Marshall 1993), especially his *Republic* (Πολιτεία), which contains a speculative or hypothetical account of what would happen if every individual were a sage living according to their personal ethic. In such a future, there would no longer be any need for temples or laws. It would be something akin to an anarchist Utopia populated by individuals guided by their own mental dispositions, who all would agree to the extent that they all accord with Nature (Sellars 2007: 19).

European anarchism traces its roots back to the political philosophy of the Enlightenment. In their respective works, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) presented contrasting views on the 'state of nature' and the transition to political society. In *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes saw the state of nature as a violent, anarchic 'war of all against all,' necessitating the establishment of a powerful sovereign through a social contract to ensure peace and security. This model has been extrapolated to the international level. In the realist tradition of IR, 'anarchy' refers to the lack of a central authority above sovereign states. This absence of a supranational power means there is no natural order in the international system, since there are no enforceable rules of conduct, especially for powerful states. This leads to a harsh, competitive environment where states' primary goals are survival and security. (Others strands of IR, of course, challenge this vision.)

In contrast (even when never using the term 'anar-



chy'), other Enlightenment thinkers spoke of the 'state of nature' – referring to a hypothetical condition before the establishment of formal societies and governments – in more Utopian terms. For Locke, this was a state of perfect freedom and equality governed by natural law, which led to the formation of government to protect natural rights and ensure impartial justice. Rousseau offered an even more positive view, seeing the state of nature as peaceful and morally neutral, with the development of civilization and private property introducing inequality and conflict, ultimately leading to the formation of political societies. Locke and Rousseau significantly influenced anarchist thinkers through their political philosophies of natural rights, the state of nature, and the social contract.

As an independent political movement, anarchism came into being after the split with **socialism** at the First International (Hague Congress in 1872), where there was a falling-out over deep-seated ideological and strategic differences, particularly regarding the role of the state and the nature of revolutionary organization (see below under 'examples'). This modern version of anarchist thought spread to the Americas through migration (e.g. labor unions in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay) in the mid-nineteenth century, and to East Asia through Western-educated elites and cultural exchanges in the early twentieth century (Park 2018; Rapp 2012). Since anarchism is constantly reinvented and adapted, it can today be considered a global ideology.

DEFINITION Anarchism, the **ideology** advocating for anarchy as a positive, natural state of human society, opposes all forms of coercive authority and hierarchical structures, including the state and capitalism. McLaughlin (2016) argues that, in essence, anarchists reject all traditional claims to **rulership** and state **legitimacy** – both rejecting **traditional rule** (religion, tradition, dynasticism) and legal-rational rule through **bureaucracy**. Anarchists seek to establish a society based on voluntary cooperation, mutual aid, and self-governance, often through decentralized and federated communities. To this end, they embrace the ethos of 'direct action' – action without intermediaries, whereby an individual or a group uses their own power and resources to change reality in a desired direction (Gordon 2007).

SEE ALSO Because of its militant nature, anarchism is associated with **revolution** and sometimes **terrorism** or **assassination** (e.g. that of US President McKinley in 1901), although the **ideology** has a complex relationship with the **legitimacy** of political violence. As a political regime type it is considered to be unstable, but a few successful examples exist – see below, 'examples.'

LITERATURE Historically, anarchism emerged during the Enlightenment and gained prominence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Influential anarchist thinkers like William Godwin (1756-1836), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), Mikhail A. Bakunin (1814-1876), Piotr A. Kropotkin (1842-1921) and Emma Goldman (1869-1940) – among many others – critiqued existing political and economic systems, advocating for a society free from oppression and exploitation. Anarchism encompasses various schools of thought, including collectivist, individualist, and anarcho-communist traditions, each proposing different methods and visions for achieving an anarchist society. The works of Locke and Rousseau were very influential for justifying the resistance to illegitimate rule and for striving to create a 'natural' egalitarian society, respectively.

Locke, in his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), emphasized natural rights to life, liberty, and property, which exist independently of any government. He argued that legitimate political authority arises from the consent of the governed and that governments exist to protect these natural rights. When a government fails to do so, it loses its **legitimacy** and can be resisted or replaced (even through **protests & uprisings** or 'regicide' – **assassination**). This skepticism about centralized authority and advocacy for individual freedoms laid the groundwork for classical liberalism, influencing anarchist thought.

Rousseau, in his *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) and *The Social Contract* (1762), argued that humans are inherently good but corrupted by civilization and private property. He believed that private property led to social inequality and oppressive political institutions. Rousseau's vision of a simpler, more egalitarian society resonated with anarchist principles, particularly his critique of the state's role in perpetuating inequality and his emphasis on freedom. His ideas influenced early anarchists like William Godwin (1756-1836), who extended Rousseau's critique to advocate for a stateless society based on voluntary cooperation and mutual aid.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As an **ideology**, anarchism contains several logical contradictions that seem impossible to reconcile; for one, the wish to uphold individual autonomy while simultaneously imposing social discipline (Ritter 1980: 25). Anarchists reject the notion that freedom could only exist within the state, arguing that both the state and private property are obstacles to true freedom. At the same time, they must limit freedom to the superior claim of solidarity, which is and will always remain the greatest source of social goods. The doctrine lacks a principle to adjudicate between individuality and community, and cannot rely on (hierarchical) institutions to settle situations where these norms collide (Ritter 1980: 29).

Anarchism is considered a Utopian ideology because it envisions a radically different society based on principles of non-hierarchy, mutual aid, and voluntary cooperation. (Despite its Utopian label, such philosophical speculation can be useful in clarifying values.) While these ideals offer a powerful critique of existing systems of power and domination, they are often viewed as impractical or overly idealistic given the complexities of human society and historical precedents. Is not the emergence of some kind of (minimal) state inevitable? Consequently, is a state of political 'anarchy' not inherently unstable as a political regime type? Anarchism also suffers from the challenge of specificity

– often equally opposing all states out of principle, even as political power can be organized in various ways. Nevertheless, anarchism continues to inspire movements and individuals seeking to create more just and equitable forms of social organization (Fiala 2021).

CLASSIFICATIONS Like **socialism** (see Box 4.9) anarchists have employed both revolutionary (A) and evolutionary strategies to realize their goals. Revolutionary anarchists often support direct action and insurrection to dismantle existing power structures, while evolutionary (B) anarchists focus on building alternative institutions and practices within the current system to gradually transition to an anarchist society. Neither group believes in emancipation through the ballot (Guerin 170).

Some are individualist (I), focused on individual autonomy, personal freedom, and skeptical of collective structures (cf. the works of Max Stirner). Collectivists (II) can be subdivided into (i) anarcho-communism, (ii) mutualism, (iii) anarcho-syndicalism. The first (i) advocates for communal ownership of property and resources, aiming for a stateless, classless society; mutualism (ii) promotes a society where individuals and cooperatives exchange goods and services based on mutual benefit; and the last (iii) focuses on labor unions and direct action to achieve workers' control over production.

Of the revolutionary type (A), anarcho-communists are stereotyped as associated with **terrorism**, especially those adhering to insurrectionary anarchism, and operating with the legacy of some militant branches of Russian anarchists that employed the 'propaganda of the deed' against monarchic rule and were, most notoriously, responsible for the **assassination** of Tsar Aleksander II in 1881 in Russia.

EXAMPLES Anarchism, as a **political regime**, has had several notable, albeit short-lived, real-life instantiations in history. These illustrate attempts at the practical application of anarchist principles in various contexts, often during periods of social upheaval or revolution. Fellow leftist organizations often stuck the knife in the back of anarchist experiments. Anarchism and **communism** have a complex interplay. The two movements often initially align to overthrow a common enemy but then fall out over issues of control and strategy. Both oppose capitalism and strive for a classless, stateless society with collective ownership. However, anarchists reject the state entirely, favoring immediate abolition and decentralized organization, while Marxists see a transitional state as necessary. Anarchists prefer direct action, whereas Marxists focus on seizing state power through a **coup** or **revolution**. Nevertheless, some anarchist political regimes did emerge in history:

The Paris Commune (1871) – Although not purely anarchist, rather a precursor, the Paris Commune was a radical socialist government that briefly ruled Paris in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War (1870) and implemented policies such as the abolition of the standing army, the separation of church and state, and workers' control of businesses. Anarchists like Kropotkin saw the Commune as a practical example of anarchist principles in action, despite its short-lived existence (Ward 2004).

The *Makhnovshchina* (Махновщина – 1918-1921) – In Ukraine, in the wake of WWI and the Russian Civil War, the anarchist Nestor I. Makhno (1888-1934), a convicted bandit and bank robber with peasant roots, radicalized in prison, returned to his hometown of Huliaipole in 1917 after a general amnesty, where he started an insurrection and the movement named after him. This movement established a stateless society in parts of southeastern Ukraine (Zaporizhzhia), characterized by self-managed communities and voluntary militias. Makhno grew larger than life due to his successful guerrilla campaigns, and his myth lives on stubbornly (Yanovitz 2007; Darch 1985). The Makhnovists preached a form of anarcho-communism, emphasizing collective ownership of land and resources, although at the regime level his movement may be compared to other historical **warlords** or **rebel regimes** marked by excessive **repression** and **personalist rule**. Constant military threats from Ukrainian nationals, the White Army and the Red Army, including the betrayal of several alliances with the latter, led to his eventual downfall and exile in Paris (Mitchell 2009; Shubin 2011).

The *Shinmin Autonomous Region* (신민부 – *Sinminbu,* 1929-1931) was an anarchist self-governing zone established by Korean exiles in Manchuria after the Japanese occupation of Korea. It hosted two million Korean refugees, and operated on principles of mutual aid, decentralized governance, and collective economic organization, employing **nationalism** as societal glue. Despite facing significant challenges from Japanese imperial forces and Korean communists, which, by 1931, led to its downfall, the region remains a significant milestone in anarchist history and the Korean independence movement. This movement, the *Korean People's Association in Manchuria* (재만한족총연합회), was the first to demonstrate the practical application of anarchist principles in a real-world context, emphasizing grassroots decision-making, collective farming, and cooperative societal structures (Crump 2023; Ki-Rak 1986).

Revolutionary Catalonia (1936-1939) – In the tradition of Proudhon, Ramón de la Sagra founded the first anarchist journal in Spain in 1845. Francisco Pi y Margall promoted mutualist ideas and attempted decentralization in 1873. Later, however, Bakunin's influence grew through Giuseppe Fanelli's establishment of International branches in 1868. By 1870, the movement had 40,000 members, growing to 60,000 by 1873. Despite frequent suppression, anarchism thrived among Catalan factory workers and Andalusian peasants, mostly underground. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), anarchists succeeded in establishing a large-scale society in Catalonia along anarcho-syndicalist lines, with powerful labor unions in the cities and collectivized agriculture in the countryside. The anarchists implemented principles of direct democracy and self-management, creating a society based on mutual aid and voluntary cooperation. Despite initial successes, the anarchist territories were eventually defeated by a combina-



tion of Franco's Nationalist forces and the divisions within the Republican side (Smith 2007; Ealham 2010).

Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities (1994-2023) – Inspired by Emiliano Zapata, a key figure in the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), who championed land reform and indigenous rights, the Zapatista movement, led by the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN), emerged in Chiapas, Mexico, in 1994 as an armed response to centuries of indigenous marginalization and NAFTA's neoliberal policies. The Zapatistas established autonomous municipalities governed by direct democracy and self-management, rejecting the Mexican state's authority. Despite the dissolution of these autonomous municipalities in 2023, due to escalating violence, the Zapatistas' emphasis on anti-capitalism, decentralized governance, and indigenous autonomy remains influential. Their model of community-based governance and resistance against neoliberalism continues to inspire global social movements advocating equity and self-determination (Collier & Quaratiello 2005; Gilbreth & Otero 2001).

These historical examples of anarchist regimes demonstrate the diverse contexts in which anarchist principles have been applied. While many of these experiments were short-lived and faced significant external and internal challenges, they provide valuable insights into the practical implementation of anarchist ideas and the potential for creating societies based on voluntary cooperation, mutual aid, and self-management.

IMPACT ON POLICY Contemporary anarchism has evolved significantly from its historical roots, broadening its focus to oppose all forms of domination, including patriarchy, **racism**, and environmental destruction. Unlike the more formal federations and unions of the past, modern anarchism favors decentralized, network-based organization and emphasizes direct action and prefigurative politics – creating alternative social structures in the present. Influenced by subcultures such as punk and environmentalism, contemporary anarchism integrates diverse cultural practices and missions (such as food distribution, harm reduction, and decarceration) and utilizes digital communication technologies for coordination. The movement is characterized by intersectionality and theoretical pluralism, incorporating post-structuralist critiques and rejecting any notion of a post-revolutionary resting point. This evolution reflects a shift from the class struggle-centric anarchism of previous centuries to a more inclusive and adaptive form of activism (Gordon 2007; Honeywell 2021).

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Communism

The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.
– Karl Marx

Socialism and communism are related ideologies that advocate for collective ownership and the reduction of social inequalities, but they differ significantly in their principles and modes of implementation. While communism is sometimes presented as the end goal of socialism, it can also be considered a more radical form of socialism that aims to establish a classless, stateless society where all property is communally owned. To this end, communism relies on a revolutionary, single-party regime to transform the state and assume full state control over the economy.

The entry for **socialism** contains more details on both topics, and shows connections to related entries in the encyclopedia, like **totalitarianism**, **ideocracies** and **single-party regimes**. Box 4.9 provides a regional comparison of socialist and communist movements.

Constitutionalism

'We the People.'
– Preamble to the United States Constitution

Constitutionalism, due to its foundational principles and flexibility in application, is both an **ideology** and an aspect of other worldviews. As an ideology, constitutionalism is rooted in the belief that government powers should be legally limited, and that the legitimacy of government depends on its adherence to these limits. This concept, heavily influenced by thinkers like John Locke and the American founders, posits that a constitution sets the framework for government authority and its constraints, ensuring that power is not absolute but subject to legal boundaries, a pillar of Max Weber's legal-rational **rulership**.

The ideological aspect of constitutionalism in liberal thought is evident in its core tenets. It emphasizes the rule of law, separation of powers, and the protection of civil liberties. These principles are designed to prevent the concentration of power and protect individual rights against government overreach. The idea is that by establishing clear, enforceable limits on government actions, constitutionalism promotes a stable, predictable, and just political order. This ideological framework is reflected in the structure of many democratic states, where constitutions serve as the supreme law, guiding the creation and implementation of other laws and policies.

Such 'negative constitutionalism' focuses on limiting state power to protect individual liberties. It views the state as a potential threat and relies on judicial review to enforce these limits. Positive constitutionalism, conversely, empowers the state to promote public welfare, emphasizing positive rights that require state action, such as education and healthcare. It sees the state as a necessary actor for achieving social justice and substantive goals. The main criticism of negative constitutionalism is that it can hinder governance (since it also limits the legislative and judiciary as well), and runs counter to egalitarianism because it entrenches one political position by constitutional fiat, forcing reformers to win their case in democratic forums (Barber 2018: 5). Positive constitutionalism risks judicial overreach and implementation complexity.

However, constitutionalism is not just an isolated ideology; it is also an integral part of various other worldviews and political theories. For instance, in liberal democracies, constitutionalism aligns with the broader liberal ideology that values individual freedoms, equality, and democratic governance. In the US it supports the liberal emphasis on protecting individual rights through mechanisms like *Bills of Rights* and judicial review, which ensure that government actions do not infringe upon fundamental freedoms. Moreover, constitutionalism interacts with other political theories such as **republicanism**, which focuses on civic virtue and the common good. In this context, constitutionalism helps balance individual rights with collective responsibilities, ensuring that government actions serve the public interest while respecting personal freedoms. This interaction is evident in the design of many republican constitutions, which incorporate checks-and-balances to prevent **tyranny** and promote the common welfare.

The flexibility of constitutionalism allows it to adapt to different political and cultural contexts, making it a versatile component of various worldviews. Religious constitutions are the pillars of modern manifestations of **theocracy** and many other **ideocracies** have enshrined the dogmas of their worldviews in this form of supreme law. Constitutions can thus ensure the 'legalization' of any type of political rule at a certain moment of history – an order that did not always exist, and which might disappear over time (Grimm 2016: 3).

As shown in **religions of the world & statecraft**, pre-modern political orders universally adhered to the concept of a 'constitution' as a set of legal constraints, ordained by deities, against **tyranny** or **despotism**, informed by religious ethics intended to impede the corruption of leaders and uphold social



harmony in hierarchically structured, non-egalitarian polities. These constitutions should *"not be confused with the normative text that seeks to regulate rule and is enacted by a political decision"* (Grimm 2016: 4). The latter is the outcome of European revolutions, where new political actors – who, like Prometheus, stole fire from the Gods – appropriated the right to make laws without any religious limitations, without being beholden to higher, divine laws.

Furthermore, constitutionalism's role in shaping judicial interpretation highlights its dynamic nature. The debate between 'originalism' and 'living constitutionalism' illustrates how constitutional principles can be interpreted in ways that either emphasize historical intentions or adapt to contemporary values and circumstances. Originalists argue for a fixed interpretation based on the original meaning of constitutional texts, while living constitutionalists advocate for a more flexible approach that considers evolving social and moral standards. This ongoing debate underscores the importance of constitutionalism in guiding legal and political discourse, and the practice is of course subject to political manipulation, as shown in **authoritarian constitutionalism**.

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Corporatism

The definition of fascism is the marriage of corporation and state.
– Benito Mussolini

Corporatism is the political doctrine or **ideology** that political systems are built on analogy with the human body or *corpus* (in Latin), and that is why this line of thought is considered part of a broader framework of political thinking known as organicism. Under the influence of Isaac Newton's works and Newtonianism, the earlier idea of 'mechanicism' – a natural philosophy likening the universe to a giant mechanism – gradually became outdated in political theories; some authors and political movements oriented themselves towards the more experience-based notions of corporatism, organicism (nature has an organic foundation), blood-ties and the common descent of people (nations) (Wolfe 1974). Corporatism was revived around 1850 to reappraise the role and position of traditional institutions and the 'divine' right of the state, threatened by the class egalitarianism of the French Revolution and the laissez-faire economics of Adam Smith's classical Liberalism (Britannica 2014). Earlier, it had served as an ideology in European Antiquity (later influenced by Christianity and its focus on the relation between the carnal (body) and the divine) and formed part of a well-established canon of pre-modern concepts.

DEFINITION Corporatism as a *political doctrine* is grounded in the belief that politics is based on the organic relations among cells and organs within the political body. Society is thus divided into 'corporations' subordinate to the state. According to the logic of state survival, the vital interests of the political body are more important than the equality of individual interests. Therefore, the formulation and representation of vital interests in politics must be organized and presented to the 'head' decision-making bodies, such as government and parliament, following privileged ways and special arrangements. The followers of corporatism therefore strive either to establish direct negotiations between these vital interest groups or to represent these interest groups through special bodies, which supplant or parallel institutions based on liberal doctrine and democratically arranged political systems.

Corporatism is often presented as a 'Third Way' between Liberalism and Marxism, making it an attractive concept to analyze non-Western polities. The concept is indifferent to democratic values, and offered attractive transformative features, after the shedding of its Catholic shibboleths, both to secular liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes with a penchant for technocratic rule.

R.B. Collier and D. Collier (1977: 493) distill three recurring defining features of corporatism: *"(a) The structuring of representation, involving the official recognition of groups, which are organized into well-defined functional categories and enjoy a monopoly of representation within their respective categories; (b) the subsidy of groups, which can occur through direct state subvention and, especially in the case of labor unions, through mechanisms that provide for compulsory membership and that facilitate dues collection; and (c) state control over leadership, demand making, finances, and internal governance"* (Collier 1995: 138).

Corporatism as a *political system* thus differs from 'pluralism' and is defined as a system of interest representation by hierarchically organized and non-competitive groups, recognized and regulated (if not created) by the state (C.A. Hale in: Bethell 1986: 435).

In a wider sense, the term 'corporatism' or 'corpo-

rate interest' is today used in the context of economic Liberalism, denoting a specific relationship between organized interests and government in which associations of interest groups coordinate some of their activities with government policies (usually regarding taxation, permits, oversight, trade privileges and labor legislation).

SEE ALSO Corporatism has parallels with **clientelism**; however, the former is a mode of authority relations among groups, whereas clientelism is a mode of authority relations among individuals. It found common ground with **Fascism** because of its nationalist outlook and indifference to democratic values. Yet too often corporatism was used as a veil to control trade unions and businesses, with the goal of creating state-led economies and establishing **personalist rule**. D. Collier (1995: 142-146) provides a detailed overview of the concept's relation to pluralism, interest mediation, concertation and policy formulation. Its development under authoritarian rule means it is often studied as an aspect of **bureaucratic authoritarianism** or **technocratic rule**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The ideas of corporatism offer security, a place and role for everyone in caring for the nation, family, local community. They aim to promote harmony and social peace. Class brotherhood was incorporated into negotiations between trade unions and representatives of capital, thus directly countering Marxist notions of class conflict. R.B. Collier and D. Collier find that societal groups accept state control 'in exchange for' the advantages derived from structure and subsidy (Collier 1995: 138). The goal was to counter the capitalist individualism of *homo economicus*, and replace it – in the words of Ugo Spirito – with *homo corporativus* (Pinto 2017: 5).

Under Italian **Fascism** (1922-1943), it was adopted and heralded as a leading doctrine, on a par with **Communism** and Liberalism. However, Mussolini's totalitarian aspirations clashed with its basic premises. The ideology was promoted as a 'Third Way' between Capitalism and Communism, but, in reality, it was applied pragmatically and selectively to destroy labor movements and suppress political dissent (Soucy 2022). After World War II, corporatism was equated with fascism. Nonetheless, there were attempts to free to concept from this association. In the early 1970s, Philippe Schmitter (1971; 1974) reinterpreted and adapted the concept to modern political systems, dominated by Liberalism and **democracy**, rebranding the concept 'neo-corporatism' or 'liberal corporatism.'

Once tainted by fascism, the concept lost much currency as an ideology to structure politics in Europe, but can still be encountered as a tool for systemic policy analysis or as a broad framework to study policy-making, decision-making processes, and institutions that focus on the relations between society's main dominant interest groups – labor and capital – and the government. It is still used to analyze the changing pattern of these institutionalized arrangements. In addition, there is a growing interest in the impact of neoliberalism and different economic and political crises resulting from different corporatist and neo-corporatist arrangements. In the context of multiple modernities coexisting, with countries having different institutionalized and informal relations between labor and capital, and given global patterns of rising inequality, this study is still dominant in the fields of the sociology of work and policy analysis.

Corporatism has been mostly connected to pre-modern regimes and authoritarian political systems. In fact, as a doctrine, although it is not liberal and not democratic (it reduces pluralism), it is also not purely authoritarian (because it is inclusive). It is built on the promotion of the vital interests in the organic perception of the community and the state – meaning that it aspires to represent the dominant interests of society. In strong capitalistic societies, it thus promotes the logic of the concentration of capital; in other cases, like fascism, it can take an authoritarian form.

ORIGINS Corporatism (*corporativismo* in Italian and Spanish, sometimes also called 'corporativism' in English) essentially originates in a spontaneous way of thinking about the natural world. In all cultures humans identify parallels between their bodies and the world they live in. Such group politics, in the words of H. Wiarda (1973: 222-223), refer to a system in which political culture and institutions reflect a historical hierarchical, authoritarian, and organic view of man, society, and polity.

In European Antiquity this can be found in the thinking of **Plato & Aristotle** about natural social hierarchies and their specific roles. The Romans added forms of representation to each of their classes. Feudal Europe was organized through the system of three estates (the clergy, the aristocracy, and commoners), each fulfilling a vital function in society, with a monarch as its head at the top.

In the High Middle Ages, corporatist organizations flourished: guilds, military orders, universities, chartered cities and towns, etc., until the advent of absolute monarchies subjugated their political influence (Wiarda 1997: 30-33). The French Revolution with its Enlightenment ideas and abolition of class privilege suddenly transformed the adherents of corporatism into political reactionaries. Some of the latter even turned against economic Liberalism and advocated for the restoration of feudal systems.

Corporatism as a doctrine predates Fascism and follows a non-linear path, as it left its mark on Western European liberal democracies as well. Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936), the German sociologist, influenced the theocratization of corporatism with his idea of a dualism of 'community' and 'society' (*Gemeinschaft* vs. *Gesellschaft*). Community is based on 'real and organic life,' society on the 'imaginary or mechanical.' Society is 'public life;' in community, *"with one's family, one lives from birth on bound to it in weal and woe"* (Tönnies 1887: 37). He believed that there was unity, a hierarchy of authority, paternalism, healthy relations, community in the Middle Ages, in contrast to modern society where people are strangers to each another and there is atomization and exploitation. In community, natural will



and laws prevail (see **organicism**); in modern society there is but the rational will. The concept of corporatism is very close to Tönnies' concept of communitarianism.

In the nineteenth century, corporatist doctrine was officially recognized by the Roman Catholic Church and later elaborated in papal encyclicals like the Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and Pius XII's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931). This approach resulted in the Catholic Church blessing trade unions and organized labor, with the aim of keeping atheist influences among workers at bay. This explicit endorsement certainly moved the corporatist debate from seminar rooms to presidential palaces (Pinto 2023: 27). Under the intellectual tutelage of S.G. Hobson and G.D.H. Cole this thinking sprouted a movement in England called Guild Socialism in 1900-1930, which aspired to establish workers' control of industry through a system of national guilds, inspired by their medieval counterparts (Britannica 2012).

In the 1920s corporatism was officially adopted by Italian Fascism as part of a totalitarian ideology based on ideas of a corporate state, an organically-based political system that promoted organic communities such as the family, and the nation itself as a big family, where there is no room for class conflict or other types of dissent. This type of corporatism later inspired Francisco Franco's Spain, António de Oliveira Salazar's Portugal, and authoritarian regimes in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, in Latin America, and even Yugoslavia and the Baltics. After World War II, many democratic European countries, especially Austria, Norway and Sweden, developed corporatist ideas to mediate and reduce class conflict between business and trade unions (Britannica 2014; Soucy 2022; Panitch 1977).

LITERATURE First emerging as an ideological and institutional mechanism in the first half of the twentieth century, corporatism was later adapted by democracies. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the rise of corporatism as a political theory, primarily intended to capture Latin American realities. Schmitter and Grote (1997) later found this turn ironic. Just as academics started using the concept to analyze trends in advanced capitalist societies, the practice had already peaked and was in decline during the 1980s. After its demise was announced in the 1980s, the concept emerged once more in the 1990s, like a 'corporatist Sisyphus,' only to be questioned again by the turn of the century (Oxhorn 1998). Witnessing the reappraisal of the concept in recent years, the authors might have been spot on about this oscillating interest.

At the beginning of the 1970s, pluralism as the hegemonic global concept was in crisis, and the ideology of corporatism had grown more powerful in its neo- or liberal forms. "Pluralism between Liberalism and Socialism," a work by Rainer Eisfeld (1972), provided an excellent illustration of the state of ideas by the end of 1960s. At the same time, Schmitter began a new discussion by arguing in his well-known article "Still the Century of Corporatism?" that pluralism was insufficient as a model for understanding political processes. Alongside these ideas there emerged a school of corporatist thinkers – G. Lehmbruch, R.E. Pahl, J.T. Winkler and others – who developed a compelling criticism of pluralism, promoting ideas of neo-, liberal, or societal corporatism instead. Corporatism was put forward as a *"new form of political-economic organization"* that involved, *"like socialism, a high level of state activity, but (...) in which the state plays a qualitatively different role"* (Pahl & Winkler 1976: 5). Corporatism was also offered as *"an economic system in which the state directs and controls predominantly privately owned business according to four principles: unity, order, nationalism, and success"* (Pahl & Winkler 1976: 7). Winkler argued that corporatism *"is the most likely development for the UK over the next 5 or 10 years"* (Winkler 1976: 100). Politically, the US was under pressure in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the weakening of its President during the Watergate scandal. Von Beyme observed: *"the majority of researchers agree that corporatist conflict mediation patterns are not an episode in post-war history"* (von Beyme, 1983: 194).

After neoconservatism and neoliberalism became the dominant ideologies in Western political systems in the 1980s, corporatism lost its currency. In the Trilateral Commission's 1979 report, all forms of direct negotiation, particularly in the field of labor and social market policies, were proclaimed inappropriate for economic development. Trade unions and all kinds of other professional organizations lost much of their power. All other collective forms of organization also lost influence. The process of individualization destroyed the bases of corporatism.

The most powerful forms of corporatism were developed in Austria. *'Socialpartnerschaft'* as a rule led all kinds of policies, including financial policy and state-owned banking (Pelinka 1984). Scandinavian states also developed a huge network of corporatist institutions. Slovenia is a peculiar case. It has a senate, a second parliamentary chamber, elected on the principle of the corporate representation of vital interests, as well as an institutionalized social partnership, in the form of a Social Council, where representatives of trade unions, employees' organizations and the government discuss issues pertaining to financial, social, and labor policies (Lukšič 2003).

Schmitter was the first to link Latin American cases to similar practices in northern Europe in the 1970s, thus revealing the universalist nature of (neo-) corporatism. In contrast, H.J. Wiarda (2009) took another direction when he adopted a more cultural approach (not solely focused on institutions) with the purpose of countering Western-centered frames of development and Easton's systems theory (**modernization theory**) with regard to Latin America. So, corporatism became for Latin American Studies what **neo-patrimonialism** became for African Studies. The Third Wave of democratization in Latin America (1970s to 1990s) contributed to the decline of the study of corporatism as scholarly attention switched to transitions, privatization, austerity measures and liberalization.

The 1990s saw a short resurgence after T.M. Shaw and J.E. Nyang'oro (1989) tried to apply it to African Studies, but its conclusions regarding the applicabil-

ity of the concept were tentative (see below). More recently, the concept recurs in the comparative study of fascism (Pasetti 2017; Pinto 2014, 2015, 2017) and the cultural impact of corporatist authoritarian legacies (Bensusán 2016; Pinto 2023; Pinto & Finchelstein 2018) – see also 'regional variation,' below, for legacies of individual cases.

There are many treatises on the concept and evolution of corporatism. The main works of Schmitter, von Beyme, Pahl and Winkler treat it as a system of interest representation. Wiarda, Collier & Collier, and Pinto consider it as an institutionalized political culture. Other interesting overviews and critiques include P.J. Williamson (1985); A. Cawson (1986); A. Cox (1988); L. Baccaro (2002); O. Molina & M. Rhodes (2002). Note: A very comprehensive bibliography of works on corporatism, before 1984, can be found in Cawson & Ballard (1984).

CLASSIFICATIONS A. Pinto makes a distinction between 'social corporatism' as a system of interest representation – with the accent on structuring and subsidy, and less on state control – and 'political corporatism,' based on an 'organic-statist' system of political representation (Pinto 2017: 5). There is a rough overlap between this division and the diverging approaches launched by Schmitter and Wiarda.

D. Collier differentiates several subtypes in terms of the locus of power along four (a-d) dimensions: (a) power located in either the state or society results in state-imposed or bottom-up corporatism; (b) privatizing vs. statizing, depending on whether groups penetrate and privatize a sector or the state, or *vice versa*; (c) inclusionary vs. exclusionary, depending on whether or not the ruling elites are dependent on societal support to rule; (d) using inducements or restraints, referring to the tactics used by the state to either solicit cooperation or apply direct control (Collier 1995: 145; Collier & Collier 1979).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES D. Collier (1995: 139-141) highlights that most scholars shared an empirical understanding. Despite the fact that Schmitter renewed interest in the phenomenon, his exemplary case (Brazil), with its elaborate corporative system, was rather an outlier. Scholars did not assume the existence of similar levels of corporatism in other cases. That being said, theory and reality did not often match: and even Brazil did not install an overarching labor confederation at the national level. Corporatist organizations combining labor and business were not only very rare (e.g. Peru after the 1968 coup); they also proved to be unsuccessful. A. Pinto (2023: 31) notes that while fascist Italy was the dominant model, it had one of the slowest implementations, resulting in more inter-institutional tensions than other authoritarian transformations.

Other criticisms observe that corporatist state control was uneven and biased toward managing labor while always leaving business less constrained (Collier 1995: 140); and that the focus is always on national institutions, ignoring the local level (Linn Hammergren, cited in Wiarda 2009: 95).

MEASUREMENT No system has been developed to measure corporatism as a political doctrine. So far, the only way is to describe its elements, such as institutions and values. A. Stepan (1978: 46) finds that corporatism contains an inherent risk of imbalance. *"On the one hand, power may shift toward the state to such a degree that corporatism is simply transformed into a system of state domination of groups. On the other hand, power may shift toward the groups to such a degree that central coordination, an essential attribute of corporatism, is lost or is fundamentally weakened"* (Collier 1995: 139). Of course, there is no established 'correct' balance.

Pahl and Winkler (1976: 12) classify political systems according to criteria of ownership (private or public) and control (private or public). By also considering non/egalitarianism, they obtained eight types of arrangements, two of which are corporate: Scandinavian redistributive corporatism and fascist Italy's conservative type.

To measure corporatism as an interest mediation system, specific indicators have been developed, allowing scholars to gauge the level of corporatism within a specific political system. Using the criteria of organizational centralization and the representative monopoly of interest organizations, Schmitter (1981: 294) ranked the political systems of countries from Austria, where corporatism is strongest, to the US, where it is weakest.

REGIONAL VARIATION Most treatises on corporatism deal with few case studies, but larger regional comparisons are also common. Interwar Europe and post-World War II Latin America are the main world regions under scrutiny, tied together by colonial legacies and fascist emulation. Wiarda (1973: 209-213) finds that the durability of this pattern in Latin America can be explained by the fact that its Iberic-Latin nations were largely bypassed by the great revolutions associated with the making of the modern world, rendering these polities in the 1970s a 'living museum,' where older institutions and traditions persisted alongside newer forms.

As concerns Europe, most works on Mussolini's Fascism cover his state corporatism (Golden 1986; Gagliardi 2016; L. Cerasi in: Pinto 2017) and Salazar's *Estado Novo* – the most durable example, lasting from 1933 to 1974 – in Portugal (McAdams 1952; Schmitter 1975; Ingerson 1984; Stoer & Dale 1987; Garrido 2018, 2020; Freire & Ferreira 2019; De Lucena 2021; Wiarda 2021). Rarer exceptions are Chirot (1980) on socialist Romania, and Whitman (1991) on the spread of corporatist ideas in the USA.

In former Yugoslavia, corporatism was most firmly established in Slovenia and Croatia, which were influenced by Catholicism and the Habsburg monarchy. Even under Tito's communism, socialist self-management contained the idea of functional representation in the form of a delegate system, and transferring the interests of self-governing communities, labor organizations and local communities to the state level. Even today, the Republic of Slovenia has a second house of parliament, which is based on functional representation and not on liberal democratic principle. Representatives to the Senate are



elected by interest groups and not by voters in a general election. Social partnership (institutionalized co-operation between labor, business and government) and the chamber system, having mandatory membership, is also in force in Slovenia (Lukšič 1994; Zver 1990; Zakošek 1987).

Latin America is the other much-studied world region (Malloy 1976; Philip 1980; Bensusán 2016; Wiarda 2019), with many works focusing on Mexico (Wiarda & Guajardo 1988), Brazil (French 1991; Albernaz 2016; Teixeira 2018; Vannucchi 2022), Chile (Drake 1978; M. Sznajder in Pinto & Finchelstein 2018), and Argentina (Buchanan 1985; F. Finchelstein in Pinto & Finchelstein 2018; Etchemendy 2019).

Corporatist legacies are also a popular research subject (Morck & Yeung 2010) with attention paid to individual cases: Portugal (Stoleroff 1992; Rovo 2002), Spain (Pérez-Díaz 1986; Martinez-Alier & Roca 1987; Royo 2006; Begega & Balbona 2014; Prat & Molina 2014), Italy (Baccaro 2002; Salvati 2006), Mexico (Grayson 2007; Patroni 2001), Brazil (Doctor 2003; 2007), and Argentina (Patroni 2001)

There are also many regional comparisons on the common legacy of Iberic-Latin corporatism (Wiarda 1974; Pinto 2015; Teixeira 2016; Pinto & Finchelstein 2018), on the decline of neo-corporatism in Europe (Balbona & Begega 2015), their links with fascism (Pinto 2014; 2017; Pasetti 2017) and Catholicism (J. Pollard in: Pinto 2017; de Abreu & Costaguta 2021).

Comprehensive application to cases in Africa (Shaw & Nyang'oro 1989) remains a critical but tentative endeavor, yielding mixed results, skepticism and warnings against conceptual stretching. In particular, the perceived 'weakness' of African states, with ethnicity trumping class, and their bias to informal and agrarian economies in those times, made most regimes unlikely cases for the study of corporatism (Negash 1991). South Africa is a better fit (Maree 1993) due to its industrialization.

NEW FRONTIERS Interesting other approaches are the corporatist influence and transformation of bureaucracies under corporatist policies, leading to the creation of accounting syndicates in Brazil (Agrizzi & Sian 2015; Rodrigues & Craig 2022) and the emergence of **bureaucratic authoritarianism** in Portugal (Madureira 2007). Other original avenues involve the concept's relation to Federalism (Encarnación 1999) and ethnodevelopment (Chartok 2013), and the perpetuation of gender inequality (Elomäki et al. 2021).

Despite these new avenues, corporatism as a doctrine and organizational form continues to lose weight because it is being undermined by individualism and 'mechanicism.' Modern authoritarian regimes no longer build an ideological base that is founded on organicism.

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Fascism

Democracy is a kingless regime infested by many kings who are sometimes more exclusive, tyrannical and destructive than one, even if he be a tyrant.
– Benito Mussolini

Fascism was a reactionary **ideology** used by conservative forces to counter the growing threat of anarchy and communism. Fascism celebrates military might, extreme devotion to country and the superiority of the nation.

Fascism today is a quasi-analytical political concept that is being increasingly used to characterize far-right authoritarian populist movements, or to disqualify political opponents. Though these movements may take inspiration from past fascist movements, no political movement today has managed to replicate the latter.

There is a broad consensus about the existence of the two fundamental fascist regimes – Italian Fascism and German **Nazism**. However, there is some disagreement about the classification of other regimes of that period, such as Francisco Franco's regime in Spain and António de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal, as well as about the nature and characteristics of the regimes in European colonies. In addition, there is much theoretical disagreement about what the key features of fascism are, as well as what constitutes fascism.

DEFINITION When attempting to explain the phenomenon of fascism, a distinction must be made between the self-identification of the Italian political movement, led by Benito Mussolini, and the wider, and also contested, concept of fascism that has often been used to describe different far-right, conservative, and traditionalist ideologies, political regimes and movements in different parts of the world in different historical periods. This is why Griffin proposes 'Fascism' to label the Italian fascist political regime from 1919 until 1943, and 'fascism,' with a small 'f,' for other similar political regimes outside Italy (Griffin 1991). Traverso further suggests that one must differentiate between historical emanations of fascism and its contemporary variations, noting that *"the concept of fascism seems both inappropriate and indispensable for grasping this new reality"* (Traverso 2019: 4). Therefore, he argues that we should use the concept of 'post-fascism' to define fascist-like movements. However, this still does not provide an answer to the question: what is fascism?

Robinson claims that although *"enormous amounts of research time and mental energy have been put into the study of it (…) fascism has stubbornly remained the great conundrum for students of the twentieth century"* (Robinson 1981: 1). Here we summarize the three most common ways of defining fascism: fascism as a specific ideology (i), fascism as a political movement (ii), and fascism as a political regime (iii).

Political ideology (i) Passmore (2002: 31) defines fascism as a specific *"set of ideologies and practices that*

seeks to place the nation, defined in exclusive biological, cultural, and/or historical terms, above all other sources of loyalty, *and to create a mobilized national community."* Moreover, fascism was an antipode of liberalism – giving priority to the nation over the individual – and actively opposed to socialism and feminism. Fascism is also considered a movement of the 'radical' right because its ideologues state that the defeat of socialism and feminism and the creation of the mobilized nation are necessary to enable the coming to power of a new elite, one acting in the name of the people, headed by a charismatic leader, and embodied in a mass, militarized party (Passmore 2002: 31).

Political movement (ii) Griffin (1991: xi) argues that fascism can be best defined as a revolutionary form of nationalism, one undertaking to be a political, social and ethical revolution, aiming to weld the 'people' into a dynamic national community led by new elites infused with new heroic values. *"The core myth which inspires this project is that only a populist, trans-class movement of purifying, cathartic national rebirth (palingenesis) can stem the tide of decadence"* (Griffin 1991: xi). Griffin emphasizes that this aspect is the 'fascist minimum' or the baseline present in all forms of fascism.

Dave Renton claims that the best way to capture fascism is as a particular form of mass movement, possessing a core set of ideas, in which ideology and mass movement interact. Thus, fascism should not be understood primarily as an ideology, but as a specific form of reactionary mass movement (Renton 1999: 3).

Political regime (iii) Although there are different definitions of fascism, many scholars identify common features: the strong party, the strong leader, the purification of society, the revival of the nation, the removal of 'impure,' 'unhealthy,' 'racially inferior' elements through industrial systems like death camps. Fascist regimes emphasized militarism and glorified war, and have focused on capital accumulation and a military economy. Though fascists usually came to power using quasi-democratic mechanisms, fascist regimes are un-democratic. Fascism closes down and destroys political opposition, while using slave labor (and anti-worker policies – see **corporatism**) to drive economic growth (Griffin 1991; Sternhell 1994; Passmore 2002).

SEE ALSO The concept of fascism is closely associated with other concepts like right-wing extremism, clerical fascism, *caudillismo* (see also Box 1.10 and **coups**), **totalitarianism**, **Nazism**, **ultra-nationalism**. It often also includes elements of **populism**, nativism, xenophobia, **racism**. To better explain the contemporary political phenomena of extremism, ultra-nationalist and racist movements, scholars mostly use the concepts of post-fascism and neo-fascism.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The concept of fascism was crucial to explaining and understanding the specific political processes and forms of political rule that emerged after the World War I. It was developed to explain the rise of Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany, while also focusing on the relationship with other important political phenomena: liberalism, socialism, democracy, communism, etc. Its significance today is often blurred due to conceptual stretching and due to difficulties delineating it. However, this does not mean that the concept has lost its relevance, but rather that effort is needed to establish clearer benchmark indicators of fascism.

ORIGIN The term 'fascism' is actually of Latin origin: *fasces* meaning 'a bundle,' commonly used to symbolize a bundle of birch or elm rods, with the blade an axe emerging from the bundle. In ancient Rome, the *fasces lictoriae* (bundles of 'lictors,' attendant-bodyguards to magistrates) were the symbol of authority (*imperium*).

In modern usage, the term comes from the word *fascio* (faction) – a word used in the late nineteenth century to designate a political group, guild or syndicate. Prior to and during WWI, there were several different *fascis* in Italy – different political groupings with very different political orientations – from left to right. In 1919, Benito Mussolini founded the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* (Italian Fasces of Combat), a succeeding the more leftist *Fascio d'Azione Rivoluzionaria* (Fasces of Revolutionary Action). In 1921, the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* was renamed and reorganized as the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (National Fascist Party) (Cassels 1969; Lyttleton 1979; Seton Watson 1967).

While the origin of the term 'fascism' can be quite clearly traced, there is considerable debate about the historical genesis of the phenomenon of fascism, its origins, and the conditions under which it can emerge. Although fascism as a socio-political phenomenon is tightly linked to the interwar period, its origins and genesis have a longer history. This longer history can be traced to the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century far-right political movements in France (the *Boulanger* movement, the *Sorel* movement, *Action Française* – see Sternhell 1996), Anglo-American theories and immigration, health and social policies of social Darwinism and eugenics (racial hygiene), and broader modern Western imperial racist discourses and policies. It was on these sources that Italian, German and other fascist regimes drew when they were established in the interwar period to address the actual and perceived multidimensional crises (political, economic, identity) of the capitalist nation-state order(s) at both the local and global level.

LITERATURE In wider usage, as a concept, fascism was already introduced in the 1920s, with some important differences. Some authors, like Pelham Horton Box, Herbert Wallace Schneider and Carmen Haider, attempted to define fascism more precisely, while other early scholars viewed fascism as a distinctly Italian experience. Renzo de Felice (1977) provides a detailed overview of the debates and the evolution of the interpretations of fascism in and outside of Italy.

Throughout the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, many different theoreticians have engaged with the problem of fascism. Marxist approaches to fascism focus on the connection



Box 4.1 Bonapartism: An Impossible Balance Between Representation & Control

I can no longer obey; I have tasted command, and I cannot give it up.
– Napoleon Bonaparte

A. Bullock and F. Deakin (1973) refer to Bonapartism as 'the intellectual's nightmare:' *"The simplest definition of Bonapartism is that it is the perpetuation of the ideas of Napoleon I, the cult of his genius and the appeal to his methods for the solution of France's problems."* It was a distinct mode of governance, both post-revolutionary and post-democratic, a hybrid of military **tyranny** and egalitarian reforms (Richter 2005).

Bonapartism (*Bonapartisme* in French) emerged in response to the chaos unleashed in France by the incessant struggle between forces associated with the **revolution** of 1789 and counter-revolutionary forces associated with the *ancien régime*. Inspired by the ideals and style of governance of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), it became a complex political ideology that was adopted and adapted by his descendants and their followers. This lack of consistency in its implementation, combined with an unrelenting anti-democratic branding by its opponents in France and abroad, makes Bonapartism very difficult to delineate and define.

It is commonly associated with the glorification of force and the practical exercise of power, its adherents advocating for the return of **charismatic rule** and **personalist rule** with the aim of restoring order and glory – a mission shared by **fascism** (Dülffer 1979). The concept was created after the first fall of Napoleon in 1814. Like all 'isms,' it evolved significantly, gaining some doctrinal clarity after the 1840s that enabled it to coax a distinct political movement into being. By then, it matched neither the worldview of Napoleon himself nor his **personality cult** (Alexander 2022).

Sudhir Hazareesingh (2004: 130) notes that, for a while, Bonapartism and **republicanism** walked hand-in-hand in France. Their fallout was the 1851 **coup** by (President) Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte (Napoleon's nephew, who later ruled as Napoleon III, r. 1852-1870) who closed down the National Assembly, reinstated monarchic rule and ended the second republic. He imposed his own anti-democratic stamp (and its rejection of the rule of law) on the Bonapartist movement, which lasted long after his military defeat in 1870.

For Marx and Lenin, Bonapartism is a form of government that grows out of the counter-revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie, aided by the military, under conditions of democratic changes and democratic revolution, resulting in a **tyranny** standing over all social groups. In the words of Karl Marx: *"the struggle seems to have reached the compromise that all classes fall on their knees, equally mute and equally impotent, before the rifle butt"* (Marx 1977, cited in Hazareesingh 2004: 129). To these leftist thinkers, Bonapartism nominally and superficially embraces some democratic values in order to instrumentalize the radicalism of the people, but masks a narrow circle of bourgeois powerholders behind the scenes (Lenin 1977: 255-260). For Gramsci's understanding of Bonapartism, consult: Antonini (2020).

The paradox of the concept lies in its double dynamic of centralizing power at the top of the regime and a diametrically opposed democratization of society by breaking down class divisions through egalitarian measures, such as male universal suffrage and enabling local democracy. For Bonapartism, democracy played an important plebiscitary role, and even its centralized authoritarian leadership was expected to enjoy widespread popular support.

This leads to a schizophrenic situation where: *"Local and central administrative institutions were also given explicitly political functions of control, surveillance, and repression. These powers were exercised against individuals and groups who engaged in activities deemed hostile to the interests of the Empire. The elimination of political dissent was part of a broader conception of public life in the provinces that particularly stressed the value of non-partisanship. Representative institutions were presented as administrative rather than political bodies, whose deliberations were not allowed to enter the public domain"* (Hazareesingh 2004: 134).

Thus, partly representative state institutions were supposed to adhere to a form of **technocracy**, fostering a specific form of patriotic citizenship under a centralized command. Of course, no Bonapartist regime ever succeeded in overcoming the inherent tension arising from the heterogeneity of popular representation and the iron fist upholding consensus and order. Still, the formative contribution made by Bonapartist experiments with male universal suffrage to the French model of democracy, and to democratic theory in general, should not be dismissed (Hazareesingh 2004: 151-152).

Modern applications can be found in Abu-El-Haj (2016) and Boita (2020) for Lula's Brazil, and in Hewlett (2007) for Sarkozy's France. For a comparison with 'Caesarism,' see: Richter (2005); McDaniel (2018); and Antonini (2020).

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between fascism and the crisis of capitalism after WWI, the main line of argument being that fascism was an answer to the bourgeoisie's inability to preserve its rule in the midst of capitalist crisis and the emergence of strong proletarian movements and communist/socialist parties. Fascism is described as a specific answer to the structural crisis of capitalism (Pollock 1941a/b), as a new type of 'Bonapartism' (Vajda 1976) – see also Box 4.1 – and as an all-encompassing Behemoth-like state, under which there was only anarchy and policies that favored the richest (Neumann 2009); as a specific and exceptional form of the capitalist state (Poulantzas 1974); or even, in a more culturalist interpretation, as the culmination of the bourgeois destruction of reason (Lukács 2001). Fascism was thus understood primarily as anti-proletarian, pro-capitalist and a form of (petty-)bourgeois reactionary politics.

Marxist critiques emphasize the continuation of the modern capitalist project and the connections between the capitalist class and the fascist state and politics, and also the culmination of the project of rationalization and the domination of instrumental reason (Neumann 2009; Horkheimer & Adorno 1969). On the other hand, liberal thinkers emphasize the uniqueness and discontinuous nature of fascist regimes in relation to the nineteenth-century liberal colonial and capitalist order (Eisenstadt 1964; 1966; Turner 1972).

After World War II, there was a tendency among **totalitarianism** scholars to explain the cruelty and novelty of the fascist regimes. Hannah Arendt (1962), in *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* established the framework for explaining Nazism as a specific emanation of fascist politics, as politically totalitarian, while considering the Italian fascist regime as belonging to authoritarian **single-party regimes**. However, her work is characterized by a major discrepancy: in the first part of the book, she mostly analyzes imperialism and colonialism, whereas the second half of the book is devoted to the analysis of Nazism and Stalinism as totalitarian regimes. Talmon (1952) with Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956) follow Arendt in explaining fascism and Nazism (while also including Stalinism and/or socialism as such) as totalitarian regimes.

Different authors explored the problematics of fascism within the framework of **modernization theory**. In *Political Man,* S.M. Lipset (1960: 137) argues that fascism and populism propose solving problems by taking over the state and running it in a way which will restore the old middle classes' economic security and high standing in society, while reducing the power and status of big capital and big labor.

David Saposs (1935: 395) claims that fascism is *"the extreme expression of middle-classism or populism."* Renzo de Felice (1977) also argues that Italian fascism found its biggest supporters among the lower middle classes.

In their seminal work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno (1969) demonstrate the destructive side of progress, as well as the rational irrationality of modernization and the technological domination of capitalist societies. Culturalist explanations define fascism as a specific movement based on some cultural essentialism. George Mosse (1998: x) argues that one should understand fascism the way it understood itself – as a cultural movement – because *"fascism created a political environment which attempted to encompass the entire man or woman, to address, above all, the senses and emotions, and at the same time to make the abstract concrete as something uplifting and familiar which can be seen and touched."*

Sternhell explains fascism as a specific anti-materialist revision and substitute for Marxism, combined with syndicalism and nationalist mythology. Sternhell (1994) thus emphasizes that fascism was a form of *"alternative political culture"* and that *"fascism, before it became a political force, was a cultural phenomenon. The growth of fascism would not have been possible without the revolt against the Enlightenment and the French Revolution which swept across Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth"* (Sternhell 1994: 3).

Besides these approaches, Umberto Eco's 1995 essay "*Ur-Fascism*" dissected fourteen elements of fascism, using the concept of 'Ur-fascism' as a broader conception of fascism operative at different times and in different forms. Eco lists the following characteristics of fascism: (1) its cult of tradition and traditionalism; (2) its rejection of modernism; (3) irrationalism and *"action for action's sake;"* (4) its intolerance of criticism; (5) its fear of differences and racism; further noting that Ur-fascism (6) builds on social or individual frustration; (7) on nationalism and an obsession with foreign enemies; (8) while trapped in an inherent paradox that these enemies are simultaneously too weak and too strong; (9)



in order to equate life with struggle, as life is *"permanent warfare;"* moreover, the ideology serves male elites, advocating vertical mobility with (10) its racial, nationalistic and popular elitism and its *"contempt for the weak;"* (11) while maintaining that everybody within the nation is to become a hero; (12) espousing sexism and machismo by instrumentalizing (13) 'selective populism' and (14) Orwellian 'newspeak.'

Ernst Nolte's *Three Faces of Fascism* represents fascism as a strongly anti-Marxist movement: *"Fascism is anti-Marxism which seeks to destroy the enemy by the evolvement of a radically opposed and yet related ideology and by the use of almost identical and yet typically modified methods, always, however, within the unyielding framework of national self-assertion and autonomy"* (Nolte 1966: 20-21). In an almost apologetic fashion, Nolte presents fascism as an overreaction to and merely the stronger copy of the original evil – the Bolshevik regime in Soviet Union. (This also led to the famous *Historikerstreit* ('historians' dispute') in (West) Germany in the late 1980s, most notably, though not confined to them, between Nolte and Habermas on how to incorporate Nazism and the Holocaust into German historiography.)

On the other hand, James Gregor (1976) defines fascism as a specific variant of Marxism, one actually expressed as such in the form of 'national syndicalism' and a specific modernizing dictatorship. Both Nolte and Gregor remain critical of fascism, but Nolte saw it as a response to socialism, whereas Gregor saw a continuity between the two, respectively arguing for equating them or classifying them as similar regime types.

Many thinkers have looked for continuities between fascism and **socialism** – especially in theories of **totalitarianism** – but one fact cannot be overlooked. While it is true that a large number of the first fascists in Italy came from the ranks of trade unionists and socialists, it is a fact that the first victims of both Nazism and fascism were precisely socialists and communists. Fascism, despite its emphasis on the ordinary man, was in essence extremely anti-worker, and (like Nazism) based on a strong connection to the capitalist classes and the disciplining of populations for the expansion of capital and territory. Both required the support of the capitalist class and large industrialists (Adler 1995; Neumann 2009; Mastnak 2019; de Jong 2022) – while socialism was the negation of capitalism.

These accounts match the argument of the famous neoliberal pro-capitalist theoretician, Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973), who praised the advent of fascism while being highly critical of socialism. Von Mises claimed that the rise of fascism *"saved European civilization. The merit that Fascism has thereby won for itself will live on eternally in history. But though its policy has brought salvation for the moment, it is not of the kind which could promise continued success. Fascism was an emergency makeshift. To view it as something more would be a fatal error"* (von Mises 2005: 30).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Despite its present popularity in scholarship and in broader political and societal discourses, fascism remains an ambivalent phenomenon. There are fundamental disagreements about its nature and central characteristics, both regarding its historical forms and its contemporary manifestations. Further, regarding the scope of the phenomenon, there are disagreements about which regimes can properly be included (e.g. Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Shōwa statist Japan – see Box 4.2) and which lack one or more crucial features, such as expansive militarism and racist, genocidal policies (e.g. Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, Perón's Argentina).

Additionally, there are fundamental disagreements between the liberal (a) and Marxist (b) theoretical traditions concerning the nature of historical fascist regimes. The liberal tradition (a) perceives fascism as a historical singularity without precedent, antithetical to modernity and its fundamental socio-political and politico-economic structures, institutions, and norms by being anti-democratic, anti-liberal, anti-capitalist anti-individualist and anti-internationalist, racist and totalitarian, and therefore more closely related to Stalinism and communism in general than to Western liberal regimes.

The Marxist tradition (b) understands fascism as a more extreme but logical development of the modern capitalist imperial regime organized through the nation-state and dependent on exploited colonies. For Marxists, fascism is a specific response of the capitalist system and its elites to the radical multidimensional crisis of the interwar period, which endangered the fundamental stability and cohesion of certain capitalist societies and drew from ideologies, practices, and institutions pertinent to modern Western imperialism and liberal regimes. Hence, it cannot be considered as related to Stalinism or communist regimes.

This also bears on the understanding and analyses of contemporary forms of fascism. Scholars in the liberal tradition locate modern manifestations of fascism on the margins of liberal societies or in non-Western authoritarian contexts, or else perceive and analyze them as contrary to the inherent progressive nature of liberal societies, as aberrations, remnants of the past, an ideology for the unenlightened, uneducated parts of the population. Alternatively, Marxist and other critical traditions view contemporary forms of fascism as specific capitalist responses to the contemporary multidimensional crises of the local and global order, which cannot be understood as antithetical to modern capitalist-imperialist structures, institutions and norms but rather draw on them and their history.

Despite these fundamental differences there is general scholarly agreement concerning the novelty of contemporary forms of fascism and, simultaneously, an accord concerning the ongoing usefulness of the analytical term 'fascism' to understand these contemporary phenomena. However, some scholars (see Traverso 2019) claim that it would be more appropriate to use a novel term like 'post-fascism' to frame contemporary fascist phenomena (right-wing **populism**), implying both continuity and transformation in relation to historical fascist regimes, movements, and ideology.

CLASSIFICATIONS While there exists no final, authoritative classification of fascist regimes, the four types listed below are usually treated as separate manifestations.

Italian Fascism After the end of WWI, the Italian bourgeoisie was not satisfied with its territorial gains, while the large gap between its industrialized north and agricultural south fueled social tensions. In the summer of 1920, it seemed that a socialist revolution might take place in northern Italy because of worker mobilization, led by socialists and anarchists during the more extensive *Biennio Rosso* (Two Red Years). Uprisings spread from Turin and the Fiat plants. In response, the workers' councils (blueprints for *soviets*) and their insurrections were crushed. Italy's political landscape changed to meet these difficulties and national disappointment (Adler 1995; Morgan 2004; Finaldi 2008; Vivarelli 2012).

The answer to the failed workers' revolution was the strong rise of fascism and Mussolini's *Partito Nazionale Fascista*'s March on Rome in October 1922 (a mass demonstration followed by a **coup**), which was also backed by Italian capitalists and the landowner class. The *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* were established in 1919 by Benito Mussolini, a former socialist and trade unionist. He became an advocate of national rebirth and grew stronger in the aftermath of WWI (Snowden 1989; Vivarelli 2012).

Under fascist rule, all political parties were forbidden by 1926. The crucial body was the *Gran Consiglio del Fascismo* (Fascist Grand Council), and most power was in the hands of the party and state leader Mussolini, who was proclaimed *il Duce*, although, on paper, Italy remained a monarchy led by Victor Emanuel III, who wielded little power.

Italian fascism was based on **corporatism**, and its organizational basis lay in collaboration between syndicates and associations of employers, resulting in the pacification of the labor movement, whose leaders were either imprisoned or executed. It adopted the *Carta del Lavoro* (Labor Charter) in 1927, which entailed the complete depoliticization of trade unions. In 1929, with the signing of the Lateran Treaty, it also reached an agreement with the Vatican. These reorganization measures, combined with the elimination of political opposition, especially from the left, were the key foundations for the fascist attempt to gain new territories (Finaldi 2008; Albanese 2019).

Special focus was given to expansionism (in Europe and Africa) and the '*spazio vitale*.' Moreover, in 1938 the fascist regime also adopted race laws, which were openly antisemitic. Although initially afraid of the *Anschluss* (the German annexation of Austria), because it would bring Germany to the border of Italy, the Rome-Berlin Axis was quickly established, later additionally strengthened by Japan. Italy officially entered WWII in June 1940, when Germany almost completely crushed France's resistance in the *Blitzkrieg*. The fascist regime lasted until 1943 under the leadership of Mussolini and the *National Fascist Party*, and from 1943 until April 1945 under the *Republican Fascist Party* in northern and central Italy, which was occupied by the Nazi regime (Adler 1995; Morgan 2004).

German Nazism Historically, the German Nazi regime can be considered the most extreme form of a fascist regime and the most radical implementation of the central fascist ideals of society and its development. It was a racist, sexist, patriarchal, genocidal, totalitarian, militaristic and imperialistic regime organized around the racist (Aryan) conception of a biologically homogeneous nation (*Die Volksgemainschaft*). This nation was conceived as constantly under biological/racial threats internally and externally (e.g. the Jews, the physically and mentally disabled, Roma, Slavs, etc.), which have to be regulated and/or exterminated (e.g. segregation, sterilization, extermination in concentration camps).

Additionally, the nation was cared for and developed as a 'biological organism' through health and family policies that targeted the proper members of the nation, who were incited to reproduce, while the Nazi regime's military and imperialist policies aimed at providing either the necessary space for the nation's expansion (*Lebensraum*) or the resources (natural resources and slave labor) for the general reproduction of German society and the proper functioning of its economy. The latter was capitalist, with the important distinction that racist-genocidal-eugenic ideas overrode even the central capitalist logic of accumulation of profits. The regime was built on the idea of an all-powerful and all-knowing leader (*Der Führer*) in the person of Adolf Hitler, and rested on the organizational might of the NSDAP (the Nazi party), which constituted a parallel institutional structure having its own security and military forces, part of but not subordinate to the state repressive apparatus. The regime lasted from 1933 until the end of WWII in 1945, a war for which it was directly responsible through its expansionist militaristic policies. Despite the short period of its existence, it was the deadliest known regime in human history, killing more than 15 million people.

Neo-fascism & Post-fascism These contemporary forms can be considered variants of a varied political ideology that combines the old fascist **charismatic rule**, the plebiscitary conception of democracy, and mass gatherings with the cult of the market (not the state); television and social media advertising, presence, and (personal) popularity (rather than mass movements). In comparison with its historical predecessors, they are far from subversive as they are internally contradictory reactionary phenomena whose aim is the recreation of a golden past and not a novel future society. Their main perceived antagonists (e.g. Islamists in Europe) are contrary to historical fascism's main antagonists (socialists, communists). However, some argue that post-fascism contains a specific Utopian synthesis, as it reworks the fascist ideological axes of nationalism, conspiracism and cleansing, charismatic authority, backlash politics, and violent masculinity; hence, there are important continuities with historical fascisms (el-Ojeli 2019). Post-fascist ideology is characterized by internal tensions, such as opposing gay marriage while having openly gay leaders, or using sexist language while rhetorically fighting Muslim oppression of women.



Neo-Nazism is often treated as synonymous with neo-fascism, but can be considered a specific type of neo-fascist movement, with dispersed (fringe) militant groups all over the world adhering to a more fundamentalist interpretation of classical forms of fascism, enamored foremost with Hitler's **personality cult** and Nazi ideology. Their followers blame their nation's issues on minorities, immigration, and Jews. Such groups include the *Rassemblement National* in France and *Golden Dawn* (Χρυσή Αυγή) in Greece. They often engage in criminal activities while promoting white racial superiority, antisemitism, homophobia, and Holocaust denial, some with the political aim of restoring the form and organization of old fascism.

As shown in Box 4.3, it is problematic to classify the case of the contemporary *Ku Klux Klan* (KKK) under neo-Nazism since it evolved from an earlier KKK predating Nazism. Several of the ideas and practices of the KKK are local (homegrown) – the 'lost cause' of the American Civil War, its interpretation of racial hierarchies or formal segregation, as well as its terrorizing tactics of lynching and burning crosses.

As concerns contemporary cases of neo-fascism, there are many instances of conceptual over-stretching and hybridization. However, the new rise of the far-right in the world of the twenty-first century means that the concept of fascism remains relevant. Thus, future research on fascism and post/neo-fascism will certainly have to deal with its existing contradictions, while simultaneously tackling the epistemological pitfall of proclaiming any conservative, reactionary group, movement or party that embraces a right-wing political ideology, etc., to be fascist.

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Box 4.2 The Imperial Shōwa Regime: Fascist or not?

It is easy to fight and win, but it is hard to defend what is won.
– Japanese proverb

The Japanese Imperial Shōwa Regime has been considered a dictatorial regime in the Empire of Japan (1868/1889-1945) between 1931-1945. American war **propaganda** later labeled it a **military regime**. (Bisson 1945) During the period leading up to World War II, the Japanese Imperial Government became increasingly authoritarian and adopted policies and practices that aligned with fascist principles (cf. **fascism**). It emerged with some radical calls by the populist political opposition for a return to the traditional organization of the state based on a model of former shogunates (a feudal-like hereditary military dictatorship), with a central role of the emperor in a modernized and industrialized version of statehood (Edwards 2003; Takeuchi 2002). Several crises and **autocratization** led to the marginalization and elimination of a young Taishō democracy of the 1920s that, in the upcoming Shōwa period since 1926, declined with rising voices for a leading Japan in 'Asia for Asiatics' (Szpilman & Saaler 2011).

The upcoming radical military regime reflected the promises and pitfalls of the Great Empire of Japan (*Dai Nippon Teikoku*) and its geopolitical ambitions in East Asia and beyond (Laš & Baar 2014). The Empire of Japan, which emerged after the Meiji Revolution (1868), had evolved from a bureaucratic-military country-based rice economy using Western political and economic models combined with Japanese and regional (Chinese) influences to an imperial and totalitarian regime towards the end of World War II. The three eras of the Empire of Japan from Meiji (明治時代 – *Meiji jidai,* 1868-1911) to Taishō (大正時代 – *Taishō jidai,* 1912-1926) and Shōwa (昭和時代 – *Shōwa jidai,* 1927-1945) presented different regimes and rising imperial ambitions. Emperor Hirohito (Shōwa), who pursued his imperial duties in the post-war modern constitutional democratic system, turned the constitution into a representative figure and not participatory as during the imperial Shōwa regime.

The (oldest serving) Japanese Communist Party, *Nihon Kyōsan-tō*, whose origins can be traced back to the early 1920s, would have had the most difficult position in the Empire of Japan, as **communism** was banned and its members persecuted. The two main opposition parties in the 1920s were the *Democratic Constitutional Party* (*Minseitō*) and the *Association of Friends of Constitutional Government* (*Rikken Seiyūkai*), which emerged as the two most relevant forces at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s but lost their political prominence to opportunists, pro-militarists, rich (often aristocratic) individuals, or ultra-nationalists (cf. **ultra-nationalism**). Next to a plan for total national mobilization, all parties were 'united' under the *Imperial Rule Assistance Association – Taisei Yokusankai* in 1940, resulting in a quasi-**totalitarian** military regime with 'Japanese characteristics,' first led by Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe. The government tightly controlled the economy and industrial production for the war effort.

The regime used a myriad of approaches, radical ideologies and regionally tailored propaganda and politics. With its right-wing extremism, ultra-nationalism, populism, xenophobia and racism, charismatic leader and militarized party, it is also labeled as 'Fascism with Japanese characteristics.' For deeper analysis, see the edited volume by Alan Tansman (2009). After the war, Japanese and foreign scholars seized upon the concept of fascism as a tool to explain what had gone wrong in pre-war Japan and who should be blamed. (Duus & Okimoto 1979)

Can the Western understanding of 'Fascism' fit into the modern Asian statehood-making process during the imperial period of colonialism? The term 'fascism' can be used to describe a range of authoritarian regimes, but it has a specific historical meaning that should be understood when it is applied to a given historical political system in modern Japan. **Fascism** emerged in Italy in the early twentieth century and was characterized by a highly centralized government, suppression of opposition, aggressive nationalism, and the use of violence to achieve political goals. What are common features of fascist regimes, and how does the Empire of Japan fit in with these?

Fascist regimes are characterized by a highly nationalist and authoritarian **ideology** that emphasizes the need for a strong, centralized government to achieve national greatness. Fascist regimes also often promote the idea of a single, unified national identity and may discriminate against minority groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, or other factors. The Empire of Japan deployed a variety of ideologies bundled under the policy of *Kokutai*. The historical concept of *Kokutai* suggested a certain 'organicity' in relation to the state. Its attribute was sovereignty in relation to the imperial dynasty; it was an imperial-centric ideology that turned ultra-national during the imperial period. *Kokutai no Hongi* – Japan's fundamentals of nationalist policies



developed on categories like sovereignty and national identity or **nationalism** (Laš & Baar 2014).

Another example is the *Shinmin no Michi* – Ministry of Education's doctrine of the 'subjects' way' (people, nation, race). Ideologies such as Asianism, pan-Asianism, *Tennōism* or *Hakkō Ichiu* were only a few layers of a complex ideological narrative deployed by the Imperial Government. The regime sought to promote the Shinto religion as the state religion, creating a strong connection between nationalism, religion, and the state. Through its incorporation of elements from State Shinto and *Kokutai*, *Nichirenism* became one of the strongest nationalist forces in Imperial Japan, having a syncretistic approach to the worship of *kami* (divine spirits) and Buddha in the context of the regime. (Wang 2022) The regime used **censorship** and **propaganda** to control information and shape public opinion. Education was heavily regulated and used to promote state ideology and nationalism. The government placed great emphasis on the idea of a superior Japanese race and promoted the idea of Japan as a dominant world power. This was reflected in the militaristic policies pursued by the regime. (Saaler & Koshmann 2007).

The 'Japanese spirit' (*yamato-damashii*) had been a generalized version of the vision of 'us' that emerged with the Tokugawa era's school about homeland – *Kokugaku*, related to the early concept of Japanese ethnicity. Later, the notion of 'Japaneseness' (*Nihonjinron* – see Box 6.1 on exceptionalism) became popular in the post-war period and developed as a different concept (cf. Lie 2001). However, the two dealt with the multi-ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the Japanese nation observed through a mono-ethnic perspective of a unique 'Japanese' culture. A special position among the Western concert of powers was to have Japan in Asia after the first Japan-Russian war in 1905 as a recognized entity when Tokyo was seen as an 'equal' imperial power among the Western colonial states for its defeat of the Russian Empire. In Asia, Japan constructed a conviction that it was predestined to lead Asia because of its unbroken imperial line (*Tenjō Mukyū*). (Wang 2022)

'Asianism' and 'Pan-Asianism' were recycled ideologies used instrumentally by Japanese elites partly as their anti-imperial means of struggle connecting such movements in other Asian countries or as a unifying framework in the *Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere* (*Dai Tōa Kyōeiken* – 1941-1945), where Japanization was part of imperial colonial policies (e.g. in Taiwan as '*Kōminka*'). Pan-Asianism was also promoted by more critical bodies such as the *Shōwa Research Association* (*Shōwa Kenkyukai*), led by researchers such as Masamichi Rōyama, who, with the concept of 'East Asian Community' inspired the idea of the Great Co-Prosperity Sphere.

There were secret Japanese societies that conducted splinter activities in East Asia, including cases against official imperial foreign policy. Here belonged, for instance, a Pan-Asianist group called the *Black Ocean Society - Gen'yōsha*, or the *Black Dragon* (or *Amur*) *Society – Kokuryūkai*, or the *Blossom Society – Sakurakai*, and other underground political forces, such as the illegal Shinto *Sect of Great Origin - Ōmoto-kyō*. This sample represents only partly the complexity of ideological, ideational and imperial frameworks wherein the foreign policy of the Empire of Great Japan (*Dai Nippon Teikoku*) merged with the national domestic politics of 'national identity and sovereignty of the state' – *Kokutai*. For a comparative overview of geopolitical ideologies and imaginations, see Laš & Baar (2014).

Fascist regimes adhered to **charismatic rule** that encouraged a cult-like following among their supporters. These leaders typically wield significant personal power and may use propaganda, violence, and other means to maintain their control over the government and society. Fascist regimes also promoted a **personality cult** around the leader, who was seen as a strong and decisive figure that embodied the will of the people, with an expanding cult suppressing dissenting opinions. The position of the emperor as a 'heavenly figure' was central to Japanese imperial ideologies, which Tennōism promoted. This concept was recycled in propaganda and can be traced to the academic activities of the Kyōto school of geopolitics led by Saneshige Komaki. The emperor was portrayed as a divine figure and the center of the national identity. (Laš & Baar 2014)

After Prince Yoshihito died (1879-1926), his son, Prince Hirohito, under the Meiji Constitution, took over the government. His first year was during the 'Shōwa Financial Crisis,' which deepened the Great Depression. Since then, Hirohito has served as Japanese Emperor during Japanese imperial expansion in Asia-Pacific. The emperor's role was, to a large extent, participatory and representative after the 1920s. Guided by a small advisory board of Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa elders *(Genrō)*, perhaps the most influential figures from the former clans of the Tokugawa period, retired experienced statesmen guided emperors and recognized authorities (cf. Bower 1932). The Institution of the Elders had an extra-constitutional position, and the emperors Mutsuhito and Yoshihito relied on their advice. With the Shōwa period, the influence of the 'politics behind the scenes' shifted from *Genrō* to the Japanese Imperial Headquarters led by the ministers from the army and navy. During WWII, one of Prince Hirohito's brothers, Prince Chichibu (1902-1953), was involved in the planning and execution of some operations in Eastern Asia. He played a role in the Shōwa regime, serving as a military leader, but he sought rehabilitation in the post-war years.

Fascist regimes suppressed political opposition and dissent, resorting to violence. This can include the suppression of free speech, the restriction of civil liberties, and the use of secret police to monitor and control the population. A strong central government characterized the Shōwa regime with little tolerance for dissent or opposition. The economy and society were state-controlled, and individual liberties were curtailed. In Imperial Japan, the political parties were eventually united under the *Imperial Rule Assistance Association* ruled by a prime minister, of which the prominent figures were Fuminaro Konoe and Hideki Tōjo between 1941 and 1944. A special role in dealing with domestic dangers was delegated to the *Kenpeitai* (憲兵隊 – Military Police Corps) that was created in 1881, but in the 1930s and 1940s, their scope and means were expanded to cover East and Southeast Asia. Their staff was known for hunting down and eliminating anti-Japanese groups considered a security threat by the Imperial Government. Known abroad as the main secret police or intelligence opera-

tives, the *Kenpeitai* and their ruthless behavior were notorious in Japanese-occupied territories, such as Korea, Taiwan, China, Indochina and Singapore.

Fascist regimes often prioritize military strength and may engage in aggressive expansionist policies to achieve their political goals. This can lead to conflicts with other nations and can result in the use of military force to achieve political objectives. Japan's military played a central role in the Shōwa regime, with many top government officials coming from a military background. Japan's expansionist policies in the lead-up to WWII were driven in part by a desire to expand its military power and influence. The Japanese military played a significant decision-making role in the government and society, with a focus on expanding the empire through conquest. Expansionist policies were tied to a discourse guided by the Imperial Army and the Imperial Navy. The *Hokushin-ron* and the *Nanshin ron*, or the 'northern' and the 'southern' direction of invasion into Asia.

At the Imperial Headquarters, the Army Department directed the Homeland Army, which consisted of the *Kwantung Army* (関東軍 – *Kantō-gun*), the *China Expeditionary Army* and the *Southern Army*. The most notorious was Unit 731, which specialized in biological and chemical warfare and committed obscure experiments on prisoners. The Navy Department operated with the Combined Fleet. For a decade, the Imperial Navy had been mobilizing resources in Micronesia, which it occupied after Germany entered WWI in 1914. As part of the post-war settlement, the League of Nations recognized the Mariana Islands as occupied territories, the Caroline Islands as self-governing territories, and the Marshall Islands as a South Pacific Mandate under the control of the South Seas Mandate of the Empire of Japan. The Pacific theater was the region of the biggest battles of WWII, such as the battles over Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Guam, Tinian, and Iwo Jima., etc. (Laš 2014; Laš & Baar 2014)

Fascist regimes used corporations as a means of propaganda and actors in implementing economic policies and achieving national goals, often having a connection to the industrial-military complex (cf. **corporatism**). The corporations and employers collaborated in groups under Italian fascism, which involved pacifying the labor movement, whose leaders were either imprisoned or killed (Hočevar 2024). In Japan, it was the *zaibatsu* (財閥 – financial cartel) corporations that dominated the Japanese economy from the Meiji period (1868-1912) until WWII (1945). In addition to having significant political influence in Japan, these corporations, including *Mitsubishi*, *Mitsui* and *Sumitomo*, also were involved in banking, mining, and manufacturing. *Zaibatsu* corporations were mostly controlled by a single family (or group of clans) and had significant control over the Japanese economy. *Zaibatsu* corporations initially controlled the government's wartime economic policy but later clashed with the military after the latter nationalized industry (Bisson 1945).

The Fascists' tight control over the media and use of **propaganda** shaped public opinion and maintained their hold on power. Resorting to state-run media outlets, censorship of independent media, and the dissemination of false or misleading information, the Shōwa regime sought to control all aspects of society, including education, the media, and religion. The government placed a high value on conformity and obedience, and dissent was often met with harsh punishment. One example is a Japanese medium that developed after the Meiji period and mainly in the 1930s. It was a form of Japanese theater – Kamishibai, a street art theater performed by a person using a wooden frame, in which they had been changing painted pictures on wooden boards. In these images, often, the military protected the rural area towns. The common people learned how to behave in war situations or how to sacrifice their lives. This concept, later adopted as 'educational *Kamishibai',* was deployed in education and state propaganda in the 1930s. It would serve propaganda goals of self-sacrifice for the sake of the empire. Later it was targeted at adults or kids in the semi-periphery and periphery of the Co-Prosperity Sphere. Unlike American war propaganda that portrayed distorted images of the enemy, Japanese imperial propaganda focused mainly on the royal family to motivate everybody to sacrifice for the nation and the emperor (Horner 2005). It was pragmatic and instructional towards self-sacrificing **indoctrination**.

The regime addressed the domestic and foreign spheres of Japan that were contested and conquered by imperialist politics in front of the military-industrial complex. The domestic objectives were tied to the spatial capacity and statehood-making in the rising New Order in East Asia (1938-1940). Foreign policy was mostly interwoven with the merciless war with China (from 1937), coarse colonization policies in Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria and elsewhere; the 'Triparty Pact' with Germany and Italy in 1940, and preparation for total war with the Western imperial powers in the Greater East Asia and Pacific.

Regarding its classification, the Japanese Imperial regime is unanimously considered one of the twentieth century's more notorious **military regimes**, even if it retained and venerated its **monarchy**. The ideas of radical political thinkers like Ikki Kita (1883-1937) and his ultra-nationalist-militaristic statism *(étatism),* or Shūmei Ōkawa (1886-1957), predicting a cultural clash with the West, merged with Western concepts of fascism and anti-communism (cf. the political thought of General Sadao Araki, 1877-1966). Considering **fascism**, even if the regime never identified as such, never had a revolutionary party that abolished the old order (the monarchy), never quite served a capitalist ruling middle class (due to its nationalization of the economy), and never framed its mission in exclusive anti-communist terms, its style of governance, leader veneration, propaganda methods and level state control over many aspects of society, leads one to conclude that Japan had a (cultural) fascist system, especially after 1936, even though its origins and institutions differed from the European experience. For detailed historiographical overviews of these debates, consult Tansman 2009; Yoko 2018; Macron 2021.

"In a Japan lacking the tradition of a bourgeois-democratic revolution, fascism had to develop from above since mass energy, having never before been a main force in political change, could not serve to bring it to power. But, as in Europe, there was a mass social base for fascism among the 'pseudo-intellectuals' of the middle class who felt threatened by liberalism and were willing to support Japan's mission of expansion in Asia." (Wilson 1968: 405,



citing Maruyama Masao)

However, in order to make the comparison with **totalitarianism**, the Shōwa regime's impressive level of control over society, including religion, the military, the economy, education, and information, does not quite add up to all the needed features because it did not have a transformative ideological mission nor a revolutionary mass **party**.

The Shōwa regime sought to suppress the cultures and languages of the peoples it occupied, often through forced assimilation and cultural genocide. The imperial regime waged aggressive war in East Asia and committed war crimes. These acts have led to widespread suffering and loss of life and have had a lasting impact on Japan's international reputation. The Shōwa regime came to an end in 1945, following Japan's defeat in WWII. The war created millions of casualties in Asia and Japan, communists came to power in China, and lasting dark memories remained. After the atomic disasters in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Allied forces occupied the country, and a new democratic government was established under a new constitution. In time, Japan transitioned to a democracy with a constitutional monarchy, rehabilitating Emperor Hirohito. The country renounced its militaristic past and focused on post-war reconstruction and growth, leading to an economic miracle.

After an International Military Tribunal, many war criminals were imprisoned or executed. Other figures were rehabilitated, such as Kishi Nobusuke, the economic bureaucrat in Manchukuo (満州国 – *Manshūkoku* – Manchuria) and founding member of the most successful post-war political *Liberal Democratic Party* of Japan. His grandson, the former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, was assassinated in an attack in public in Nara in June 2022. Abe was known for efforts to reform defense and reinterpret 'Article 9' of the Japanese constitution concerning the renunciation of war and to address the geopolitics of rising China.

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Box 4.3 The Ku Klux Klan – Older than Fascism

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.
– Nelson Mandela

The KKK is an American white supremacist, racist (proto-)Fascist organization whose origins can be traced to the aftermath of the American Civil War. During its existence, it had various iterations and versions. Scholars have identified four distinctive historical versions of the KKK that were inextricably linked to historically specific socio-political and politico-economic conditions that had substantially different capabilities and power, number of members, societal importance, and reach. The first and second KKK were centrally important for the reorganization of the American polity and the transformation of the state and society, while the third KKK was an important reactionary force against Civil rights and the Black Power movement. The contemporary fourth iteration of the KKK, although the least central, least powerful, and least relevant iteration, is relevant as a part of a wider popularity of far-right and neo-Nazi ideologies and movements.

The first KKK was established between 1865 and 1866 by the former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest as one of the central paramilitary, far-right clandestine (hooded uniforms that concealed the identities of members) organizations operating in the former slavery-defending Confederate states after their military defeat and forceful reintegration into the US as societies without enslaved people. Their fundamental goal was, along with other parts of the former slave-owning elites and their supporters, to delegitimize the post-Civil-war reconstruction political regimes and to establish a reorganized white supremacist socio-political and economic order in the former Confederate states. They utilized various violent and ideological means to fight against the enactment of formal equality for the freed African American population and specifically against their voting rights. They terrorized the freed African American population into subservience to the gradually reestablishing white supremacist order. This was done through lynchings, killings and beatings of those individuals who were perceived as challenging the 'natural' racial hierarchy where the African Americans were deemed as inferior to white Americans. They also utilized violence and the threat of violence against the white Americans who were opposed to the establishment of the novel racist white supremacist regime. The federal government's activities against the KKK were successful in breaking it up between 1870 and 1871.

However, strategic considerations (a fast reintegration of Southern states) and political deals made by the northern politicians with the southern elites meant that these activities were short-lived and fundamentally ineffective in preventing the goals of the KKK from being enacted and the KKK's ideology and violent practices to be integrated and legitimized in the novel regimes. The elites of Southern states gradually developed the latter as formally racially segregationist white supremacist apartheid regimes *avant la lettre* that lasted until the 1960s. Ideologically, the first KKK was instrumental in not only reaffirming white supremacy, racist hierarchies, patriarchy and the 'natural' societal order and the notion of the *Herrenvolk* democracy but also in the gradual process of rehabilitating the Confederacy through the ideas of 'Redemption' and 'the lost cause.' These ideas falsified the historical cause of the Civil War, which was slavery and its abolition, and the nature of the authoritarian, brutal, violent, and exploitative slave regimes of the Confederate states. In these mythologizations, the Confederate states were imagined as fighting for state rights and freedom against the oppression of the Federal government and slavery was imagined as a benevolent system.

The second KKK was officially established in 1915 in the context of a massive expansion of American industries and the growing immigration from all parts of the world that began to substantially transform American society, intensify various societal contradictions, antagonisms, and ills (poverty, etc.), and heighten the appeal of left revolutionary ideas. It was also in 1915 that the first American box office hit, D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of the Nation,* came out that popularized and normalized the white supremacist ideology of the first KKK by romanticizing its role after the Civil War and by representing the freed African Americans as violent, lazy, corrupt and a danger to the purity of the 'proper' white American race.

Contrary to the clandestine nature of the first KKK and similarly to fascist movements in Europe, the second KKK was a mass movement that gained substantial popularity in the 1920s. At its height, it had six million members and was a very wealthy organization. Ideologically, it added specific notions such as anti-Catholicism and similarly to European fascists, it added antisemitism and eugenics as a novel form of white supremacism. Its popularity must be understood in the context of the broader structural features of the US in the first half of the twentieth century. US society, in general, was organized along racist lines, and the life chances of individuals were dependent on their membership in specific racial groups that were hierarchically organized with white Americans on top.

The vast majority of white Protestant Americans held similar beliefs to the KKK, whose activities further normalized novel eugenic ideas. These were broader than the anti-black racist ideas of the first KKK as they were directed towards all populations deemed non-American and non-white (Asians, Latinos, Jews, Eastern Europeans, etc.), to all that were deemed a threat to 'proper, pure' (WASP – White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) Americans. Whiteness and Americanness were reaffirmed and inextricably linked in the novel patriotism and ultra-nationalism and to notions of the white *Herrenvolk* democracy. These ideas made the second KKK appealing to various local contexts and helped it to broaden its scope and gain a foothold in the northern states. Its **ideology** also had right-wing populist quasi anti-elitist ideas that targeted cosmopolitan, liberal elites but made strong



alliances with moneyed interests. The latter was also inextricably tied to the KKK's virulent anti-socialism that was also part of fascist ideology. Generally, it played on and intensified white people's sense of fear, humiliation and victimization and refocused their anger on the already marginalized, thereby preventing any cross-racial solidarity that would challenge the unequal, exploitative nature of the existing order.

The second KKK did not rely primarily on spectacles of violence but utilized a cutting-edge **propaganda** machine (from newspapers to radio stations, movies, mass rallies, and country fairs) and its political position as a very powerful electoral force for popularizing its ideas and reaching its goals of re-consolidating the American racist order. It played a crucial part in the substantial expansion of the capabilities of the US state to regulate people's lives that were directly tied to the novel restrictive quota-based federal immigration policies adopted in 1924. These were based on eugenic racist ideas promoted by the KKK. The KKK must also be understood as a very important part of a broader American fascist movement in the 1930s that, in contrast to European **Fascism,** did not strive for the elimination of marginalized groups but their exclusion. The decline of the second KKK was caused by **systemic corruption** that reached destructive levels and caused the Klan to lose most of its members by the mid-1940s.

The third KKK arose in opposition to the Civil Rights Movement and began in the late 1940s. It was not a mass movement with only several thousand members but had the silent support of the elites of the Southern segregationist states in their fight against the abolition of segregation. Ideologically, it did not differ from the past iterations. It became infamous for executing civil rights protesters, lynchings of African Americans, bombing of African American churches and other violent acts for the reactionary goal of upholding the existing racist order. Despite never being held accountable for their many crimes, they were ultimately not successful in halting the abolition of formal segregation during 1964-1965, which also precipitated their organizational decline and irrelevance. However, their racist segregationist ideas survived informally and became an unspoken part of the formally post-segregationist American socio-political and economic order.

The fourth KKK is the present rather marginalized white supremacist group and one of many varieties of various Neo-Fascist, Neo-Nazi, far-right groups operating in the contemporary US and the West and sharing white supremacist ideology that includes past ideas promoted by the KKK with the additional anti-Muslim and anti-LGBTQ sentiments. It gained public attention in the wider context of the emboldening of far-right groups with the first election of Donald Trump, which itself is a symptom of a destabilization of the US socio-political order and the various right-wing and centrist projects for its reorganization and restabilization along mostly more authoritarian lines.

Studying the various historical variations of the KKK in the context of the study of dictatorships remains relevant from several aspects. First, it is relevant for studying proto-fascistic movements and ideologies in its earliest iteration. It is relevant for understanding the many far-right fascistic movements that were present in the West during the existence of historical fascistic regimes. It is relevant for studying the post-war far-right reactionary movement against more inclusive societies and is relevant for studying the contemporary far-right forces in Western countries and their rising relevance. The study of the KKK is also relevant for understanding the historical adaptability and non-linear development of far-right ultra-nationalistic (proto-)fascistic movements and ideologies. Finally, it is relevant for comprehending the instrumentality of historical and contemporary fascistic movements and ideologies for existing power structures and societal elites in preventing revolutionary changes to the existing order, to enact substantial transformation or to steer these transformations in the direction of strengthening the order.

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Legalism (The *Fa* Tradition)

The reality of human beings is that they have things they love and things they hate; therefore they can be governed.
– Shang Yang (商鞅) *The Book of Lord Shang*, (ca. 390-338 BCE)

What gets measured gets managed
– V.F. Ridgway (1956)
(Often misattributed to Peter Drucker)

Legalism (a disputed term as explained in 'origins') is a realist intellectual tradition concerning statecraft, originating in China at a time when warring kingdoms faced great systemic instability. It emerged alongside Confucianism, Daoism and Mohism, and was one of several younger competing worldviews of that era, later termed the 'Hundred Schools of Thought.' Legalist thinkers inspired reforms, centralizing the Qin state to enable the conquest of its rival, the Eastern Zhou, finally establishing the (short-lived) Qin dynasty (秦 – *Qín*, 221-206 BCE) that unified the warring states.

Shang Yang (see below) and Li Si, both prime ministers of pre-Imperial Qin, were instrumental to the process of state-building. Li Si (李斯 – *Lǐ Sī* – ca. 280-208 BCE) was a student of the famous Confucian master Xunzi (荀子 – *Xúnzǐ*), a precursor for advocating laws and punishments as legitimate tools by rulers who demonstrated moral self-perfection (Eno, no date). Li Si was in many ways the first architect of Imperial China. He was also notorious for, allegedly, instigating a massive burning (on this topic, see Box 4.4) in 213 BCE of all books not dealing with agriculture, medicine, or prognostication, excepting the historical records of Qin and the imperial library (Müller 2024). However, there seems to be no evidence for this, and Li Si's bad reputation appears to be the product of anti-Qin propaganda by the later Han dynasty (Ter Haar 2009: 65).

The **ideology** advocated reforms for strong, centralized states with rigid legal and ethical standards, which had a lasting influence on Chinese and other East Asian polities, although this impact remains mostly overshadowed by Confucianism (Hsiao 1976).

DEFINITION Legalism, or *Fa Jia* (法家 – *fǎjiā*), is an ancient Chinese philosophical doctrine that emphasizes the importance of law in governing society. Unlike other Chinese philosophies, such as Confucianism or Daoism, Legalism advocates a system of strict laws and harsh punishments to maintain order and control within a monarchic state, organized according to specific classes of subjects, all with their prescribed roles.

The core belief of Legalism is that human beings (the common people and elites alike) are inherently selfish and short-sighted, and therefore require stringent regulations to curb their natural inclinations and ensure societal stability. In practice, this advocacy for a strong (some say 'totalitarian') state meant imposing a 'tyrannical peace' to deter future transgressions – albeit it under a highly formalized system of the rule of law, without arbitrary punishments (supported by the people). The *Book of Lord Shang* states: *"When the people are weak, the state is strong; when the people are strong, the state is weak. Hence, the state that possesses the Way devotes itself to weakening the people"* (Shang Yang, cited in Pines 2017).

A legalist, absolute monarch is bound by his own rule of law, and should stay within the purview of his own governance, not growing familiar with his ministers, who should fear him and be unable to predict his actions: 'Be immeasurably great, be unfathomably deep' (Watson 2003). In this regard, legalist rule is both absolute and impersonal (Pines 2017) and **power** is formalized and institutionalized in a state **bureaucracy** according to the principle of meritocracy (Box 1.9). In the conferring of ranks and offices, hereditary titles and personal favoritism are destructive to the state's functioning and will end up weakening the monarch. (Note the similar thinking in the *Arthashastra* – Box 2.2.)

Han Fei argues: *"The ruler of men stands in danger of being blocked in five ways. When the ministers shut out their ruler, this is one kind of block. When they get control of the wealth and resources of the state, this is a second kind of block. When they are free to issue orders as they please, this is a third kind. When they are able to do righteous deeds in their own name, this is a fourth kind. When they are able to build up their own cliques, this is a fifth kind"* (Han Fei, paraphrased by Watson 2003).

Anti-corruption measures are crucial, as is objectively matching the responsibilities of an office to a candidate's competence: *"When the common and the private are clearly separated, petty men do not envy the worthy, and the unworthy are not jealous of the meritorious"* (Shang Yang, cited in Pines 2017).

In *The Essentials of the Six Schools* (六家之要指) the classical historian Sima Tan describes the legalist tradition as follows: *"The fajia are strict and have little kindness, but their alignment of the divisions between lord and subject, superior and inferior, cannot be improved upon. (...) Fajia do not distinguish between kin and stranger or differentiate between noble and base; all are judged as one by their fa. Thus they sunder the kindnesses of treating one's kin as kin and honoring the honorable. It is a policy that could be practiced for a time, but not applied for long; thus I say: 'they are strict and have little kindness.' But as for honoring rulers and derogating subjects, and clarifying social divisions and offices so that no one is able to overstep them – none of the Hundred Schools could improve upon this"* (Sima Tan, cited in Goldin 2011)



SEE ALSO The position of the ruler is very distinctive in legalist **ideology**. On the one hand, there are no limits to the power of the ruler, who is always a monarch – see **absolutism**. Unlike **personalist rule** or **patrimonialism**, the ruler upholds a highly formalized regime and state **monarchy (**calling to mind some forms of **totalitarianism**), having a clear hierarchy and rigidly delineating the roles of all those serving under the ruler. Appointments are not made according to personal ties; instead, impersonal meritocracy (see Box 1.9) prevails. As in **patrimonialism**, the state's economy is directly under the command of the ruler, who is not bound by tradition. As with **personalist rule**, the ruler formulates his own laws – 'as needed by the times' – and is their ultimate arbiter and interpreter. But unlike personalism, **despotism** or **tyranny**, a legalist, absolute monarch is impersonal, institutionalized, and bound by his own morality. He is to follow 'the Way' and rein in all selfish desires to govern 'All-under-Heaven' (天下 – *tiānxià*), the realm, for the benefit of the people, not for personal gain.

ORIGIN Legalism emerged during the Warring States period (ca. 475-221 BCE), a time of intense political fragmentation and conflict in ancient China. Its translation into English as the 'School of Law' is inaccurate for two reasons. The *Fa Jia* (法家) label itself is misleading because 家 – *jiā* suggests an organized and self-aware intellectual movement (i.e., school or 'scholastic lineage') comparable to the followers of Confucius (孔子 – *Kǒngzǐ*) or Mozi (墨子 – *Mòzǐ* – 'Micius'). But this *Fa Jia* label – developed by Sima Tan (司馬談 – d. 110 BCE), father of the famous historian Sima Qian (司馬遷) – was primarily a bibliographic label used to catalog intellectually related texts in imperial libraries. While appropriate for organizing texts, its utility diminishes when employed as a major analytical tool. In the first place, no early thinkers identified themselves as members of the 'School of Fa.' Secondly, the term 法 – *fǎ* does not solely mean 'law.' It also encompasses 'standards,' 'models,' 'norms,' and political institutions. The 'legalist' label thus oversimplifies *Fa* thought, focusing too narrowly on its relation to Western 'rule of law' concepts, thus diminishing its complexity. Alternatively, legalists have been referred to as 'realists' (see **political realism**) – but this presupposes the existence of 'idealists' as ideological counterparts. A more neutral designation would be the '*Fa* tradition' (Pines 2023; Goldin 2011).

LITERATURE Classical Chinese political thought evolved significantly by the time of the Warring States and the emergence of the 'Hundred Schools.' The 'Mandate of Heaven' (天命 – *Tiānmìng*), initially tied to a ruler's moral virtue and divine favor, justified the Zhou conquest of the Shang by the shift of the favor of Heaven. 'Heaven' was, originally, considered a moral deity, passing judgment. Over time, it developed into an abstract principle of moral order (and its designs were no longer accessible via divination). With this cosmic order, procedures gained importance and a distinct political realm developed, existing alongside the ethical order that supported it. For instance, Confucianism emphasized rulers' virtue but also recognized procedural norms and political order. Regarding **succession**, Mencius (孟子 – *mèngzǐ* – Master Meng) had highlighted the importance of a proper 'designation' for rulers, but **legitimacy** eventually shifted to a system of (procedural) hereditary **monarchy** (Mou Zongsan, cited in Angle 2022). Some classical thinkers, like the legalists, focused on effective technology for the administration of power and the maintenance of order, at the expense of ethical concerns, but most intertwined ethics and politics, emphasizing their mutual dependence (Angle 2022).

Legalism as a doctrine argues that the greatest benefit to the people and the realm (天下 – *tiānxià*) is order (秩 – *zhì*): *"'benefit (li)' is the standard by which theories of governance are judged, but it also places particular stress on the collective character of 'benefit.' In a war-torn world, we are told, only when the state is strong can its inhabitants flourish. Those who act for their own interests rather than for the 'benefit of the state,' therefore, are to be punished"* (Angle 2022).

Governance thus requires (public, impartial) objective standards (法 – *fǎ*) and specific roles for every class of people, with specific punishments for transgressions and rewards associated with normative behavior. Rulers alone fix these standards based on their assessment of the needs of the age and should neither imitate antiquity nor follow existing standards. They are responsible for settling conflicts when standards diverge (Angle 2022).

The doctrine was developed by several key thinkers, each contributing to its evolution. *The Book of Lord Shang* primarily focuses on strengthening the state in relation to society. In contrast, the *Han Feizi* and the surviving fragments of Shen Buhai's writings (and to a lesser extent those of Shen Dao) concentrate mainly on the dynamics between rulers and ministers, and general administrative issues. These topics receive much less attention in Shang Yang, but his text does touch upon issues like the bureaucratic abuse of power, corruption, dereliction of duty by officials, and the danger of officials undermining the ruler's authority (Pines 2017).

Shang (Lord) Yang (商鞅 – *Shāng Yāng*, originally: Gongsun Yang, ca. 390-338 BCE) An influential statesman and prime minister to Duke Xiao of the pre-imperial Qin state, Lord Shang implemented radical reforms that centralized power and strengthened the state through rigorous laws and military discipline. His work, *The Book of Lord Shang* (商君书 – *Shāng jūn shū*), laid the foundation for legalist thought and Y. Pines (2017) finds him to be *"an architect of the idea of a total state and one of the earliest proponents of radical social engineering in human history."* Shang Yang propounded that the anarchic state of nature, intrinsically plagued by turmoil as populations grew, should move away from a kin-based society toward a stratified, structured state order based on the elevation of the worthy. However, this alone does not suffice to curb human selfishness and nepotism: a 'True Monarch' should be established to set laws, prescriptions and standards, and impose draconian punishments to check the flawed human nature of the ruled (Pines 2017).

Shen Dao (慎到 – *Shèn Dào*, ca. 350-ca. 275 BCE) As a daoist-legalist thinker, he is most remembered for his influence on Han Fei regarding the concept of *shi* (勢 – *Shì* – 'the power of authority'). All remaining fragments of his work focus on the concept of *fa* (administrative methods and standards), a core principle of his school of thought (Thompson 1970; Pines 2017).

Shen Buhai (申不害 – *Shēn Bùhài,* ca. 400-ca. 337 BCE) Serving the Han state, and known for his administrative techniques, Shen Buhai emphasized the importance of bureaucratic governance and the use of impersonal laws to manage the state effectively – with rulers withdrawing after distributing appointments; they 'do nothing' more (无为 – *wúwéi*) than keep the system running smoothly (cf. *laissez-faire* political economics). Shen Buhai's works greatly influenced Han Fei, but none of his original texts have survived. Creel (1982) credits him with the origins of the Chinese examination system – see Box 4.8 on 'mandarins.'

Han Fei (韓非 ca. 280-233 BCE) A (Han) nobleman and a student of the famous Confucian reformer Xunzi (like Han Fei's rival Li Si who drove him to suicide), Master Han Fei synthesized the ideas of earlier legalists (and adapted religious ideas from other schools like Daoism or Mohism), articulating them in his seminal work, named *Han Feizi* (韩非子 – *Hánfēizi*), after himself. He is considered the most prominent of the legalist philosophers ('not its inventor, but its perfecter'), advocating the use of strict laws and centralized authority for bringing about social order by linking prescribed roles to rewards and punishments, and attributing final arbitrage regarding accountability and performance to the ruler (**absolutism**). (Watson 2003)

"The Daoist sage has absolute understanding; the Legalist ruler wields absolute power. In the quality of absoluteness, they are alike. The Daoist sage rises above all conventional distinctions of right and wrong, good and evil; so does the Legalist ruler, for he is a law unto himself. The Daoist sage adopts a course of quietude and deliberately refrains from all forced or unnatural activity. The Legalist ruler, head of a vast bureaucracy, does the same, issuing orders, quietly judging the efficiency of his ministers, but refraining from any personal intervention in the actual affairs of administration; he sets up the machinery of government and then allows it to run by itself. The Daoist sage withdraws from the world to a mysterious and transcendental realm. The Legalist ruler likewise withdraws, deliberately shunning contacts with his subordinates that might breed familiarity, dwelling deep within his palace, concealing his true motives and desires, and surrounding himself with an aura of mystery and inscrutability" (Watson 2003).

IMPACT ON POLICY Legalism became particularly relevant during the Qin dynasty (秦 – *Qín*, 221-206 BCE), when it was adopted as the guiding philosophy for statecraft. Under the leadership of Qin Shi Huang, the first 'Emperor' of China, legalist principles were implemented as a means to conquer and unify the warring states and establish a centralized empire. The Qin Dynasty's adoption of Legalism led to significant administrative and legal reforms, including the standardization of laws, weights, measures, and the written script. However, harsh legalist policies and authoritarian rule also contributed to the dynasty's downfall. The brutality and rigidity of legalist governance led to widespread discontent and rebellion, culminating in the collapse of the Qin dynasty shortly after Qin Shi Huang's death. Legalism and its leading thinkers were largely discredited because as a result, and other schools of thought regained prominence. Legalist thinking did not altogether disappear from imperial political discourse, resurfacing during military, political, or economic crises as a model for re-empowering the state. Ultimately, it was Mao Zedong who dusted off Shang Yang's legalist works in the 1970s to legitimize his Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), aimed at breaking China's (Confucian) traditions (Pines 2017).

After this period of turmoil and the abortive reign of the Qin dynasty, the succeeding Han dynasty made significant contributions to social and political philosophy by integrating various classical schools of thought. They systematized the inheritance of the classical era by editing and standardizing earlier texts, and by categorizing different schools of thought such as Confucianism, Mohism, Legalism, and Daoism. Despite distinguishing these schools, Han thought and practice were highly synthetic, aiming to harmonize insights from all schools. This synthesis involved creating a state that relied on laws and standards (Legalism) as well as on rituals and the ethical character of rulers (Confucianism). (Angle 2022)

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Legalism provides a distinctive perspective on **political regimes** (and statecraft). It emphasizes the necessity for strong state control, the rule of standards and meritocracy, from a historical-dialectical perspective, meant to cultivate 'the utmost virtue' in 'All-under-Heaven' (天下 – *tiānxià*), a Utopian end-goal, after the subjugation of domestic and foreign enemies (and resonating with the works of Mao Zedong). It proposes that a well-ordered society can only be achieved through the enforcement of clear, impartial laws and the centralization of authority. *"Violence and oppression are the necessary evil en route to universal good"* (Shang Yang, cited in Pines 2017).

This approach contrasts sharply with Confucianism, which is preoccupied with governance based on moral virtue and ethical self-cultivation. Legalism's view of human nature is fundamentally pessimistic. It asserts that individuals are inherently selfish and prone to wrongdoing, necessitating strict laws and harsh punishments to maintain social order.

This belief in the inherent evil of human nature underpins the legalist argument for an authoritarian government that prioritizes state control over individual freedoms (like Thomas Hobbes or John Locke almost two millennia later). Han Feizi clearly states that 'private' and 'public' are irreconcilable and that the great good (order) trumps private ambition and needs.

Legalism's emphasis on strict laws and centralized



Box 4.4 Book Burning – The Pinnacle of Cultural Barbarism

Das war ein Vorspiel nur; dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen
(That was only a prelude, where they burn books, they ultimately burn people)
– Heinrich Heine (1820)

The burning of libraries and books is a notorious practice associated with dictatorships and extremist movements, and serves as a potent herald of extreme **censorship** and ideological control, aimed at suppressing dissenting ideas and reinforcing a regime's ruling ideology. This practice is particularly prevalent in **totalitarian regimes**, where absolute power is centralized, and control over both public and private life is extensive. Historical instances, such as those in Nazi Germany and under General Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, vividly illustrate the dynamics of book burning as both a form of **repression** and **spectacle politics** (Fishburn 2006). The issue provokes such strong emotions in authors writing on the topic that they lose their scholarly tone when referring to the perpetrators (Chodorow 2007, on Bosmajian (2006) and Knuth (2006)).

Christianity, in particular, has been both a victim and perpetrator of book burning. In what is known as the 'Great Persecution' of Christians (303-311 CE) in the Roman empire, emperors Diocletian and Galerius sought to suppress the growing influence of Christianity, which was seen as a threat to traditional Roman religious practices and the quasi-divine status of the emperors. Public burnings of Christian books were staged in marketplaces, and houses containing these books were also destroyed, deeply imprinting an identity of martyrdom on the religious movement.

Once in charge, however, Christian authorities played a significant role in the suppression and destruction of books in Late Antiquity. The impact of their practice remains under-explored today. D. Rohmann (2013; 2016) plunges into the involvement of Christian institutions, writers, and saints in book burning, analyzing a wide array of literary and legal sources, and highlights that, beyond targeting heretical, magical, astrological, and anti-Christian texts, Christian authorities also censored or destroyed other genres. These included materialistic philosophical works, which later influenced modern philosophy and science. By prohibiting the copying of certain manuscripts (since 1560 blacklisted on the 'Index' – *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* or *Index of Forbidden Books*), Christian ideologues aimed to suppress ideas and texts from the late classical era until 1966.

Other **theocracies**, like the Taliban regime and ISIS (cf. **Islamic States**) are also infamous for irreparable cultural destruction, targeting heritage they deem 'un-Islamic.' The Taliban notoriously destroyed the ancient Bamiyan Buddha statues in 2001 and ravaged libraries and museums during their first rule from 1996 to 2001. Similarly, ISIL (ISIS) obliterated the historic Mosque of the Prophet Younis in Mosul, Iraq, and carried out extensive destruction in the ancient city of Palmyra, Syria, including the Temple of Bel and the Arch of Triumph. Additionally, ISIL demolished numerous pre-Islamic, Jewish, Christian, Sunni, and Shi'a spiritual and sepulchral buildings across the Levant. These actions reflected a broader strategy to erase historical and cultural identities that conflict with their extremist ideologies.

The act of book burning in dictatorships represents a direct form of repression, targeting works and ideas perceived as threats to the regime, especially in **ideocracies** that do not tolerate ideational dissidence to their worldview. This extends beyond the physical act to encompass broader strategies of intellectual and cultural control, including **censorship** and the persecution of intellectuals. For example, the Nazi regime's book burnings aimed to purge German culture of 'un-German' elements (read: Jewish, communist, socialist or other unaligned political thinkers), while Pinochet's regime in Chile targeted books considered subversive to "extirpate the Marxist cancer." These acts also play into **spectacle politics**, serving as public demonstrations of the regime's power and commitment to ideological purity, often drawing international attention and condemnation (Knuth 2003; 2006).

Regimes with a ruling political **ideology** (often combined with a **personality cult**) are most closely associated with book burnings, seeking to control not just the political and economic spheres but also the cultural and intellectual life of their citizens. The suppression of dissenting ideas, the public nature of the book burnings, and the international condemnation these acts attract, highlight the fundamental violation of intellectual freedom and human rights. Book burning, therefore, stands as a powerful symbol of the lengths to which rulers may go to break with the past, impose a single, ideological narrative, and create a new order.

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power resonates with contemporary discussions on autocratic legalism, in which legal frameworks are used to legitimize and perpetuate authoritarian rule. The **ideology**'s focus on the utilitarian application of law to achieve state objectives provides a historical precedent for social engineering, prompting several twentieth-century scholars to draw parallels to **totalitarianism**. As examples of the latter, Pines (2017) cites Creel 1953: 135-158; Rubin 1976: 55-88; Fu Zhengyuan 1996. Pines (2017) also expands on the question of **education** (keeping the masses ignorant in order not to corrupt them and distract them from their work) and the legalist distaste for **indoctrination** (rather than deceiving the masses, policies should harness the intrinsic and immutable selfishness of the people, incentivizing them with rewards and inescapable punishment should they fail to obey).

Legalism's legacy in Chinese political thought continues to influence modern governance models. The integration of legalist principles with other philosophical traditions, foremost among them Confucianism, has shaped a unique approach to statecraft that balances legal authority with ethical considerations. This synthesis offers a nuanced understanding of how ancient philosophies can inform contemporary political systems and reveals why there is a significant disparity between northeastern Asian countries and legal systems in the West.

While long understudied (see Shaw 1980), more recent works tentatively tackle the history of Legalism in Korea. Lee (2013) highlights the legalist roots in (South) Korean law. Levi (2020) explores the particular (hidden) legalist legacy in North Korean ideology, focusing on collective guilt and mass purges.

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Modernization Theory

Restlessness is discontent and discontent is the first necessity of progress
– Thomas Edison

I have seen the future and it works
– Lincoln Steffens (1919)

Modernization theory is an umbrella concept for several interconnected and mainly state-centric theories that address how societies, especially states, gradually progress from lower to higher stages of development, and – in doing so – open themselves to greater economic wellbeing and democracy. Modernization theory is thus connected to other evolutionary, progressive and/or teleological social theories, such as Marxism, which account for how societies either adopted or transitioned to economic practices associated with modernity, such as industrialization. It further presumes that societies develop or progress by distinct levels or stages, most of which possess causal primacy in explaining political, social and cultural advancements; as well as in accounting for the challenges that specific systems of rule, people or social organizations face at any given period. What separates modernization theory from other equally progressive social theories is its place and period of origin, the United States (US) in the mid-twentieth century, and the extent to which it embraces, rather than disparages, capitalism and liberal democracy as benign means of development.

Despite its prevalence and influence in the 1950s and 1960s in US social science, modernization theory was heavily criticized in the following decades. Yet,



even as it ceased to be of major scholarly interest for the remainder of the twentieth century, its impact extended far beyond academia. US social and foreign policy – not to mention the policies of other international organizations, such as the UN – still connects the attainment of modern liberal democracy to social economic development. In any case, modernization theory never lost its intellectual prominence, inspiring key post-Cold War works, such as Francis Fukuyama's (1992) renowned *The End of History and the Last Man*. It has also informed authoritarian studies, by addressing the underlying conditions that promote or prevent the development of democracy.

DEFINITION Modernization theory mainly refers to a set of theories – as opposed to a single, coherent body of work – that determine the social, political, and economic effects of a transition from a lower stage of development to a higher stage, consisting of capitalism and secular liberal democracy. That said, like most intellectual endeavors, modernization theory is difficult to pin down with in a single, definitive definition, not least because contemporary uses of the term self-consciously incorporate sundry critiques directed at the classical version of modernization theory (Tipps 1973; Inglehart & Welzel 2010). Moreover, there is no shortage of theories that deal with the repercussions of modernity and the means by which it was attained. Hence, a comprehensive definition must not only make sense of its objects of inquiry, including how they are assessed, but also the period and location in which they arose. Otherwise, it would hardly be possible to differentiate modernization theory from other progressive social evolutionary theories.

Attentive to these caveats, Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005: 17) conceptualize modernization theory as follows: *"In the postwar United States, a version of modernization theory emerged that viewed underdevelopment as a direct consequence of a country's internal characteristics, especially its traditional economies, traditional psychological and cultural traits, and traditional institutions. From this perspective, traditional values not only were mutable but could – and should – be replaced by modern values, enabling these societies to follow the (virtually inevitable) path of capitalist development. The causal agents in this developmental process were seen as the rich, developed nations that stimulate the modernization of 'backward' nations through economic, cultural, and military assistance."*

It is worth noting that Inglehart and Welzel (2005) purposely separate the theory from other versions of modernization. As the term itself suggests, modernization theory stems from the concept of the 'modern' or 'modernity,' which have both been a major object of academic and intellectual discussion for nearly three hundred years. 'Modernity' usually refers to a period or stage of significant socio-economic transformation, characterized by secularization, industrialization and nationalism, which encompasses most European polities from the late eighteenth to the twentieth century (Nisbet 1980; Giddens 1991; Habermas 1996; Inglehart & Baker 2000; Armitage 2012). For historians, modernity usually designates, however loosely, the period into which Middle Age Europe transitioned, when European states expanded beyond the Western hemisphere, began to question the basis of feudalism (see Box 1.14), and looked into the nature of empirical and scientific inquiry (Giddens 1990; Habermas 1996).

For Anthony Giddens (1990), modernity is associated with three broad characteristics, all connected to change: the *Pace of Change*, the *Scope of Change* and the *Content of Institutions*. As its name implies, modernity presupposes the development of major and accelerated change. The pace of that change is further compounded by a broad swath of transformations, affecting almost all aspects of political, social and economic life. From the family unit to political routines, communities under modernity cannot but experience a major social and material transformation.

Finally, it is not merely the experience of change that constitutes modernity; rather, it is the direction toward which those changes tend. In this regard, modernity, according to Giddens (1990: 6), pertains to specific social forms *"that are simply not found in prior historical periods – such as the political system of the nation-state, the dependence of production upon inanimate power sources, or the thoroughgoing commodification of products and wage labour."* This is not to say that modernity replaces all past institutions, many of which – such as the city – existed prior to the modern age. But it does change them. That said, further research into modernization has also enlarged the scope of the phenomenon to include distinct cultural manifestations of modernity, not least how different people coped with its social, political and economic transformations. Shmuel Eisenstadt (1986; 2000), for instance, propounds the notion of multiple modernizations to account for the distinctive ways in which societies adapted to large-scale cultural change. Nevertheless, the term has been criticized, with some suggesting that varieties of modernization – as opposed to multiple modernizations – are more a suitable way to locate the differences to which Eisenstadt and others are sensitive (Schmidt 2006).

In view of the unprecedented change spawned by modernity, modernization theory seeks to address the multifaceted issues that came to shape that process, although in a manner different from other relevant socio-economic theories, such as Marxism. Walt Rostow's (1960) seminal work, *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, sought to make sense of the sweeping social and economic changes that first enveloped Europe and North America without reference to Marxist ideas, and even less to a worker revolution that would abolish private property. While accepting that not all the consequences of modernity are positive, Rostow envisages a sequential process of modernization that would be compatible with capitalism and democratization.

SEE ALSO For alternative theories of modernization (beyond modernization theory itself), see world-systems theory, dependency theory, Gramscian theory, and third worldism. For more on modernity itself and its many facets, see Ulrich Beck's work on Risk Society, Anthony Giddens on Modernity and Reflexivity, and Habermas's *The Philosophical Dis-*

course of Modernity (Wallerstein 1976; Giddens 1990; 1991; Habermas 1996; Berger and Weber 2014). Many twentieth-century **ideologies & worldviews** adhered to the paradigm of modernization when formulating the regime's guiding **ideology**, a practice sometimes followed by scholars in the study of comparative authoritarianism (see, e.g., Box 5.3 on transitology).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Modernization theory derives its significance from its object of study and the influence it wields beyond the intellectual circles from which it initially arose. Despite the initial criticism to which it was subjected, modernization theory provides a means to ascertain political and economic development in ways that do not always succumb to Marxist theory. Consequently, it provides an alternative way to address socio-economic growth and the transition to democracy. In this connection, ongoing research into the relationship between development and democracy has drawn significantly from modernization theory. Lipset's (1959) foundational work on the relationship between democracy and development contributed to an ongoing interest in the connections between modernity, democracy and authoritarianism. Research on the threshold for democracy, for instance, frequently refers to a degree of economic growth or wealth as necessary for democratic development, though such findings are often disputed in comparative politics and political sociology (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán 2003; Ciftci 2010; Coppedge 1997). Likewise, those who refer to multiple modernities, rather than to a common form of modernity, have frequently contested the relationship between modernization and democracy, thus demonstrating the ample debates provoked by political change across various societies, especially those outside Western Europe (Eisenstadt 1986; Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán 2003; Arjomand 2011; Spohn 2010; Wittrock 2000).

Besides comparative politics, modernization theory is also a useful intellectual tool to consider the origins of US aid programs – not to mention liberal European ones – across the globe, many of which presume that that the constitution of democracy requires, among other things, the transition to a higher stage of economic development.

ORIGIN The origins of modernization theory itself are distinct from, albeit connected to, academic studies of the nature of modernity and modernization. Starting with the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century and continuing into most European intellectual circles in the nineteenth century, modernity was a topic discussed by various scholars, politicians, public intellectuals and philosophers, giving rise to key political and academic traditions, such as liberalism, socialism and Marxism. In addition, sociology as a burgeoning field of inquiry, particularly via the contributions of Max Weber, dealt with the consequences of modernity, such as its impact on individualism, modern **bureaucracy**, *anomie* (erosion of ethical standards due to an absence of common purpose) and economic wellbeing (Weber 1964).

While intellectually indebted to those contributions, modernization theory is a later development, deriving from the context of the Cold War. As a strand of thought, it arose in US academic circles in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly as a response to the geopolitical context. Because of the Cold War and the so-called 'red scare,' US policymakers actively sought to support political-economic development in war-ravaged Europe. The Marshall Plan of 1948 materialized that overall concern (Tipps 1973; Baber 2001).

Nearly a year later, President Truman's Inaugural Address outlined the need to assist societies worldwide in their pursuit of socio-economic development, in particular to curtail the spread of **communism** and **socialism**: *"I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development. Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens"* (Truman 1949).

Only through modernization could prosperity and, more importantly, peace be achieved: *"Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge. Only by helping the least fortunate of its members to help themselves can the human family achieve the decent, satisfying life that is the right of all people. Democracy alone can supply the vitalizing force to stir the peoples of the world into triumphant action, not only against their human oppressors, but also against their ancient enemies – hunger, misery, and despair"* (Truman 1949).

As the US political establishment propounded support for international economic growth, in an effort to contain the spread of **communism**, scholarly communities in the US sought to make sense of the relationship between developmental stages and economic and political progress (Lipset 1959; 1960; Rostow 1960). It was in this social and political situation that a key, perhaps defining, contribution to the burgeoning field of modernization theory was published. Walt Rostow's *Stages of Economic Growth: An Anti-Communist Manifesto* (1960) speaks to a broader academic context which espoused the links between development and politics. By doing this, his work seeks to *"to dramatize not merely the uniformities in the sequence of modernization, but also – and equally – the uniqueness of each nation's experience"* (Rostow 1960: 1). Nearly a decade later, he published another book, *Politics and States of Economic Growth*. In this text, Rostow , among other things, seeks to understand how development can potentially assist humans with what he claims to be the principal, if not universal, tasks of government: "*Whether in an African tribe ruled by custom and the elders or a Greek city state, whether in Nixon's America or Mao's China, men look to government to find an acceptably balanced way to do these three things: protect them from others; provide acceptable standards of welfare; settle quarrels among themselves, peacefully, on terms judged equitable,*



holding the community together?" (Rostow 1971: 11).

Rostow's work helped to spell out the main aims of modernization theory, including the language by which it was constituted. It also provided an impetus to strengthen US support for underdeveloped countries, a policy already inaugurated by Truman (Baber 2001).

As political and academic interests increasingly intertwined, modernization theory formed a key academic undertaking until around the 1970s, when it underwent major scrutiny and criticism (Tipps 1973; Wallerstein 1976). Most scholars refer to mid-twentieth century theories (Inglehart & Welzel 2005; 2010; Goorha 2010) when speaking of classical modernization theory. Despite criticism, however, modernization theory never completely faded away; it has resurfaced as a dominant mode of inquiry across the globe, not just in US academic institutions.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As modernization theory focuses primarily on development, especially economic growth, most of its different iterations take production – usually measured by GDP – to be its principal object of inquiry. Based on increasing income, different modernization theories address the impact of economic transitions on politics, democracy and other social practices.

Classical modernization theory, which was propounded in the mid-twentieth century, was criticized on account of its problematic assumptions, many of which were methodological in nature. Those criticisms were addressed by the theory's later proponents.

One criticism of classical modernization theory is that it tends to presume that a specific social, political and economic trajectory is universal and thus extends to vastly different cultural communities (Tipps 1973; Wallerstein 1976). Inglehart and Welzel (2005), to take one example, seek to counter this criticism by developing a modernization theory sensitive to cultural heterogeneity.

Classical modernization theory was also criticized for the way it dealt with the process of modernization itself. It was considered to be either too open-ended – based on a key variable, such as industrialization – or too goal-oriented, that is, determined by reaching a certain point. The problem with reliance on a leading variable to translate the sequence of modernization is that it could be easily replaced by another concept, such as industrialization, GDP growth, to name just two. Put differently, the only original aspect to modernization would be the concept on which it was based. On the other hand, if it avoided a critical variable and was simply concerned with how one stage is achieved after another, the theory would reduce empirical complexity to a loose sequence of stages (Tipps 1973). In this connection, cultural factors, rather than economic or institutional variables, have often been sidelined in accounting for the development of democracy as opposed to authoritarianism. The notion of multiple modernities was propounded precisely to explain the potentially distinct ways in which societies other than European ones adapted to major economic and social change (Eisenstadt 2000).

Another methodological concern has to do with the state-centric nature of economic development. Causal primacy, besides being determined by economic growth, is spatially bound to the state; that is, modernization is assumed to spring almost exclusively from developments within the state (Tipps 1973; Rostow 1971; Huntington 1968). In this connection, modernization theory has been criticized for not considering external sources of development, mainly the way that global economic structures hinder or foster development. Dependency theory and world-systems theory gained prominence at the expense of modernization theory precisely to the extent that they sought to account for uneven, if not unjust, political economic endowments within a global market (Wallerstein 1976; Arat 1988).

IMPACT ON POLICY Modernization theory had and continues to have a major impact on policy decision-making, especially in the US establishment and in international politics broadly defined. From the moment the US government linked economic development to peace and democracy, as was central to the Truman administration in the aftermath of World War II, modernization theory – and not least the concepts it advanced – became a means to legitimate aid, and support state-building, **democracy promotion** and peace-building. Even after the theory ceased to gain much academic support, it remained the conceptual benchmark to advocate US global initiatives after the Cold War (Fukuyama 2004; Duffield 2001).

As the Soviet Union and the US authorities overcame their geopolitical hostilities in the late 1980s, modernization theory partly constituted the general *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the age, a set of ideas subsequently subsumed in Fukuyama's (1992) work, which claimed that the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism was conclusive. In any case, as the optimism of the age increasingly came under scrutiny, the international response, mainly from the United Nations (UN), was still articulated with reference to modernization theory. Not only did the UN's 1994 *Agenda for Development* claim that development was a *"fundamental human right,"* but that it was *"the most secure basis for peace"* (United Nations 1994). Democracy was also considered to be the crucial means to prevent long-term conflict. In that respect, what came to be known as liberal peace-building, a form of post-conflict construction developed by the UN, was indebted to the ideas initially advanced by modernization theory (Pugh et al. 2008; Richmond 2014; Chandler 2017). However, the very connection between modernization and democracy has been the subject of major intellectual dispute, not least because of the scrutiny of the notion of modernity itself. In response, some refer to multiple modernities, rather than a single version of modernity, as sparking cultural backlashes against massive social transformations (Arjomand 2011; Wittrock 2000; Eisenstadt 2000).

Most of the ongoing policy critiques of state-building and peace-building, particularly its liberal variants, partly address the assumptions advanced by modernization theory. They question the universalization of liberal peace, especially the notion

that most societies are advancing to the same end (MacGinty & Richmond 2013). They also emphasize external sources of underdevelopment, such as capitalism (Pugh 2004). Consequently, they unsettle the state-centric assumptions put forward by most modernization theories; and, hence, also dismiss increasingly prevalent concepts like **state fragility & failure**. Even though such notions do not necessarily form a part of modernization's theory jargon, they nevertheless reflect the need to foster economic and institutional development to promote peace and democracy in states that were failing or which had succumbed to armed conflict (Call 2008).

At a more conceptual level, ongoing policy debates about the US and the UN's approach to peace critically address the extent to which development has become a security issue. As long as armed conflicts are considered to be a matter of uneven development, this precisely justifies global interventionism to prompt modernization among war-torn states or to prevent them from becoming violent in the long run (Barnett 2001; Duffield 2001; Lake 2016).

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Nationalism

Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind.
– Albert Einstein

Nationalism is a modern belief system, dividing the world's population into large identity groups (ethnos) which naturally (and perceptibly) correspond to specific delineated spaces or territories. Human settlement impacts the occupied territory and turns it into *"a poetic landscape that is an extension and expression of the character of the ethnic community and which is celebrated as such in verse and song"* – an 'ethnoscape' (see Smith 1998: 63).

Each group of 'people' (ἔθνος – *ethnos* in Greek) commands the primary allegiance of its members, its group boundaries being more inclusive than the local identities of kin-groups: 'nations,' 'ethnic groups,' and larger 'tribes' (although the latter term carries some pejorative connotations). By definition, each group (radically) excludes foreigners, migrants, and members of other nations, as well as identity groups 'othered' due to their culture, perceived origin, beliefs or customs.

Nationalism is also a powerful *political doctrine* (**ideology**) stating that a nation should coincide with the (modern) state – or at least expressing the desirability that the extent of the state should be determined according to ethnographic principles (Kohn 2023). This (modern) state has a centralized authority that controls its *own* territory and enjoys sovereignty in the international system (see **external legitimacy**). Given the current ubiquity of this belief system, it is difficult to imagine that, historically, people were not driven by nationalism. Their devotion and loyalty belonged to community identities, ancestral traditions, their native soil, and local (feudal) lords.

While the genesis of nationalism continues to be heavily debated, several key factors contributed to its rise, among them the spread of Enlightenment ideals, which emphasized individual rights and self-governance, concepts that resonated deeply with emerging nationalist movements. Economic changes brought about by the industrial revolution further fueled nationalist feelings as people began to increasingly identify with emerging nation-states. The growth of commerce and industry necessitated larger, more centralized political units and a state **bureaucracy**, which facilitated the development of a national consciousness. Additionally, political centralization under **absolutism** helped erode old feudal allegiances, paving the way for national unity.

Cultural movements, particularly Romanticism, fostered a sense of cultural identity and pride in a shared history, language, and traditions, essential components of nationalist ideology. As feudal and religious ties frayed, this cultural renaissance encouraged people to see themselves as part of a distinct national community with a unique heritage.

Since the rise of nationalism at the end of the eighteenth century (the French **revolution**), the focus on a 'people' abetted the shift toward sovereignty, slowly ousting **monarchies** all over the world. The concept was elaborated, rationalized and instrumentalized by new regimes in the spirit of **modernization theory**.

The academic debate on nationalism encompasses several perspectives. Primordialism (I), largely rejected today (but still often propagated by nationalist movements), posits that nations are ancient, perennial, fixed and a natural part of human society. P. Van den Berghe's *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (1987) argues that ethnic identity is biologically rooted (see Box 1.1 on 'nepotism'), instinctual, and evolutionary. He emphasizes cultural markers for group differentiation and critiques modernist views that see ethnicity as purely a social construct. He also highlights the role of ethnic myths in sustaining group identity, arguing that ethnicity is an adaptive behavior enhancing survival and cohesion. This perspective underscores the enduring and natural basis of ethnic affiliations.

In contrast, modernism (II), a widely accepted canon of theories, suggests that nations are 'imagined communities' and the result of an 'invented tradition' (see Hobsbawn & Ranger 1983), a necessary stage in political development (Ozkirimli 2017). E. Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) posits that nationalism is a product of modernity, arising from the need for cultural homogenization in industrial societies. He argues that a shared education system and a standardized language are essential to the functioning of modern states. Conversely, B. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) conceptualizes nations as constructs formed through shared narratives and symbols. He emphasizes the role of print capitalism in disseminating a common national consciousness and the decline of religious communities to the benefit of secular ideologies.

Ethnosymbolism (III), another approach, emphasizes the role of symbols, myths, and traditions in the formation of national identity. This perspective bridges the gap between primordialism and modernism by acknowledging the importance of pre-modern ethnic ties even as it recognizes the modern nature of the nation-state. Anthony D. Smith (2009) argues that nations are deeply rooted in pre-modern ethnic communities and that national identities are formed through shared symbols and myths. Smith's approach highlights the continuity of ethnic traditions and their role in modern nationalism. J.A. Armstrong (2017) contributes the concept of 'myth-symbol complexes,' emphasizing the long-term historical processes in the development of national identities. J. Hutchinson (2000; 2009) stresses the cultural and historical dimensions of nationalism, emphasizing the role of collective memories and myths. Critics argue that ethnosymbolism risks conflating ethnic groups with nations, and may overemphasize the continuity of ethnic traditions. Some suggest it overlooks the role of political power and state institutions in shaping national identities. Despite these criticisms, ethnosymbolism strives for a nuanced understanding of nationalism by integrating his-

torical, cultural, and symbolic elements, offering a valuable counterpoint to more modernist and functionalist theories

Nationalism has profoundly shaped political, social, and cultural landscapes, leading to the unification of countries and the dissolution of empires. Initially cosmopolitan, over time nationalism became more parochial as it displaced older belief systems, finally becoming unstoppable. It has been a driving force behind significant historical events, from the unification of Germany and Italy in the nineteenth century to the decolonization movements of the twentieth century, fueling centrifugal forces in composite polities, disintegrating empires, and reshaping modern international relations.

For the study of modern dictatorships and the instrumentalization of ethnic identities for political survival, consult **ultra-nationalism** (also referred to as 'hyper-nationalism'), **ethnic politics**, and **racism** in the section on **ideologies & worldviews**.

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Nazism

The best political weapon is the weapon of terror. Cruelty commands respect. Men may hate us. But, we don't ask for their love; only for their fear.
– Heinrich Himmler

Nazism, or National Socialism (*Nationalsozialismus* in German), was a political **ideology** and fascist movement and a racist, nationalist rebranding of **socialism**. For the ideational treatment of the phenomenon, as a doctrine, consult the main entries on **fascism** and **ultra-nationalism**; for its organizational aspects, as a regime type, see **personalist rule** and **totalitarianism**.

The movement was led by Adolf Hitler as head of Germany's Nazi Party from 1920 to 1945. It emerged in the aftermath of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, when Germany was left politically unstable and economically devastated. This context provided fertile ground for several radical ideologies, including Nazism, to take root and gain support. The German Nazi regime can be considered the most extreme historical form of a fascist regime, and the most radical implementation of the central fascist ideals concerning society and its development. It was a racist, sexist, patriarchal, genocidal, totalitarian, militaristic, and imperialistic regime organized around the racist (Aryan) conception of a biologically homogeneous nation, known as the *Volksgemeinschaft*. This nation was imagined as under continuous biological and racial threat from internal and external enemies – such as Jews, the physically and mentally disabled, Roma, and Slavs – who had to be regulated or eliminated by segregation, sterilization, and extermination in concentration camps (see Box 1.19 on 'genocide').

After World War I, Germany faced significant economic hardship. The Treaty of Versailles imposed heavy reparations, leading to hyperinflation and mass unemployment. The Weimar Republic, established after the war, struggled with political instability, frequent changes of government, and social upheaval. The global economic downturn of the late 1920s and early 1930s further destabilized Germany, increasing support for extremist parties like the Nazis. Hitler's skillful oratory and the effective use of **propaganda** by figures like Joseph Goebbels helped the Nazis gain mass support. Using legal means and cooperating with right-wing political elites and major industrialists (major corporations), they capitalized on the weaknesses of the Weimar Republic to gain power. Hitler was appointed Chancellor in 1933; following President Hindenburg's death in 1934, he consolidated his **dictatorship**.

Nazism was characterized by several core principles and beliefs, explained in detail in the entry on **fascism**. Central to Nazi ideology was the belief in the racial superiority of the Aryan race, especially ethnic Germans, who were seen as the pinnacle of human development. Jews were considered the primary racial enemy, depicted as a parasitic race responsible for Germany's problems. This racial antisemitism led to the Holocaust, the systematic extermination of six million Jews. The Nazis adopted



Social Darwinist ideas, believing in the survival of the fittest and the natural right of superior races to dominate inferior ones. Nazism rejected **democracy** and liberalism, advocating a **totalitarianism** in which the *Führer* (leader) had absolute power. The ideology emphasized the subordination of the individual to the state, demanding strict obedience to the leader and the party.

The Nazis aimed to expand German territory, particularly eastward, to provide living space for the Aryan race, a policy known as *Lebensraum*. This justified aggressive military expansion and conquest. Building up the military was a priority, both to reverse the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles and to prepare for territorial expansion. The Nazis vehemently opposed **communism**, which they saw as a Jewish conspiracy to undermine nations. Their anti-communist stance helped them gain support from various segments of German society, including the business community and the military. Nazism's devastating impact was felt globally, culminating in World War II and the Holocaust.

Political Islam

The life of words is not independent of the life of ideas. The word civilization, which our ancestors did very well without, perhaps because they had the thing itself, spread during the nineteenth century under the influence of new ideas.
– René Guénon (1886-1951), *Orient et Occident*, 1924

Often used interchangeably with 'Islamism' and 'Islamic fundamentalism,' political Islam refers to a wide range of political thinking and movements for which the Islamic faith goes beyond the confessional-cultural in the sense that it also drives political mobilization to make Islam a cornerstone of the political-societal order. Usually associated with actors as diverse as the Muslim Brotherhood and its many offshoots and affiliates, Salafism, the governance system in Iran, the Taliban and armed Sunni jihadist groups like al-Qaeda, the term originated and gained prominence in the early 1980s. Although an entire encyclopedia could easily be devoted to this topic alone, we examine a number of key components and characteristics here.

DEFINITION According to Andrew March (2015: 104), *"political Islam should be understood in the broadest sense possible as the range of modern political movements, ideological trends, and state-directed policies concerned with giving Islam an authoritative status in political life."* For John Voll and Tamar Sonn (2011: 5), the term refers generally to *"any interpretation of Islam that serves as a basis for political identity and action [and more specifically] to the movements representing modern political mobilization in the name of Islam, a trend that emerged in the late twentieth century."* Finally, in the words of Jocelyne Cesari (2018: 2, 7): *"political Islam is 'multifaceted religious nationalism' which first emerged as a modern technique of governmentality with the adoption of the nation-state and the westernization and secularization of Islamic tradition. (…) It is not the outcome of an impossible clash between Western modernity and authentic noncolonized Islam [but] rather results from grafting the concepts of religion, nationalism, and secularism in Muslim territories. It must be understood in terms of its own cultural premises and not as a mediation of forces from elsewhere, whether it is a transfer of economic grievances, a medium for old class politics, or a vehicle for new political identities."*

SEE ALSO As an **ideology** and a form of **legitimacy**, political Islam belongs to worldviews of **traditional rule**, even when blended with modern realities. As a **political regime**, it often supports **monarchy**, although more radical versions can be considered to operate in the realm of **ideocracy** and **totalitarianism**, like some **Islamic States**.

ORIGINS If we speak of the origins of the term itself, the one author believed to have first coined it is Martin Kramer in a 1980 essay with that title. A proper interest in research of what would eventually be called political Islam started in the 1960s, often in connection with an interest in pan-Arabism and anti-leftist movements in the Arab world (Hasche 2015: 26). If we speak of the origins of political thought and of movements that qualify as political Islam – even if the latter mostly do not use this term, considering it pleonastic since Islam comprises many dispositions to organize and steer the worldly and the societal, and has thus always been political in nature – then it can be traced to the second half of the nineteenth century.

While it is popularly often believed to group surviving remnants of 'traditionalist' and 'medieval' ideas, movements and forms of social organization, political Islam is, in fact, something closely intertwined with modernity and modern political thought. The emergence and development of political Islam has been shaped by five historical shifts and impetuses. First (i), even if it is too easy to attribute everything quasi-exclusively to Western European colonialism as a cause, its establishment and maintenance of colonies, protectorates and trusteeship over much of the Islamic world (ca. 1810-1960), created, along with pre-colonial societal crises, a number of conditions and circumstances that engendered the coming into being of political Islam. These include elite westernization and the introduction of a number of European institutions, concepts like the nation-state and secularism, technological modernization and the disruption of precolonial socio-economic pat-

terns, and a contact of some sectors of society with Western European political thought through modern telecommunications and education.

Second (ii), there is the long decline and eventual demise of the Ottoman empire between roughly 1800 and 1922, an empire that, before the arrival of the Western European imperial powers, ruled in some form over large parts of the Islamic world; as well as the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate by secular Turkish nationalists in the spring of 1924. The anti-Ottoman Arab uprisings of 1916-1918 finally failed to establish a pan-Arab polity to replace the Ottoman empire as the leading power in the Islamic world (see Roy 2007: 89-144). Third (iii) is the founding of Israel and the repeated Arab defeats in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1947-1949, 1956, 1967 and 1973. Fourth (iv) is the growth of opposition, eventually leading to revolution in Iran against enforced, elite-driven modernization (1965-1979) and the establishment of an Islamic republic, which clearly showed the limits of a paradigm of westernization and secularization too long taken for granted. And fifth (v) there is the failure and waning of leftist movements and societal experiments, both homegrown and Soviet-backed, in the Islamic world.

For Jocelyne Cesari (2017), the origins of political Islam are closely entwined with the rise of modern nation-states and nationalism in the Muslim world. *"The emergence of nation-states from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire irrevocably changed the dynamic between Islam and society,"* the author states. *"The transformation wrought by the adoption of Western concepts of nation and state led to an unprecedented fusion of religious and national identities. Although most of the founders of Muslim-majority countries were secularized, they nevertheless incorporated Islam in the institutions of the new states. That process accelerated the politicization of Islam by turning it into a national ideology that served as a common denominator for all political forces, secular or otherwise"* (Cesari 2017: 31)

Mohamed Mosaad Abdelaziz Mohamed (2023) traces the origins of political Islam to the impact and aftermath of the earlier brief Napoleonic French campaign in Egypt, and its intentions to 'civilize' and transform the Orient through social engineering and the promotion of Enlightenment ideals; as well as to scholars whose work, Mohamed claims, was integral to the emergence and development of the modern Egyptian state. However, if political Islam has any 'founding fathers', then these include, arguably, the Iranian-born scholar, Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, better known as al-Afghani (1838–1897) and his Egyptian disciple, Muḥammad Abduh (1849-1905), among others. Torsten Hasche (2015: 236-237) points out that the context for the coming into being of Asadabadi and Abduh's pan-Islamic modernist thought was influenced by Egypt's 1805 acquisition of quasi-independence from the Ottoman empire. The rule (1805-1848) of the Greek-born former Ottoman officer Muhamed Ali was marked by a European-inspired attempt to turn Egypt into a modern nation-state by reforming its bureaucracy, military and economy (including industrialization).

"In the context of this political and social structural changes," Hasche continues, *"Islamic modernism emerged (...) as a synthesis of a return to the Islamic tradition and the expansion and aspiration of Western European modernity. This emulsion of Islamic tradition with the growing cultural and political influence of the emerging European powers prepared the ground for pan-Arab nationalism. The latter's main representative Sati al-Husri (1882-1968) took over European ideas and concepts on nationalism and applied them on the formerly religiously-coined concept of the Islamic community or Ummah to come to a collective concept of a pan-Arabic nation, which was then adopted by the numerous national movements that emerged in the declining Ottoman empire."*

For Abba Idris Adam (2017: 40-41), *"Islamic modernity was an effort to give a befitting interpretation of Islam that fits the modern world. These ideas were formulated during the nineteenth century as an intellectual response to Western colonial influence in the face of declining Islamic civilization. Islamic modernism objected to Western colonial exploitation of Muslim countries and the imposition of Western secular values. Many Islamic modernists argued that Islam and modernity were compatible, and that all it takes is to re-interpret and re-apply the principles and ideals of Islam to formulate new responses to the political, scientific, and cultural challenges of the West and of the modern life."* Al-Afghani and Abduh's pan-Islamism, advocating the unity of the Muslim *Umma* (أمة) on the basis of a shared identity and predicament in reaction to Western (threats of) encroachment, eventually added an anti-colonial layer to Islamic modernity. Essentially, for the founders of what came to be known as political Islam, since traditionalist Islam and traditionalist structures and institutions were unable to prevent European encroachment on the Ummah and the Ummah's humiliation, Muslims had to eclectically acquire modern European techniques and knowledges to use them to regain control of their own destiny.

SEE ALSO This entry on **ideologies & worldviews** illustrates the ongoing crisis of **traditional rule** and modernity in political regimes with large Muslim communities. The search to integrate some form of political Islam into political regimes has skewed (Western) opinion that the default outcome is always non-democratic, eventuating in a mix of cultural pessimism and autocratic cultural atavism known as 'Arab exceptionalism' (see Box 6.1) – erroneously stating that political Islam is incompatible with democracy.

Note that although the term 'political Islam' is very often used interchangeably with *Islamism*, a number of authors, like Jocelyn Cesari (2021), argue that Islamism more narrowly refers to Islamic political parties, whereas political Islam covers a broader and more complex range of Islamic political action and governance. Another term commonly used interchangeably with political Islam is Islamic fundamentalism. In the strict sense, however, Islamic fundamentalists declare that what they consider the original foundations of the Islamic faith – the Quran and the *Sunna* or the tradition of sayings and practices attributed to the prophet Muhammad –



should be the sole sources of knowledge, religious practice, law and societal organization; *bid'a*, or later innovations, are distortions, divisive and heretical. Although fundamentalists can get involved, and as a matter of fact often are involved, in the political, this does not make fundamentalism a synonym for political Islam. Lastly, though nowadays less prevalent, another term used to designate political Islam is 'integralism' or 'integrism.' In its proper sense, however, this refers to a traditionalist-restorationist movement within Roman Catholicism especially present in historically Catholic Latin countries, which argues that the Roman Catholic faith should be the basis of public law and public policy in society.

MEASUREMENT Approaches used to study and measure political Islam and examine the wide range of movements, parties, etc., that qualify as such range from discourse and (social) media analysis (for an example, see Kadivar 2020), focusing on databases with election results and armed actions, to qualitative field-based case study research (for an example, see De Cordier 2010). In terms of theoretical frameworks, social movement theory has been popular in this field (for a critical examination, see Bayat 2005). In terms of categorization and the establishment of typologies, a number of general typologies of religiously-oriented parties (see Ozzano 2013) are relevant to the study and measurement of political Islam. In terms of public support and opinion, there are comparative quantitative surveys on the position of Islam and Shariah law in public life, or what this position should be, on minority rights, on preferred forms of governance, and on attitudes towards democracy in Muslim countries and communities. Though it needs to be updated, one example is the *Pew Research Center* study (2013).

CLASSIFICATIONS In terms of organization, mobilization, political activity and its relation to the state, political Islam can come in many forms. Samir Amghar (2010: 529-541) identifies three basic types of political Islamic movements, parties and approaches: (a) so-called 'managing' parties, (b) opposition or protest parties, and (c) parties existing outside the system that may or may not be considered revolutionary. 'Managing' parties (a) are generally parties situated close to power and which claim to exercise power, without however always managing to do so. They thus have a routine vocation, depending on the vagaries of democratic alternation. These parties try to build majorities, join government coalitions or control municipalities. Their exercise of public affairs or their hope of one day taking power utterly influence their language and their strategy (Amghar 2010: 529-541). This also includes co-optation by essentially secular regimes.

As regards opposition or protest parties (b), the co-optation by a number of regimes of certain Islamist groups and the participation strategy of some in political life (and parliaments) have led to the institutionalization of part of Islamism. This leads to the trivialization and routinization of the discourse of Islamist parties, *ipso facto* causing a dilution of their ideology's scope of protest. In response to the criticisms of a part of the electorate, denouncing certain Islamist groups for their possible political compromise with a regime whose functioning they had previously vilified, other Islamist parties have decided to remain in opposition. They participate in the political system, but refrain from any form of governmental participation. It is a question of integrating into the political game without compromising themselves, and of preserving their 'opponent' character as Islamists while playing the card of political inclusion, even if they are associated with power. So, in contrast to the so-called managerial Islamist parties, the so-called opposition Islamist parties are characterized by the distance they keep from the centers of power (Amghar 2010: 529-541).

Finally, there are the parties existing outside the system (c). Some may be considered revolutionary, others are 'voluntary outsiders.' While the so-called managing parties and protest parties share a recognition of the dominant political system, parties outside the system position themselves as in confrontation with the incumbent political regime. Because they are very critical of it, they have a revolutionary potential that the protest parties do not have. They then find themselves in three types of situations: either they are banned and continue their activity clandestinely, or they are forced into exile, or they are tolerated but cannot organize into a political party. Some prefer to voluntarily situate themselves outside the political system (Amghar 2010: 529-541). We can add that some parties, or at least factions within them, eventually opt for armed struggle or organize parallel and informal forms of governance in areas or among populations that they control or where they have a following. Furthermore, some actors are anchored and active in a clearly-defined territory, while others are deeply de-territorialized and internationalized.

Traditionally considered as being on the Right or even the radical Right on the conventional Left-Right political spectrum, some authors (Karagiannis & Mccauley 2013) see a growing symbiosis between political Islam and the (radical) Left, especially in Western Europe and North America. In the last ten to fifteen years, a number of Islamist movements (for an example, see De Cordier 2010: 482) have adopted the sort of anti-capitalist and alter-globalist parlance and slogans long considered to be typical of if not exclusive to the militant Left. More recently, investigative journalists and think-tank researchers examined Qatar's role in funding Muslim Brotherhood activities in Europe (Chesnot & Malbrunot 2020) and the instrumentalization and co-optation of wokeism and so-called decoloniality activism in Western Europe by the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates (Vidino 2022). Islamists and political Islam actors themselves usually consider the conventional Left-Right classification irrelevant.

REGIONAL VARIATION In terms of major contemporary currents and movements, we identify and hereby examine the following six: Ikhwanism, Salafism and Wahhabism, Takfirism, Khomeinism, Deobanism, and Jamaatism.

Ikhwanism – الإخوان translating as (*al-'Ikhwān*

– 'brethren') 'Brotherhood-ism,' it can also refer to Islamic insurgents in early twentieth-century northern Arabia. Here, however, following Khalil al-Anani (2016: 118-134), it refers to world views, ideology, identity codes and political methodologies of the *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* or Muslim Brotherhood. Founded in the spring of 1928 by Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), a teacher, in Ismailia in what was then the Kingdom of Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood is often considered to be the 'ideal type' of a political Islamic movement and a trailblazer of modern political Islam. Initially a social-caritative and educational movement – as it still is – it rapidly politicized through its opposition to the British occupation of Egypt (1882-1956).

There is considerable debate (for examples, see Heggy 2011; Rogler 2011) about what the Brotherhood's current ideology and true aims are. In general, the movement seeks to permeate the organization of state and society with Islam and bring Islam into the secular. Historically, much of its ideological framework and political thought is based on the writings of both Hassan al-Banna, its founder, and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). The latter argued that Egypt and modern Muslim societies in general essentially needed to go through a process of re-Islamization (Lagervall 2021: 76). Qutb's ideas eventually also inspired violent jihadist movements, yet most of what we can categorize today as Ikhwanism is non-violent. Arguably, some Ikhwanist elements, such as the concept and role of the elite vanguard party, are Leninist.

For al-Anani (2016: 99; see also Lagervall 2021: 84), *"one of the key characteristics of the Brotherhood's organization is its elasticity and adaptability. [It] has evolved over time in response to both internal and external factors (…) and reflects the movement's responsiveness to contextual changes."* Since, for a long time, the Brotherhood's Egyptian mother organization as well as its branches in other Arab countries were regularly curtailed or outlawed, the movement, through a history often marked by a (semi-)clandestine existence, came to operate through a wide range of affiliates and semi-affiliates (parliamentary and non-parliamentary political parties, charity foundations, non-governmental organizations, community organizations, social media, think-tanks, etc.) and independently-operating national sections.

In general, many Brotherhood affiliates are active in the field of social welfare and charity in Arab societies (see Benthall 2018; Vannetzel 2017), thus acquiring a presence and also a certain popular legitimacy for Ikhwanism in the grassroots. They essentially fill a gap left by the absence or the withdrawal of the state from the social field, a recurrent effect of neoliberal policies and conditionality imposed by international financial institutions.

Politically, the position of Ikhwanism varies considerably by country. In Jordan, for example, the local Brotherhood's political arm, *Jabhat al-ʿAmal al-Islāmī* or *Islamic Action Front*, traditionally has a base of support among Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent. Since it was founded in 1992, the party has run in elections, with representatives in parliament, and has conducted social work through its welfare arm. For the monarchy in Jordan, its presence and position has been a way to the channel political-religious sentiment in society. In Gaza and Cis-Jordan, Ikhwanism has historically converged with Palestinian nationalism in the form of *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-Islāmiyyah*, better known as Hamas and is as such contextually-engaged in armed struggle with Israel (Hroub 2009; Aby-Amr 1993).

In Egypt, the Brotherhood and its affiliates played an active and leading role in the 2011 protests – see **Arab Spring** – and the Tahrir uprising in 2011, and its political arm, the *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wal-ʿĀdāla* or *Freedom and Justice Party*, subsequently led an elected coalition government until it got outlawed and dissolved after el-Sisi's **coup d'état** in the summer of 2013. Since then, its followers and structures have been repressed and dismantled. In a number of other countries and places, Ikhwanist movements and parties operate in some way in practical alliances with non-Ikhwanist actors considered to be *ahl an-nuṣrat* or 'people of support.'

Historically, this expression refers to the Bedouin tribes that backed the prophet Muhammad when he took power in Medina in the year 622. In modern usage, it refers to existing groups, institutions and actors that are deemed capable – whether technically, militarily or through influence over key players (e.g. the military, tribes and clans, etc.) – to influence or remove present authorities and establish, secure and maintain an Islamic alternative (Karagiannis & Mccauley 2013: 326-327). In Yemen, for example, Ikhwanism thus embeds itself in tribalism through *al-Islah,* a coalition of Sunni tribal and religious factions and groups that is also present in parliament.

In Libya, where the Brotherhood was outlawed and repressed under Qaddafi, only again able to operate in the open after the downfall of the regime in the autumn of 2011, *Ḥizb al-Adāla wal-Bina* or *Justice and Construction Party*, the local Brotherhood's political arm, numbers as one of the better-organized political parties. It is represented in parliament where, operating in the context of state disintegration, absence of central governance and local power centers, it has been trying to boost its influence through strategic alliances with independents who often run on a tribal-regionalist line. It has also organized logistical support for humanitarian aid from neighboring countries (see also Trautig 2018).

Some authors (Vidino & Altuna 2021; Vidino 2022) argue that since the Brotherhood and Ikhwanism have increasingly come under pressure in their cradle (Egypt in particular) and are losing some clout in the Arab world, they have re-oriented their efforts, allegedly with Qatari support, to Muslim immigrant communities living in (Western) Europe, thereby often linking up with leftist minority rights and anti-racist movements. Arguably this could be considered a form of entryism, a method traditionally attributed to Leninism and Trotskyism, whereby one anonymously joins other organizations with the intention of influencing their agendas and methods.

Salafism & Wahhabism Often mentioned in the same breath, the two currents have similarities but different genealogies. What is now known as



Salafism came into being in Cairo in the Khedivate of Egypt, then under British control, around 1880. It originated as a puritanical Islamic reform movement which advocated the implementation of Islamic law and a return to the essence of Islam as contained in the Quran and as it existed in the time of the prophet Muhammad and the *al-salaf aṣ-ṣāliḥ*, the prophet's companions and the first generations of Muslims. In line with the modernist ideas of al-Afghani and Abduh, it endeavors to combine this with the embrace of modern science and technology.

Salafism (السلفية – *al-Salafiyya*) is considered to be one of the fastest-growing Islamic movements in the world, including among migrants and converts in Western Europe, not least because of funding by nongovernmental foundations from the Gulf and because its champions and actors discovered the use and effectiveness of the digital realm and social media early on (Roy 2004: 145-178). It basically comes in four forms; however, the lines between them are not always clear and they can sometimes be combined. The first (i), the *pietist*, propagates 'proper Islamic' devotion, practice and lifestyle at the individual level as well as in specific communities of Muslims and converts, or expresses devotion through social welfare and relief work.

The second (ii), the *proselytist* or *da'wa*-ist, actively propagates the Salafi interpretation of Islam with the purpose of winning reverts and converts. Examples include *Da'wa Salafiyya* in Algeria and the *Turati* movement on the Indonesian island of Java. The third (iii), the *political-activist*, participates in the political realm and institutions, often also in combination with welfare and relief work. Examples include the *Ḥizb an-Nūr* or *Party of Light* in Egypt, which is given a place in parliament to boost the el-Sisi regime's Islamic credentials as well as its relations with the Gulf emirates; and the *el-Isla* or *Reform Front Party* in Tunisia. The fourth (iv), finally, is the *armed jihadist*, one example being the *Jama'a es-Salafiyya li Da'wa wal Qital* (*Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat*), which was active in the Sahel region from 1998 to 2007. For investigations into and case studies of the different manifestations of Salafism in politics, see Meijer (2009), Woodward et al. (2013) and Ali (2019).

Wahhabism (آلُو هَابِيَةُ – *al-Wahhābiyya*), in contrast, came into being in central Arabia, then loosely situated on the edge of the Ottoman sphere of influence, around 1740. Originally a movement led by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, which propagated a literalist-puritanical form of Sunnism based on a literal understanding of the Quran and rejection of *bid'a*, or novelty, among the Nejd Bedouins of central Arabia, it became the official doctrine of the emirate of al-Diriyya – the precursor of what was to become the kingdom of Nejd and Hijaz in 1926 and eventually, in 1932, Saudi Arabia – and the ruling al-Saud tribe in 1744 (Tehami 1997; Nevo 1998). Historically, Wahhabism has fueled and legitimated campaigns and uprisings against Shias and the Ottomans in the area.

So, whereas Salafism was internationalized, from its very beginning Wahhabism was closely intertwined with the polity and the state of the emirate of al-Diriyya and then of Saudi Arabia. Although there are no official statistics on the issue and many Wahhabi do not call themselves such, followers of Wahhabism are believed to form a dominant minority of – perhaps – one-quarter of the population of Saudi Arabia. It is also present, influential and (semi-) official in Qatar, Kuwait and among the indigenous minority of the UAE and particularly Abu Dhabi.

Despite their different origins and contexts, a 'Salafo-Wahhabi' synthesis did come into being when, in the 1960s and 1970s, Saudi Arabia, the custodian of the holy pilgrimage sites of Mecca and Medina, grew worried at the growing influence of leftism in the Arab region, and – fueled by oil revenues – started to boost its influence in the Islamic world through pan-Islamic diplomacy and soft power. The credibility of Nejd Wahhabism being too limited in the wider Islamic world, it sponsored the development of a more sophisticated pan-Islamic form, often with the help of Egyptian Salafist scholars who had fled the (then) leftist-secular nationalist government at home (Stanley 2005). Since 1962-1978, the *Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami* or *Muslim World League* and *al-Igata* or *International Islamic Relief Organization* have been channels for the propagation of Salafo-Wahhabism in combination with welfare and relief work (see, among others, Woodward et al. 2013: 65). Another vector for its influence in the Arab region and, in particular, Africa are returnee labor migrants from the Gulf. For examples and case studies, see El Obeid (2020) and Karakoç et al. (2017).

Takfirism Sometimes considered to be an offshoot of Salafism, Takfirism's origins actually go back to the seventh-century Kharijite movement, which emerged in Arabia during a succession crisis after the death of the prophet Muhammad, and to some of the work of the thirteenth-century scholar ibn Tamiyyah (Poljarevic 2021). Modern Takfirism originated in Egypt under the influence of the writings of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) and especially of the impact of the Arab defeat by Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967. Its followers basically believe that the primary cause of the weakness of the Ummah is internal decay and corruption; therefore, those they see as 'heretics,' 'apostates' and 'hypocrites' must be excommunicated – which is what the Arabic word *takfīr* (تكفير) means: excommunication. Enemies include Muslim secularists who collaborate with the infidels, but also Shias and Sufis (Kadivar 2020), and pretty much anyone who practices Islam 'improperly.' Takfiri consider the prophet Muhammad's polity in Medina, which lasted from 622 to 632, to be the sole model of true Islamic governance, and maintain that sincere Muslims must leave countries and societies ruled by apostates and infidels or at least withdraw from them. Though some Takfiri societal withdrawers' groups are non-violent, the current's main political manifestation today is of the violent revolutionary type. Examples of Takfiri movements or groups influenced by Takfirism include *ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah* – better known as the Islamic State – and parts of *al-Shabaab* in Somalia (see **Islamic States**).

Khomeinism Named after ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini (1902-1989), the leader and iconic

Box 4.5 Baʿath Party: The Broken Dream of Arab Unity

Umma Arabiyya Wahida Dhat Risala Khalida
(One Arab Nation with an Eternal Mission)
– Baʿath Slogan

The *Baʿath* movement was established in 1943 in Syria. *Baʿath* (البعث – meaning 'resurrection' or 'renaissance' in Arabic) was inspired by pan-Arabism and born against the backdrop of Western colonialism in the early twentieth century. It adopted its party charter in 1947 and merged with the *Syrian Socialist Party* to become the *Arab Socialist Baʿath Party* in 1953. Branches were created in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq between 1948-1951.

Michel 'Aflek (1910-1989, an Orthodox Christian) and Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn al-Bīṭār (1912-1980, a Sunni Muslim) were the founders of the party. (Note that Zakī al-Arsūzī (1899-1968) and his ideas on Arab identity were very influential for the movement, even if he never joined the party.) Both Syrian thinkers were inspired by the powerful appeal of pan-Arabism and the revolutionary, social, and emancipatory message it had. Both founders had been exposed to pan-Arabism early in their lives under colonial rule, as a great deal of Syrian education at the time included Arabism in the curriculum. It was during their careers as teachers that they decided to dedicate themselves to propagate and preach the principles of Baʿathism. While 'Aflaq, like Hassan al-Bannah (the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928) preferred to educate people through pamphlets and meetings, al-Bīṭār pushed for a political manifestation of these Arabist, anti-colonial and socialist principles. Their slogan, 'Unity, Liberty, Socialism,' resonated with many young Arabs who were sympathetic to the Soviet Union, and resented the Western colonial presence that had been such a salient reality in their youth. They embraced the non-aligned movement and espoused their own version of 'Arab Socialism,' independent of the USSR.

The Baʿath worldview rejected the colonial order and shamed other Arab parties that followed 'national' delineations (accepting colonial borders). The Baʿath refused to acknowledge these colonial creations, referring to these Arab national states as *quṭr* (region) (Rabinovich 1972). The goal was the creation of a unified Arab state (uniting all Arab regions), with the Baʿath leading a revolutionary socialist struggle whose goal was to bring enlightenment to Arab culture, free of class discrimination, exploitation, capitalist or feudal domination. The socialist aspects focused on emancipation, equality and justice, but did not embrace the communist, atheist materialism of the USSR, despite their commitment to secularism (Hanna & Gardner 1969).

Initially, the Baʿath movement found its champion in Nasser, who took over Egypt in 1952 with a **coup**. The Baʿath leadership announced that their party would strive for union between Egypt and Syria as a first step to achieve pan-Arab unity, successfully pushing the issue in the Syrian parliament (Devlin 1991: 1396-1399). After two successful national plebiscites, the *United Arab Republic* (UAR), joining Egypt and Syria, came into being in 1958, but it did not last. Dissatisfied by unequal power distribution, the marginalization of the Baʿath Party in favor of Nasser's appointees, and unpopular (land) reforms, a 1961 coup d'état by military officers led to the (uncontested) secession of Syria from the union. The UAR itself was formally dissolved in 1971.

Despite this enormous blow to pan-Arabism, the Baʿath party (and its various branches) reinvented itself after the exit of the Nasserites, although temporarily reduced in size. The reshuffle at the top in all four branches (Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon) admitted a new generation (about twenty years younger), putting a stronger accent on the party's socialist component. Notably, this influx of new members included many army men predisposed to a military chain of command, initially at the local and regional levels, but soon dominating the top command. This effectively replaced the consultative culture with authoritarian selection, and paved the way for military control (Devlin 1991: 1400-1403).

Coups followed in Syria and Iraq in 1963 and 1968, respectively, after which the Baʿath consolidated power (with an earlier attempt in Iraq in 1963, known as the 'Ramadan Revolution'). In 1963-1966 the struggle between military and civilian control culminated in the 1966 palace coup by the military command, expelling the old (civilian) guard into exile. This automatically resulted in a schism between the Syrian 'neo-Baʿathists' – who tweaked the ideology to confirm their supremacy and put pan-Arabism on the back burner – and the Iraqi branch that still (nominally) recognized the original, exiled, (ideological) leadership, offering them safe haven in Baghdad after 1968.

Some of the most notable members of the Baʿath party were the young Hafez al-Assad, who joined the party as a teenager and launched a bloodless palace coup against his rival faction in 1970, and Saddam Hussein, who made his first appearance on the Arab political scene as a young Baʿathist militant involved in the 1959 assassination attempt against the then Iraqi president Qassim for being too sympathetic to socialism. Both presidents competed for leadership of the Baʿath party as this implied (relatively speaking) leadership of Arab nationalism after Egypt had been discredited by their peace deal with Israel in 1978. The Baʿath party grew exponentially since citizens of both Syria and Iraq joined the party both as a display of their loyalty to their regimes and, especially in Iraq, as a pre-requisite for obtaining public sector jobs. In time both presidents reverted to **personalist rule**, but their respective Baʿath parties remained important pillars supporting regime **patronage**, **indoctrination**, and upholding **personality cults**. For Hafez al-Assad, the party was instrumental in institutionalizing the **succession** of his son, Bashar al-Assad, in 2000. The Iraqi patronage system was so entrenched that the 2003 de-Baʿathification campaign (and disbanding of the army) during US Operation 'Iraqi Freedom' led to violent insurrection. Former Baʿathists and members of the military rebelled after the decision



to bar them from public service in the new regime. This fallout was considered a major strategic US policy blunder and a direct trigger of the civil war that followed the US occupation (Pfiffner 2010).

For a broader perspective on the Arab Left before 1970, see Guiguis (2020); for the disintegration of these movements after 1970, and their position at the time of the **Arab Spring**, see Abisaab (2016), Haugbolle (2017); and for a survey of the Arab Left today, consult Resta et al. (2018), Browers (2021).

The party archives constitute an interesting case for historians: With the ouster of Saddam, the Iraqi Baʿath archives, key to untangling the regime's inner workings, were seized and transferred to the US, leading to a contested debate about ownership, collective memory, and cultural property (Montgomery 2011; Caswell 2011; Wilkinson 2019; Brill 2023).

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figure of the Iranian revolution of 1979, Khomeinism, a term which appeared around 1990, is now part of the ideological framework of the Iranian Islamic republic as well as of a large number Shia political movements in other, Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries. It is based on state, polity and society ideas and precepts held Khomeini himself, but also borrowed from other thinkers, including nationalist and leftist ones. Although its protagonists and advocates will insist that what came to be known as Khomeinism is neither specifically 'Shia' nor 'Iranian' but destined for the wider Ummah, it is undeniably rooted in Shia political theology and in the societal and political conditions of prerevolutionary Iran.

As Yann Richard (1995: 207-208) explains, *"some distinctive theological features of Shiism take on a particular emphasis as they are used in a political context: the eschatological wait for the (Mahdi or Savior) (...), the justification of rebellion against an iniquitous government, secrecy and clandestinity, and obedience to a religious leader chosen by oneself."* Richard also mentions clearly social-revolutionary elements such as the notion of a vanguard class that has to take the lead in the emancipation and uplifting of the downtrodden community of believers – its own interpretation of the Marxist proletariat if you wish – as a precursor to the whole of humanity.

Since the Iranian revolution was essentially the social and nationalist (see Richard 2005: 62-65) uprising of the working classes and middle groups against the enforced westernization policies of native elites increasingly disconnected from societal reality – something indeed still recognizable outside Iran – Ervand Abrahamian (1993: 13-38) considers Khomeinism a form of radical populism. Khomeinism (or variants of it) form part of the ideological armature of Shia communitarian movements, often Iranian-backed, that champion the rights and uplifting of Shia majorities or minorities.

Examples of the latter include Hezbollah (the 'Party of God') in Lebanon (Kanaaneh 2021) and the *Kataʾib Hizballah* ('Hezbollah Battalions'), the *Harakat Hizballah fi Iraq* or 'Hezbollah Movement' in Iraq, and the *Jamʿīyah al-ʿAmal al-ʾIslāmī* or 'Islamic Action Society' in Bahrain, which was outlawed after the largely Shia-driven protests in 2011 (see **Arab Spring**). Although it is now at odds with Iran, the Iraqi *al-Tayyār al-Sadri* or 'Sadrist Movement' was also, initially, inspired by Khomeinism.

Deobandism Deobandism is a scholastic Sunni revivalist movement found primarily in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and in countries with large diasporas from the Indian subcontinent. It came into being in the *Dār al-ʿUlūm* seminary which was

founded in 1866-1867 in the small town of Deoband, located north of Delhi – whence the name. Marked by the dramatic failure of earlier Indian uprisings against British colonial encroachment, and the sidelining of the Islamic judiciary and administrator class after the introduction of new British forms of governance in northern India, the movement's pioneers blamed the decline, powerlessness and serial humiliations endured by the Muslim Ummah on the internal corruption of Islam by folk practices and Shia influences (see Metcalf 2002: 5-6). Rather than confronting British colonial rule head-on, the Deobandi movement aimed to preserve and revitalize Indian Islamic identity and to 'properly' re-Islamize Indian Muslims through its network and model of madrassas, or Islamic seminaries, which it set starting in 1880.

Initially a pan-Indian movement opposed to the creation of a separate Pakistan (and later Bangladesh), it adapted to the new reality after the Indo-Pakistani partition of 1947 and the Bengali secession from Pakistan in 1971. Its center of gravity expanded from Uttar Pradesh in India to include Pakistan. From 1965-1970 onwards, the Deobandi current also came under influence and reach of Gulf Salafism (see Pease & Hess 2021). Once anticolonial, Deobandism's current intention is the development and uplifting of the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim populations and communities. The madrassa system is still its core activity. Figures on the current numbers of Deobandi or Deobandi-inspired religious seminaries vary widely; however, some estimates number them between fifty and sixty thousand on the Indian subcontinent alone. However, although many are considered or self-identify as 'Deobandi,' they function independently of the historical mother institution in Deoband (Tareen 2014).

A considerable network of religious seminaries, often attached to vocational-technical schools, easily accessible by the poorer strata of society, is something with which even non-Islamist political parties and their clientelist networks have to reckon to gain or maintain a foothold in society, and among certain electorates. Deobandism's political clout further comes from its own political arms (the *Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind* in India, the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* in Pakistan and its namesake in Bangladesh), their breakaway factions, and affiliated social associations, rights unions and legal platforms. In India, where Muslims form a sizable minority, they rally, among other issues, against communitarian violence and in favor of minority rights and the multi-confessional character of society. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, Deobandi-connected candidates have run under the *Bahujan Samaj* Party, a political party that arose from the emancipation movement of the Dalits or lower castes. In Pakistan, Deobandi or Deobandi-backed candidates regularly win seats in parliament or participate in electoral alliances. It is also in Pakistan that Deobandism has become most controversial for its alleged and real connections with Sunni jihadism and anti-Shia violence. The first generation of Taliban leaders attended Deobandi madrassas in Pakistan, though the Deobandi movement itself is divided in its stance *vis-à-vis* the group. According to Stéphane Dudoignon (2020), Deobandism has also built a presence in Iran as an anti-Shia counterculture, especially among the Baluchi minority in the southeast.

Jamaatism Jamaatism is largely confined to the Indo-Pakistani and Bengali regions as well as to the diasporas from these countries and societies. Resembling Ikhwanism in its worldview and approaches (see Gani 2023), its name comes from *Jama'at-i Islami* (*Jamaat-e Islami* – جماعتِ اسلامی in Urdu) or 'Islamic Society.' The original movement was founded in Lahore, now in Pakistan, in 1941 under the leadership of the journalist and scholar Sayyīd Abū al-A'lā al-Mawdūdī (1903-1979). The movement, later to be a party, was formed in reaction to what was felt to be the growing Hindu and secularist domination of the Indian anti-colonial movement, and the failure of traditionalist Sufism and secular Muslim nationalists to properly address the concerns and interests of the Indian Muslims and Islam.

The latter, it maintained, could only be done through the establishment of parallel genuine Islamic structures and leadership for Indian Muslims. The creation of an educated elite of devout Muslim leaders would, as the vanguard of a vanguard party, lead the way to the revival of Islam in India (see De Cordier 2010: 48). Founded as a pan-Indian Islamic party, and initially opposed to the creation of an independent Pakistan and Bangladesh, after the partition of India in 1947 and the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, it reorganized itself into national Indian (*Jamaat-e-Islami Hind* – in Arabo-Urdu), Pakistani (*Jamaat-e-Islami* – in Urdu) and Bangladeshi chapters (*Bānglādēsh Jāmāyatē Islāmī* – in Bengali), which accommodated their work and activities to national frameworks and circumstances.

The promotion of education through networks of party-affiliated schools and colleges, in an effort to reconcile Islam and Western science and uplift Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims remains one of Jamaatism's core activities. In India and Pakistan, in particular, the Jamaat is especially active and influential through its social welfare and charity services, community development and disaster relief through its social departments, students' and women's wings, and a wide range of affiliate foundations and non-governmental organizations like the *al-Khidmat Foundation* in Pakistan, *Falah-e-Aam* in Uttar Pradesh and the *Islamic Relief Committee of Gujarat* in India.

In Pakistan and Bangladesh, where it sometimes had representatives in parliament and provincial councils, *Jama'at-i Islami* has historically maintained ties to sectors of the military, and participated in coalitions with political parties issued from military rule, or taken part in electoral alliances with other Islamic parties. In India, against the backdrop of the rise and coming to power of Hindu nationalism, the *Jama'at-i Islami Hind* actively opposes neoliberal and privatization policies by the central government, and campaigns for religious freedom and for civil and minority rights.



KEY SIGNIFICANCE The significance of the study of political Islam and its various forms and manifestations, including those in Europe, lies first in its connections to local conditions and forms of populism and nationalism and, second, in the importance of identitarian movements. The rise and expansion of political Islam also challenges the long-taken-for-granted paradigm of linear, teleological secularization and westernizing modernization (see **modernization theory**).

Political Islam's relevance in the study of authoritarianism appears at several levels. To start with (i), movements, parties and associations that qualify as 'political Islam' often participate in or lead opposition to secular dictatorships. Second (ii), the real or perceived threat that political Islam poses, in whatever form, is often instrumentalized by secular dictatorships to legitimize themselves as guarantors of secularism and stability (e.g. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Egypt until early 2011). Furthermore (iii), some parties or factions are co-opted by dictatorships so as not to alienate religious sectors of society or to boost relationships with patron countries (e.g. el-Sisi's Egypt). And lastly (iv), Islamic parties and movements, through their affiliates, often provide social services and relief where governments with neoliberal economic policies – not necessarily or exclusively authoritarian ones – have withdrawn from the social field.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As political Islam is a quite loaded subject, there are a few methodological issues, some of a practical and others of an ethical nature. To begin with, there is the issue of positionality. This is perhaps more vexed for Muslim researchers, or those with a Muslim background, than for atheist-agnostic or Christian European and Anglo-American scholars, since they may be confronted with questions by respondent activists and militants on where they themselves stand.

Further, research on the topic often involves work in conflict areas, anything from war zones like Syria to turbulent French *banlieues* (suburbs), or in places with authoritarian regimes, like Egypt or Uzbekistan for example. In such cases, the issue is naturally how to protect and deal responsibly with contacts and respondents, who run a risk, and how to cope with government attempts to bureaucratically impede or control research.

Furthermore, there are language barriers. Not everyone has a sufficiently good command of Arabic (in particular) to directly access written sources or interact directly with informants. This raises the issue of dependency on and reliability of in-person interpreters and translation apps. Finally, since political Islam has periodically attracted a lot of attention from academic and policy researchers over the last twenty years or so, there is, quite understandably, a growing 'researcher-weariness' and frustration with the lack of reciprocity between (potential) respondents, as well as the growing suspicion that research may be an alibi for intelligence gathering.

LITERATURE There is an enormous body of literature on political Islam, much of which has come in waves as the subject grew (again) topical, if not fashionable, in the wake of the Iranian revolution, terror and the war declared against it in 2001, the electoral breakthroughs of Islamic parties, the umpteenth escalation in Gaza or Israel, the (aftermath of the) **Arab Spring** uprisings, and so on. However, if we have to pick a handful of essentials, the following will serve. For a decent, in-depth discussion and extensive literature review of the various concepts and forms just examined ('fundamentalism,' 'Islamism,' 'militant Islam,' 'political Islam,' etc.), we recommend R.G. Mainuddin (2007). Likewise, J. Cesari (2018) helps to understand the many aspects and forms of political Islam, looking beyond the clichés surrounding the term. For an in-depth overview of relevant movements, we recommend M.A. Upal & C.M. Cusack (2021). Although not all of its case-chapters treat movements and currents that qualify as political Islam, several do. This work has the additional advantage of dealing with political and non-political forms of Islam, allowing the reader to assess the difference or, rather, the often-vague gray border between the two. Olivier Roy (2004; 2006) is a must-read as he identifies and examines a number of trends that shape contemporary political Islam: migration and the formation of diasporas, the trans-nationalization of movements and the rise and expansion of the digital sphere, and Western Europe (as well as North America) as a space for political Islam.

Woodward et al. (2013) challenges the erroneous stereotype that Sufism is by nature tolerant, moderate and pacifist, and Salafism by nature violent and extremist. This is not unimportant as the regimes of some Muslim-majority successor countries of the Soviet Union, like Uzbekistan, have sometimes promoted state-aligned forms of Sufism to counter 'extremism.' Lastly, Maréchal & Zemni (2013) is good study of the (politization of) the Sunni-Shia factor and dynamics, comprising chapters on both general topics and more specific case studies in the Arab and non-Arab world, and the issue's impact on the Arab uprisings.

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Populism

The secret of the demagogue is to make himself as stupid as his audience so they believe they are clever as he.
–Karl Kraus (1874-1936)

It has been very truly said that the mob has many heads, but no brains.
–Antoine Rivarol (1753-1801)

Especially since 2016 – with the Brexit referendum and the first victory of Donald Trump in the US elections – 'populism' has become one of the most widely used terms, both broadly and in academic circles. Numerous recent books, articles and edited volumes have appeared tackling the phenomena of populism and populist politicians, and analyzing the crisis of liberal democracy, and how and why state functioning and transformation is under attack, notably by populist politics (Mouffe 2018; Mounk 2018). In strictly numerical terms, Roodujin has demonstrated the rise of interest in populism in both the media and the academy. In 2015, *The New York Times* used the word 'populism' 671 times, 1,399 times in 2016, and 2,537 times in 2017. In 2010, if we look at the *Web of Science* database, 76 articles with 'populist' or 'populism' in the title were published; in 2015, there were 155 articles and as many as 332 articles in 2017 (Rooduijn 2018: 1). So, as the 'populist moment' some authors write about (Mouffe 2018; Mounk 2018) seems likely to turn into the 'populist century' (Rosanvallon 2021), it is not surprising that the word 'populism' became the Cambridge Dictionary 2017 Word of the Year.

DEFINITION Like most notions in political science, populism is *"an essentially contested concept"* (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 2). Some approaches consider populism to be either a specific discursive style, a political strategy, or an ideology. Below we discuss only one of the most common definitions in today's social science research.

Cas Mudde supplies the conceptualization of populism that is probably the most used. He argues that populism is a specific ideology, based on the separation of society into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite (Mudde 2004: 543). However, this ideology is a 'thin' ideology, because it has a *"restricted morphology, which necessarily appears attached to – and sometimes is even assimilated into – other ideologies. In fact, populism almost always appears attached to other ideological elements, which are crucial for the promotion of political projects that are appealing to a broader public"* (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 6). Similarly, Albertazzi and McDonnell argue that populism is a specific ideology *"which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice"* (Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008: 3). Populism is based on *"people-centrism and anti-elitism"* (Rooduijn 2018: 3). This is the basic element of populism since *"all forms of populism include some kind of appeal to 'the people' and a denunciation of 'the elite.' Accordingly, it is not overly contentious to state that populism always involves a critique of the establishment and an adulation of the common people"* (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 5).

SEE ALSO Today, populism is mostly associated with strongly anti-elitist and anti-establishment politics. Moreover, in its right-wing variant, it entails elements of xenophobia, **ultra-nationalism**, **racism** and sometimes **fascism**. Left-wing populism, on the other hand, is close to anti-capitalism, anti-globalism, class politics and internationalism, and often resonates with various interpretations of **socialism** or **communism**. For more on the (now) pejorative label 'demagogue,' see Box 4.6.

ORIGINS Although the concept of populism is more than a century old, it has gained prominence in recent decades, as neoliberal capitalism and the unipolar post-Cold War world system entered a series of crises. Moreover, the concept has changed significantly over the last century – once a positive phenomenon, it is today mostly referred to negatively, except for the few attempts to use it in connection with left-wing politics. However, as shown below in 'methodological issues,' unclear definitions, conceptual stretching and conflation with other concepts diminish its validity.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, the term 'populism' was introduced to describe specific political movements in two very different countries. In the US, it was used to explain the rise of the agrarian movement, which later, in the 1890s, formed the *People's Party* in the South and Midwest US. Another political phenomenon closely associated with populism was the Russian *narodnichestvo* (народничество), a political movement aimed at mobilizing the peasantry as the revolutionary class (Moffit 2016; Fuentes 2020).

The first political movement labeled as populist was in the US. The political and economic state of affairs following the American Civil War only increased the North-South divide. Southern farmers felt exploited and wanted to bring about change through militant politics. A movement began to emerge – it started in Texas, coalescing into the *Farmers' Alliance* – that in 1892 consolidated in the People's Party. This political actor broke the two-party political system in the US: *"The rise of the Populist movement and the People's Party represented the mobilization of a particular regionally-based defense of agrarian radicalism against the economic and political power of the North and against the failure of the party system to represent this new force"* (Taggart 2000: 31). This specific popular movement and party was

formed and organized by farmers themselves, but it lacked a clear strong leader – which is today regarded as one of elements of populist politics. (For the seminal works on the *People's Party* and populism, see Goodwyn 1976; Hicks 1931).

The second important political movement understood as populist was the Russian narodnik movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, which began gaining support in the 1860s. This movement was based on a romanticized conception of the peasantry and the countryside. The *narodniki* (народники) *"who went to the people in 1874 lacked a written program or organization. They came from intellectual urban circles and were relatively inexperienced in the business of political work. Moving from village to village, they distributed revolutionary pamphlets and talked indiscriminately to the peasants who crossed their path about the need radically to redistribute land and engage in revolution"* (Taggart 2000: 51). However, in contrast to the populist movement in the US, the promotion of the peasantry was based on the Russian urban elite's idealizing of the 'other,' perceived as pure and uncorrupted.

In the 'West,' the term *narodnichestvo* was translated as 'populism' only in 1912 (it was translated into French as *populisme*), and limited to the Russian experience. However, in Russian, the Western concept is translated as *populizm* (популизм), while *narodnichestvo* remains in use for the specific Russian experience. This has led Fuentes to claim that the *People's Party* was not just the pioneer of populist politics in the US but that *"the People's Party and its political role in the 1890s"* was the *"the founding moment of populism in the world."*

KEY SIGNIFICANCE From the concept's initial use until recent times, in both Shils (1956) and Lipset (1960), there has been a concern about the potentially negative role populism may play in democracies. Mainstream analyses, grouped around Mudde's 'thin-centered ideology' approach, tend to view the relationship between populism and democracy as ambivalent, with populist impetus in favor of the 'popular will' giving preference to minimal or procedural democracy, at the expense of liberal democracy and its rule of law, separation of powers, and minority rights (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2018: 1670). For Mudde (2004: 561) populism is *"inherently hostile to the idea and institutions"* of liberal democracy, while Zakaria (2003) views it as one form of 'illiberal democracy.' From this perspective, although populism can be pro-democracy, it is always against liberal democracy (Mudde 2021: 579). The main normative implication of such approaches is their underlining of the claim that populism is a threat to liberal democracy *in toto* (De Cleen & Glynos 2021: 184). In condemning populism as an assault on democracy, authors reference memories of supposedly well-functioning democracies diminished by the actions of leaders such as Viktor Orbán in Hungary or Donald Trump in the US (Azmanova 2019: 1191).

However, this position's main assumption and shortcoming is that it postulates that democracy has not had other challenges – a slip avoided by radical-democratic approaches that acknowledge the deep-rooted contestations of the principles of modern democracy and focus on how populist projects operate democratically from below (Kempf 2020: 284). This also entails assessing how populist leaders often utilize the discourse of democracy to consolidate their power and build their position, regardless of their ideological standing.

In an even greater contrast, in Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) theory of radical democracy, populism does not at all aim to renounce liberal democracy, *"but on the contrary to deepen and extend it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy."* Hence, rooted in the principle of democratic equivalence, populist mobilizations can also be assessed in terms of their struggle to construct various demands in accordance with the values of freedom, equality and solidarity, in a way that overturns the possibility of oppression and exploitation (Howarth & Roussos 2023: 313). What Laclau and his proponents make clear is that, while some populist movements can indeed be anti-democratic, even totalitarian or fascist, there is a much broader spectrum of potential articulations of populism beyond that suggested by the democracy/anti-democracy split (Laclau 2005: 166).

This means that populism can also be a democratizing response to a crisis of representation (Laclau 1977). Moreover, populist tactics are used by political actors operating within the bounds of democratic institutions and their policy objectives can be beneficial for democratic stability (Bonikowski 2017: 190). Thus, for some authors, populism cannot be studied without acknowledging its democratic potential. For instance, Goodwyn (1978) argues that populism offers a vision of democratic participation more advanced than the existing one: *"far from being a threat to democracy, populism was democracy's zenith."*

In any case, we cannot understand populism outside of the scope of democracy, since it always *"belongs to democratic politics but has an uncomfortable relationship with it"* (Arditi 2015: 102). In this sense, populism is always a moment internal to (liberal) democracy, however much it disrupts or deviates from it. In Hobbesian terms, populism is democracy misliked, *"democracy with foreseeably malignant consequences"* (Dunn 2019: 55). One such observed consequence has been its fusion with **nationalism** and **authoritarianism**. It is precisely its proclivity for authoritarianism that has been repeatedly regarded as characteristic of populism (at least in mainstream approaches). This association can be traced to two supposed elements of populist mobilization: **personalization** and weak institutionalization. The **personalist rule**-style of populist leaders relies on the premise of a strongman, further characterized by nationalistic, xenophobic, anti-establishment and anti-pluralist rhetoric, who connects to their supporters in a quasi-direct way (de Jonquires 2017: 555). So as to maintain their own promise, namely of their personal autonomy and power, personalist populist leaders rely on political tools which propel them in authoritarian direction, depicting themselves as saviors of 'the people' and turning the political arena into a site of struggle between the forces of good



and evil (Weyland 2019: 324). Thus, the assumption is that populism thrives in authoritarian contexts (Caiani & della Porta 2011), or rather, that a tendency to authoritarianism is inherent in populism itself (Weyland 2019: 326). However, here we see a kind of paradox emerging. Research has noted that, in both democratic and authoritarian regimes, populist mobilization can threaten democracy but also constitute the means of democratization (Peters & Pierre 2020). As Koch (2021: 401) explains, since populism essentially addresses issues of representative practices, it may function as a democratic corrective and not exclusively as an authoritarian threat. This also means being careful to contextualize the cases being assessed, making a clear distinction between populism as operative in democratic systems and populism as utilized by authoritarian regimes in their quest for self-legitimation (see **legitimacy**).

LITERATURE As already mentioned, populism is a highly contested concept. Both its historical usage and the theoretical concept of populism have undergone certain changes, but the crucial ambiguities remain. We have already highlighted one of the most common definitions of populism, as a thin **ideology**. However, there are many other definitions of populism. Some authors claim that populism should be seen as a specific political movement (di Tella 1965; Dix 1978), characterized by the *"political mobilization of mass constituencies by personalistic leaders who challenge established elites"* (Roberts 2006: 127). Other scholars argue that populism is a distinct political or communication style, based on a strong connection between the leader and the people (Knight 1998: 227; Jagers & Walgrave 2007: 322). A third group of researchers have defined populism as a discourse. Laclau (1977: 172-173), most notably, argues that populism is a specific antagonistic *"popular-democratic interpellation"* in relation to the dominant ideology (see also Kazin 1995; de la Tore 2000). In contrast to these definitions, Weyland conceptualizes populism as a specific political strategy, used by a strong leader to either gain or exercise political power, usually based on the direct and unmediated support of a larger number of non-institutional and unorganized supporters (Weyland 2001: 14).

After World War II, only two political phenomena could be characterized as populist: *Poujadisme* in France and McCarthyism in the US. 'Poujadism,' named after Pierre Poujade (1920-2003), was a French populist and right-wing movement in the 1950s that mobilized the lower middle classes, shopkeepers, artisans, and peasants, against tax collection and modernization while promoting a corporatist, anti-parliamentarian, and xenophobic ideology. 'McCarthyism' was a period in the 1950s characterized by intense anti-communist suspicion and widespread investigations, led by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (1908-1957), targeting alleged communists and subversives in the US government and other institutions.

Two important theoretical interpretations of populism, connected to these processes, arose in the US. Shils (1960) writes about populism in underdeveloped and developed countries and about the role of intellectuals, while Lipset (1960) addresses the specific rise of McCarthyism as a form of populist politics. Shils even argues that populism is not a historical phenomenon, but rather a part of daily political life. It should be understood as a relatively wide-ranging political phenomenon, occurring every time that there is popular ideological resentment against the existing order and the ruling classes, which are perceived to exercise a monopoly on property, power and culture (Shils 1956: 100-101). Lipset connects the rise of populism to economic hardship, claiming that a common 'social base' was characteristic of those supporting populist politics. These followers were *"declining 'liberal' classes living in declining areas,"* who were discontented with their economic situation and whose *"discontent leads them to accept diverse irrational protest ideologies – regionalism, racism, supernationalism, anticosmopolitanism, McCarthyism, fascism"* (Lipset 1960: 173).

By the 1960s the concept was used mostly to explain specific political developments in Latin America, especially the political movements in Argentina, Mexico, Brazil and Ecuador (Di Tella 1965; Smith 1969). It is important to note that Latin America remains a mandatory reference point for discussions of populism. It is the region that gave birth to modern populism and produced its most paradigmatic cases, *Peronismo* (Argentina) and *Chavismo* (Venezuela). Moreover, Latin America has a rich experience with populist regimes and populism in power, initiating the contemporary populist revival in both theory and practice (de la Torre & Peruzzotti 2018). In addition to Di Tella (1965) and Roberts (1995), who discuss populism in Latin America, Goodwyn (1976) and Kazin (1995) analyze populism in the US, and Laclau (1977) partly focuses on Europe. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, numerous comparative works were also published: Roberts 2006; de la Torre 2010; Weyland 2001; Stavrakakis et al. 2016 (on Latin America); Albertazzi & McDonell 2008; Mény & Surel 2002 (on Europe). However, recently, there has been a shift from studying populism in the 'Third World' to exploring populism within the core of the global capitalist system.

In 1967, Ionescu and Gellner organized a conference at the London School of Economics. The aim of the conference was to engage with the problem of how to define populism. Their edited book (Ionescu & Gellner 1969: 1), stated: *"There can, at present, be no doubt about the importance of populism. But no one is clear what it is."* This volume covers different approaches to populism: as a political movement, an ideology, and a specific political phenomenon.

In 1981, Margaret Canovan identified seven different types of populism. However, she does not list a single common feature in these seven types that would enable comparative research. Canovan (1982) takes a different approach to populism, which she calls 'phenomenological,' one less concerned with explaining what populism is than with describing it. She develops a descriptive typology of populism, in which she points to differences between political and agrarian forms of populism.

In the 2000s, many researchers adopt a compara-

tive focus on populism. They analyze different Latin American cases (Roberts 2006; de la Torre 2010; Weyland 2001); European populism and populists (Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008; Mény & Surel 2002). In the 2010s, several important and influential works appeared: Moffitt 2016; Müller 2016; Van Kessel 2015; Kriesi & Pappas 2015; Rovira Kaltwasser et al. 2017; Wolinetz & Zaslove 2018; Akkerman et al. 2014; Bonikowski & Gidron 2015; Müller et al. 2017; Norris & Inglehart 2019.

With this scholarly boom, the focus has shifted from the supply side to the demand side, that is, to how specific politicians, political parties and movements try to mobilize the 'pure people' against corrupt elites. For specific treatment of how economic hardship and insecurity can move people, disappointed by the established parties, to vote for populists (either right-wing or left-wing), as well as for works that also emphasize the importance of cultural variables in relation to economic crises, see Acemoglu et al. 2013; Becker et al. 2016; Foster & Frieden 2017; di Tella & Rotemberg 2016; Norris & Inglehart 2016; Algan et al. 2017; Rodrik 2017; Guiso et al. 2017.

Although most scholars view populism in relation to reactionary political movements that are inherently a threat to democracy, a different legacy emphasizes the possible emancipatory character of populist politics. This tradition is more in line with the views of early twentieth-century scholars and their assessment of the character of the first US populist movement. Today, this positive view is associated with the discursive approach of (post-)Marxist scholars. For example, Laclau and Mouffe argue that progressive populist movements can bring about necessary correctives to existing capitalist societies, especially given the declining influence of working-class politics (Laclau 1977; 2005; Mouffe 2005; 2018). Hence, Mouffe argues, one should differentiate between right-wing reactionary populism and left-wing emancipatory populist politics: *"it is necessary to establish a political frontier and that left populism, understood as a discursive strategy of construction of the political frontier between 'the people' and 'the oligarchy', constitutes, in the present conjuncture, the type of politics needed to recover and deepen democracy"* (Mouffe 2018: 11).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As with all '-isms,' populism is very difficult to define and measure. Canovan claims that the difficulties of exploring and explaining populism boil down to one common problem: *"Methodological problems arise not so much in recognising similarities among these movements as in trying to decide what is 'populist' about them and what, if anything, they have in common with other past and present political phenomena known by the same label"* (Canovan 2004: 243). Here we list only a few:

Scope One of the crucial problems is that scholars of populism explore and compare different things. They focus on parties, ideologies, politicians, political strategies, modes of representation, styles, etc. In this way, it is impossible to compare 'populism as an ideology' to 'populism as a political movement.' Although some of their features may appear similar, the research object differs.

Context specificity Spanning more than a century, populism has meant completely different things in extremely varied political, historical, economic and cultural contexts. We often fail to understand the different meanings of populism both historically and in specific locations.

Conceptual stretching Claiming that populism has some essential attributes that can be identified in most cases, if not in all, is certainly problematic. It leaves aside many important concepts (like ideology, for example) to get a 'lowest common denominator' definition. Moreover, many features that are presented as 'essential elements' of populism are also listed as essential to other political phenomena, like **nationalism**, religious movements, right-wing extremism and even **fascism**. Hence, vastly different politicians, parties and movements are often labeled 'populist.' Yet what do left populists like Jeremy Corbyn (UK), for example, have in common with Marine Le Pen (France), Donald Trump (US) or Viktor Orbán (Hungary)? Not much besides an oppositional stance toward the *status quo*. Canovan (1981: 6) writes, *"The more flexible the word has become, the more tempted political scientists have been to label 'populist' any movement or outlook that does not fit into any established category."* Consequently, this conceptual stretching, with its claims about essential features, will have to be addressed and tackled in the future: *"To avoid stretching the concept of populism to a point of meaninglessness and get instead a 'general' concept with worldwide applicability requires that we reduce the number of its necessary properties, or qualifying attributes"* (Pappas 2016).

Operationalization Another troubling issue is that concept lacks a negative counterpart. If populism is on the one side, what is its other pole, elitism? As Pappas (2016) argues, and Mudde (2004) and de la Torre (2013) show, elitism is not always the counterpart of populism, because populists can often claim a technocratic regime. Furthermore, if we disregard the construction of the opposite of populism, we still have a problem with degrees on the continuum of more or less populist. This would require the exact operationalization of the concept, which is very difficult, and additionally poses many challenges for comparative study due to the many different definitions.

MEASUREMENT & CLASSIFICATION As mentioned above, one of the pressing issues in populism studies concerns the lack of data measuring voters' populist attitudes and the populism of political actors, as well as of comprehensive classifications accounting for multiple dimensions and a full range of mobilizations of what can be defined as populist. As Meijers and Zaslove (2021) note, researchers mostly employ Large-N studies of populism, relying on classifications based on literature reviews or country expertise, which may result in issues of reliability and validity. In this respect, most works tackle the 'supply side' of political party research; however, in



Box 4.6 Demagogues: From Cleon of Athens to Adolf Hitler

The most powerful modern demagogues are sincere and fanatic believers in their mission as 'saviors' of their people. They are not tortured by skepticism or self-doubt. This very defect in self-valuation makes them the heroes of the masses who are harrassed by uncertainty. The real demagogue gives them faith and security because he is so sure of himself. He regards himself as God-sent, almost God-like.
– Sigmund Neumann (1938)

Demagogue (from the Greek δημαγωγός – 'leader of the populace') as a term has shifted in meaning to that of 'rabble-rouser.' It is an old term used in political science, though it foremost carries a negative connotation today. Historically, in ancient Greece, it described charismatic leaders who appealed to the emotions and prejudices of the masses, often manipulating public sentiment for their gain. Over time, the term has evolved to refer to political leaders who use inflammatory rhetoric, fear-mongering, and divisive tactics to gain and maintain power. (Gustainis 1990)

The term is inherently linked to democracy and its subversion. Patricia Roberts-Miller (2005) explains that for democracy to function, people must engage in conversation. For it to function well, that conversation must be of high quality. In other words, a fundamental principle of democracy is that the public's ability to make sound decisions largely depends on the quality of public discourse. The more the public can collectively debate issues of shared concern, the closer society comes to achieving what political theorists refer to as 'deliberative democracy.' The aim of such discourse is not merely to impose one's will or to coerce others through bargaining or threats but rather to engage in a discussion where citizens and their representatives move beyond self-interest and narrow perspectives to reflect on the general interest or common good.

In this setting, a demagogue is typically seen as a leader who undermines democratic institutions by stoking fear, hatred, and division among different social groups. They often present themselves as champions of the people while exploiting popular anxieties or grievances. Demagogues are known for their ability to manipulate public opinion through emotional appeals rather than rational argumentation, routinely falling back on an 'us vs. them' dynamic that exacerbates social and political polarization: **racism**, **ultra-nationalism**, **fascism**.

The concept of demagoguery differs from **populism** because the former is narrower and subscribes to a politician's oratory skills as a source of power (**charismatic rule**), while the latter is broader, touching upon the anti-establishment sentiments and the claim to 'represent the people.'

Oral skills are one thing, but beliefs seem to matter more, as clearly shown by Donald Trump in both election campaigns: Hahl et al. (2018) find that the 'lying demagogue' (someone who deliberately tells lies and appeals to non-normative private prejudices) can still attract authentic appeal by those electoral segments of the populace if these are convinced that the political system is flawed or illegitimate.

The emergence of populism, in general, has also renewed interest in the study of demagoguery and its exact dynamics: Roberts-Miller 2005; Lawler McDonough 2018; Petersen 2020. For Athenian examples (Finley 2013); for American examples, see: Luthin (1951).

Throughout history, demagogues have risen to power by exploiting popular emotions and undermining democratic norms. One of the earliest examples is Cleon of Athens (died in 422 BCE), a general who gained influence during the Peloponnesian War by attacking the aristocracy and advocating extreme measures, such as the brutal punishment of the Mytilenean people, nearly derailing Athenian democracy.

In modern times, Adolf Hitler stands as one of the most infamous demagogues, using antisemitic scapegoating and ultra-nationalist fervor to consolidate power in Nazi Germany, leading to catastrophic consequences during World War II. Similarly, Benito Mussolini employed populist rhetoric and authoritarian tactics to present himself as Italy's savior while dismantling democratic institutions and establishing his fascist regime.

In the US, Huey Long, a Louisiana governor and senator, used his charisma and promises of wealth redistribution under the slogan 'Every Man a King' to amass power, all while engaging in corrupt practices and silencing opposition. During the Cold War, Joseph McCarthy capitalized on anti-communist hysteria to gain political influence through unsubstantiated accusations and personal attacks. Meanwhile, Father Charles Coughlin, a Catholic priest and radio personality in the 1930s, built a large following by promoting antisemitic conspiracy theories and criticizing both capitalism and communism.

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recent years, an increasing number of case studies have addressed the 'demand side.' In the latter, one of the most widely employed instruments to measure voters' populist attitudes is a scale proposed by Akkerman et al. (2014), which operationalizes three elements (populism, pluralism and elitism) through measurement of corresponding attitudes and voting preferences. Assessing the 'supply side' of populism is more diverse in terms of methodology and in the choice of attributes and dimensions to be measured. Authors employ everything from content analyses (speeches of political leaders, press releases, party literature) to computer-based studies of party manifestos and even machine learning coding procedures (Olivas Osuna & Rama 2022). Frequently observed categories include the Manichean (absolutist, black-and-white) worldview, people-centrism, anti-elitism, the 'will of the people,' as well as support for conservative or progressive values, environmental issues and migration. Authors also rely on projects such as the 2014 *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* or *Global Party Survey* run by Pippa Norris, which rest on expert surveys measuring the degree of populism in political parties and leaders. Another useful tool is the *PopuList* project, organized by several comparativists working on populism (including Matthijs Rooduijn, Andrea Pirro, Stijn van Kessel and Cas Mudde), which offers a large database of populist parties in Europe classified into categories of populist, far-right, far-left, and Eurosceptic.

One of the earliest classification attempts was by Canovan (1981), who develops seven categories of populism, including three varieties of 'agrarian' populism – (i) farmers' radicalism (e.g. the US *People's Party*), (ii) peasant movements, and (iii) intellectual agrarian socialism (e.g. *narodnichestvo*) – and four varieties of 'urban' populism: (iv) populist **dictatorship**, (v) populist **democracy**, (vi) reactionary populism, and (vii) politician's populism.

The initial and most common classification of populism, however, is the one that establishes it along partisan lines: the literature regularly speaks of left-wing and right-wing populism. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2013) extend this classification by dividing the concept into categories of inclusionary and exclusionary populism, with left-wing populism subscribing to the former, and right-wing populism to the latter. Further classifications have been developed over the years and new categories continue to emerge. For instance, Hall (1978) coins the term 'authoritarian populism' to analyze Margaret Thatcher's rule in Britain. McGuigan (1992) writes of 'cultural populism' in his investigation of the role populists play in popular culture. Bickerton and Accetti (2021) argue for 'technopopulism' as a new category of political logic hinging on the traditional struggle between left and right. The DEMOS project (2020) analyzes four categories of populism in Europe: (a) radical left-wing, (b) radical right-wing, (c) illiberal, and (d) anti-establishment or 'empty populism.' In the literature, most other classifications follow similar, lines echoing nuances of populist mobilization along the left-right axis.

Although it often seems only a buzzword to discredit political opponents, populism is clearly a real phenomenon, although not easily definable or comparable. However, in order to increase explanatory power and analytical validity, more attention needs to be paid to resolving the methodological and empirical contradictions of the concept. To gain clarity, more empirical evidence and a definition of populism would be required before undertaking empirical research. However, it is very difficult to achieve coherence when some authors understand populism as a corrective to liberal democracy, and others see it as a great threat to it. Greater clarity about populism would be gained by using clear adjectives like 'left-wing' and 'right-wing,' which would greatly assist in achieving methodological and epistemological clarity, but would not resolve the problem of conceptual stretching. One should be careful not to conflate more common political phenomena: social-democratic politics with left-wing populism, for example, or xenophobic right-wing extremism with right-wing populism. If populism is simply everything not aligned with the mainstream liberal *status quo*, then as a concept it has very little value.

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Racism

Racism is not easy to define (...) Short, tight definitions mislead (...) Although racism is a multidimensional phenomenon, it has suffered from formulaic and clichéd thinking from all sides of the political spectrum.
– Ali Rattansi

Racism is a political tool of colonialism and imperialism (...)
– bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins)

Racism is like a Cadillac; they make a new model every year.
– Malcolm X

Racism is dominantly understood as an inherently anti-democratic **ideology** that considers humanity as divided into superior and inferior races. According to some scholars, the world was heading towards the 'end of history' or a general hegemony of post-racial national and international liberal regime(s) (Bonilla-Silva 2010). However, the rise of far-right political forces since the 2010s, boosted by societal popularity, electoral success and their impact on public policy relied upon the utilization of virulent and explicitly racist discourses. For too long these were deemed to be politically irrelevant, even as they have severely complicated a whiggish (teleological) history of the present. However, these processes took place on a global scale and can be observed in varied liberal-democratic, authoritarian and hybrid political regimes; they transcend simple geopolitical and geo-economical divisions.

At the same time, the rise of far-right political forces has also reinvigorated anti-racist movements (e.g. Black Lives Matter). These processes nevertheless demonstrated the multidimensionality, complexity, heterogeneity, and varied logics of racism. They showed that, though racism has local peculiarities concerning racial categorizations and hierarchies, it is universally present, and that racisms in specific contexts share specific commonalities. These interrelated processes demonstrate the fundamental ambivalence of racism in modern societies as well as its persistence, despite long-standing national and international anti-racist policies. Recent political changes have also demonstrated that racisms only become visible (to mostly unaffected majorities) in times of crisis, when they erupt in intense and extreme displays. Since our present and future will be characterized by the intensification of multiple crises, we can expect that racism will continue to be relevant, not only as a socio-political phenomenon, but also as a field of study.

There is a fundamental lacuna in mainstream analyses and theories of racism. They generally fail to address and reflect on racism's historical and contemporary systemic role in the development, transformation and functioning of modern politico-economic regimes. Similarly, studies of political regimes hardly ever address racism as a relevant and crucial dimension of a regime's characteristics, development and functioning. For a critique and overview of mainstream research, see Bonilla-Silva (1997), Goldberg (2004), Guillaumin (1995) and McWhorter (2009).

DEFINITION Framing racism can never be understood as a neutral undertaking. It is inextricably tied to one's understanding of the broader social, political and economic order, and connected to a specific vision of society and politics (Bonilla-Silva 2015). Many scholars regard racism as an **ideology**, a set of beliefs, a dogma, or a doctrine that leads individuals to develop negative attitudes towards an entire group of people, and this can potentially incite individuals



and groups to specific racist practices of exclusion and discrimination against racial minorities. These scholars differ about its rationality, its function in modern societies and its structural underpinnings. The liberal American thinker Ashley Montagu (1945) provides one of the most influential definitions of racism. He defines it as a modern murderous irrational doctrine, a collective pathology built upon a modern race myth (the existence of naturally distinct racial groups), whose purpose is to abolish democratic politics. According to Montagu, racism runs contrary to all the central elements of **democracy** (rights, freedoms, accountability, etc.), goes against Western moral standards and is antithetical to the 'natural' egalitarian tendencies of capitalism and **nationalism**. The liberal sociologist Pierre Van den Berghe (1967) defines racism as any set of beliefs that organic, genetically transmitted differences between human groups are intrinsically linked to the presence or absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics. Consequently, these differences are considered a legitimate basis for systemic discrimination between groups socially defined as races.

Marxist, postcolonial and structural understandings of racism see it as a rational, and not merely rationalizing and legitimizing, ideology. They see it as a system or structure tied to capitalist accumulation and to modern forms of wielding power over and organizing, ruling, and regulating populations. One of the most comprehensive definitions is provided by the pioneer of the Marxist analysis of racism, Oliver Cox (1959), who influenced the understanding of later Marxists (Carmichael & Hamilton 1967; Fields & Fields 2022; Haider 2018; Hall 1996; Miles 1993; Reed & Chowkwanyun 2011). Cox sees racism as a single complex modern phenomenon, which originated in the European context and was later introduced into practically all human societies via colonialism and the establishment of the global capitalist system. It is a complex system developed by the bourgeoisie, a structure that includes ideology, material practices and institutions and is constitutively connected with modern social formation. This complex system constantly dehumanizes and rationalizes and legitimizes the exploitation, subjugation, enslavement, expropriation, and extermination of populations deemed racially inferior, while ensuring the continuous division of the working classes. Its genesis and development are inextricably tied to the development of the modern order in all its interrelated spheres and dimensions, running through the capitalist mode of production, the modern colonial project (**colonial states**) based on colonial genocide and the slave system, modern scientific thinking, religious transformations, and modern political forms, as well as through the nation-state and national ideologies and identities.

Franz Fanon (2021), the father of the postcolonial tradition, offers another similarly comprehensive, but distinct, definition; although it is derived from colonial experience, it is adaptable to a wider context. He defines racism as a totalizing system intrinsic to capitalist and colonial relations. As a system, it affects and is perpetuated through political and economic structures and institutions, practices and ideologies, as well as through the process that constitutes the colonized (as racially inferior) and the colonizer (as racially superior) at the level of the body and the psyche. This produces a constant neurosis in both. Hence racism includes economic exploitation, the denial (or limitation) of political rights for the subjugated (racially inferior), and the systematic production of cultural representations (language, books, films, scientific discourses, and popular culture) that belittles the colonized (those deemed racially inferior).

Structural/systemic understandings define racism as constitutive of the social formation, as ultimately a non-individual, historically dynamic phenomenon, not predicated or dependent on irrational thinking or overt behavior, and not a remnant of a less enlightened past. Scholars in this tradition (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Feagin 2010; Goldberg 2004; Omi & Winant 1994) draw a distinction between racism as an extreme ideology, on the one hand, and a generalized modern racial national and international order organized, regulated, and reproduced through the continuous racialization of individuals (and populations) into specific categories (naturalized race thinking), on the other. For instance, Alana Lentin (2020) defines racism as beliefs, attitudes, ideas, and morals built on an understanding of the world as ordered into discrete races, even as she stresses that racism's condition of possibility is a racialized assemblage in the form of discourses, practices, desires, infrastructures, languages, technologies, sciences, economies, dreams, and cultural artifacts that together ensure the maintenance of political structures and institutions in ways that bar 'non-white subjects' from being considered fully human. These racialized assemblages are not uniform or static but historically and geopolitically dynamic. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2010) emphasizes, there is a wide variety of historical and contemporary racialized systems that differ substantially concerning their level of racialization. The more a system is geared towards substantial differentiation of the life-chances of individuals, as ascribed members of specific racial groups, the more they are racialized, and explicitly racist ideas and practices are more prevalent and extreme. Although all historically racialized systems are hierarchical, there are substantial differences in the way that racial hierarchies are established, inscribed, policed, and perpetuated.

SEE ALSO This entry connects with **ethnic politics**; together, the two contain important, salient structural variables that **political regimes** use to formulate their **ideology** and worldview, driven by their quest for **legitimacy**, as well as providing their justification for **repression**. Almost always, racial discrimination coincides with **nationalism**, with an 'in-group' constructed around 'a people' and 'their state' – extreme versions like **fascism** or **ultra-nationalism** turn racism into the ordering principle of their **ideocracies**.

ORIGIN The origin of the term 'racism' is inextricably connected with the rise of **Nazism** in Germany

and the rebuttal of Nazi racist ideology. We first encounter it in the works of the German Jewish sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1933; 1934) to describe and criticize the Nazi racist ideology and belief that humans can be divided into races, and that there are superior and inferior races. But American scholars played a central role in the early study of racism. The American historian Jacques Barzun (1937) and the anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1940; 1945) broadened the initial focus on antisemitism to include reflection on anti-black and anti-indigenous racism(s). The central coordinates of the research field were from the outset built on the notion of racism as a specific ideology or doctrine, supported by the scientifically false conception that, biologically, there exist human races which can be clearly defined and hierarchically ordered. This tendency gained strength in the aftermath of the Word War II and the greater institutionalization of racism research, as an academic field, in connection with national and global institutionalizations of anti-racist policies that were intended to prevent future genocides (see Box 1.19) – like the fascist racist genocides of WW II – through education and the demystification of racist ideology. The work of Ashley Montagu (1945) can be considered as central in setting the foundational coordinates for the future academic study of racism. This process of academic and policy institutionalization was not without controversy, some critics considering it an instrument to distance Western imperial regimes from the Nazi regime (see Cox 1945).

There is little scholarly disagreement regarding the modern origins of the phenomenon of racism. However, substantial disagreement exists concerning exactly when, where, why and how it appeared, and how it developed, transformed, and consolidated. Some locate its beginning in the early modern period, in the context of the Iberian Peninsula and the first modern European colonial projects (Blackburn 1998; Cox 1945). Others place it in the (early) Enlightenment period in France and England (Hall 1995), in the nineteenth century, even the late nineteenth century (US and Western Europe) (Arendt 1944; Montagu 1945). Some see it as inextricably connected with modern colonial occupation, genocide and expropriation; or with modern slavery, the slave trade and a slave economy; or with the genesis of the modern state, modern **nationalism**, modern capitalist systems, modern scientific thinking (specifically evolution theory), modern representative political institutions, modern disciplinary, punitive institutions and modern **bureaucracies**, modern immigration policies, modern health, and medical policies, modern urbanism and transportation, modern security and policing institutions, and modern mass media (pamphlets, books, newspapers, etc.) (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991; Fields 1990; Fredrickson 2002; Guillaumin 1995; Williams 1944). There is also wide disagreement concerning the role it played in modern societies, where it appeared and what kind of relationship it had with central socio-political, economic, cultural, and other societal structures and institutions at the local and regional/global level. There are disputes over its (non)centrality for the (development and functioning of) modern order and whether it is constitutive of modern structures and institutions, policies and practices, ideologies, and beliefs – an inherent, indivisible part of them – or rather has an accidental, historically contingent, ambivalent, non-constitutive relation to them, one easily abolished as its utility for elites, power structures, societal stability, cohesion and the reproduction of the social formation(s) was either limited and not crucial or else useful solely in a more irrational past (see Stoler 1997).

LITERATURE The field of racism(s) research is vast. There are numerous approaches (A-D) associated to a diverse range of fundamental understandings of the phenomenon. Not only are there disputes between various approaches, but even within individual approaches many central debates are unresolved. Research in the liberal tradition can still be considered the dominant framework for analyzing and understanding racism in formal anti-racist policies. The conceptualization of racism(s) developed in the works of the pioneers of the liberal approach (e.g. Montagu 1945) still form the foundation for contemporary liberal understandings of racism that frame it as a set of beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes, an **ideology**, a doctrine that is irrational, anti-scientific, anti-liberal, anti-democratic and antithetical to the presupposed inherently egalitarian tendencies of capitalism and **nationalism**, one held by certain fringe groups made up of irrational, uneducated, unenlightened individuals, and groups (the racists) or which characterizes various forms of authoritarian states.

The contemporary main developments of the liberal tradition (A) can be traced to the 1980s and 1990s, when today's most salient liberal approaches were developed, namely (I) 'critical race theory,' (II) 'intersectionality,' and (III) 'privilege theory.'

Privilege theory (III) was developed by Peggy McIntosh (1990) and based on the concepts of white and male privilege. It addresses the ways that whites and males (in the US) benefited from their position in racial and gender hierarchies, both in the past and the present. This approach is based on introspection and personal change (via shame and guilt) of the privileged subject. Collective action to radically change the system is a non-issue. Privilege theory is one of the cornerstones of modern corporate diversity training and mainstream anti-racist education.

Critical race theory (CRT) (I), the best-known liberal approach, was first popularized in the 1990s but especially in the twenty-first century. It was developed by the legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (2010). It presupposes that US political, legal, and economic institutions are formally non-racist, diverse, and inclusive; and that equality can be achieved via the fight for formal rights and by the re-education of whites. Racism is understood as a psychological deficiency of whites. Anti-black ideas or the symbolic subordination of blacks, denies them social and political equality, which in turn creates material disadvantages or material subordination. The CRT framework also popularized the term 'white supremacy' to conceptualize this symbolic



and material subordination of black (and brown) people in a white-centered system (Delgado & Stefancic 1997).

Crenshaw (2017) was also central in the popularization of intersectionality (II). She was the first to use the term to describe employment experiences specific to black women, indicating that that race and gender interact in multiple ways that contribute to the multidimensional exclusion, the marginalization and disempowerment of those at the bottom of intersecting racial and gender hierarchies. Other scholars later extended the notion to include other forms of discrimination and oppression in other spheres of life. Today, intersectionality today covers a very heterogeneous set of approaches, some differing substantially from each other, and some retaining their radical, Marxist, post-structural, postcolonial roots.

The Marxist approaches (B) to the study of racisms began in a systematic manner in the 1930s and 1940s when Eric Williams (1944) and Oliver Cox (1945) published their foundational works, systematically demonstrating the role that race played in the constitution of the modern capitalist order, as an organizing principle and structure as well as a rationalizing and legitimizing ideology. Later (neo-) Marxist thinking further developed the crucial insights of these pioneers in complex and contested ways. Substantial theoretical-methodological and ontological disagreements concerning the nature of racism and its relationship to the modern capitalist social formation and its general (re)production persist. There is general recognition of the relevance of colonialism, modern slavery and rationalizing racist ideology and practices in the genesis of a modern capitalist global order defined by nation-states. But there is also disagreement concerning the nature of this relevance. Some (Blackburn 1997) argue that it was foundational and necessary; others argue that, though it was not foundational for the capitalist logic of accumulation, racism was historically necessary (Reed 2002). Some (Wood 2002) tie it exclusively to the pre-capitalist process of primitive accumulation, characterized by violence, dispossession, occupation, enslavement, genocide; others situate it firmly in the (re)production of the capitalist societal formation, which reproduces past violence via internal colonial racist material and ideological structures (Carmichael & Hamilton 1967). Some understand it as inextricably linked to the genesis and consolidation of nationalism as the central ideology of the capitalist nation state (Balibar & Wallerstein 1991). Many (Haider 2018; Reed & Chowkwanyun 2011) stress the primacy of class and class antagonism in the functioning of the capitalist system over categories such as race and racist ideologies. Others do not see the relationship as one of primacy and subordination, but as mutually constitutive and central to the general reproduction of the capitalist social formation (Kundnani 2014).

Dissatisfied Marxist activists who sought to transcend class reductionism were the first to developed an intersectional approach (III). The black radical feminist Combahee River collective and the Black Panther activist and Marxist scholar Angela Davis (1981) were the first to systematically theorize intersectional oppression and exploitation, and argue for the simultaneous critique of capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy, which they understood as mutually constitutive and reinforcing structures that must be abolished to attain real equality and freedom.

Scholars working in the systemic/structural tradition (C) demonstrate the constitutive nature of racism in the modern socio-political and economic order, functioning either at the level of specific nation states – their political, legal, and economic systems, and political ideologies (Feagin 2010) – or in the regional transatlantic context (Gilroy 1993), or at the global level of the international system (Grovogui 1996). Other scholars focus on the changing nature of specific racial systems. Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation framework, which understands these changes as the result of the specific racial/racist project of specific political forces, was and continues to be very influential. Others stress the simultaneous and dynamic relation between the fluidity of and changes in the racial/racist system and the relative stability of asymmetrical power relations, practices, and structures, identifying specific substantial local and global changes over time. Colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2010), new racism (Barker 1982) and neo-racism (Hall 1996) were introduced to designate a novel articulation of racism in the context of substantial societal changes that perceptibly delegitimized overt, biologically conceived racist hierarchies. Others (Feagin 2010) stress the relative stability of specifically racially ordered systems regarding the dominant and subjugated groups.

Foucauldian frameworks (D) (McWhorter 2009) specifically stress the productive relations between the operation of power (practices, discourses), the historical establishment of racial categories, and the historical and contemporary relevance of racism for the modern functioning of state/societal power at the local nation-state level or the level of the international system, dividing populations into the normal and abnormal, nurturing and developing the normal and excluding, disciplining and regulating the abnormal. Many scholars working in structural and postcolonial frameworks focus on the discursive dimension of the development, transformation, fluidity, and stability of racisms: the development of ideas, notions, beliefs concerning race(s), their nature, characteristics, differential capabilities, accompanying concepts and notions (Curtin 1964; Ignatiev 1995; Mudimbe 1988; Said 1978; Vukovich 2013).

These insights were utilized and expanded in further studies that addressed the developments and characteristics of racist systems in various socio-political contexts and societal spheres, ranging from formal politics, political movements (far-right), (neo-)fascist movements, legal systems, labor markets and employment, wealth distribution, general economic systems (racial capitalism), urbanization (segregation practices and policies), scientific theories, practices and institutions (essentializations), migration policies and security policies and anti-ter-

rorist policies, developmental policies, popular culture, newspapers and various online content, social media discourses and practices, the racist/racial nature of contemporary digital technologies and their development and applications (Kundnani 2014; Lentin 2020; Lipsitz 2011; Traverso 2019).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Racism continues to function as a critical tool for the survival of authoritarian regimes, bolstering their **legitimacy**, justifying **repression**, and facilitating **co-optation** (creating exclusive **patronage** networks). In **ideocracies** (especially in **totalitarianism** and **fascism**), the creation of a common enemy or scapegoat (see **populism**) can unite a segment of the population against perceived threats, thereby consolidating power over this group – see Box 4.7 on Apartheid. Historical narratives and national identity are often manipulated to glorify the race of the 'nation' while demonizing minorities, and this helps to legitimize the ruling elites' rule and policies.

Repression of minority groups and rival elites is another way that racism supports authoritarian regimes. Because of their functional nature (from the viewpoint of the regime), the literature refers to such policies as **ethnic politics** (sometimes **clan politics**). In **coup-proofing**, leaders protect themselves against violent ousters through 'ethnic stacking' and (ethnic) **purges** of state institutions, which they may justify on racist grounds.

Racist ideologies provide a justification for state violence and legal discrimination, making it easier for a regime to maintain control and suppress dissent. Laws and policies that institutionalize racial discrimination limit the rights and freedoms of (minority) groups, ensuring they remain marginalized and less able to challenge a regime's authority.

Racism also informs the **foreign policy** of authoritarian regimes. Racism can lead to aggressive actions to protect the interests of the regime's in-group, extend regime ties to the diaspora abroad (**linkage & leverage theory**), form alliances with states that share similar racist ideologies, and use racist **propaganda** to justify their actions on the international stage. **Colonial legacies** similarly offer anti-colonial discourses that can be instrumentalized by the ruling elites for geopolitical and geostrategic purposes, contributing to regime **longevity, stability & resilience** by way of alliance building in the international system.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The study of racism perennially runs against the ambivalent nature of present national and global systems, which simultaneously acknowledge the existence of racism (anti-racist policies) and relativize their importance outside select racialized systems (e.g. Nazi Germany, segregation in the US South, the Apartheid regime in South Africa) and events (e.g. 'race' riots, civil rights movements, Black Lives Matter protests). Despite numerous studies that demonstrate the centrality of racism in the development of modern societies, racism is still seen as non-central to the development of fundamental theoretical frameworks and the normative and empirical study of societies, their processes, structures, institutions, and relations.

Another central methodological issue is Anglo-American dominance of the field, which affects theoretical reflection and empirical studies. The US context is established as paradigmatic. Due to the hegemonic position of the US in the academic sphere, it exercises a great influence on how racism is conceptualized and analyzed around the globe. This has the effect of flattening the substantial differences between racialized orders in various parts of the world, and poses an obstacle to developing and implementing a more nuanced, comprehensive framework attuned to local specificities (see Stoler 1997).

A further central issue concerns the initial understanding of racism (ideological/symbolic vs. material/structural/systemic), its nature (aberration, irrationality vs. rational, modern), its history, development and transformation (linear vs. dynamic development), its historical and contemporary relations (the constitutive and strategic function it has within modern orders) that substantially affect the ways that the research is carried out (e.g. discourse analysis vs. analysis of political economy), its scope (e.g. focusing on racist individuals or groups) and potential insights (the relevance of fringe phenomena vs. its fundamental relevance for politics, economy and society).

A central methodological issue also relates to what the fundamental unit of study of the phenomenon of racism should be. There is a sharp divergence between approaches. Some individualize racism, others attribute it to specific groups, and other still perceive it as societal phenomenon tied to discourses, structures, institutions, practices, and identities. When researching racism as a social phenomenon, there is disagreement concerning the scope of the object of analysis. Although the predominant focus is specifically on the nation-state, competing epistemological currents either stress the importance of an initial comparative focus, or else emphasize the always-already relational nature of racism in its historical development and its contemporary nature and operation, acknowledging the central role of the nation-state yet stressing racism's constitutive relational nature both locally and globally (Gilroy 1993; Goldberg 2004; Stoler 1997).

The weak connection between theories of racism and the study of comparative authoritarianism can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, each has mostly developed its conceptual framework in isolation. Racism is traditionally studied within the context of social psychology and sociology, focusing on prejudice, privilege, discrimination, and systemic inequality; whereas **authoritarianism** has been analyzed primarily through **comparative politics** and **political regime** theory, emphasizing elite control and political repression. This disciplinary separation has hindered the integration of the two fields, despite their overlapping dynamics and the importance of racism in constructing a political **ideology** that serves a regime.

Secondly, the role of racism has been historical



Box 4.7 Apartheid – The Unique South African Cold War Racist Regime

The policy of separate development is merely to ensure there are no grounds for envy or envy-creation.
– Hendrik F. Verwoerd, the 'architect' of Apartheid, Speech in Parliament (1958)

Apartheid was a specific political, economic, and cultural regime that was established in South Africa (SA) in the second half of the twentieth century. It was a system of total racial domination by the white minority, the Afrikaners, over the Black majority, implemented and perpetuated through formal racial segregation that was built on the denial of citizenship to the Black majority. It involved the whole system of access to work, access to land and the control of all movement of the black South Africans and was underwritten by systemic violence against the oppressed Black majority. It was formally established by the *Nasionale Party* (National Party – NP), which was the major political power among the white South Africans that held power between 1948-1994.

The movement had its roots in the short period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when South Africa was a part of the British Empire. The Apartheid regime is a generalization of key features of the early system of segregation that was similar to other settler colonies established by the British Empire (e.g., the USA, Canada, and Australia). The latter was based on the migrant labor system under which Black people, who worked in the mines and represented the core of the SA economy, were required to return to their place of origin in the rural areas. Apartheid was a variation of racial capitalism and served the interests of the dominant section of capital in SA (the mining and gold industry). Internal and external economic and political crises and factors led to its downfall in 1994.

The Apartheid regime was historically unique as it contradicted both the mainstream liberal modernization and Marxist theories of the development of states and economies. Contrary to the prevalent theories where capitalist social modernization through the development of market forces should lead to the gradual abolishment of formal racist segregation, this did not happen in SA. Similarly, the regime was also an outlier when compared to the conventional historical developmental trajectories of modern states, as it actually strengthened formal segregation instead of developing more sophisticated and informal practices by adapting its **ideology** of discrimination. With the post-independence development of the white-ruled SA and its industrial development, racial segregation became even more pronounced and central to the functioning and legitimacy of the regime.

Despite being an outlier, the regime's ideology was in line with far-right and right-wing ideologies in the Anglo-American and broader Western context. This ideology was built on inextricably interconnected elements such as white supremacy, white civilizing mission, anti-Black **racism**, eugenic ideas of racial purity and the fear of (biological, cultural, social and political) 'contamination' as well of Black retribution and violence (i.e., the 'Black danger' or 'Swart gevaar'), and virulent anti-communism and anti-socialism ('red danger' or 'Rooi gevaar') seen as crucial for upholding the 'natural' socio-political hierarchies. The ideology was a direct continuation of nineteenth-century Western ideologies when racism and anti-communism/socialism became firmly interrelated, and anti-racist ideas and movements were conflated with the communist/socialist danger of overturning the societal order (**revolution**).

On the other hand, its decades-long survival cannot be understood outside the Cold War framework of alliances and support by the West, specifically European colonial powers such as Portugal. Although the West supported SA as a crucial actor in their (global) struggle against anti-colonial uprisings and/or communist insurrections, this support was ambivalent as it clashed with their promoted ideological principles of liberal **democracy** and **human rights** and encountered global and national condemnation by progressive civil society forces. The stability of the Apartheid regime was also built on strong alliances with friendly neighboring regimes. It collaborated with the Portuguese colonial administrations in Angola and Mozambique and had established an alliance with its sister white supremacist regime in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) until the latter's fall in 1979. The regime was also engaged in continuous military operations and wars (e.g., The South African Border War 1966-1990) against various states and independence movements in Southern Africa (Angola, Namibia, Zambia) that it considered as a danger to its stability and power. The regime strived to legitimize these brutal operations as part of its ongoing containment of **Communism** and regional Soviet-Cuban expansionism. It was also directly engaged and/or supported other struggles of (former) colonialist powers against the newly independent postcolonial regimes. For instance, in Congo, along with the former colonial power (Belgium), SA supported the short-lived but important secessionist State of Katanga, a breakaway province of the newly independent Republic of the Congo (later renamed Zaire and DRC). This precipitated the fall (and **assassination**) of its first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba (Box 5.1), one of the heroes of African independence struggles.

The Apartheid regime began to unravel in the late 1980s when an internal economic crisis precipitated the intensification of the political opposition to the Apartheid organized by the *African National Congress* (ANC) led by Nelson Mandela and other prominent leaders. This subsequent political crisis intensified once the West cut support for the regime. The end of the Cold War removed the West's strategic need to support the racist, anti-communist Apartheid regime. In combination with growing internal and external pressure the regime had crumbled by 1994.

From the point of view of the study of dictatorships, the Apartheid regime and its ideology are relevant as a specific historical form of a racist settler-colonial capitalist regime that managed to survive far longer than

similar regimes due to specific geopolitical and internal politico-economic conditions (cf. **gatekeeping**). Its study is also relevant for analyzing the long shadow of past **authoritarian legacies** on present political systems. Even 30 years after its demise, its imprint still has a negative effect on the present nominally liberal-democratic South African political system.

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underestimated in authoritarian regimes. For much of the twentieth century, the study of authoritarianism was dominated by analyses of **fascism** and **totalitarianism**, which, while acknowledging racial ideologies, did not systematically integrate them into broader theories of authoritarianism. By the 1990s, ideology (as a whole) seemed to become less salient and other **classifications & typologies** of political regimes became more mainstream. The comparative intersections of racism and political regime types remain understudied.

Lastly, empirical challenges and methodological issues have contributed to this weak connection. The complexity of measuring and comparing racism across different authoritarian regimes, coupled with the difficulty of accessing reliable data from closed or repressive states (**censorship**), limits comprehensive studies. Additionally, the focus on macro-level analyses of authoritarian regimes often overlooks the micro-level manifestations of racism, like everyday discrimination and social intolerance, which are crucial to understanding the full impact of racism in the functioning of these regimes.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS Across specific geopolitical contexts, there are similarities and differences between racisms, their development, consolidation and key transformations; the central racial categories and hierarchies; the discourses, practices, structures. Racial orders have a longer period of development in (post-)colonial geopolitical contexts than in contexts that never experienced colonization, like China, or in non-Western imperial contexts like Japan – see **colonial legacies**. Despite the late start in the latter, their racialized orders and racisms are in many ways similar to those developed in the West, though with specific modifications adapted to local contexts (e.g. 'superior' Han vs. 'inferior' Uyghurs; 'superior' Japanese vs. 'inferior' Ainu and Koreans), even as they incorporate some elements of Western imperial racisms relatively unchanged (Dikötter 1997; Shih 2013; Zhu 2021). Anti-black racism drawn from Western colonial and imperial discourses was and is present in China and Japan, as well as other Eurasian states (e.g. Russia), that did not participate in the modern slave system or colonize the African continent (Cheng 2011; Rainbow 2019) – see **imperial legacies**.

Antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism, which draws from Western racist discourses, can also be found in various contexts. These dimensions of local racism have a more direct strategic function tied to the specific political, economic, and societal needs of a particular context, and to the specific global migration, security, economic and identity politics of Western liberal regimes (Kundnani 2014). Antisemitism in Arab and Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East, plays a strategic function in the workings of these politico-economic regimes (**foreign policy**), being utilized in their power struggle with Israel and to consolidate their internal cohesion and stability. Anti-Muslim racism has a central strategic function in the workings of the states of Israel, China and India, and their general societal orders, in their striving for cohesion, stability and capital accumulation (El-Haj 2010; Jaffrelot 2005; Qian 2021; Webman 2010).

The development of a local variation of the racialized order is predicated on the type and time of the connection between the local context and the Western-dominated capitalist inter-imperial global system (Genovese 1969). However, the particularities of local racisms are also tied to local relations of power pertinent to these orders (van den Berghe 1967). There is also a substantial difference between racisms developed in the context of settler-colonial regimes (the US, Canada, Australia, Apartheid South Africa – see Box 4.7) and those in other geopolitical contexts. The racialized orders of the former have a brutal genocidal history, which specifically affects their contemporary societal hierarchies, their relations of power, the distribution of wealth and the health of specific populations (Wolf 1982). Despite the relational nature of different types of racism and their present universality, the racist discourses, practices, hierarchies and structures and institutions developed by the Western imperial powers still have a disproportionate global effect. These different forms of racism continue to be perpetuated in a Western-dominated global capitalist and inter-state system, and in various transnational political, economic, finance and cultural institutions (Mignolo 2000).



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Religions of the World & Statecraft

Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual life.
– the Buddha

Worship is a way of seeing the world in the light of God.
– Abraham Joshua Heschel, Polish-American Jewish theologian

As major world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all propose different prescriptions for state organization, even as they share common themes of ethical leadership and the welfare of the people. Their differences lie in the basis of authority (see **traditional rule**) and the **legitimacy** they bestow on the political order, the conduct prescribed to rulers and their subjects, the extent of political engagement and influence of religious institutions, their historical evolution, and their view of the ideal society or state, reflecting their unique religious and cultural contexts.

All religions urge ethical leadership as a moral duty to ensure the wellbeing of and justice for the populace. Confucianism and Buddhism focus on ethical and moral virtues, while Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism often incorporate divine or religious authorities to assist rulers. Buddhism is less known for its political engagement, seemingly more preoccupied with the spiritual realm. Confucianism emphasizes moral governance without detailed legal structures, in contrast to Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, which have more structured political prescriptions, often blending legal and theocratic elements. Historically, Judaism and Christianity have evolved significantly to incorporate modern democratic principles, while Islam, Confucianism, and Hinduism retain stronger ties to their traditional frameworks and older **political regimes**.

The scope of this entry can only serve as a modest 'selective introduction.' The diversity of many religious traditions is too great to be captured within the confines of a single entry. Whole shelves have been filled with books on topics like the plethora of pre-colonial, pre-Islamic African 'ontocracies' (see Arend van Leeuwen), sacralizing authority and power with the effective integration of altar and throne (Bediako 1993); or the Mayan intermediary divine rulers, communicating directly with deities; or Aztec warfare as a sacred act in the service of the gods (see Pennock 2023); or the shamanistic and animist practices found in a variety of forms ranging from Native American belief systems to Tengriism. Similarly, there is no space to cover Jainism, Sikhism, Daoism/Taoism, Shinto or Zoroastrianism or to untangle mutual influences. Also, this entry fails to account for the many innovations and spin-offs of the last few centuries. (Some of these topics resurface in the entries on **monarchies**.)

Instead, this entry offers a short overview of select world religions and their ideational contributions to statecraft, political legitimacy, and prescriptions for ideal polities. First of all, it presents some of the foundational early writings that provide the rudimentary basis for their original political thought about rulers, subjects and statehood. Most of these belief systems developed alongside **monarchies** and, while some remain uniquely favorable to this type of governance, many were revolutionary in their time, advocating for greater consultation in policy-making and linking royal mandates to popular support, countering **absolutism**, and especially **tyranny** and **despotism**.

HINDUISM The classical theory of statecraft in early India was based on a millennial religious-literary tradition, and included such notions as the divine mandate of rulers, the 'absolute' power of the monarch, and the superiority of the upper class – the Brahmins. These ideas, characteristic of Hindu philosophy, were well documented in Hindu mythology, in such works as the epics *(itihasa) Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhāratha* (ca. 700-ca. 300 BCE), tracing back to the Vedic texts (ca. 1500-ca. 800 BCE) (Callewaert & Goddeeris 2010).

Hindu political thought is deeply rooted in the concept of Dharma (duty/righteousness) and the *varna* and *jāti* system (social hierarchy in classes and castes). The ideal ruler, *Rājarṣi* (philosopher-king), should govern according to Dharma, ensuring justice, prosperity, and the spiritual welfare of the people. The Vedas refer to four types of sages (*ṛṣi*). A ruler can achieve the status of *Rājarṣi* through self-actualization during their reign; it does not require asceticism or giving up kingship.

Later, during the reign of Chandragupta (Ashoka's grandfather – see 'Buddhism' below), in the fourth to third centuries BCE, these Brahminic ideas of politics and statecraft were given formal expression in the writings of the influential political theorist Kautilya (Jayasuriya 2008: 48). (For a detailed treatise on Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, consult Box 2.2)

The mythical Manu (Svayambhuva) is the reputed author and narrator of the *Manusmriti* (मानव धर्मशास्त्र – *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* or *Laws of Manu*), an ancient legal text, dating no later than the third century AD, which outlines the duties of rulers and the organization of society according to Dharma. The *Manusmriti* provides detailed guidelines about law, governance, and social hierarchy, emphasizing the importance of ethical leadership and the welfare of the populace (Scharfe 2022).

According to Manu, the (Vedic) 'state' was (instantaneously) created by the God Brahma to end the chaotic and lawless state of nature; he emphasizes that its necessity arose from human evil and uncontrollable habits rather than economic need. The king, seen as a divine entity endowed with the qualities of various gods, is tasked with maintaining social harmony, peace, and welfare. Manu outlines the



king's duties, including law enforcement, taxation, justice, and interstate relations, emphasizing the importance of a council of ministers for effective governance. The king must rule with self-control, intelligence, and the consent of the governed, guided by the Brahmans. Additionally, Manu's thought is deeply intertwined with the *varna* system, which he views as essential for social order, each caste being assigned specific roles and duties to preserve societal harmony.

Hinduism thus espouses a symbiosis between the earthly and the divine orders, even if some thinkers (e.g. Kautilya – Box 2.2) distinguish between *raison d'état* and the spiritual mission of rulers. The Vedic state (as a form of rule) is sacral and meant to uphold Dharma (the divine order); lawlessness is inimical to this purpose. Ghoshal (1923: 6) conceptualizes the Vedic state according to a horizontal division (between orders) and a vertical one between classes (*varnas*). Rao (1958: 75) classifies this a 'qualified monism,' in which the autonomy and diversity of the various social groups residing within the boundaries of the state were recognized, and in which subjects had multiple loyalties:

"An individual weaver might have to recognize the rules of his guild, the directions of his village council, and the orders of the temple that owned the village land, as well as the obligations of his caste, as directed by the shastras. Guilds agreed upon rules to regulate their working practices, including sanctions for anyone who breached them; groups of potters and weavers regulated the materials, quality, and styles of their products; and merchants got together to set prices and fix standards for quality and weights" (Pirie 2021).

Historically, this complex worldview eluded Western scholars, who for too long belittled original Indian political theory as irrational and dogmatic, and undeserving of the label 'political.'

As a godly creation, the Vedic state is thus virtually an end in itself, securing not only the socio-political sphere, but upholding the very existence of the people (Ghoshal 1923: 5). Brahma, the creator, also gave the people their ruler, tasked with upholding law and order, and with carrying out justice. Such divinely-bestowed **monarchies** thus meet many criteria associated with **absolutism**; nevertheless, such **traditional rule** constrained rulers as they were bound by their own Dharma, and were not its sole interpreters. Both the king and the office of kingship were human(-made), not divine. The king was not a godly incarnation or a prophet. The ruler's **power** as described by Kamandaki (a pupil of Kautilya) in his *Nītisāra* (*Essence of Statesmanship*) came from three sources: *Prabhuśakti* (the power of the army and the treasury), *Mantaśakti* (the counsel of wise men, specifically the Council of Ministers) and *Utsahśakti* (see **charismatic rule**) (Prakash 1993). Law was derived from four sources: Dharma (sacred law), *Vyavahāra* (evidence), *Carita* (tradition and custom), and *Rājaśāsana* (edicts of the king) (Sharma 1976). Their level in the hierarchy is debated and probably evolved from kingdom to kingdom, but whenever *Rājaśāsana* trumped Dharma, absolutism would increase.

BUDDHISM Buddhist political thought generally views political engagement as secondary to spiritual development. It promotes ethical governance that minimizes harm and fosters compassion. The ideal ruler, often depicted as a *Dharmaraja* (righteous king), should rule justly and ensure the welfare of all beings. Political involvement is seen as a means to support a peaceful and just society, but not as an end in itself.

Buddhism has a reputation for minimizing political engagement, focusing instead on spiritual development for several foundational reasons. Key among these is the emphasis on individual liberation from suffering. Even in different variants of Buddhism, the common central core is enshrined in the three fundamental axiomatic principles of the phenomenal world (*anicca*, *anatta*, *dukkha* (impermanence, no-self, and suffering) and the 'Four Noble Truths' (चत्वार्य् आर्यसत्यानि – *catvary āryasatyāni*): the existential state of suffering, its cause, its cessation; and the path leading to its cessation (Jayasuriya 2008: 44). Buddhism prioritizes personal spiritual growth and the attainment of Nirvana over worldly concerns like politics (Anderson 2016). Political power is thus viewed with caution in Buddhism, as it often involves greed, hatred, and delusion – elements contrary to the Buddhist goals of morality, purity, and faith. The Buddha himself avoided political power, believing that true religion is based on moral and ethical standards, not the pursuit of power.

Buddhism has a complex interplay with statecraft. Its origins in India were revolutionary, challenging a traditional order marked by political systems that had institutionalized a class- *(varna)* and caste-based society *(jāti)* that denied individual autonomy, human freedom and legitimized inequalities (Jayasuriya 2008: 47). At other times, it was very comfortable with **monarchies** and **absolutism**, which were a natural stage in the (cyclical) evolution of the world (toward increasing materialization and back to spiritual elevation with each *kalpa* – each cycle of cosmic recreation) (Tambiah 1967: 9-18). Buddhist concepts of karma and rebirth provided another powerful source of **legitimacy** for rulers: hereditary descent from a great historical 'wise' ruler was cherished. And to be reborn into the royal family as heir-apparent implied the accumulation of positive karma over innumerable lifetimes, and thus as being well on the way to Buddhahood.

The ideal Buddhist ruler is the cakravartin (चक्रवर्तिन् – 'wheel-turning monarch') or universal ruler, whose historical model is Ashoka Maurya. In Buddhism, the *cakravartin* is seen as a secular counterpart to a Buddha. While the Buddha brings spiritual enlightenment, the *cakravartin* brings order and justice in the material world. A sage ruler's reign is characterized by moral governance, and his authority is believed to be supported (solely) by the turning of the Dharma wheel, a symbol of righteous rule and the spreading of Buddhist teachings. (In Hinduism, there is a similar concept of an ethical sage king, but the corresponding domain of Dharma exists alongside three others: *Ashtra*, *Kama* and *Moksha* – see also Box 2.2). The *cakravartin* is also

associated with the concept of a bodhisattva, a being who seeks enlightenment not just for themselves but for all sentient beings. (A *cakravartin* embodies the virtues of a bodhisattva by ruling with compassion, wisdom, and justice) (Ladwig 2022; Tambiah 1976).

Ashoka (ca. 304-232 BCE), the Mauryan emperor, is a significant figure in Buddhist political thought. He was the grandson of Chandragupta, the dynasty's founder, and employer of Kautilya (see Box 2.2). As a warrior king, Ashoka suffered a crisis of identity when he witnessed the carnage of the Kalinga War (262 BCE). Afterwards, it is believed, he fully embraced Buddhism and became its great patron. Ashoka's new approach to statecraft gave primacy to Dharma over 'Danda' (force), espousing restraint and non-violence (*Ahimsā*) (Tambiah 1976: 57). His *Edicts of Ashoka* are inscriptions on pillars and rocks throughout his empire, promoting Buddhist principles of governance, non-violence, and welfare. Ashoka's edicts emphasize the importance of ethical leadership, compassion, and the welfare of all beings, reflecting his commitment to Buddhist values in statecraft. It is noteworthy that Ashoka did not declare Buddhism a state religion, but adhered to religious tolerance.

Until recently, the political philosophy of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, who advocated the election of rulers and framed kingship as a 'social contract' (two thousand years before European Enlightenment thinkers), was virtually unexplored. Rulers were to be elected by the people, not for their ability to wage war, but for their nobility of character and form. In addition, the 'natural state' of humanity ('deprived' vs. 'harmonious') was not static in Buddhist thinking. Humanity (cyclically) evolved into different stages of order (influenced by external factors like lack of resources). During eras of social upheaval, state-imposed order was justified and necessary (Ilaiah 2002; Omvedt 2001).

The ultimate goal of Buddhist practice is to guide individuals to enlightenment through ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom. The three heterogenous 'schools' or 'traditions' of Buddhism (Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana) provide different paths to enlightenment, vary in monastic practice, their reliance on scripture, ritual and esoteric texts (Tantras), and therefore calibrated with local customs differently as they spread geographically.

Of course, elites always had political considerations when adopting a (state) religion, even when choosing between 'schools.' For instance, the bodhisattva ideal in Mahayana Buddhism provided a framework that proved highly compatible with the values and needs of (East) Asian monarchies. By promoting compassion, ethical governance, and social harmony, the bodhisattva position allowed Buddhism to integrate seamlessly into ruling practices, thus enhancing the coherence between religious ideals and political authority. This alignment helped rulers legitimize their power (as semi-divine beings) and provided a moral and ethical foundation for governance that resonated deeply with their subjects.

Political systems, regardless of their ideals, cannot achieve the inner peace and happiness Buddhism seeks, which are found through personal transformation. Historically, Buddhism has thrived in apolitical environments, allowing communities to focus on monastic life and teaching, without political distractions. Nevertheless, an 'Engaged Buddhism' has emerged, advocating for the application of Buddhist principles in social and political activism. Figures like B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), an Indian jurist and statesman of Dalit (the 'outcasts' or 'untouchables') descent, and Thích Nhất Hạnh (1926-2022), a Vietnamese monk and peace activist, have championed this modern adaptation as a way to address social injustice (Gleig 2021; King 2009). Buddhist teachings on governance, such as the *dasavidha-rājadhamma* ('tenfold virtue of the ruler'), emphasize ethical leadership and non-violence, but, all in all, political goals remain secondary to individual spiritual liberation.

CONFUCIANISM As a Western term with no counterpart in Chinese, 'Confucianism' can be many things: a worldview, a social ethic, a political **ideology**, a scholarly tradition, and a way of life (Tu 1998: 3). There is some debate about whether Confucianism is a religion, since it does not meet all of the Western-centric defining criteria. It does not identify a supreme, personal deity (although it does include the (imperial) sacral concept of Heaven, within a cosmic order). It never had a formal clergy or centralized religious organization; it fails to offer a detailed cosmology explaining the origin of the universe; and it emphasizes moral and ethical development in the real world over spiritual (transcendental) experience.

Confucianism was labeled a religion by early Jesuit missionaries in the late sixteenth century, who hoped to sought to advance their proselytizing mission by accommodating the existing cultures and belief systems they encountered. Their initial attempts to co-opt Buddhist practices failed (in China). Consequently, they turned to the predominant culture of the elites, who were all educated in the Confucian classics. The ascribed label of Confucianism as a religion stuck in the Western imagination, even if the Catholic Church abandoned this approach, and it was cemented by the advent of comparative religious studies in Europe. Of course, the debate about the religiosity of Confucianism is beyond the scope of this entry. For an overview, see Chen 2012; Goldin 2014.

'Confucianism' is the Latinized term for *Kong fuzi*, meaning 'Revered Master Kong.' In Chinese, followers of his thinking are called *Ru* (classicists – 儒 – *rú*), a name they eventually monopolized, but one initially also applied to adherents of other philosophies who studied classic texts. 'Confucianism' is referred to in Chinese as *Ru Studies* (儒学 – *Rúxué*), sometimes *The Ru School of Thought* (儒家 – *Rújiā*), although 'school' was added centuries later as a bibliographic frame to sort authors and texts. Since Confucius' tradition did influence statecraft and guidance for rulers in and beyond China, it is included in this entry.

Master Kong (孔子 – *Kǒngzǐ*, ca. 551-ca. 479 BCE) was a ritual master, like many before him. Born in the sixth century BCE, the details of his life remain very scant, and this led to his active deification in time.



(In many ways, this is the closest that Confucianism comes to venerate a personal God.) The ritual culture of ancient China, evidenced by the earliest bronze artifacts, required ritual masters to teach its use and incorporate moral principles into practices. Confucius was the first whose teachings were documented. He emphasized the moral aspect of rituals, transforming the role of ritual masters into that of moral philosophers. Confucius himself abhorred the idea of fixing his tailor-made sage advice in writing, devoid of context or nuance, and therefore did not leave behind written works. All works attributed to him were compiled posthumously by his disciples, who wished to preserve his intellectual contributions for posterity; hence, their title, *Analects* (論語 – *lún yǔ* – 'selected sayings') (Goldin 2014: 7-9).

Confucius was not the only thinker in the tradition that carries his name. Mencius (孟子 – *Mèngzǐ* – Master Meng, ca. 371 – ca. 289 BCE) similarly did not leave any written texts. His contributions only survive in selected works by his commentators. Later followers, the so-called neo-Confucians, elevated him to the status of 'last sage' in the Song dynasty (960-1279). Along with other topics, Mencius is attributed with the elaboration of the concept of life-force (*qì*), and for considering human nature as intrinsically good, thus making 'the people' and their welfare central to Confucian thought. He argued that by implementing concrete public policies that ensure the wellbeing of the populace, a ruler could create an environment where moral and ethical behavior would naturally flourish. This would allow the ruler to govern with minimal intervention (*wúwéi*), as the people would be self-regulating and harmonious (Kim 2010; 2014).

Another famous Confucian master was Xunzi (荀子 – *Xúnzǐ* – Master Xun, ca. 310 – ca. after 238 BCE). By the time the Jesuits arrived, he had been disavowed by most Confucian scholars, and thus has no Latinized name. Recently, he has re-emerged as probably the most complex (and controversial) philosopher that China has ever produced. Xunzi composed a robust theory of the universe and its relation to moral philosophy, and (in contrast to Mencius) believed that people are not naturally good – meaning that humans are born with innate tendencies that, if left unchecked, lead to negative behavior and societal discord. So, goodness is not inherent in human nature but is instead the result of conscious effort and education. He argued that with the guidance of teachers, the practice of rituals, and adherence to societal norms, individuals could cultivate virtue and moral behavior (Sungmoon 2011; Goldin 2014: 67-76; Gu 2022).

Confucianism has profoundly influenced Chinese culture and other East Asian societies. As a philosophy it aims to socialize society and provide a framework for **indoctrination** at the grassroots level to achieve a harmonious society, fostering virtuous citizens and just rulers, based on a rigid social hierarchy emulated in the political sphere. The model for this ideal society is Confucius' imagination of the Zhou dynasty.

Confucianism prescribes good governance through a framework centered on moral virtue, benevolence, and the ethical conduct of rulers. Confucianism advocates a government led by virtuous rulers who act as moral exemplars. The ideal ruler, or *Junzi* (君子 – *jūn zǐ*), should embody and promote virtues such as righteousness, propriety, and benevolence. (Note that there exists a higher level of sainthood (聖– *sheng*) that very few individuals ever attain.)

Governance should be based on ethical principles rather than strict legal codes, emphasizing moral education and the cultivation of virtuous citizens. In this respect, this philosophy goes against **legalism**, a contemporary ideological framework that emerged by the end of the Warring States period and is also classified as one of the 'Hundred Schools of Thought' of that era.

The **legitimacy** of rulers in Confucianism is deeply rooted in the concept of the 'Mandate of Heaven' (天命 – *Tiānmìng*). This principle holds that rulers' right to govern is granted by Heaven based on their virtue and ability to govern justly. If rulers fail to uphold these standards, they risk losing their mandate. A legitimate ruler must demonstrate personal virtue and benevolent governance. This includes being just, compassionate, and attentive to the needs of the people. Confucianism asserts that the governed have the right to expect benevolent governance, and rulers must earn their loyalty through virtuous conduct. This framework creates a moral obligation for rulers to prioritize the wellbeing of their citizens and maintain social harmony. According to some interpretations, rulers' transgressions give the people the moral right to remove them – e.g. if they establish a **tyranny** or fail to uphold Confucian principles.

Mencius is most vocal about this (unlike Confucius, who has little to say about the legitimacy of rulers), and identifies three modes of **succession**: abdication, hereditary succession, and **revolution**. Abdication involves the voluntary transfer of power to a virtuous minister, while hereditary succession passes power to the ruler's son, and revolution establishes a new dynasty by deposing the incumbent ruler. Mencius emphasizes that Heaven's will, discernible in the people's acceptance and the ruler's moral conduct, ultimately determines the method of succession (Goldin 2014: 61-64).

Heaven's approval is indicated by successful governance and the people's peace. Though the people's approval is significant, Heaven's mandate is paramount. Mencius argues that if Heaven favored abdication, it would endorse it; however, in his time, hereditary succession was more common, reflecting Heaven's will then. Thus, Mencius' views integrate both divine command and popular approval, with Heaven's mandate being the ultimate determinant of a ruler's legitimacy. This is a far cry from the proto-democrat label sometimes conferred on Mencius (Nuyen 2013; Richey, no date).

Confucianism provides specific advice for rulers, elites, and citizens. For rulers, the emphasis is on self-cultivation and continuous learning. Starting in the Han dynasty, Chinese emperors were expected to study Confucian texts and be guided by Confucian scholars. This education aimed to instill a sense of

moral responsibility and the importance of benevolent rule. For elites, Confucianism advocates a meritocratic system (see Box 1.9) in which officials are selected based on their virtue and ability. This ensures that those in positions of power are committed to public service and the wellbeing of the people. The Confucian-inspired state examination system for mandarins (see Box 4.8) dates to the Han dynasty, and was designed to identify and promote talented individuals who demonstrated these qualities.

For citizens, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of moral education and the cultivation of virtue. The philosophy suggests that a well-ordered society begins with the moral development of individuals, which then extends to the family and ultimately to the state. Citizens are encouraged to practice filial piety (*xiào* – 孝) respect for elders, and social harmony. This bottom-up approach to governance underscores the interconnectedness of personal virtue and societal wellbeing. By fostering a culture of mutual respect and ethical behavior, Confucianism aims to create a stable and harmonious society in which both rulers and citizens contribute to the common good, but always within the hierarchical system of a **monarchy**.

JUDAISM Jewish political thought has evolved from biblical models of tribal federations to charismatic movements by prophets, monarchies, theocracies, and modern democratic participation. Jewish political ideas have their roots in traditional Judaic discourse, often legal or homiletic rather than philosophical. The discourse on governance evolved with and adapted to different historical settings.

Historically, Jews lacked a state, yet central political issues were addressed within the medieval *Qahal*, an autonomous, theocratic urban Jewish community. The covenant at Sinai, where God and the Israelites established a bond, is pivotal in Jewish political thought, signifying God's authority and the Israelites' commitment to the Torah.

Solomon ibn Gabirol (1021-1058; Avicebron in Latin) was a Jewish philosopher and poet whose work, *Fons Vitae*, explores the nature of existence and the ethical responsibilities of rulers. Ibn Gabirol emphasizes the importance of wisdom, justice, and ethical governance, arguing that rulers should act as moral exemplars and ensure the welfare of their subjects. His works influenced Jewish philosophers such as Moses ibn Ezra and Abraham ibn Ezra.

Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) was a medieval Jewish philosopher and legal scholar, who codified Jewish law. His other opus magnus, *Guide for the Perplexed*, addresses the relationship between religion and philosophy – integrating Aristotelian thinking, Arab-Islamic thought and Jewish theology – and includes prescriptions for political governance. Maimonides emphasizes the importance of justice, ethical leadership, and the covenant between God and the people. He argues that rulers should govern in accordance with divine law and ensure the welfare of the populace (Lorberbaum et al. 2003). (For the influence of Arab-Islamic thought on Jewish thinkers, see Zonta & Manekin 2024.)

Jewish teachings prioritize justice and ethical governance, urging leaders to pursue justice and maintain integrity, fearing God and rejecting ill-gotten gains. Community welfare is also crucial; the prophet Jeremiah encouraged Jews in exile to seek their cities' peace and prosperity, highlighting the importance of prioritizing communal wellbeing (*Holy Bible*, *Jeremiah 29*: 5-7). Additionally, Jewish tradition emphasizes responsibility and accountability, with leaders being answerable to both divine authority and the people. The Talmud and other rabbinic texts stress that leaders should be chosen with the consent of the governed and be held accountable for their actions, ensuring they serve justly and ethically.

Jewish political discussions were influenced by the Talmudic legal tradition, biblical memories of Israel's monarchy, and messianic prophecies. The tradition also includes justifications for human political agency based on popular consent, reflecting proto-democratic elements. (There were always debates about divine sovereignty, with some views excluding human authority and others allowing it through agents like kings, priests, prophets, and rabbis, who interpreted God's words and made decisions by vote.) The Hebrew Bible, particularly in *Deuteronomy*, outlines a separation of powers among judges, kings, priests, and prophets. This early form of constitutional government aimed to balance religious and civil authority.

Living as minorities under non-Jewish rulers, Jews dreamed of redemption and a messianic king. In order to minimize tensions with the sovereign government of the land where they resided; they developed the principle *dina de-malkhuta dina* (the law of the land is the law) (Joskowicz & Katz 2015: 4). In addition, Jewish communities often organized themselves into autonomous entities known as *kehillot*, managing their internal affairs, including religious, educational, health, and welfare needs. This self-governance allowed them to maintain their cultural and religious identity while meeting civic obligations like taxes and military service, without direct state interference. *Shtadlanut* (intercession) involved Jewish leaders, known as *shtadlanim*, negotiating with state authorities on behalf of their communities. This practice, prominent in medieval and early modern Europe, aimed to protect Jewish interests and secure favorable conditions through diplomacy and negotiation, rather than through direct political means (Klieman 2008).

Since 1948, the state of Israel has prompted a re-examination of Jewish political tradition, exploring its relevance in a modern democracy with a Jewish majority and significant non-Jewish minorities, balancing theocratic and democratic principles. In response to the rise of modern nation-states in the Middle East, Jewish thinkers have revisited a variety of legal doctrines, theories, and historical experiences to explore whether there are authentic warrants within their tradition for separating religion and the state. Jewish law, or *halakha*, has traditionally envisioned a unified religious polity where political authority is subject to and enforces divine law. However, this model was not always adhered to



in practice, and in medieval times, both Islam and Judaism developed doctrines that permitted extra-legal powers in political authority, diverging from scriptural norms (Last Stone 2008: 631-632).

Even though original Zionism was a secular revolutionary movement, its undercurrent contained a religious variant that slowly rose to the surface as a major force by the 1970s. Alexander Kaye (2020: 1-23) argues this religious Zionism is a modern invention, spearheaded by Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog (1888-1959), Chief Rabbi of Ireland from 1921 to 1936, whose political ideas were greatly influenced by the Irish struggle for independence and constitutionalism. Herzog and his followers transformed *halakha* from a hitherto decentralized, fragmented body of legal traditions, each interpreted by local rabbinical courts, into a unified, hierarchical legal system modeled on the legal codes of modern European states. They innovated the legal system (e.g. with appeals courts) to meet modern demands and expanded its jurisdiction to all citizens, whatever their religion. The halakhic state is a **theocracy**, rejecting constitutional secularism (in the tradition of Locke) and espousing the inherently legal character of Judaism, its legitimacy coming from God, as interpreted by rabbis. This fundamentalist system discriminates, and does not allow women and non-Jews to hold political or judiciary positions. Based on pre-modern law, it has few provisions for real-life modern polities regarding mass representation, the structure of government, the role of the army, or foreign policy.

The establishment of the state of Israel as a constitutional, secular, liberal democracy has pushed the question of the separation of religion and the state to the forefront, particularly given the rise of religious Zionism. The arguments for legitimizing Jewish theocracy revolve around the supremacy of divine law, the preservation of Jewish identity, and the belief in moral governance. However, these arguments meet with substantial opposition in democratic values, in inclusivity, and in practical governance issues (of imposing such rule against the will of the people, both Jews and non-Jews) (Tzfadya 2022). This debate intersects with numerous issues, including land for peace, the conduct of war, personal status law, the Law of Return, religious legislation, the construction of an egalitarian civil society, the treatment of non-Jewish populations under Jewish governance, and the role of Jewish law in the state's legal culture (Joskowicz & Katz 2015; Cohen 2003).

CHRISTIANITY The concept of the separation of religion from politics has a historical background rooted in Christianity. This idea emerged out of the experience of European Christendom, whose Christians, from early on, perceived church and state as distinct entities with separate jurisdictions, powers, and logics. As Mark Lilla (2008) has argued, the notion of divided sovereignty aligns more closely with the Christian understanding of a triune God (the Holy Trinity), which inherently suggests a division within the divine itself (Last Stone 2008: 631).

The evolution of Christian political thought can be traced through several key periods. Early Christianity focused on the distinction between the spiritual and temporal realms, emphasizing the ultimate authority of God. Initially, it exhibited a kind of non-conformism, resisting Roman political religion and emphasizing a kingdom "not of this world" (*Holy Bible, John 18*: 36). However, with the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, the relationship between church and state evolved into a model known as *symphonia* (συμφωνία – 'accord'), in which the two were seen as complementary entities working harmoniously together (Hovorun 2023; Ostrogorsky 1956).

In the early stages of Christian political thought, St. Augustine (354-430) emerged as a pivotal figure. In his seminal work *City of God*, Augustine introduced the concept of two distinct realms: the divine and the temporal (the City of Man). He argued that while Christians should engage in earthly politics, their ultimate allegiance lies with the City of God, the heavenly city. This dualistic approach laid the foundational groundwork for the later concept of the separation of church and state, stressing that earthly governance should not overshadow spiritual commitments. Augustine's ideas were revolutionary for his time, offering a framework for understanding the role of Christians in a predominantly secular world.

Byzantine **theocracy** was unique in that emperors (as priest-kings) often saw themselves as both political and spiritual leaders, mediating between God and the people. The *symphonia* model was idealized, with church and state seen as emanating from a single divine source, akin to the soul and body of a human being (Hovorun 2023). This adaptation was not without problems, as Byzantine emperors attempted to navigate their Roman secular legal legacy and the Greek philosophical tradition, with its non-religious prescriptions for just governance – see **Plato & Aristotle** (Runciman 1977).

Similarly, since its establishment in the fourth century, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has been deeply intertwined with the Ethiopian state. The church and the **monarchy** were seen as two sides of the same coin, with the church providing religious legitimacy to the rulers and the state supporting the church's authority and influence. The church espoused the concept of Ethiopia as a 'covenant nation,' a theological and philosophical idea that portrayed the nation as chosen by God, with a divine mission to uphold Christian values and unity. This idea has been instrumental in promoting national identity and social cohesion, especially during times of foreign invasion (Ademe 2023).

The Great Schism of 1054, the breaking away of the Roman Catholic Church, reinforced the centralization of authority in the papacy in the West. The Pope's role as the supreme spiritual and temporal authority was consolidated, leading to the development of the doctrine of papal supremacy. As a result, the Western Church grew increasingly centralized and legalistic. The influence of Roman law shaped the Western approach to theology and governance, emphasizing the Pope's authority over both ecclesiastical and secular matters. In the East, the concept of *symphonia* ('accord') between church and state continued to dominate. The Eastern Orthodox

Church maintained a more collegial and conciliar approach. Decisions were made collectively by bishops and councils, reflecting a more decentralized ecclesiastical structure.

Medieval thinkers synthesized biblical revelation with Greek and Roman philosophy, notably through Augustine and later scholars influenced by Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) further developed Christian political theory in his comprehensive work, the *Summa Theologica*. He proposed a natural law theory, asserting that human laws should reflect divine law. He believed that rulers have a moral obligation to govern justly, promoting the common good and aligning their policies with Christian ethical principles. Aquinas' synthesis of faith and reason provided a robust intellectual foundation for the governance models that would influence medieval and later political thought.

Medieval political theory was more sophisticated than often perceived, as detailed in the entry on **medieval classifications of constitutions**. The translation of Aristotle's works, especially in the twelfth century Renaissance, had a significant impact. As regards regime types, medieval scholars were especially interested in the concept of a 'mixed constitution,' which combined elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. Innovations in medieval political thought included the development of jurisprudence in universities, which led to concepts such as individual rights, due process, and the notion of a corporation. These legal developments contributed to a political environment that valued the rule of law and the consent of the governed, distinguishing between good and corrupt constitutions.

The medieval period laid the groundwork for later developments in the relationship between church and state. The integration of Aristotelian philosophy into Christian theology led to the development of natural law theory, which influenced the governance models of the time. The period of the Reformation (starting in 1517) brought significant shifts in Christian political thought, with Martin Luther (1483-1546) playing a central role. Luther's doctrine of the 'two kingdoms' posited that God governs the world through two distinct realms: the spiritual (church) and the temporal (state). He argued that Christians should obey secular authorities in matters of civil governance, while maintaining spiritual independence. This doctrine underscored the importance of respecting earthly authorities without compromising religious convictions, marking a departure from the more integrated, hierarchical church-state models of the medieval period.

John Calvin (1509-1564) further advanced Reformation political thought in his influential work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin emphasized the sovereignty of God over all aspects of life, including politics. He advocated for a **theocracy** in which civil authorities would be subject to divine law and be responsible for enforcing moral order. Calvin's vision of governance was one where the state played a crucial role in upholding and promoting Christian values, reflecting his belief in the pervasive influence of divine sovereignty over human affairs.

Protestant political thought is diverse, reflecting a wide range of denominations. Common themes include the emphasis on individual interpretation of the Bible, salvation by faith alone, and a rejection of certain Catholic practices. Protestants generally advocate the separation of church and state, emphasizing the authority of the Bible over the institutional church. Some branches, like the Anabaptists, advocate separation from worldly politics, emphasizing pacifism and communal living. Pentecostals often focus on personal salvation and spiritual renewal, with varying degrees of political engagement depending on the denomination.

Catholicism, on the other hand, emphasizes human dignity, the common good, and the principle of subsidiarity, which advocates engaging with social issues at the most local level possible. The Catholic Church maintains a hierarchical structure with the Pope as the ultimate authority. It encourages active participation in politics, including voting and defending one's country.

Finally, Orthodox Christianity, emphasizes the ontological goodness of the created order and the transcendence of God. Orthodox political thought often criticizes political leaders who act for themselves rather than the common good. Historically, Orthodox churches have been closely associated with nation-states, and there is a greater acceptance of state support for religion in Orthodox-majority countries. *Symphonia* remains a central tenet of Orthodoxy, dating back to Constantine I (ruled 324-337), prescribing that religious and political authorities should work together – in a symphonic agreement – for the material and spiritual welfare of the faithful (Leuștean 2011). For its application under Tsarist and post-Soviet Russia, see Prosic 2014; Antonov 2020; for a history of the evolution of the concept, see Hovorun 2023.

In Africa, Christianity and politics remain deeply intertwined, influenced by the African religio-cultural context, in which power is often seen as spiritual. During the colonial period, missionary Christianity introduced a more secular Western worldview, yet political and spiritual power continued to connected. After independence, African nations formally separated church and state, but church leaders often criticized governments, and aided democratic development. Contemporary Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in Africa blurs the lines between secular and religious realms. 'Political spirituality' shapes Christian engagement in politics, national redemption, and views on issues like Christian-Muslim relations, homosexuality, and abortion, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future (van Klinken 2018; Meyer 2004; Bediako 1993). For comprehensive overviews, see Maxwell 2000; Katongole 2011; Asamoah-Gyadu 2015 (for West Africa); Elphick et al. 1997 (for South Africa).

Liberation Theology in Latin America originated in the late 1960s, a period characterized by widespread social and political turmoil, in the context of military dictatorship and geopolitical interventionism following the Cuban revolution. This theology was born out of profound ethical and spiritual out-



Box 4.8 Mandarins: Promoting Competent and Loyal Staff

One person becomes a mandarin, his whole clan benefits.
– Vietnamese proverb

A *mandarin* is a Western name for a Chinese-style scholar-bureaucrat or scholar-gentry employed in the hierarchic royal administration in East and mainland Southeast Asia. The practice of state exams in China goes back to the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE), but the innovation of imperial exams (in Chinese: 科举 – *kējǔ*) as a precondition to enter the state bureaucracy was implemented in 607 under the Sui dynasty (589-618 CE) and later expanded under the Tang (618-907 CE) to counterbalance the sway of aristocratic families over emperors and centralize imperial power. By countering the power of birth with proof of merit, the imperial bureaucracy saw an influx of new, bright and most of all loyal elites, owing their careers to this system after passing state exams and receiving recommendation from peers.

Initially, the system was still skewed in favor of noble families but, by the time of the Song dynasties (960-1276), the state bureaucracy was dominated by *jinshi* degree-holders (in Chinese: 進士 – *jìnshì*, imperial degrees) from various middle-class and elite backgrounds. The system waxed and waned over time, but became more formalized under the Song and Ming dynasties (1368-1644), being streamlined with Confucian values. It was abolished in 1905 just before the fall of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), but many of its features have become stable elements of Chinese political culture: e.g. its bureaucratic jargon, hierarchical stratification of bureaucratic levels, the rotation of senior officials, etc.

The competitive civil service exam system created a curriculum that brought gentry, military and merchant families together into one culturally defined status group, sharing a language, a canon, and a literary style. Inviting applicants from all backgrounds, the open recruitment broke the monopoly of the hereditary nobility in the civil service and boosted its efficiency and loyalty. By custom, mandarins were sent to strengthen the government in provinces that were not their own, avoiding the pitfall of dual loyalty when executing their mandate.

By opening the doors of the **selectorate** even a crack, emperors and kings could select staff from a loyal and competent pool of candidates in order to centralize their hold on power. Even if at times only fewer than two percent of applicants were eventually drafted into the Chinese state bureaucracy, the competition itself fostered legions of classically literate men (and women) who applied their talents elsewhere (Elman 2013).

Lui Haifeng (2007) finds that the practice spread from Tang China to Japan in the seventh to the eighth centuries, but remained the prerogative of nobles and incumbent bureaucrats and their offspring. Hence, its practical value faded by the eleventh century, and the exam system remained in form alone, with candidates (all nominated) passing the exam unconditionally. True to its original form and purpose the system was adopted in Korea for almost a millennium (from 958 until 1894) and most rigorously applied, and introduced to Vietnamese kingdoms in 1075 (and kept in use as late as 1919), with other Southeast Asian polities borrowing some of its elements. European states also reformed their civil service recruitment processes based on the Chinese experience.

The word 'mandarin' originated from the Malay *'mantri'* (through Portuguese) meaning 'councilor' and has a Sanskrit origin (*'man-'* meaning 'to think') (Britannica 2021). The name of the classical Chinese spoken by such bureaucrats became the label for the standard 'Mandarin' Chinese: 官话 – *Guānhuà* (literally: speech of public officials) (Ter Haar 2009: 8). In the popular jargon of the 1970s and 1980s it was used to refer to scheming senior state officials and top-level advisers, especially in British and Commonwealth polities.

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rage at the extreme poverty and systemic oppression faced by the majority. Influenced by the renewal of the Catholic Church after the Vatican II reforms (1962-1965), theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez sought to reinterpret Christian teachings to emphasize social justice and the liberation of the oppressed (Sigmund 2019; Sung 2024).

The rise of Liberation Theology was characterized by a radical stance against both local and global structures of oppression, especially capitalism. It employed socio-analytical tools, including Marxist theory, to critique these structures and advocate systemic change. Central to its message was the 'preferential option for the poor,' which underscored God's special concern for the marginalized and called for the Church to align itself with their struggles (Sung 2024).

Politically, Liberation Theology had a profound impact on Latin American societies. It inspired grassroots movements, influenced political discourse, and often put the Church at odds with authoritarian regimes. The theology's emphasis on praxis

– action informed by reflection – led to significant social and political activism, directed to transforming unjust structures and promoting human dignity. Despite facing opposition and declining with the rise of neoliberalism, Liberation Theology remains a vital framework for addressing contemporary issues of inequality and social justice in Latin America. For overviews, see Hartch 2014; Freston 2008 (select countries); González & González 2007 (chronological overview).

ISLAM This world religion is also covered in two other entries: **political Islam** and **Islamic States**, both multifaceted expressions of how Islam has engaged with and adapted to modernity in post-colonial and de-colonial ways, respectively. 'Political Islam' provides an overview of contemporary Islamic thought and its engagement with secularism and modernity in post-colonial polities, under the pressure of Western notions of statehood. 'Islamic States,' on the contrary, delves deeper into contemporary **theocracies** or Islamic **ideocracies**, and how such radically unique polities present a challenge to the international system. This section complements these entries and elaborates on Islamic legal prescriptions regarding the selection of leaders and succession. In addition, it presents some key historical political theorists of Islamic governance.

Islamic political thought is based on the principles of *sharīʿah* (Shariah, Islamic law) and the concept of *khilāfa'* (caliphate). Governance should be conducted in accordance with the Quran and Hadith, emphasizing justice, consultation (*shūrā*), and the welfare of the Ummah (the Muslim community). Sovereignty belongs to Allah, and rulers are seen as His representatives on earth, responsible for implementing divine law. Despite popular belief, Orientalist biases, and an abundance of examples of authoritarian rule in the Arab and Muslim world (Khatab & Bouma 2007), there is generally no historical claim to rule by divine right, least of all by the Prophet.

Azizah Y. al-Hibri (1992), Parray (2012) and many others demonstrate that Islamic thought provides several principles of government that emphasize elective, consultative, and other democratic elements. The process of *bayʿah* (pledge of allegiance) involves the community's consent to a leader, signifying a contractual agreement. As head of an Islamic state, the ruler ruled in accordance with the laws of God, not as His incarnation on earth.

Historically, there was a two-stage process. The 'Wise Ones' – the *Ahl al-ḥall wa-l-ʿaqd* or 'the people who loosen and bind [a contract]' – first nominated a caliph. This was followed by the general public's endorsement (Zaman 2007). *Shūrā* (consultation) is thus a fundamental principle in Islamic governance, mandating that leaders consult with knowledgeable and just individuals. This principle is enshrined in the Quran and the Sunnah (in the Hadith), emphasizing collective decision-making and preventing autocratic rule. However, the holy scriptures do not provide a procedure for selecting or removing the Wise Ones; they were simply recognized within their society. In the early Muslim community, this recognition was straightforward. However, the expansion of Islam required new selection methods, but these were not developed. Instead, Islamic governance evolved differently (al-Hibri 1992).

Such consultative practices also apply in the rather rare method of succession called *istikhlāf* (a caliph choosing one's own successor). Sunni tradition holds that the Prophet did not use this method; after his death, Muslims chose his successor through *bay'ah*. However, some early rulers did choose their successors, and this practice eventually became established. Some jurists approve of *istikhlāf* only if it involves extensive consultation, citing early Islamic precedents (al-Hibri 1992).

Though not explicitly detailed in early Islamic texts, the separation of powers is implied through the roles of different authorities. The Quran and Sunnah guide the legislative, executive, and judicial functions, ensuring that no single entity holds absolute power. Islamic law allows for *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), enabling scholars to interpret and adapt laws to contemporary contexts. This flexibility supports the development of governance systems that align with democratic principles while adhering to Islamic values. Al-Hibri (1992) concludes that Islamic governance is based on the consent of the Ummah (Muslim community), akin to democratic systems where legitimacy is derived from the will of the people.

Abu Nasir al-Farabi (*al-Fārābī* – 872-950, 'Alpharabius' in Latin), known to later generations as the 'Second Teacher' after Aristotle, wrote extensively on a wide range of topics, including political philosophy, building on neo-Platonism and on Syriac Aristotelian thinkers. His work *Al-Madina al-Fadila (The Virtuous City* or *Ideal State*) describes an ideal polity ruled by a philosopher-king who embodies both wisdom and virtue. He integrated Greek philosophical traditions (see **Plato & Aristotle**) with Islamic thought, emphasizing the importance of a just and virtuous ruler for the wellbeing of the 'state.'

Al-Farabi categorizes cities into five distinct types based on their ethical and moral orientations rather than their political structures or ideologies. These types are the virtuous city (i), the ignorant city (ii), the wicked city (iii), the erring city (vi), and the diverted city (v).

The *virtuous city* (i) is the ideal city whose inhabitants collectively pursue true happiness and virtue, guided by a ruler who embodies wisdom and moral excellence. This city is analogous to Plato's concept of the 'ideal city' but is rooted in Islamic ethics. In contrast, the *ignorant city* (ii) is characterized by its inhabitants' lack of understanding of true felicity, with subtypes including cities focused on basic necessities (survival), wealth (see **oligarchy** and plutocracy), pleasure (hedonism), honor (see **timocracy**), power (see **tyranny**), and unconstrained freedom (see **democracy** according to **Plato & Aristotle**). The *wicked city* (iii) comprises citizens who know the truth but choose to act against it, while the *erring city* (iv) consists of people who have deviated from the right path due to incorrect beliefs. Lastly, the *diverted city* (v) includes those who have altered the truth to suit their desires. Despite its idealistic



nature, al-Farabi's vision emphasizes the importance of moral and ethical considerations in the governance and organization of societies, offering a timeless perspective on the role of virtue in political life (Azzhuri 2022; Germann 2021; Kurmangaliyeva & Azerbayev 2016).

Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah (*The Ordinances of Government*), by al-Mawardi (972-1058), is a seminal work that outlines the principles of Islamic governance under **monarchy**. Al-Mawardi discusses the roles and responsibilities of the caliph, the judiciary, and other state officials, emphasizing the importance of justice, public welfare, and adherence to Shariah. In *Nasihat al-Muluk* (*Counsel for Kings*), al-Ghazali (1058-1111) offers ethical and practical advice for rulers to be just, pious, and attentive to the needs of their subjects. Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) addresses the balance between Sharia and practical governance in his *Al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah* (*The Governance of Islamic Law*), arguing for a system of governance that upholds Islamic principles while being flexible enough to address contemporary issues.

Nizam al-Mulk ('Orderer of the Realm' – *Nezām al-Molk*) is the honorific for the Persian vizier, jurist and scholar of the Seljuk Empire, known as Abu Ali Hasan ibn Ali Tusi (1018-1092). He took over the reins of power after the **assassination** of Sultan Arp Aslan (1029-1072) by a rebel during a military campaign in Central Asia. His contributions to statecraft, righteous governance, and guidance for rulers are encapsulated in his seminal work, the *Siyasatnama* (*Siyāsat-nāmeh – Book of Government* or *Rules for Kings*) (Horák 2021: 586). He adeptly combined Persian administrative practices with Islamic values, unlike his peers who focused solely on Islamic jurisprudence. For instance, he propagated the Persian *iqta*-system *(iqṭā')*, a practice of distributing (non-hereditary) fiefs for optimal tax collection. His commitment to education was unparalleled; he established the *Nizamiyyah* schools (madrassas), promoting education as essential for statecraft. Unlike his contemporaries, Nizam al-Mulk stressed *Realpolitik*, in particular the importance of a comprehensive intelligence network to pre-empt threats (rebellion, sectarianism) and maintain stability. His concept of justice extended beyond legal frameworks to include social welfare. He established public complaints courts, ensuring transparency and fairness, even allowing the ruler to be held accountable. His *Siyasatnama* is thus pragmatic advice on governance, emphasizing consultation with wise advisors and effective delegation, and contrasted with the more idealistic writings of his peers (Al-Mulk 2002; Islam 2020).

Ibn Khaldûn (1332-1406) is renowned for his *Muqaddimah* (Introductions), which is considered a foundational work of sociology and historiography. As shown in Box 6.7, he was an unparalleled scholar who analyzed the rise and fall of states, emphasizing the role of social cohesion and economic factors in maintaining political stability. His theories on the cyclical nature of political power remain influential and his intellectual legacy is currently being reappraised.

The relation between state and religion in modern times remains central to Islamic thinking. Jawad (2013) illustrates that some influential Islamic thinkers (i.e. Rachid al-Ghannouchi, a Tunisian politician, 1941-) believe that an Islamic model of democracy will eventually come from a marriage of Islamic ideals and democratic tools, especially after the **Arab Spring**. Many scholars have identified dependency relations with the West as a crucial factor impeding this process (Muqtedar Khan 2006). But an endogenous factor remains the routine dismissal of the need for secularization: Many modern Islamic thinkers argue that there are no tensions between Islam and secularism and modernity, and believe that – unlike the West – Muslim countries do not need this separation: Islam is inherently political and democratic, making the separation of religion and state unnecessary (Jawad 2013: 338-3396).

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Republicanism

REPUBLIC, n. A nation in which, the thing governing and the thing governed being the same, there is only a permitted authority to enforce an optional obedience. In a republic the foundation of public order is the ever lessening habit of submission inherited from ancestors who, being truly governed, submitted because they had to. There are as many kinds of republics as there are gradations between the despotism whence they came and the anarchy whither they lead.
– Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*, 1911

Republicanism is a forgotten doctrine, one that liberalism and **democracy** have completely displaced in the last fifty years. More recently, however, some scholars have developed high hopes for republicanism making a comeback (Lovett 2022: 7). This does not bode well for liberalism and democracy, but, since **socialism** has already bowed to neoliberalism, a discussion about a once-powerful doctrine and practice of the penetrating bourgeoisie is welcome, even if it can only provide a temporary solution to the question about the fundamental orientations of political communities and the world. The Italian political thinker Viroli (2002: 103) was convinced, in the midst of the unchallenged rule of Silvio Berlusconi, that *"republicanism in democratic multicultural countries can be offered as a new political vision of the civic ethos, which reconnects the concepts of freedom and responsibility."*

DEFINITION Republicanism, in its broadest sense, is opposed to **monarchy**. Manfred Schmidt (1995: 835) contrasts the republic with **despotism** and group rule (*Gruppenherrshaft*). He also notes that the republic was used as a synonym for a 'free state,' which primarily meant a state in which the monopoly of violence was limited by the constitution. A further dimension of a republic is related to the limitation of the mandate and elections. In republics, mandates are limited, and rulers are elected. In contrast to this, a monarchy has no term limit, but is lifelong and (often) hereditary, and the ruler takes power by **succession** rather than elections.

Since its beginnings, doctrinal relations within a republic have not been made clear. Polybius in the second century BCE described the Roman Republic as a *"mixed rule in which aristocracy, monarchy and democracy balanced each other, ensuring stability and preventing the constant transition of regime from one form to another"* (Saxonhouse 2001: 13193).

On the great stage, republicanism got its biggest boost from the French Revolution. The American one, though earlier, was then less important in the constellation of the world due to its distance and fragility. But the US carried the torch of republicanism through all the fluctuations in France (Owen 2010: 126). This fact is 'true,' paradoxically, even though, until 1865, the American republic tolerated slavery, the highest degree of unfreedom – see also **revolution**.

Confusion about the relationship between republicanism and democracy is worsened by the situation in the US, whose main parties call themselves by the names Republican and Democratic. The US is an anti-monarchical republican republic, which means that the spirit of republicanism is still very much alive and dominant in political processes.

ORIGINS The republic is a political practice of Roman origin; linguistically, therefore, it has its home in Latin. *Res publica* means a public thing, a common good, a thing that cannot be traded. The Roman political thinker Cicero translated the ancient Greek concept of *politeia* into Latin as *republica*. He introduced the distinction between *res publica* (common good) and *res populi* (thing of the people). 'Republic' was used to denote the bourgeois order in the Greek polis and the Roman city-state, respectively.

The first republic was the Roman republic, but it was a republic under conditions of slavery. It was created after the expulsion of the seventh and last Etruscan king, Tarquinius Superbus, in 509 BCE, and it lasted until the emperor Gaius Octavius Augustus, the first Roman emperor, in 27 BCE. Livy wrote that freedom reigned at that time because the law was stronger than man. During the long period of its existence, this republic could be described as aristocratic or patrician, with fluctuating influence from the plebeians. It pursued freedom, as **Machiavelli** saw it, and this passion for freedom was worthy of emulation by medieval political practice as well. The essence of what the term *civis*, or 'citizen,' carried in the Roman Republic was freedom as opposed to slavery. The main tendency of this arrangement was the common interest, and the actors were the richest class in the cities.

The first slave-free republics arose in the northern part of the Apennine Peninsula (now Italy) in the Middle Ages. Previous forms of political life were useless for the political life of cities. Living together in cities meant a high degree of interdependence. This required a higher degree of equality and free-

dom, and thus also cooperation in the exercise of power, which had to make and implement decisions faster than classical feudalism (see Box 1.14). Pisa in 1085 was the first documented new form of city government. Milan, Genoa, and Arezzo followed by 1100, and then Bologna, Padua, Florence, Lucca, and Siena by 1140. These cities elected their own consuls and conferred judicial authority on them. The highest values of city life were inner peace and unity.

Republicanism was also a powerful political movement that prepared the March Revolution of 1848. The main goal of this movement in Central Europe was the abolition of monarchies and the introduction of republics modeled after the First Republic in the French Revolution. The republic would introduce the values of freedom, equality, and fraternity. Opponents of republicanism, liberals, and conservatives accused republicans of introducing republican terror (Nohlen 1998: 559).

The republican tradition was eventually unified by a common enthusiasm for ideals and a set of institutions: the rule of law, an order where different forces operated as checks and balances of each other, and a regime of civic virtue where people were willing to serve in public office honestly (Pettit 2010: 20).

LITERATURE Quentin R.D. Skinner (cited in Farrelly 2007: 149) argues that republicanism surpassed liberalism in five key points: an oath to the doctrine of the 'invisible hand' (of *laissez-faire* free market economics), an oath to the primacy of rights over duties, a flawed concept of law, a hostility to utilitarianism and a misunderstanding of negative liberty. For James Bohman (2007: 169), the difference between liberal and republican cosmopolitanism lies in the fact that the liberal stops at *"the moral status of individuals independent of political institutions."*

Patten (1996: 36), however, asserts that this could not have happened at all because republicanism *"failed to identify any philosophically significant distinction between these two positions,"* i.e. in relation to liberalism. According to Patten, republicanism is deeply embedded in liberalism, so that there is no significant difference between the two. These are both bourgeois ideologies, which start and stop with the crucial interest of the bourgeoisie in relation to the nobility and the working class.

Viroli (2002: 6) establishes that republicanism is not the opposite of liberalism, but most of the ideas that form the basis of liberalism were developed by the theory of republicanism – the idea of power-sharing, the idea of individual freedom, the idea of limiting power through the constitution and laws. However, republicanism differs from liberalism in that it sees the state as the protector of the life, liberty, and property of the individual. From a theoretical point of view, liberalism is *"an impoverished or incoherent republicanism and by no means an alternative to republicanism"* (Viroli 2002: 61).

Liberalism introduced the idea of natural freedom and the natural rights of the individual. The idea of nature is an absolute argument in the main political battle between the bourgeoisie and the nobility, between capitalism and feudalism. The individual is a free being by nature. People are equal by nature – at birth and in death. Market laws are natural laws. Legitimation by God maintained and still maintains **monarchies**, and the liberal idea of legitimization by nature therefore has more support from natural science than social science.

Republicanism, however, is a political doctrine (**ideology**). It does not refer to nature, but to the public good. The republic is a political community; the republic has a political structure, a hierarchy, an army, a power to protect individual freedom. In accordance with ancient tradition, it builds on the idea that man is a *zoon politikon* (ζῷον πολιτικόν – *animal politique* (in French) – a social animal) and not just a natural being. According to liberal thought, man is free if no one interferes with him. In republicanism, he is free as long as he is not dependent.

As a doctrinal movement, republicanism experienced a renaissance at the end of the twentieth century in the US, as part of the doctrine of communitarianism, which opposes the strict possessive individualism of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Republicans emphasize the following as their ideals: community values, public good over private interest, positive freedom that necessitates people's participation in managing common affairs, civic education and, last but not least, special care for minorities and patriotism (Nohlen 1998: 560). The two main streams of republicanism differ in whether the virtues of the people lie in their having more power and authority, or whether they are more interested in freedom and stability. Madison was closer to the latter position, believing in aristocratic values because they provided the greatest stability. Jefferson's concept of public happiness was closer to the former.

For liberals, any law is a limitation of freedom, whereas republicans understand that the law is the best barrier to protect freedom and reduce the weight of arbitrary power and domination (Viroli 2002: 62). Republicanism is more pro-democratic than Liberalism. Republicanism is *"committed to the public good, which helps to protect individual freedom from the abuses of arrogant rulers and citizens"* (Viroli 2002: 64). Viroli (2002: 67) points out that classical republicanism supported people's participation in government and the education of citizens, but put the importance of good leaders above participation.

Viroli tries to prove, like Rousseau, that republicanism also promotes a sense of equality. No one in the republic should be so poor as to be forced to sell themselves into slavery. Similarly, no one should be so rich that they could command submission from others in a republic. Republicanism thus has a human face, at least to the extent that it is aware of inequality; however, it does not develop any tools against it, as **socialism** desires. As Viroli states, *"A republic is not a profit-oriented corporation, but a way of living together that wants to ensure the dignity of its citizens"* (Viroli 2002: 67).

The republic also has a special relationship with the concept of **democracy**. Viroli (2002: 10) is convinced that the democratic idea is only a radicalization of republicanism. For both doctrines, freedom is the absence of domination and not just non-interference; both also assume that government



exercises the will of the people. He even insists that republicanism is a *"self-governing political community."* The *Encyclopedia Britannica* points out that a republic is a country in which *"power is not directly in the hands of the people, or a thing wholly controlled by the people, in contrast to a democracy"* (Munro 2024).

CLASSIFICATIONS The debate on republicanism has given rise to two main concepts: classical republicanism and neo-republicanism or 'civic republicanism' (Lovett 2022: 1). Classical republicanism is represented mainly by **Machiavelli**, the English republicans, **Montesquieu**, and the American thinkers Jefferson, Madison, and Adams. Its common features are *"the importance of civic virtue and political participation, the dangers of corruption, the benefits of a mixed constitution and the rule of law"* (Lovett 2022: 1). Neo-republicanism is built mainly on the value of *"political liberty, understood as non-domination or independence from arbitrary power"* (Lovett 2022: 1). The first type of republicanism draws from the tradition of the Greek polis, while the second builds on the experience of Roman jurisprudence. Civic republicanism *"reduces the distance between classic republicanism and the mainstream liberal tradition"* (Lovett 2022: 7). In this sense, neo-republicanism is much more easily reconciled with existing political processes and serves as a more convincing apologetic theory of existing liberal democratic political systems.

Owen (2010: 29) presents two types of nineteenth-century republicanism: radical, or even socialist, and conservative. The first was prevalent until 1848, whereas the second prevailed after the victory of the monarchist reaction won, and constitutional monarchy was settled as the dominant system of government.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS The relationship between a republic and a democracy developed particularly dynamically in the US. The US is a republic because it refused to be a democracy. Madison justified a republic as the more appropriate form of government than direct democracy. It reduces the possibility of corruption and, as a representative form of government, it enables operational authority over a greater territory. He also favored the separation of powers and the mechanism of checks-and-balances rather than democracy and the excessive influence of the majority on decision-making. The main idea behind these solutions was to *"limit the power of the state as a factor of legitimate domination"* (Vatter 2001: 13200). Even the Democratic Party itself does not contribute very much to the spread of democracy and thus the softening of the republic. The leading doctrine of both parties is republicanism, the rule of the richest class in the form of some democratic approaches. Even in this context, the idea of revitalizing republicanism is welcome because it better describes the actual situation in the US and the modern world.

The early US republic was decentralized and even federal. At the beginning of the twentieth century, national markets, following the logic of capital concentration, supplanted the denationalized economy, and the early models of the decentralized republic proved inadequate. The new phase of the development of capitalism also required a new political form, a new republic. The formation of great and mighty nations, whether in the form of a monarchy or a republic, were the order of the day. The process of nationalization, of unification into closer nation-states, and the processes of imperialism and nationalism thus laid the ground for the new republics. In the US, this project was most clearly established by Roosevelt with the New Deal. In the second half of the twentieth century, the project stalled and was redirected. According to Sandl (2004: 25), *"the common philosophy of common goals turned into a philosophy of just procedure, the politics of the good into the politics of rights, and the national republic into a procedural republic."* For modern republicans, besides negative freedom and the rule of law, the most important considerations are trade and financial systems (Vatter 2001: 13203).

The republican idea did not have such a great impact in the core of Europe, in Western Europe, in democratic Europe, where many monarchies ruled: Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Monaco, Liechtenstein, the Holy See in the Vatican (elected Monarchy), Denmark, and Andorra. Monarchism also got under the skin of political science. At the end of the twentieth century, Foucault rightly called for the need to 'kill the king:' to eliminate the idea of monarchy, which locates power in a specific person, a specific building, and is therefore unable to understand power relations beyond the mechanistic – for political thought on 'regicide,' see **assassination**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Republicanism radically upgraded the idea of enlightened **absolutism** and constitutional monarchy, demanding the abolition of the **monarchy** as a prerequisite for the rule of the bourgeoisie. Drawing on the traditions of ancient Greece and Rome, it influenced smaller republics, especially those on the Apennine peninsula. Republicanism's first major victory was the American Revolution, followed by the French Revolution. The latter nurtured radical Republicanism until the Spring of Nations in 1848, after which republicanism withdrew its demand for the abolition of monarchies. However, the concept greatly contributed to the **transition** of forms of government from more absolutist versions of monarchies to constitutional monarchies, and finally to the abolition of monarchies and the transition to democratic systems (Owen 2010).

Republicanism lost its revolutionary momentum in the twentieth century when it was replaced by **democracy**. Monarchies agreed to constitutions and thus adapted to the influence of the bourgeoisie. Thus, the idea of democracy was driven not by the bourgeoisie, but by the labor movement, which sought to increase its influence and reduce the influence of the bourgeoisie. The key idea of democracy is a fairer and more equal distribution of wealth in society. The idea of democracy is based on universal suffrage, which admits people into the political process regardless of their social status or wealth, something that is hidden in the idea of republicanism.

Increasingly, the twentieth century flattened the idea of democracy into a narrow republican idea: the absence of arbitrariness and coercion in government (see **tyranny**, **despotism** and **absolutism**). Democracy surpasses the republic only in that it is about positive freedom, which is expressed in direct participation in sovereign debates (Viroli 2002: 11).

NEW FRONTIERS As concerns the understanding of freedom, the relationship between republicanism and **anarchism** should be explored, as both doctrines defend freedom from arbitrary power. For anarchism, the centers of power are mainly the state, capital, and the church, whereas this is not clearly defined in republicanism. It would also be necessary to investigate the relationship between republicanism and democracy, since democracy is a phenomenon linked to the explosion of the labor movement, while republicanism is rather a doctrine of the bourgeoisie and trapped in the defense of 'aristocratic' capitalism. Special attention should also be paid to the relation between republicanism and the accelerated concentration of capital, in individual countries and in the world as a whole, since the latter favors a less democratic political system. It would also be necessary to examine the relationship between **socialism** and republicanism and see if the development of a concept of socialist republicanism is possible.

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Socialism

Socialism and **communism** are connected ideologies that promote collective ownership and aim to reduce social inequalities (like **anarchism**). Yet they differ markedly in their core principles and methods of implementation.

Socialism is an economic and political system in which the means of production, such as factories and resources, are owned and controlled by the state or cooperatives. It allows for some degree of private property and market mechanisms. The government plays a significant role in regulating the economy and redistributing wealth to ensure social welfare. Socialism can coexist with capitalist elements, leading to a mixed economy in which both public and private sectors operate.

Communism, on the other hand, seeks to establish a classless, stateless society where all property is communally owned. In a fully realized communist society, there is no private property, government, or currency. The production and distribution of goods are based on the principle of 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' Communism aims to abolish all class distinctions and create a society where everyone is equal. This ideology often requires the revolutionary overthrow of existing power structures to establish a single-party state that controls all aspects of life.

While this entry does not delve too deeply into the (ideological) distinctions between socialism and communism, understanding them is crucial to the study autocratic regimes for several reasons: Depending on their achieved level of socio-economic transformation, socialist and communist regimes are often referred to as **ideocracies** – a regime type that tends to be more durable than other autocratic systems. This durability is attributed to their strong ideological foundations, which provide a robust basis for regime **legitimation** and elite cohesion. The ideological commitment to a classless society helps maintain internal stability and justify the regime's actions.

Both socialist and communist regimes employ various mechanisms of control and **repression** to maintain power. Autocratic socialist states, such as those following the Soviet model, use a combination of ideological **indoctrination** and violent repression, under the leadership of **single-party regimes**. This blend of external controls and ideological **propaganda** creates a stable, albeit repressive, political environment, keeping both elites and the masses in check. Regimes that transform society according to their political **ideology** – centralizing power in one monistic organization, the vanguard party, rooting out all opposition and dissent – are considered to be totalitarian (see **totalitarianism**).

Box 4.9 provides a basic comparison of socialist and communist movements in all world regions. Studying them in different historical and regional contexts provides insights into how these regimes adapt and evolve over time. Transnational research perspectives highlight the long-term impact of cross-border linkages and transfers on socio-political developments within the Soviet camp (**authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning**), challenging the traditional view of communist regimes as isolated entities. The effects of their socio-economic transformations can last for decades (see **totalitarian legacies** and **revolutionary legacies**).

Box 4.9 Fifty Shades of Socialism

If a lie is only printed often enough, it becomes a quasi-truth, and if such a truth is repeated often enough, it becomes an article of belief, a dogma, and men will die for it.
– Isa Blagden, *The Crown of a Life*, 1869.
The African is not 'Communistic' in his thinking; he is – if I may coin an expression – 'communitary.'
– Julius K. Nyerere, President of Tanganyika, 1960.

Socialism is a large family of movements and ideologies. Their common denominator is their doctrine for public over private ownership, especially regarding the means of production (thus opposed to Capitalism) and their conviction that the yardstick for social and political organization is the community.

Socialism can thus refer to revolutionary socialism, advocating for a swift and radical transformation of society as found in Marxism; it can also refer to social democracy, striving for a correction of the society by fostering equality and justice through democratic means while upholding a capitalist system. On another side of the spectrum, one can find **anarchism** rejecting a centralized role for the state aiming to reinvent society based on voluntary associations and decentralized decision-making.

With many variables, and since different strands of socialism have evolved, it is impossible to provide a static overview of this ideological family. Movements have differed greatly and clashed gravely about the following five dimensions: (a) the degree of private ownership allowed; (b) the centralization of **power**, ranging from (i) monism (e.g., **single-party regimes** espousing Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, *Juche*) and, (ii) pluralism, to (iii) anarchism (e.g., Bakunin's anarcho-communism); (c) the chosen mode of struggle (peaceful and legal vs. violent, armed struggle; with additional nuances: e.g., proletarian **revolution** vs. *foquismo* – see Box 5.9); (d) the intended scope of transformation: solely domestic (e.g., Stalinism, *Juche*) or also international (e.g. Leninism, Trotskyism, etc.); (e) their tolerance for religion and local customs and traditions; with on one end Hoxha's

atheist Albania and on the other Arab Socialism.

Marxism-Leninism was the official state ideology adopted by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and also the official ideology of the vast majority of the socialist regimes in the twentieth century. The name is derived from Lenin's (re)interpretation of some of the elements of Marx's political, economic and social theory. Marxism-Leninism was based on the idea of the necessity of class struggle in capitalist societies and the need for revolution.

The basic elements of Marxism-Leninism (as adopted in the USSR) were laid out in Lenin's works, especially in *What is to be Done?*, the *April Theses*, and *State and Revolution*. Imperialist wars, as predicted by Lenin (1917) in his book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, would lead to the collapse of capitalism and make revolution inevitable. One of the basic elements was also the question of the timing of revolutionary efforts. Lenin reinterprets Marx's rather teleological and technological premises but emphasizes the potential of revolutionary struggle in different contexts. He emphasized the vanguard party of professional revolutionaries who could lead the masses of the working classes in the struggle against the bourgeoisie. The basic elements of Marxist-Leninist ideology, as adopted in the USSR and later modified by Stalin, were based on dialectical materialism, the thesis of the necessity of party rule instead of the rule (dictatorship) of the proletariat (cf. Box 1.3).

Unity in the ranks was paramount. Already, under Lenin, factionalism was not forgiven. The 'Mensheviks' (меньшевики – *mensheviki*, derived from the Russian word for 'minority') – initially (1903) a faction in the *Russian Social Democratic Labor Party*, but later a separate political party after their 1912 split-off from Lenin's 'Bolsheviks' (the 'majority') – clashed with Lenin over party membership criteria, the search for political allies (bourgeoisie, centrists vs. peasants), geopolitics (WWI), and mode of struggle (legal vs. violent). After the October Revolution (1917) the Mensheviks were ousted in a **coup** together with the other parties in the Provisional Government. They were declared illegal after the 1921 Kronstadt rebellion, a naval insurrection in the Gulf of Finland near Petrograd (Leningrad/Saint-Petersburg). Afterwards, Menshevik party members either emigrated, changed sides or ended up arrested in the Russian Civil War. Still, for many who stayed, their past came to hunt them, as former Mensheviks were among the early victims of Stalin's Great Purge. Even emigration did not equal safety, as illustrated by the fate of Trotsky. (Liebich 1997; Broido 2019)

The *Comintern*, or the *Communist International*, was established in March 1919 in Moscow with the primary aim of promoting world **revolution**. This initiative sought to unite communist parties globally in the fight against capitalism and the establishment of a global communist society. However, it quickly became a tool for Soviet control over the international communist movement, evident through its administrative structures and the loyalty foreign communists felt towards the Soviet Union. As global political realities shifted, the *Comintern* adapted its strategies, supporting anti-fascist efforts and becoming instrumental in shaping early twentieth-century communist movements. Nevertheless, it eventually dissolved in 1943 under Stalin's directive, partly to alleviate fears of communist subversion among the Allied powers during WWII.

After Lenin's death, Stalin's interpretation of Marxist-Leninist ideology became prevalent and solidified in the *Comintern*'s political doctrine. One should not disregard the apparent differences between Marx's thought and the later use by certain Bolsheviks. In particular, Stalin's 'codification' of the true doctrine of Marxism-Leninism was instrumentalized in legitimizing his regime. The reinterpretation was nothing new. Different interpretations of Marxism had even distanced Karl Marx (1818-1883) from his own literature during his lifetime – so much so that he famously declared that "he was certain he knew that he was not a Marxist" *("ce qu'il y a de certain c'est que moi, je ne suis pas marxiste")*.

Differences with Leninism also manifested themselves in the former's revolutionary drive. Defended by Trotsky but abolished by Stalin, who formulated the idea of 'socialism in one country' in its stead. Stalinism thus embraced *"an intense parochialism closely associated with the traditional patterns of Russian history: a fear and suspicion of the West – even with Western Communist parties and socialist regimes – and a belief in the self-sufficiency of the Russian society. The initial internationalist impetus of the Revolution was followed (…) by an intense nationalism."* The outcome and model were Russian and "to be imitated in a servile way manner and never questioned." (Macridis 1952: 220)

With all rivals out of the way, there was no ideological opposition left to stop Stalin's name from being added to the pantheon of formative thinkers, hence: 'Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism,' while a reformulation in the form of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism was adopted in China after the Sino-Soviet split (cf. Box 3.9) in the 1960s.

The transition from the *Comintern* to the *Cominform* in 1947 marked a significant shift in international communist strategy. The *Cominform*'s establishment reflected the intensification of the Cold War and Moscow's desire to consolidate control over European communist parties, particularly amidst tensions with the United States. The expulsion of the *Yugoslav Communist Party* from the *Cominform* in 1948 highlighted its role in enforcing Stalinist orthodoxy. Unlike its predecessor, the *Cominform* focused on coordinating communist governments in the Soviet bloc according to Stalinist principles, aligning with the emerging Cold War dynamics. Its dissolution in 1956, amidst de-Stalinization (cf. Box 3.4) and Soviet efforts to improve relations with Yugoslavia, signaled Moscow's understanding of a changed geopolitical order with a growing group of prominent (East) Asian communist regimes.

When the satellite states in Eastern Europe disobeyed the directions of Moscow, brute force was used to ensure they kept in step with the official Marxist-Leninist agenda. For instance, the crackdown on Czechoslovakia's ideological aberration of 'Socialism with a Human Face' (*socialismus s lidskou tváří* in Czech, *socializmus s ľudskou tvárou* in Slovak). It had started with economic and political reforms (under the auspices of the *Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*) with the fresh chairmanship of Alexander Dubček after January 1968. The reforms aimed at liberalization (including press freedom) and rebuilding popular support for communist rule but swiftly got out of control, resulting in party factionalism,



anti-Soviet polemics, and unsanctioned grassroots initiatives. This 'Prague Spring' was brutally suppressed with an invasion by the Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968.

Enforcing the orthodoxy of 'scientific Marxism' was only possible under conditions of direct control (or the credible threat of force). In its international relations, the USSR had to tolerate uncontrollable neighbors (like Tito) and be more pragmatic with far-away allies regarding their homegrown *couleur locale* like *Juche* or Arab Socialism.

The origins of Titoism (and Maoism, for that matter) were partly rooted in personal animosity. Josip Broz Tito's clash with Stalin is a story of an exemplary pupil going rogue, rejecting Soviet authority after the latter attempted to control the hard-won Yugoslav gains after WWII. Tito broke ranks by defecting from the *Comintern* in early 1948 and ideologically challenged Stalinism by positing that there were multiple roads to the paradise of Socialism, even when some ran against the path chosen by the USSR. Titoism is not so much a cohesive ideology but more a state-oriented offshoot of the scientific Marxist branch, in which Tito safeguarded the right to ideological adaptation for himself – just like in ultra-nationalist regimes like Kim Il-Sung in North Korea after de-Stalinization (see Box 3.4) – as well as the freedom to pursue his alliances (e.g., with the West). It is also a rejection of Russian dominance in the *Comintern*, where its member states refused to allow Stalin to appropriate to himself the right of the ultimate decision. (Macridis 1952: 220).

Titoism was based on three predominant ideological and practical elements. First, the brotherhood and unity concept aimed at superseding the national identities alongside the construction of the supranational Yugoslav identity. The second important element was the negation of the state ownership of the USSR and other real-socialist regimes. Namely, the accusation in Yugoslavia was that the USSR was an imperialist power, which also meant that it did not implement the proper form of socialism if it was socialism at all – imperialism was, according to Lenin, the highest stage of capitalism. Therefore, a new concept of workers' self-management was introduced, which was based on social ownership of the means of production and companies as well as on the many different levels of workers' councils and of workers' representatives within the political system (Kirn 2019; Jakovina & Previšić 2020). The third element was a practical move toward creating and leading the non-aligned movement with many Asian, African and Latin American countries, as opposed to the bipolar split between the US and the USSR, while clearly advocating for a left politics, but different from the Stalinist practice (Jakovina 2011; Stubbs 2023).

Communism in Southeast, East and South Asia emerged as early as 1920 (Indonesia), 1921 (China) and 1925 (India and Vietnam), respectively, and diverged from its European counterparts due to the region's unique historical and socio-political conditions. In Southeast Asia, communism evolved within anti-colonial struggles and national liberation movements, with communist parties in countries like Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Indonesia emerging as leading forces against colonial rule. In South Asia, its offshoots were founded primarily in response to colonial oppression and exploitation under British rule, and the *Communist Party of India* had direct ties to British communists. In East Asia, communist networks were formed through a combination of peasant uprisings, intellectual ferment, and revolutionary fervor with ties to Russia, hardened by partisan warfare against Japanese occupation and domestic rivals. (Guan 2018)

All these movements adapted communist ideology to local contexts, integrating elements of nationalism, anti-imperialism, and agrarian reform, with a significant reliance on peasant support. In contrast, European communism was influenced by industrial and class struggles within advanced capitalist societies, emphasizing the industrial proletariat as the vanguard of revolution and focusing on Marxist-Leninist principles. Southeast Asian communist movements engaged in prolonged armed struggles, such as the First and Second Indochina Wars, while post-WWII European communism largely participated in electoral politics within existing state structures.

Maoism and *Juche* are adaptations of communist ideology shaped by unique national and regional geopolitical contexts, characterized by their distinctive principles and emphasis on specific revolutionary strategies.

Maoism, developed by Mao Zedong (毛泽东 – *Máo Zédōng*, often spelled as 'Mao Tse-tung' when using the Wide-Giles transliteration) in China, diverges from traditional Marxist-Leninism in its emphasis on the peasantry as the main revolutionary force, with the concept of the People's War advocating rural-based guerrilla warfare. Mao conceptualized the peasantry as both a revolutionary subject and a main revolutionary force, distinguishing between the leadership role of the proletariat and the mass revolutionary potential of the peasantry. He saw the peasantry's numerical strength and their direct interest in overthrowing the feudal structures as key to the success of the revolution. Mao's strategy involved mobilizing the peasantry through peasant associations, promoting land reform to redistribute land from landlords to peasants, and engaging the peasantry in guerrilla warfare and other forms of struggle (Hočevar 2019). Mass mobilization, expressed through the 'Mass Line' method, is crucial in Maoism, involving consulting the masses, interpreting their suggestions, and enforcing resulting policies (thus making ideological deviation from scientific socialism possible). Continuous revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat, exemplified by the Cultural Revolution, is another key aspect. Mao believed that class struggle continued under socialism and that the bourgeoisie could re-emerge within the Communist Party itself, necessitating periodic cultural and political campaigns to prevent capitalist restoration. Maoism also advocates for self-reliance in economic development.

Juche (주체 – 'self-reliance'), developed (but not coined) by Kim Il-Sung in North Korea, focuses on political independence, economic self-sustenance, and military self-defense. It is an ultra-nationalist adaptation of Stalinism, upholding political independence (*Chajusŏng* – independent spirit) from imperialist powers, promoting self-sufficient economic policies, and maintaining a powerful military capability for national defense. (Koo 1993) A distinctive feature of *Juche* is its leader-centric philosophy, with a strong cult of personality around the Kim family. The ideology has led to North Korea's policy

of isolationism, with the country largely cut off from the outside world. This isolation serves to protect the regime from external influence and control the flow of information to the populace.

Both Maoism and *Juche* differ from traditional Marxism-Leninism. Maoism diverges by prioritizing the peasantry over the urban proletariat as the main revolutionary force. Both ideologies incorporate strong elements of nationalism and self-reliance, departing from the original internationalist outlook of traditional Marxism-Leninism. Additionally, both Maoism and Juche developed strong **personality cults** around their leaders, which is not inherent to Marxism-Leninism.

Latin American strands similarly adapted to their unique historical, social, and economic conditions, integrating their revolutionary history (*Bolivarismo* – see Box 3.8). Latin American communist movements tailored their strategies to address issues such as land reform, indigenous rights, and colonial legacies, employing diverse revolutionary tactics from armed guerrilla warfare to electoral participation. The Cuban Revolution, particularly Fidel Castro's leadership and Che Guevara's *foco* theory of guerrilla warfare (see Box 5.9) profoundly influenced communism on the Latin American continent, shaping its trajectory. Moreover, while some Latin American communist groups received support from the USSR, others upheld their independence or even critiqued Moscow, especially after events like the Cuban Missile Crisis or the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The region's communist movements were also greatly impacted by US interventions, including military coups, economic sanctions, and support for anti-communist regimes, the latter of which arguably pressed their mark much deeper on Latin American history in many cases. Latin American communism often intertwined with broader social movements, incorporating peasants, Indigenous groups, and marginalized communities, reflecting the region's complex social hierarchies and ethnic diversity. (Field et al. 2020; Brands 2012)

African Socialism emerged across various African nations post-colonization, blending Marxism with indigenous values and modernization ideals. It served as a guiding philosophy for leaders seeking national unity, economic growth, and independence from Cold War influences. This ideology, distinct from Marxism-Leninism, amalgamates Marxist principles with traditional African communalism, allowing for a mixed economy and diverse political strategies, often adopting non-alignment in global affairs. African Socialism prioritizes cultural identity and socioeconomic heritage, fostering a unique path to development while being receptive to foreign investment and cooperation with both Eastern and Western powers.

In contrast to Marxism-Leninism, which is centered on the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as the driving force of historical development, African Socialism focuses on preventing the emergence of class divisions and exploitation. It seeks to integrate socialist ideas with African communal traditions and modernization efforts, aiming to create a modern variety of socialism adapted to the African environment. Its take on class is rooted in the traditional values and practices of African society, many of which were disrupted during colonial rule. African socialists generally deny the existence of classes or a class struggle in African society, as they are understood in Marxist theory. Instead, they acknowledge the presence of 'social groups' competing for influence but reject the notion that these groups constitute classes in the Marxist sense. For instance, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first president of Senegal, argued that there was no exploitation of man by his fellow in Africa, and the challenge was not to end such exploitation but to prevent it from ever happening. (Friedland & Rosberg 1964; Klinghoffer 1969)

African Socialism's take on religion was generally accommodating and sought to integrate religious beliefs with socialist principles rather than opposing or seeking to eliminate religion. This approach was notably different from the atheistic stance of early Marxism-Leninism, which often viewed religion as an opiate of the masses that needed to be eradicated or at least marginalized in a socialist society. Soviet thinkers modulated their stance, finding that socialism was not incompatible with Islam or other religions and that the latter would eventually fade under established Socialism. (Klinghoffer 1969)

Arab Socialism (see also 'Baʿathism' in Box 4.5) was a blend of pan-Arabism, Arab nationalism, anti-feudal and decolonial fervor with Islamic thought (especially its prescriptions about social justice). Epitomized by leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser in the mid-twentieth century, this amalgam merged pan-Arabism with socialist principles, aiming to foster social justice, economic progress, and political autonomy within an Arab nationalist framework. Key economic strategies included the nationalization of foreign-owned enterprises, land redistribution to peasants, and centralized planning to steer development. Politically, it championed Arab unity, expanded social welfare, and advocated for workers' rights through legislative measures. Distinguishing itself from Marxism-Leninism, Arab Socialism emphasized nationalism over class struggle, integrated Islam into its ideology, and represented a departure from both Western capitalism and Soviet communism, seeking to forge a path tailored to the specific historical and cultural context of the Arab world. Ultimately, Arab unity was abandoned for more narrow nationalist projects as the *Baʿath* party split across territorial lines.

The decline of Arab Socialism and African Socialism was driven by internal factors such as incomplete socialization, shifts in class alliances (e.g., the Arab militaries abandoning the worker class), and economic challenges, as well as external pressures including the global ideological shift towards neoliberalism and the influence of international financial institutions. These factors led to a reorientation of economic and political policies away from socialist principles towards neoliberal models, contributing to the end of the socialist era in these regions (Kadri 2016).

In conclusion, communist regimes stand apart from other forms of dictatorships due to their possession of an ideological framework aimed at profound societal and socioeconomic transformation. Rooted in Marxist-Leninist thought, these regimes often face the necessity of defending their revolutions against counter-revolutionary forces, resulting in the development of robust military apparatuses and stringent political control. Due to their violent origins (cf. **revolutionary legacies**), most communist regimes acquire tight political control over their armed forces and tend to be less susceptible to **coups**.



While adhering too closely to this ideological blueprint may limit flexibility and adaptation, moments like de-Stalinization (cf. Box 3.4) have marked significant shifts, leading to intense reinventions of Marxist-Leninist ideology after 1956 in allied regimes. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, surviving communist regimes have displayed enormous resilience and adaptability, fostering a distinct class of elites often generationally tied to the original revolutionaries. **Personalist rule** and **personality cults** have been most common among founding revolutionary leaders, but over time, most regimes tend to evolve towards more collegial governance. Notable exceptions such as North Korea and concerning trends like the **personalization** under Xi Jinping in China underscore alternative paths.

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Ultra-Nationalism

One dreads to contemplate the world that the new nationalism is producing: a world of illusions, of mysteries of 'Blut und Boden,' of spiritual emptiness, and of maddening excitement.
– Joseph Sidney Werlin

We don't want to fight but by Jingo if we do
We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too
We've fought the Bear before, and while we're Britons true
The Russians shall not have Constantinople!
– British nationalist pub ballad, written by G.W. Hunt
and popularized by G.H. MacDermott (1878)

Ultra-nationalism or hyper-nationalism are, of course, an extreme version of **nationalism**, treating nationalist tenets as absolute. This can translate into aggressive foreign policies and the justification of violent means in domestic and international politics. It is most commonly associated with **fascism** as the **ideology** of an authoritarian **political regime**.

DEFINITION Ultra-nationalism can be defined as a far-right **ideology**. It is an excessive form of nationalist ideology and identity that is characterized by extreme positions concerning the nature of the nation and its relationships with other nations, and is a fundamental part of fascist ideology (Griffin 2015). It can be government-promoted or the ideology of specific movements (Rockman 2019). This ideology rests on imagining the nation simultaneously in primordial terms as a 'natural' organism, to which every member is naturally connected, and which is 'naturally' tied to a specific territory. In historical terms, it is conceived as having a glorious past and a potentially glorious future. Its essence is not only a presumed common heritage but also a specific way of life, and an ultra-conservative, hierarchical, patriarchal, sexist, heteronormative, racist and classist organization of society in which all people play their 'natural,' unequal, social roles (Griffin 2015; Stanley 2021).

This situation is mirrored at the international/global level, where nations are imagined hierarchically, and the home nation considered superior to other nations. The latter are not only imagined as inferior but also perceived as a threat that must be confronted (Gröppmaier 2019; Mearsheimer 1990). Hence, ultra- or hyper-nationalism is characterized by a suspicion of other nations as well as by the fear that the nation's greatness, its essence, can be harmed by external and internal enemies or threats (Jackson 2021; Zhao 2000).

That the nation is constantly under threat is a central notion. It serves to rationalize and legitimize aggressive rhetoric and violent action against any imagined threat. Unflinching loyalty, devotion and allegiance to the nation and the nation-state is therefore a fundamental element of ultra-nationalism, and any perceived deviation is imagined as a threat to the glory and/or rejuvenation of the nation (Leidig 2020). Ultra-nationalism is inherently against diversity; it is anti-individualistic, intolerant, anti-democratic, anti-international; it can be militaristic and expansionist and also protectionist (Peucker & Smith 2019). It is generated and/or magnified by chauvinistic myths (Van Evera 1990).

SEE ALSO The concept of ultra- or hyper-nationalism as an extreme form of **nationalism** is closely connected with the doctrines of **fascism**, **Nazism**, jingoism and other far-right political ideologies, and their over-politicization of society in black-and-white and populist terms (see **racism** and **populism**). This dichotomized political **ideology** is applied to justify both domestic policies of **repression** and a **foreign policy** defending the nation's sovereignty and militantly dealing with perceived threats, including **foreign invasion**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The concept of ultra- or hyper-nationalism was developed and utilized to analyze both historical and contemporary political regimes, movements and ideologies. These can differ substantially but are organized around an excessive form of far-right nationalist ideology. Ultra- or hyper-nationalism is an older and broader concept than **fascism**, which continues to form a part of the analyses of political regimes and of conflicts, violence and wars.

ORIGIN Historically, ultra- or hyper-nationalism has been closely connected with the development of the concepts of chauvinism (a) and jingoism (b) and the social movements to which they refer. From the French *chauvinisme* (a), the former refers to an exaggerated and irrational belief in the superiority of one's own group, often coupled with a disdain for other groups. This ideology can manifest itself in various forms, including national, gender, and cultural chauvinism. The term derives from Nicolas Chauvin, a legendary (perhaps fictional) soldier, reputedly one of Napoleon Bonaparte's most zealous and loyal supporters. Jingoism (b) is characterized by extreme nationalism and aggressive **foreign policy**. It involves a fervent belief in the superiority and righteousness of one's own nation, often accompanied with the willingness to use military force to achieve national objectives. (Note: the epigraph of G.W. Hunt's popular war song, above, was the direct inspiration for the term 'jingoism,' coined by G.J. Holyoake (1817-1906) in 1878. 'By jingo' is a euphemism for 'by Jesus' – cf. *par Dieu* in French) (Harper, no date).

The two movements and their related concepts



developed in the nineteenth century in France and Britain. They involved an excessive, irrational patriotism and an aggressive militarism in foreign policy (Demiashkevich 1930; Paton 1915). Ultra-nationalism was and is used to describe the ideology of the far-right precursor movements of modern fascism, such as the *Boulanger*, *Maurras* and *Sorel* movements; and also of the fascist movements and regimes of the first half of the twentieth century themselves (Tucker 1955). It has also been utilized in the analysis of nineteenth-century German nationalism and the interrogation of the causes of WWI and WWII (Latour 1955; Werlin 1939). It was further utilized to analyze the nature of the Japanese fascist regime (see Box 4.2) and its imposition of a particular hyper-nationalist ideology that helped establish a restrictive and particularistic modernity project (Fujiwara 1956; Maruyama 1969).

LITERATURE Modern scholarship on ultra-nationalism in the period since WWII has continued to study far-right movements, regimes, phenomena and ideological characteristics addressed by the first studies, which were mainly focused on the West European and wider Western context, including Japan. For example, some scholars argue that the ultra-nationalist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an artificial phenomenon engineered by elites, serving to persuade publics to tolerate the great stratification of European societies of the time (Van Evera 1990: 28). Fascist regimes from Nazi Germany to the ultra-nationalistic Shinto Japanese empire have been subject to even more systematic study, focused on their various characteristics, including their ultra- or hyper-nationalist nature (see Skya 2009). Yet there has also been a significant expansion in the number of analyses addressing and interrogating the geopolitical scope of and causes and conditions for the (re)appearance of ultra- or hyper-nationalist ideologies, movements, political parties and even regimes. This was and is inherently and inextricably connected with broader socio-political and politico-economic transformations that affected specific local geopolitical contexts and/or global structures and relationships as a whole since the 1950s.

For instance, decolonization processes, anti-colonial movements and the development of post-colonial political regimes in Asia and Africa have been analyzed in terms of the ultra- or hyper-nationalist analytical framework, as scholars perceived a specific transformation of an earlier nationalist ideology into a 'degenerative' hyper-nationalist form that was reactive and exclusionary, and which dismantled its initial universalist character (Olorunsola & Vaitheswaran 1970; Fanon 1961). Ultra- or hyper-nationalism was also studied in the context of the post-World War II Zionist movement, focusing on far-right Zionist factions and on the politics of the newly created state of Israel, which established an ultra-nationalist exclusionary regime with respect to the Palestinians (Zureik 2020).

EXAMPLES & REGIONAL VARIATIONS Intensifying economic globalization since the late 1970s, linked to far-reaching multidimensional local and global political and economic transformations and crises, especially in 'Third World' and 'Eastern bloc' societies, established a novel context for the development of ultra- or hyper-nationalist movements and ideologies and regimes. This ushered in an intensification of research into ultra- or hyper-nationalism. In the European context, there was a focus on Eastern Europe, including Russia, and the movements that appeared in the fraught transition from state socialism to a liberal-democratic capitalist system, one characterized by radical social upheaval, suffering, economic and political crises, and rising poverty and inequality. Study turned to the exclusionary, anti-liberal, racist, sexist, and xenophobic nature of these movements and parties, and to the appeal and popularity they gained as they provided 'simple solutions' (excluding and removing specific groups of people) to complex problems (Higley & Pakulski 1995; Katsiyiannis 1996; Miller 1992; Mudde 2000).

The modern Yugoslav wars (1991-1995) constituted a specific field of ultra- or hyper-nationalism research. Here, ultra-nationalism served as the central analytical framework for understanding the causes of these wars. Rather controversially, mainstream research understood them as having direct roots in the dormant ultra-nationalism of the Balkan wars of the early twentieth century (Gallagher 2003). In the late 1990s and especially in the 2000s, there was an increased focus on the West European context and the rise of movements, parties, and ideologies opposed to the further EU integration enacted in the early 2000s. These movements perceived the latter as further eroding national sovereignty. The global financial crisis and its aftermath – the Euro crisis and the various austerity policies that were implemented to address it – severely impacted the living standards of Europeans and people around the world, established the conditions for and fostered the growth of ultra- or hyper-nationalism around the world. Both the phenomenon itself and analyses of it substantially intensified and increased by the 2010s. In a context especially marked by the appearance and success of far-right movements and right-wing populist movements, parties and leaders were analyzed. Ultra-nationalism was perceived as one of the crucial elements in their ideologies and policies. Analyses focused on far-right, neo-Nazi, racist, xenophobic parties like the Greek 'Golden Dawn' (Χρυσή Αυγή – *Chrysí Avgí*) and the Hungarian *Jobbik* (translated as both 'better choice' and 'more to the right'). The ruling Hungarian right-wing party and its leader Viktor Orbán represented a specific focus of research along with other prominent right-wing populist leaders in Europe (Kyriazi 2016; Lamour & Varga 2020; Vasilopoulou & Halikiopoulou 2015).

As regards leaders and regimes outside of the European context, R.T. Erdoğan's Turkey, Narendra Modi's India, Jair Bolsonaro's Brazil, Mohammed bin Salman ('MBS') al-Saud in Saudi Arabia, V.V. Putin's Russia and Xi Jinping's China have been analyzed from the perspective of their ultra-nationalist character (Friend & Thayer 2017; Juneau 2019; Leidig 2020; Öniş 2004; Sajjanhar 2022; Shlykov 2021; Zhu

& Berry 2009). In these cases, many studies extended the understanding of earlier historical political processes considered crucial to explaining contemporary political developments in various part of the world. For instance, Modi's rise and the rise of his *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) have been linked to the Hindu ultra-nationalist *Hindutva* movement and its various organizations and their long-term development since the early twentieth century (Leidig 2020; Mayaram 2022).

There is continuous interest in the Trump phenomenon in the US (Haider 2018; Jackson 2021) and the various far-right populist movements and parties in other non-European Western states, like Australia (Peucker & Smith 2019).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES One of the central issues affecting many analyses of ultra-nationalism is the absence of a firm and comprehensive definition of the term, which is mostly treated as self-evident and seldom critically scrutinized as a concept. Consequently, in many studies, the concept lacks clarity and has limited analytical potential. Little space is devoted to define and delineate it clearly in connection to 'normal,' 'non-excessive' and 'non-extreme' forms of **nationalism** and nationalist ideologies. Some critical scholars (Sanchez 1999) argue that the term has historically been applied by Western powers, especially the US, in their political, policy and academic discourses to delegitimize any national interests or popular policies in 'Third World' countries that were contrary to the interests of (specific) Western powers.

Beyond the lack of a specific delineation of ultra-nationalism, the concept is mostly linked to **fascism** (treated as a regime type), which – due to its own methodological issues – further complicates advancing the field of comparative authoritarianism beyond in-depth case studies. As in the case of **racism**, the majority of scholars of ultra-nationalism have a background in history, sociology, or cultural studies; whereas mainstream dictatorship studies are dominated by political science, political philosophy and area studies. This hinders the cross-fertilization of insights.

The present socio-political, politico-economic, geopolitical, and ecological situation is characterized by multiple and multidimensional crises destabilizing the existing order at the local, national and global levels. As this is likely to continue, we can expect that the phenomenon of ultra- or hyper-nationalism will not only remain an object of study, but gain even more attention in the future.

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SECTION 5
ORIGINS, TRANSITIONS & BREAKDOWNS







50 Ngultrums, Bhutan (2008-2021), depicting King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

1 Dollar (Ringgit), Brunei Darussalam (1996), depicting Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, the 29th and current ruler.

1 Rupee, Nepal (1974), depicting King Birendra Bir Bikhram, Shah Dev.



Assassination

Es ist nichts … es ist nichts … es ist nichts
(It is nothing … it is nothing … it is nothing)
– Last words of Franz-Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, after being shot (on 28 June 1914), as accounted by Count Harrach.

(…) it is lawfull, and hath been held so through all ages, for any who have the power, to call to account a tyrant, or wicked king, and after due conviction, to depose and put him to death.
– John Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* 1649.

Political assassination conjures up romantic images from a range of Shakespearian plays covering tyrannicide or its aftermath *(Macbeth, Richard II, Hamlet,* and *Julius Caesar*) to movies on regicide like *Richard III* (1995) and *To Kill a King* (2003), or those like *V for Vendetta* (2005) that depict related political terrorism. Most famous of all is Frederick Forsyth's novel *The Day of the Jackal* (1971) with its sensational plot to kill Charles de Gaulle, the French president. Less well-known but intriguing are the award-wining novels *The Feast of the Goat* by Mario Vargas Llosa (2000; 2001), dramatizing the assassination of Rafael Trujillo, the dictator of the Dominican Republic, and Mohammed Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), which explores the mysterious 1988 plane crash that killed General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, then the strongman of Pakistan.

SEE ALSO Political killing is a practice with a long tradition in many domains of comparative politics: The assassination of rulers (A), the selective killing of political rivals (B), and the high-profile murder of state officials as an act of terror (C), the targeted elimination of foreign threats (D). All of these are forms of political violence – within their respective analytical domains of **transitions** and **succession** (A), **repression** (B), **terrorism** (C), and security studies or foreign policy analysis (D). However, this entry will primarily focus on the political assassination of (autocratic) rulers (A), the motivations behind such actions, the impact on regime outcomes, and the canon of ideas justifying 'regicide' or 'tyrannicide' – justifications drawn from **religions** or anti-monarchic **ideologies** like **republicanism**, **anarchism**, and **ultra-nationalism**.

As concerns actors, **intelligence services** have been associated with all four types of these covert activities; however, sometimes **paramilitaries & death squads** are enlisted to eliminate political rivals (B) or sow terror (C). Logically, **terror groups**, mainly resonate with the murder of state officials (C) and sometimes even kings or presidents (A), as in the case of anarcho-communists and their 'propaganda of the deed.' Militaries (and **presidential guards**) have been known to kill rulers (A) by accident or design, as part of a larger plot to execute a **coup**.

DEFINITION For a long time, scholars have struggled to untangle this concept by separating it from related and overlapping phenomena (cf. Esquivel 1979; George 1988). A complete overview of the evolution of definitions would be tedious. Therefore, this entry aspires to show that small variations in some defining elements drastically alter the scope and interpretation of what constitutes political murder, as indicated by categories A to E in this entry.

Ford (1987: 2) defines 'political assassination' as *"the intentional killing of a specified victim or group of victims, perpetrated for reasons related to his (her, their) public prominence and undertaking with a political purpose in view."* All other forms, any 'homicide related to the body politic and its governance,' fall under the broader label of political murder, and are thus the lethal outcome of various forms of political violence, covered in categories B, C, D.

An attempted political assassination of a ruler (A) takes place when, for political reasons, one or more perpetrators take concrete, illegal actions to kill the incumbent leadership. There are a lot of nuances to unpack. For starters, (i) how many assailants are there? Is the attack the work of a lone wolf or a conspiracy? Second, (ii) are the perpetrators regime insiders or not? If they are insiders, and politically motivated, was the assassination meant to destabilize the regime (and hopefully result in its collapse (a)), seek (abrupt) policy change (b), initiate the **succession** to a more favorable candidate (c), or was it retribution for the betrayal of ideological or political or religious values (fanaticism (d))? If the killers were outsiders, was their goal political chaos and instability (a), policy change (b), revenge (c) or to win publicity for a cause or demonstrate the vulnerability of a government (C).

Next (iii), if the killing was executed by 'state actors' and operated in the framework of a larger plot to seize power, it falls under a **coup** and thus has radically different domestic and international implications**.** In this case, the killing itself is secondary to the conspiracy to usurp power, and could be accidental (e.g., the Diệm brothers in South Vietnam in 1963; Salvador Allende in Chile in 1973), improvised (Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi in Japan in 1932), or deliberate. In **monarchies**, 'regicide' was usually part of the package of putting a preferred candidate on the throne (executing a coup for the purpose of forcing a **succession** – c). In Europe this practice was largely abandoned with the systematic introduction of hereditary succession, legitimate birth and primogeniture (cf. Box 5.10), accompanied by divine laws against murder, although Bagge (2019) finds that the practice continued unabated in strong monarchies with robust bureaucracies, like Byzantium, where succession was not in peril. In the latter, regicide may have provided a safety valve against bad rulers,

Table 5.1 – The Spectrum of Political Assassinations

Number of assailants (i)	**Regime-organized (ii)**	**Coup or not (iii)**	**Foreign conspiracy (iv)**	**Motivation (v)**	**Perpetrator(s)**	**Target (vi)**	**Classicifation** *(See LEGEND)* ***Example*** *(if applies)*	
One	Outsider	No	(-)	Political	Lone wolf Fanatic/ zealot	Supreme ruler	A (a, b, d)	I
						Supreme ruler + other elites	C	
				Criminal	(-)	Felony murder		
				Personal	(-)	Vendetta, mental illness		
	Insider	No	(-)	Political	Lone wolf Fanatic/ zealot Defector	Supreme ruler	A (b, c, d)	II
					Regime insider	Other elites	E	
				Criminal	(-)	Felony murder, 'settling a score,' silence a witness		
				Personal	(-)	Vendetta, mental illness		III
Few / Many	Insider	Yes	(-)	Political	Inner circle	Supreme ruler	Palace coup	
					Crown prince		Royal coup	
					Other regime actors		Regular coup	
		No	(-)	Political	Inner circle	Supreme ruler	A (b, c, d)	IV
					Defectors		A (a)	V
					Other regime actors		A (b, d)	VI
					Supreme ruler	Other elites	B-D (consolidation of power)	VII
					Inner circle		B (purges), E	
					Other regime actors		E	
				Criminal	(-)	Felony murder, 'settling a score,' cover-up, turf war		
				Personal	(-)	Vendetta		

	Outsider	Yes	No	Political	Non-regime actors	Supreme ruler + other elites	Regular coup	
			Yes			Supreme ruler + other elites	Foreign backed-coup	
		No	No	Political	Former allies Fanatics/ zealots Opposition	Supreme ruler	A (a, b, d)	VIII
			No/Yes		Terrorists	Supreme ruler + other elites	C	IX
			Yes	Political	International conspiracy	Supreme ruler + other elites	D	X
			No/Yes	Criminal	Hitmen	Contract killing		
			No/Yes	Personal	(-)	Vendetta		

LEGEND: (-) not specified or relevant for this type.
A – the assassination of the supreme powerholder(s)
  a) destabilize the regime
  b) seek instant policy change
  c) initiate succession
  d) retribution
B – the selective killing of political rivals (repression)
C – high-profile murder of state officials as an act of terror
D – targeted elimination of foreign threats
E – elite infighting

Source: Author's own work.

as long as it did not lead to prolonged civil war.

(Note that perpetrators who are 'state actors' can be regime insiders (see 'palace coup' or 'royal coup'), but need not be. If, in a plot to seize power, the perpetrators are not state agents, the whole action would rather fall under **revolution** or **foreign invasion**.)

Moreover, (iv) if the perpetrators are part of a larger conspiracy, initiated and planned abroad, the political assassination (A) is usually linked to forcible **regime promotion**, thus falls under extreme measures of **authoritarian promotion** within wider consideration of International Relations. A good example would be the killing of communist ruler, Hafizullah Amin on 27 December 1979, during *Operation Storm-333* (Шторм-333), when (Russia-led) Soviet special forces stormed the Tajbeg Palace in Kabul. This operation marked the beginning of the Soviet military invasion in Afghanistan (1979-1989). Amin was replaced with Babrak Karmal, a rival communist leader, as part of the Kremlin's strategy to stabilize Afghanistan under a more controllable regime.

Sometimes, such foreign-backed assassinations are just (extreme) attempts to destabilize regimes (D), especially during periods of heightened tension, like the many attempts on South Korean leaders (e.g., Park Chung-Hee in 1968; Chun Doo-Hwan in 1983) by the North Korean regime (BBC News, 2017). In the context of the (currently ongoing) Russian-Ukrainian war, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has reportedly been the target of more than a dozen such attempts (Lister et al. 2023).

'Political assassination' remains a valid term even when the supreme ruler is not the target, but other figures holding high office (v), although the dynamics change drastically. In the latter case, such killings can be integral to elite infighting (E) in the regime (cf. competing patronal pyramids; see **patronalism**); the opening gambit of a 'creeping coup' (cf. **coups**); when executed by outsiders, the preamble to a greater overt action to oust the regime (**revolution**); 'propaganda by the deed' to spread terror (C), expose regime weaknesses or solicit popular support for the political organization responsible for the killings.

When the targets are not state agents, but key figures in non-state political organizations, branded as hostile or terrorist groups, such orchestrated killings usually fall under national security threats (D), and responses are executed by the pointy end of security agencies (cf. **intelligence services**). The identification of targets constitutes a gray zone – and here B and D overlap – because different regime types describe these threats according to their own logic. For instance, (powerful) democracies (today) are more likely to act against foreign terrorist groups or rival armed movements. Dictatorships, on the other hand, are inclined to increase the scope to inimical targets abroad, e.g., dissidents in exile, former regime insiders who defected and fled, critical investigative journalists, political rivals or opposition members. This is beyond dictatorships' focus at home, including some (or all) forms of opposition and dissent perceived as affecting regime stability (or simply as an exercise in pure intimidation and state terror). In the latter cases, political assassinations of targets, when ordered by the regime itself, clearly fall under **repression** (B), like that of Leon Trotsky, the communist revolutionary and ideologue, murdered with an ax in Mexico on 21 August 1940 at the hand of Ramón Mercader, an NKVD agent, on Stalin's orders.

The different factors – the number of killers (i); whether or not they are regime insiders (ii); if assassination is part of a larger coup-plot (iii); whether the conspiracy is backed or planned by foreign actors (iv); the exact intended target(s) (v) – affect the interrelating dynamics of political murder and how they are studied. The final factor is the motivation (vi) of the plotters, which can be political, criminal or personal. This is difficult to disentangle, especially when there is overlap between conspirators and the assassins (no murder for hire) and the motives are unclear. Similarly, sometimes the distinction between repression (B) and terrorism (C) hinges solely on the nature of the perpetrator. Regimes can engage in 'state terror,' where the goal is no longer the selective, strategic elimination of political challengers, but expands into mass murder, displaying a visceral nature that is meant to shock and intimidate the population as a whole.

EXAMPLES All numbered examples correspond to a type of political assassination in Table 5.1 (or serve as counterexamples of killings that were not politically motivated, but had great political consequences).

(I) Fanatic lone wolves Gabriel Narutowicz, the first president of Poland, was shot by Eligiusz Niewiadomski, a nationalist painter, at the *Zachęta National Gallery of Art* in Warsaw on 16 December 1922, just five days after taking office. Niewiadomski was motivated by antisemitic and nationalist sentiments. He was against Narutowicz's presidency, which had been marred by intense right-wing opposition and propaganda.

On 30 August 1918, Fanny Kaplan (born Feiga Haimovna Roytblat), a member of the *Socialist Revolutionary Party* (SR), attempted to assassinate Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin outside the Michelson Factory in Moscow. She shot Lenin three times, seriously wounding him in the neck, jaw, and shoulder. Kaplan, who viewed Lenin as a traitor to the revolution, was immediately arrested and later executed by the *Cheka*, the Soviet secret police. The assassination attempt led to the Bolsheviks unleashing the 'Red Terror,' a campaign of mass arrests and executions targeting political opponents.

On 4 November 1995, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, a right-wing extremist opposed to the Oslo Accords. The assassination occurred at the end of a peace rally in Tel Aviv's Kings of Israel Square. Amir shot Rabin twice in the back as he was walking to his car. Rabin was rushed to Ichilov Hospital but succumbed to his injuries. The assassination shocked Israel and the world, leading to a period of national mourning and significantly impacting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

(II) Ambitious followers The Roman Emperor Claudius was reportedly poisoned by his wife Agrip-



pina the Younger in 54 CE. Agrippina allegedly used poisoned mushrooms to kill him, paving the way for her son Nero to become emperor. Note: there are very few examples of regime insiders acting alone and personally killing the ruler, without a plot to immediately take over the regime.

(III) Personal fallout On 25 March 1975, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was assassinated by his nephew, Prince Faisal bin Musaid al-Saud, during a royal audience in Riyadh. Prince Faisal approached the king under the guise of paying respects and shot him twice in the head with a revolver. The king was rushed to a hospital but succumbed to his injuries. The assassination was reportedly motivated by a personal vendetta, possibly related to the death of Prince Faisal's brother, Prince Khalid, killed by Saudi security forces years earlier. Prince Faisal was later executed by beheading after a Sharia court found him sane and guilty. This is a rare instance of a counterexample, a lone wolf insider executing a premeditated, but non-political assassination (Asmar 2020).

(IV) Ultimate betrayal The archetypal example of this form of political assassination is the stabbing of Julius Caesar, the Roman dictator, on 15 March 44 BCE, by a group of Roman senators, including his one-time allies Brutus and Cassius. The conspirators feared Caesar's growing power and his potential to become a monarch and tyrant, which they believed threatened the Republic.

(V) Lethal defection South Korean President Park Chung-Hee was assassinated on 26 October 1979 by Kim Jae-Gyu, the director of the *Korean Central Intelligence Agency* (KCIA) and a close associate. Kim claimed he killed Park to restore democracy to South Korea, under Park's authoritarian rule since the 1961 coup. Chung-Hee feared being marginalized by rival hard-liners in Park's increasingly personalized regime (Ching et al. 2022).

(VI) Irreconcilable differences Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was assassinated on 6 October 1981, during a military parade in Cairo. The assassins, radicalized soldiers, led by Lieutenant Khalid Islambouli, a member of the *Egyptian Islamic Jihad*, were part of the Egyptian military and opposed Sadat's peace treaty with Israel.

Another example of revenge is the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984, by her trusted Sikh bodyguards, Beant Singh and Satwant Singh. The killing was in retaliation for *Operation Blue Star*, a military operation ordered by Gandhi to remove Sikh militants from the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

(VII) Consolidating power This scenario is rare today but was routine in **monarchies** until medieval times, before primogeniture (Box 5.10) became the norm and world religions made murder anathema. Many aspiring or new monarchs were forced to eliminate their uncles, siblings and cousins as (potential) contenders for the throne. Without firmly established **succession** rules, and some civilizational complexes actually encouraging open competition, the killing of 'pretenders' with an equally strong claim was a common feature of power consolidation (cf. Ehlers 2004). This practice overlaps with domestic repression (B), when victims lie within the same kingdom, but can be construed as targeted assassination (D) if they reside in neighboring polities, which was often the case in feudal constellations (cf. Box 1.14).

A contemporary example is North Korea's Kim Jong-Un targeted assassination of his half-brother in February 2017. Kim Jong-Nam lived in exile in Malaysia and was assassinated with a nerve agent at Kuala Lumpur's airport. This daring murder followed the **purges** of around 140 senior officials, including members of Kim Jong-Un's own family, most prominently his uncle Jang Song-Thaek, who was executed in December 2013 (Kwon & Westcott 2016; Lee 2017).

(VIII) Infiltration On 14 April 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, a well-known actor and Confederate sympathizer, as he attended a play at *Ford's Theatre* in Washington, DC. The shooting took place just days after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee, signaling the end of the American Civil War. Booth, along with his co-conspirators, initially planned to kidnap Lincoln but opted for assassination following the Confederacy's defeat.

(IX) Spectacle terrorism Tsar Alexander II of Russia was assassinated on 13 March 1881, by members of the revolutionary group *Narodnaya Volya* (Народная воля – 'The People's Will'). They threw bombs at his carriage in St. Petersburg, killing him and several others (cf. **anarchism**). The group opposed the autocratic rule of the Tsar and sought to incite a revolution.

Other notorious examples of this kind of **terrorism** are: Archduke Franz-Ferdinand and his wife, shot by Gavrilo Princip an anti-imperialist, Yugoslav nationalist on 28 June 1914; and Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan, who died in a combined shooting and bombing attack on 27 December 2007 that was caught on camera.

(X) Targeted terminations The CIA made numerous unsuccessful attempts to assassinate Cuban leader Fidel Castro, including using exploding cigars and a scuba-diving suit lined with poison. The US admitted to eight assassination attempts, although Castro himself put the figure much higher, with one estimate in the hundreds. Castro once said: "If surviving assassinations were an Olympic event, I would win the gold medal" (MacAskill 2017). Margaret Thatcher was targeted by the IRA at the Brighton Hotel in 1984. Patrice Lumumba (Congo-Kinshasa) was also targeted by the CIA (with a plot involving poisoned toothpaste) but his rival Mobutu (see Box 1.7) got to him first, assisted by the secessionist leader Moise Tshombe and the Belgian secret service. Brincat (2009b) ponders the tenuous legal frameworks of such interventions.

ORIGIN The term 'assassin' originates from the Arabic *hashīshīn* (twelfth century), used for the Nizari Ismaili sect led by Hasan ibu-al-Sabbah in Lebanon during the Crusades. The sect was believed to carry

out murders under the influence of hashish – they did not – and was notorious for sending out death squads to eliminate enemies of their faith in their historical context of political **terrorism**. The plural suffix '-in' in *Hashīshīn* was mistakenly thought part of the word itself in Europe, leading to variations like *hassais* and *assasis* in Middle English and Old French. In the fourteenth century, the Italian language played a role in the generalization of the term 'assassin' to refer to any type of murderer (Harper, no date).

'Regicide' and 'tyrannicide' both have their roots in Latin, *rex* (king) and *-cida* (from *caedere* – to kill), thus king-slaying and tyrant-slaying. (For the etymology of 'tyrant,' see **tyranny**.) These terms also denote the person doing the slaying. 'Regicide' is additionally the name of the crime, the gravest of infringements on royal *majestas,* the supreme sovereignty of the state and (the personal integrity) of the monarch.

In the case of Europe, Ford (1987) and Cottret (2009) trace the mainstream theoretical-philosophical treatises on these practices to the Jewish Old Testament and Roman political intrigues. The most prominent (although not the first) was the devout Jewish widow Judith, from the apocryphal *Book of Judith*, who won fame by killing Holofernes, the Assyrian general who besieged Bethulia. She tricked Holofernes by charming him, then beheaded him during a banquet when he was intoxicated. According to myth, this act led to the defeat of the now leaderless Assyrian army by the Israelites. Her story was a model for regicide, emphasizing divine justice and virtue triumphing over tyranny. Judith's political assassination was viewed as a heroic act of delivering her people from oppression, inspiring resistance against unjust rulers.

Marcus Junius Brutus – as briefly described in the 'examples' (IV) above – took part in the murder of Julius Caesar, and became the most famous member of this larger conspiracy due to his close friendship with the victim – a betrayal worthy of Judas Iscariot. Throughout history, this political murder was lauded for saving the Roman republic, and safeguarding its citizens against the emergence of monarchs and tyrants.

REGIONAL VARIATION There has been no systematic survey of non-Western political assassinations of rulers. In the non-European part of *Eurasia*, Van Auken (2014) untangles political killings in classical China from 722 to 481 BCE. Carreiro (2013) deals with classical thinkers' political thought on tyrannicide. For the late imperial period, see Chan 1987. On the translation of regicide from the Chinese and its nuances, see Defoort 1998. McMullen (1987) covers early modern Japan. For *Latin America* as a world region, Menjívar & Rodríguez (2005) and Green (2015) provide comprehensive overviews of repression (B) by targeted assassination and the elimination of ideological threats (D). For historical cases in *Sub Saharan Africa* and the nuances of (ritual) regicide and succession plots, see Rowlands 1993; Salokoski 2005; Ayittey 2010. For modern times, the most notorious political assassination would be that of Patrice E. Lumumba (1961) in Congo-Kinshasa (De Witte 2015), maybe followed by that of Juvénal Habyarimana in Rwanda (1994). Although the Burkinabè revolutionary Thomas Sankara (Box 5.1) also lives on in collective memory, his assassination was part of a coup by Blaise Compaoré. Attention has recently been given to the (growing list of) political killings of Rwandan dissidents (in exile) by the Kagame regime, which falls under **repression** (B) (see, e.g., Jalloh 2021).

LITERATURE & CLASSIFICATIONS Within the (narrower) scope of the political assassination of rulers (A), two concepts have extensive political-philosophical traditions: 'regicide' and 'tyrannicide.' They are not at all synonymous, the former being either a capital crime or a political justification, depending on one's perspective (and ideological background), while the latter has only ever been a vindication for killing the ruler.

Regicide In more neutral terms, the act (or crime) of killing a king can form part of a 'palace coup' (i), in which regime insiders depose a disliked or incompetent king to allow the **succession** of a preferred candidate (if the conspiracy includes the crown prince as a key member this is a 'royal coup'). Alternatively, regicide can be performed by a new ruler (or usurper) to eliminate rival claimants to the throne, consolidating power (ii) by killing royal family members considered legitimate monarchs by their respective factions (see 'example VII' above). In this case, it is considered an **ouster** and regime change, and can be a **coup** if the usurper's fellow conspirators come from state agencies.

Moreover, regicide executed by regime outsiders can be justified on ideological grounds, either by those espousing **revolution** (iii) and aiming for fundamental regime change by overthrowing **monarchy** as an institution. Alternatively, it can be the result of **foreign invasion** (iv); however, battle deaths are excluded. Regicide can also be a form of **terrorism** (C), its short-term goal being intimidation and rallying support for one's cause (v), regime ouster being the long-term end goal.

So, 'regicide' is an umbrella term for targeted killings aimed at securing power or leader turnover in a **dynasty** (i, ii) or the default outcome in the process of overthrowing monarchy as a regime type (iii, iv, v). Philosophical justifications in favor of regicide are found in (radical) republican thinkers and advocates (e.g., Cicero (106-43 BCE, *De Officiis*), Seneca (ca. 4 BCE – 65 CE, *Hercules Furens*), Plutarch (ca. 46 – ca. 119 CE, *Timoleon; Pelopides*), etc.), anarchists, (ultra-) nationalists, and in other adherents of anti-monarchical **ideologies**. Their commitment to regicide is usually unconditional and uncompromising ('abolishment or death'). In contrast, when political assassins target the ruler (as a person) and judge the latter's alleged transgressions, their justifications are conditional on evidence and the legitimacy of their action. Thus, in the latter case, regicide overlaps with tyrannicide.

Tyrannicide This term's target scope extends beyond monarchs and incorporates any ruler pejoratively labeled as a 'tyrant' (see **tyranny**). Although



this label is too commonly used gratuitously, the case for tyrannicide (either before or after the act) demands justification, and different (mostly Western) historical contexts have elaborated philosophical arguments for when rulers can be deposed (and killed) with **legitimacy**.

Shannon K. Brincat (2008; 2009) identifies three models (a,b,c) of tyrannicide. The classical model (a) is rooted in the works of philosophers like Socrates, **Plato & Aristotle**, and emphasizes the importance of public life and the functional role of leadership. Tyrannicide is justified when a ruler fails to serve the public good, becomes (morally) corrupt, abandons the rule of law or tradition, and elevates private desires above all else. For Plato, **tyranny** was seen as a malady of the soul, the tyrant's soul being corrupted by enslavement to passion and succumbing to the temptation of profiting from injustice. This (moral) corruption spreads to the polity, causing it to suffer a similar affliction. Consequently, tyrannicide was considered the natural remedy to address this anomaly in the *polis*, and even as ending a tyrant's personal psychological torment. For Aristotle, tyranny was a perverse political regime, which eroded the egalitarian status of citizens before the law (Brincat 2008: 216-217).

Roman legal philosophy similarly finds that tyrants transform free citizens into slave-like subjects, and were unable to formulate just laws because they were not in accord with natural law (Ford 1985; Brincat 2008: 218). Polo (2006) investigates and questions the alleged universal acceptance of tyrannicide as a legitimate practice in Roman times, arguing that it was actually an illegal, radical measure frequently contested and opposed by significant segments of Roman society. (Forced exile *(regifugium)* was the traditional Roman solution.)

The medieval model (b) is derived from thinkers such as St. Augustine, John of Salisbury (1159), Thomas Aquinas, Jean Petit (1408) Francisco Suarez (1613), and Juan de Mariana, who justified tyrannicide through natural law doctrine (Dillinger 2015). Scholars like Nicolas d'Oresme clearly distinguish **tyranny** and **despotism** (Turchetti 2008). Tyrannicide is permissible only when a ruler acts against divine and natural laws, failing to ensure the common good and violating the moral order. This model resonates with non-Western religious prescriptions of just rule (see **religions**). However, the model's reliance on natural law is subjective and unverifiable, making its consistent application difficult. Also, the invocation of divine morality limits its applicability to contemporary secular contexts (Brincat 2008).

Finally, the liberal model (c) – influenced by thinkers like John Milton (1649), John Locke (1689), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) – is based on social contract theory. Tyrannicide is justified when a ruler breaks this contract, acting beyond the authority granted by the people and undermining (proto-)democratic principles. In this time period, **despotism** became equaled with **tyranny**, ignoring conceptual differences – with notable exceptions like Jean **Bodin** and Locke. Still, there was never any 'despoticide' (Turchetti 2008: 160). For Locke, it was only when the sovereign failed to provide necessary security (of life, liberty and property) that a rationale existed for subjects to transfer authority (Birn 1977: 139). Others were less demanding (Brincat 2008).

Shannon K. Brincat (2008; 2009a) rightly distills the (legal) arguments common to all three models into 'self-defense,' either stemming the corruption of the *polis* (a), restoring divine order and natural law (b), or exercising the right to resist after a breach of the social contract (c). Brincat (2009a/b) extends this logic to contemporary justifications for tyrannicide, informed by a modern understanding of self-defense and combined with universal human rights.

Detailed chronological overviews of diverse cases can be found in Ford (1987), Burleigh (2021) and (in French) Cottret (2009). For the specific application of regicide as the political assassination of rulers (A) in modern contexts, see Iqbal & Zorn 2006; Iqbal & Zorn 2008; Serban et al. 2018; Escribà-Folch 2024. For tyrannicide from the point of view of **terrorism** (C), consult Bowden & Davis 2008; Dillinger 2015; Dietze & Verhoeven 2021.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Royal political assassination declined once monarchies switched to procedural succession models (Ehlers 2004; Bagge 2019). By the eighteenth century, republican, nationalist and other non-monarchical **ideologies** led to a surge in regicides which lasted until the collapse of most world empires during the two world wars. Thereafter, a different dynamic involving authoritarian leaders followed, and this is still being studied. Serban et al. (2018) show that social conflict significantly increases the probability of leader assassination. In their sample from 1789 to 2011 they found that the probability of assassination peaked around 1945, and steadily declined afterwards. The reasons for this remain unclear.

Between 1946 and 2010 there were 117 standalone assassination attempts against autocratic rulers (not part of coups) (Escribà-Folch 2024: 262). In modern times, the concurrence with coups is rarer than one would expect: only 7% of attempted coups included the killing of the ruler. Most of these took place in the Middle East and North Africa (Chin et al. 2022).

The impact of political assassination varies enormously depending on the political regime type affected, but this was not studied before the advent of Large-N research. Regimes having institutionalized procedures for incumbent incapacitation or death – those closer to the ideal type of legal-rational rule – are likely to experience shock, outrage and crisis, but can still rely on their institutions to enable leadership turnover (**succession**).

Conversely, systems in which leadership succession largely occurs through internal struggle or guile are substantially more likely to experience turmoil following the forcible removal of the head of state. In such a system, the assassination of the head of state creates a power vacuum that is not immediately remedied through institutionalized channels, with various factions vying for power, often using violent means. In addition, the demise of a strongman may afford opportunities for protest and unrest (Iqbal & Zorn 2008: 387-388). Van den Bosch (2024: 282-287)

confirms this finding for **personalist rule**. Sudden leader incapacitation (by assassination, a health setback or an accident) brings down regimes if they are caught unawares and have no procedural precedent to deal with such a shock. Chin et al. (2022) find that with increased **personalization** (and thus **coup-proofing**), rival elites, less able to coordinate coup attempts, turn to assassination, which does not require the same level of elite coordination. (**Coups** require more communication, coordination, equipment, and trust to mobilize multiple actors in order to seize power.)

Iqbal and Zorn (2006: 495) find evidence that previous leader assassinations increase a country's likelihood of experiencing another such killing in the future (see 'coup traps' in Box 5.2 and 'regimes and repertoires' in Box 5.8).

MEASUREMENT The *Archigos* dataset distinguishes between coups and assassinations (Goemans et al. 2009). Using newspaper sources, Jones and Olken (2009) built on an older version (2.5) of the *Archigos* database, and count 298 assassination attempts, of which 251 were 'serious attempts' and 59 resulted in the leader's death, between 1875 and 2004.

The *Combating Terrorism Center* (CTC) created a database of political killings understood according to a broad definition – as an action that directly or indirectly leads to the death of an intentionally targeted political actor, in order to promote or prevent specific policies, values, practices or norms pertaining to the collective – thus covering A, B, C and D. The CTC dataset is global in scope, covering political assassinations between 1945 and 2013, and identifies 758 attacks by 920 perpetrators that resulted in the death of 954 individuals (not counting 'bystanders') (Perliger 2015).

The *Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime* (2020) created the *Global Assassination Monitor*, a dataset that includes more than 2700 cases of successful or attempted assassinations reported in the media since 2019. Their global coverage deals with contract killings foremost, and includes political, criminal and economic motivations (Kaysser & Oliveira 2021).

Combining datasets, Chin et al. (2022) identify 210 potential assassination attempts against dictators from 1946 to 2010; their coding criteria are listed in appendices.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The literature on leaders' assassinations is fragmented and limited, leading to insufficient insights into the political conditions that precipitate such events. This limitation arises from inconsistencies in concepts, data, and samples used in prior research (Iqbal & Zorn 2006; Jones & Olken 2009; Torgler & Frey, 2013; Perliger 2017; Serban et al. 2018). Many studies fail to account for the differences in power struggles and political dynamics between dictatorships and democracies. Additionally, they often focus on successful assassinations, overlooking failed attempts and the unique factors influencing them; sometimes they include non-leader assassinations, which likely have different causes (Escribà-Folch 2024: 266).

Lone wolf attacks are notoriously hard to classify (political or personal?). Take, for instance, Thomas Matthew Crooks' failed assassination attempt on US presidential candidate Donald Trump on 13 July 2024, during a campaign rally near Butler, Pennsylvania. At the moment of this writing, there is no evidence of a conspiracy or foreign involvement. The attempt involved a lone assailant, who was shot by Trump's protection detail. Any political motives behind Crooks' actions remain unclear, as investigators have so far not identified a definite motive; there is no evidence of strong political beliefs or affiliations that would suggest a politically driven assassination attempt. Investigators posit that Crooks may have been looking to carry out a high-profile shooting (for notoriety), and the Trump event's proximity and timing offered him the most accessible opportunity. Whatever the case, had Crooks succeeded, the political fallout would have been enormous (Biesecker et al. 2024; Cohen et al. 2024).

IMPACT ON POLICY Over the centuries rulers have lost a lot of sleep over regicide. Even Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (see Box 2.2) offers advice on how to assassin-proof the ruler's living quarters as early as the fourth century BCE. During historical periods when regicides have peaked, or after escaping some failed attempts, monarchs could easily become paranoid. Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia once told a minister that *"Whenever I get out of my coach, I wonder whether the shot will come from the right or the left"* (Burleigh 2021). With potential assassins everywhere, new counter-terrorism units were created and **intelligence services** innovated tactics for covert work and infiltration. With modern armies and new technologies, **coup-proofing** techniques evolved with successful innovators, while unsuccessful (slain) rulers have become the objects of **authoritarian learning**.

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Box 5.1 Assassinated Visionaries: Lumumba, Sankara, and Their Enduring Impact on Africa

Without dignity, there is no liberty, without justice, there is no dignity, and without independence, there are no free men
– Patrice Lumumba

You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness
– Thomas Sankara

Patrice Lumumba and Thomas Sankara, two towering figures of African liberation, remain enduring symbols of resistance against imperialism and neocolonialism. Lumumba, the first prime minister of Congo (now DRC), and Sankara, the revolutionary leader of Burkina Faso, shared a vision rooted in pan-Africanism, social justice, and economic self-determination. Though their lives were tragically cut short by assassinations linked to both internal and external rivals, their legacies continue to inspire movements for justice, unity, and transformation across Africa.

CONGO Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961) was a Congolese national leader, fighter for independence, and the first prime minister of the independent Congolese state from June to September 1960. Originally an advocate of colonial power and a colonial postal officer, in 1958, he was elected as a leader of the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC), which later advocated for national liberation and independence (Zeilig 2016). Lumumba's pan-Africanist and nationalist visions collided with the Belgian effort to maintain an influence over Congo. Belgium's delegitimization campaign against the Congolese struggle for independence led by Lumumba is described in Quinonez & Murillo (2021). They stressed that the colonial Belgian government prioritized its economic benefits over the liberties and human rights of the Congolese people. For these reasons, Belgium supported the separatism of Katanga led by Moise Tshombe, the province rich in mineral resources, after Congolese independence in 1960. Prime Minister Lumumba and President Kasavubu requested the deployment of UN troops to Congo to calm the situation. After the Kasai province declared secession in August 1960, Lumumba was dismissed as prime minister. He was accused of communism and committing genocide in Kasai and was assassinated on 17 January (see, e.g., Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002).

Hochschild (1999: 301-302) mentions that Lumumba not only argued for the political independence of Africa but also stressed the need to emancipate economically. He also described the murder of Lumumba and the role played by Joseph-Désiré Mobutu (Box 1.7) with the financial and political support of the US, France, and Belgium which later helped Mobutu to consolidate power and become Congolese ruler. Mobutu's **coup** after the **assassination** of Lumumba is mentioned by Kombeto et al. (2021), who presented a comparative study of bad governance in CAR, DRC, and Uganda. The complicity of the CIA in enabling Lumumba's assassination is described by, e.g., Quinonez & Murillo (2021). Mountz (2014) claims that US intervention in Congo during the crisis between 1960 and 1965 ended up with support for Moise Tshombe to become prime minister in 1964 and Mobutu to become dictator in 1965 not "*only because of a commitment to contain the communist threat, but also because of a commitment to a liberal ideology.*" He argues that the US administration participated in a plot against Lumumba and used various strategies for Cyrille Adoula to become prime minister in August 1961. Kennedy's administration supported a territorial unity of Congo because it believed that an independent Katanga would mean the fall of Congo under the Soviet interest sphere. The US was also worried about the criticism from the Afro-Asian bloc.

In contrast to US cooperation with other African leftist leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana or Sékou Touré of Guinea, Patrice Lumumba was considered by US administration to be "*a rabble-rousing speaker, a shrewd maneuverer with clever left-wing advisers, aided and encouraged by Soviet and Czech Ambassadors*" who would "*continue to cause difficulties in the Congo whether he is in control of the government, in jail or released.*" (Telegram from the Embassy in the United Kingdom to the Department of State, 3 September 1960, in FRUS 1958-1960, 14: 486-487, cited in Mountz, 2014: 156).

Even before Lumumba's death, the US embassy and the CIA established relations with Cyrille Adoula despite his lack of broader political support (Mountz 2014: 158). The US cooperated closely with the UN, whose Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld hoped that the government of reconciliation would end Katanga's claims for secession and remove the need for the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo (the first of its kind for the UN).

There has been a debate on the role of the Western countries in the assassination of Lumumba. The publication of the book *The Assassination of Lumumba* by Ludo De Witte in 2002 caused a scandal in Belgium for openly accusing Belgian troops of involvement in Lumumba's death. It even led to the Belgian Parliament deciding to set up an official commission to investigate Lumumba's murder (Bustin 2002). The investigation results and the commission's report are evaluated in the book *Lumumba: Un Crime d'État* by Colette Braeckman (2002). Since then, several other books and journal articles critically evaluating Lumumba's life and death have been published (Bustin 2002; Reid 2023; Weissman 2014; Zeilig 2015). The role of the British during the first years of Congolese independence has been evaluated by Alan James (1996), for instance.

Lumumba's thoughts are recorded in the volume *Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958-1961*, edited by Jean Van Lierde, with an introduction written by Jean-Paul Sartre (Lumumba 1972). Lumumba is the author of the book *Congo, My Country* published in English in 1962 (Lumumba 1962).



Lumumba's speeches were analyzed by Olivier Klein and Laurent Licata (2003) from a social-psychological perspective. They claim that the social context affects the content of group representations and show this with the example of portrayals of Belgians and Congolese in Lumumba's speeches.

BURKINA FASO In contrast to Lumumba's overwhelming electoral victory, Thomas Sankara (1949-1987) came to power through a **coup d'etat** which took place on 4 August 1983, in which he and Blaise Compaoré overthrew Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo (Sawo 2017). Military coups had been part of Burkina Faso's politics since independence from France in 1960. After the coup in 1983, the supreme governing body of the new regime became the *Conseil de Salut du People* (CSP – People's Salvation Council), comprised of army officers (Skinner 1988). The new leadership declared that a new direction for the country was not inspired from abroad (or by any ideology) but was based on local realities. However, Sankara established close relations with like-minded African leaders, such as Jerry Rawlings of Ghana or Colonel Mathieu Kérékou of Benin (formerly Dahomey) (Skinner 1988).

Sankara declared the creation of the *National Council of the Revolution* (CNR) and became its chairman. Several leftist groups and their leaders who supported the coup also took up posts in the newly created government. The CNR and government were hybrid military-civilian formations. Still, the August 1983 coup leaders, Sankara, Compaoré, Henri Zongo, and Jean-Baptiste Lingani maintained the most significant influence (Harsch 2013: 361). Sankara appealed to people to establish *Comités de Défense de la Révolution* (CDRs, Committees to Defend the Revolution) that were supposed to "participate in the great patriotic battle of rehabilitating the nation" (Skinner 1988: 443).

As for Sankara's ideologies, he proclaimed himself to be Marxist and was inspired by the French Revolution, Paris Commune, and Russian Revolution (Harsch 2013: 361). He was labeled a *"Pan-Africanist, anti-imperialist, communist, anti-corruption crusader"* (Harsch 2013: 363). His speeches and works have been collected into the volume *Thomas Sankara speaks* by Michel Praire. In the introduction, Praire claims that *"Sankara stood out among the leaders of struggles for national liberation in Africa in the last half of the twentieth century because he was a communist"* (see Praire's introduction in Sankara 2007). David Gakunzi (1991) claims in the preface to the collection of Sankara's speeches that *"profoundly Burkinabe, Sankara was also profoundly pan-Africanist, internationalist, and attached to the struggles of the Third World"* (Harsch 2013: 363). He also proclaimed his anti-imperialist and anti-colonial stances. He advocated for supporting liberation movements elsewhere – from Southern Africa to the Western Sahara and Central America to New Caledonia (Harsch 2013: 362).

After the Sankara came to power through the coup, the US and France cut off support and material aid intended for Burkina Faso. Therefore, the new regime turned to the USSR and Libya for support provided only in a limited amount (Skinner 1988: 445). Sankara's revolutionary regime also became a source of mistrust among the leaders of neighboring countries, such as Seyni Kountché of Niger and Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo. The relations between Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast were also bitter due to a large Burkinabè diaspora in the latter, a legacy of French colonial rule. The relations between Burkina Faso and Mali were also complicated due to the competing national interests of these two countries. (For a treatise on Burkina Faso-Ivory Coast and Mali relations, see, e.g., Skinner 1988).

Murrey (2016: 215) defines Sankarism or Sankarist tradition as follows: *"a Pan-African, anti-imperialist, and communist-inspired political praxis that emphasizes holistic social transformation through the permanent dismantling of (neo-)imperial structures of dispossession. According to Sankarist tradition, this emancipatory social transformation is possible only through the collective energies and everyday actions of the Burkinabè"* Sankara was convinced that the transformation of relationships between the state and the post-colony was inevitable. After he came to power, he abandoned the symbols of power and strategies used by postcolonial Burkinabè elites, advocated for the transformation of the whole society, and supported the country's sustainable development (Murrey 2016).

Sankara's regime can be considered nationalist and pan-Africanist. In 1984, as part of his revolutionary actions, he renamed the country from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, which means the '*Land of the Upright Men*' (Sawo 2017: 10; Skinner 1988). Through this shift, the Burkinabé government aimed to craft an African identity for the new state and embrace the ethnic and language diversity of its people (Harsch 2013: 363). Sankara also introduced reforms in education, health, and agriculture, and his government invested in building roads, schools, and houses. Additionally, he advocated for women's rights, which was considered rare for an African president then. He even appointed several women to his cabinet (Harsch 2013: 366), declared 22 September 1984 as the day for husbands to do their family shopping, and banned prostitution (Skinner 1988, 444).

In the economic agenda, the new Burkinabè government under Sankara opposed and rejected the IMF and World Bank's programs (even though at the beginning, they unsuccessfully sought funding from the IMF for building the railway from Ouagadougou to Tambao (Skinner 1988: 445)), because of their neoliberal policies and instead, proposed alternatives to economic globalization (Harsch 2013: 364). He opposed the dependence on international aid (Murrey 2020) and instead supported development through social mobilization and community-led projects, especially through *Committees for the Defense of the Revolution* (CDRs) established for collective labor mobilizations. Even though the CDRs were supposed to represent popular participation, there were no plans to introduce democracy in Burkina Faso. On the contrary, all political parties were banned (Harsch 2013: 367).

As for the social policy, Sankara promoted programs on healthcare (vaccination campaigns) and education of Burkinabé children and proposed a higher education reform, which was unsuccessful. The educational system's reform was motivated by Sankara's assumption that *"the colonial schools were replaced by neocolonial schools, which pursued the same goals of alienating the children of our country and reproducing a society funda-*

mentally serving imperialist interests" (Sankara 2007: 81-82, cited in Murrey 2016: 216). He also supported building housing infrastructure (Cité II and Cité III) provided for people living in informal settlements (Murrey 2020).

Thomas Sankara was assassinated on 15 October 1987 during a military coup orchestrated by his former ally and fellow revolutionary, Blaise Compaoré. Sankara was gunned down by a commando unit at a meeting of the *National Revolutionary Council*, along with 12 of his colleagues. Compaoré, who immediately assumed power after the coup, denied involvement in the **assassination** for decades. However, following his ouster in 2014 and subsequent trial, he was found guilty *in absentia* in 2022 for his role in Sankara's murder.

Compaoré served as president of Burkina Faso from 1987 until 2014, when he resigned amid mass protests against his attempt to amend the constitution to extend his rule. To justify the coup, Compaoré and his supporters portrayed Sankara as *"an autocrat who wanted to rule alone and was against the unification of the revolutionary political organizations"* (Harsch 2013: 369).

SHARED VISION Certain ideological and political commonalities between Patrice Lumumba and Thomas Sankara can be identified. Both leaders were staunch proponents of pan-Africanism and resolute opponents of Western colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism. Their policies were deeply rooted in promoting social justice and reducing inequality, with a focus on uplifting marginalized and impoverished sections of society. Sankara's government, for instance, implemented radical economic reforms, including land redistribution, nationalization of resources, and initiatives aimed at achieving self-sufficiency. Similarly, Lumumba advocated for the control of Congo's vast natural resources to benefit the local population rather than foreign powers.

Both leaders actively engaged with the masses and sought to mobilize popular support for their transformative policies. Sankara emphasized participatory governance, involving the public in decision-making processes, and his administration was particularly progressive in advancing women's rights and youth involvement. While Lumumba's tenure as prime minister was brief, his rhetoric also called for the inclusion of all societal segments in the process of nation-building.

During the Cold War, both Lumumba and Sankara adopted a non-aligned stance, striving to navigate an independent path free from the influence of major power blocs. They championed solidarity with other newly independent nations in Africa and beyond, aligning themselves with leaders and movements across the Global South that were resisting colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism. Their revolutionary rhetoric advocated for radical changes to the entrenched social, political, and economic structures inherited from colonial rule.

However, both leaders faced significant opposition domestically and internationally. Lumumba was ousted in 1960 and assassinated in 1961 during a crisis fueled by internal rivalries and Cold War geopolitics. Western powers, particularly Belgium and the US, played a role in his downfall due to his anti-imperialist stance. Similarly, Sankara was overthrown and assassinated in 1987 during a coup led by Blaise Compaoré, with suspicions of external involvement from France due to Sankara's radical reforms and rejection of **foreign aid** dependency.

LEGACIES Thomas Sankara and Patrice Lumumba left enduring legacies and are regarded as near-mythical heroes, particularly among young Africans. Sankara is remembered as "the most celebrated leader" within the Burkinabè revolutionary context (Harsch 2013) and was officially rehabilitated and declared a national hero in 2000. His legacy continues through the activities of 'Sankarist' political parties, which have participated in Burkina Faso's elections since the 1990s. The largest of these groups is the *Union pour la Renaissance/Parti Sankariste* (UNIR/PS). Youth opposition in Burkina Faso often draws on Sankara's ideas to protest against corruption and entrenched elites, advocating for democracy rather than communist ideology. As a charismatic leader and pan-Africanist, Sankara has been added to the pantheon of prominent African anti-colonial leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Modibo Keita, Jomo Kenyatta, and Patrice Lumumba (Skinner 1988).

Patrice Lumumba's legacy is similarly profound. His assassination in 1961 became a symbol of Western rivalries during Africa's decolonization process, highlighting neocolonial interference in newly independent nations (Monaville 2019). Lumumba's death framed reinterpretations of the Congo Crisis in the 1960s and inspired generations of Congolese student activists. While Mobutu Sese Seko's regime (Box 1.7) proclaimed Lumumba a national hero to leverage his international popularity (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002; Petit 2020), it simultaneously suppressed anti-Western protests inspired by Lumumba's ideology, most notably during the violent crackdown on 4 June 1969 (Monaville 2013). Outside of student movements, Lumumbism has had limited influence on Congolese politics. One notable exception is Antoine Gizenga's *Parti Lumumbiste Unifié* (PALU), which joined President Joseph Kabila's ruling coalition in 2006. However, Monaville (2019) argues that efforts to restore Lumumba's legacy by Mobutu and the Kabila administrations were largely superficial.

Lumumba's intellectual contributions have had a lasting impact on decolonial thought and liberation discourse across Africa. His emphasis on African unity, solidarity, and cooperation continues to inspire contemporary scholars such as Walter Mignolo, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Emnet Woldegiorgis, and Achille Mbembe (Monari 2024). His life and ideas have been explored in academic works (Zeilig 2016), novels, films, music videos (Ndaliko 2019), and artistic representations (Monari 2024). For example, the Museum for African Art in New York hosted an exhibition in 1999 titled *A Congo Chronicle: Patrice Lumumba in Urban Art*, featuring portraits of Lumumba by Congolese artists. Pierre Petit (2016; 2020) analyzed Lumumba's iconography on coins, stamps, banknotes, and postcards, noting that his international legitimacy has only strengthened over time. Today, Lumumba remains a fierce symbol of African independence and unity.

Both Sankara and Lumumba are remembered for their revolutionary ideals and their uncompromising opposition to imperialism and neocolonialism. Their legacies continue to inspire movements for justice and



liberation across Africa and beyond.

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Authoritarian Legacies

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
– Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias*, 1819

The study of authoritarian legacies is essential for understanding the long-term impacts of autocratic rule after dictatorships have fallen. The target is mostly countries transitioning to democracy. Authoritarian regimes leave lasting marks on political, economic, and social institutions, shaping future governance and the prospects for democratic consolidation. Examining these legacies reveals how the patterns of behavior, norms, and values developed under authoritarianism influence both elite and public attitudes toward democracy. By analyzing the persistence of 'authoritarian enclaves' – such as militaries, (regional) political parties, and judicial systems – scholars can identify the challenges faced by new democracies in overcoming entrenched authoritarian practices. These studies provide crucial insights into the dynamics of democratic backsliding and the struggle for sustainable governance, particularly in countries where authoritarian memories linger in the collective consciousness (**authoritarian nostalgia**). Understanding these legacies is key to fostering more resilient democracies and preventing the resurgence of autocratic rule.

DEFINITION Authoritarian legacies are the particular long-term impact of authoritarian rule. Studies of authoritarian legacies pay special attention to how an authoritarian period affects the prospects for democracy and democratic consolidation. Samuel Huntington (1991: 270-271) argues, for example, that the *"longer and more recent experience with democracy is more conducive than is a shorter and more distant one."* The underlying argument is that earlier experience with democracy reduces uncertainty about the new regime, mitigating elite opposition to change. Huntington further notes that, among third wave democracies, those that had prior experience with democracy were more likely to be stable.

SEE ALSO This entry focuses on authoritarian legacies in a broad sense, referring to societies with authoritarian memories (**authoritarian nostalgia**), authoritarian 'enclaves' (see below), authoritarian residues, or authoritarian vestiges, with political systems unaccustomed to democratic values and practices, operating with authoritarian bureaucracies. **Colonial legacies** and **imperial legacies** look more closely at general (structural) historical burdens that countries carry with them; **revolutionary legacies** and **totalitarian legacies** engage their respective literatures in greater depth than this entry. (Some sources on 'personalist legacies' are covered under **personalist rule**.)

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Historical legacies can also have an impact on how values are formed, as shown in the **colonial legacies** and **imperial legacies** entries. Studies have examined how exposure to autocratic institutions, values and practices shape people's political beliefs and behavior. This has important implications for democratic backsliding today. Many democracies have had an authoritarian past that their citizens can remember.

LITERATURE There is a rich body of literature looking at the legacies of authoritarian rule (Bratton & Van der Walle 1997). Many scholars have investigated how a country's prior experience with democracy and autocracy matters (Donno & Russet 2004). Studies of authoritarian legacies look at patterns of behavior, norms, values, relationships, as well as at social and political institutions, rules and procedures. These values and institutions can grow entrenched, and this affects the post-autocratic period. For this reason, post-authoritarian regimes with some experience of democracy have an advantage in making democracy work.

In contrast, new democracies that experienced long periods of authoritarian rule struggle in numerous ways. Parties and party systems struggle to operate. Politicians lack the legislative experience to collaborate, formulate laws and check the executive (O'Donnell 1994). Judicial institutions lack experience in interpreting the constitution and challenging the executive, while security institutions lack experience in upholding the rule of law and protecting civil liberties. Local governments are often totally unprepared to make the transition. Citizens who endured autocratic rule also lack a meaningful attachment to democracy (Pridham 2000).

Institutional legacies or 'authoritarian enclaves' often recreate the habits and processes of the past. Authoritarian enclaves designate the persistence of non-democratic institutions, unresolved **human rights** issues, and the political and social actors who refuse to comply with democratic rules (Gilley 2010). They are institutional spaces within the state and society that adhere to authoritarian norms at odds with democracy. The term was first used by Merino Garreton (1991; 1995) in his analysis of Chile's transition to democracy, and much of the early work on authoritarian enclaves focused on legacies in Latin American third-wave democracies. Authoritarian enclaves could consist of institutions such as the military, the senate, courts and the monarchy. For instance, the Chilean constitution has often been cited as an example of an authoritarian enclave.

CLASSIFICATIONS & EXAMPLES Studies have also looked at the duration of authoritarian rule (see autocratic spells – Box 2.4) and the intensity of the authoritarian system. Myanmar's military has been in power for over five decades, and citizens have been exposed to intense **indoctrination** and surveillance. When Myanmar began to open up its regime somewhat in 2011, there was a great hope that the



country might finally be on the road to democracy. Myanmar embarked on a series of political and economic reforms, and the first multi-party elections were held. In 2016, elections resulted in victory for the civilian opposition party, the *National League for Democracy*. But hopes for democracy were short-lived. Myanmar lacked the institutional and political cultural legacy that could facilitate the transition. By contrast, Uruguay experienced a repressive interlude of military rule from 1973-1984. But this was not of sufficient duration to affect its return to democracy. Within five years, Uruguay's democracy was back to where it had been before, with a two-party system, a constitution and a commitment to democratic norms and principles by both the public and elites.

When it comes to classifications, scholars have noted that the character of the previous regime (A, B, C) has an effect on the **exit options** and the nature of **transitions**, but can also have an effect on the process of **democratic consolidation**. Smaller distinctions matter as well.

Military regimes (A) face the additional task of de-politicizing the armed forces. Milan Svolik (2008) finds that a military past has a significant, negative, and independent effect on a democracy's susceptibility to reversal. In other words, military regimes have an impact on a democracy's chances of consolidating. Other scholars confirm that a military legacy is particularly bad for democracy (Cheibub 2007).

This finding would appear to contradict the results from Geddes' earlier work that military regimes are especially prone to breaking down. Geddes argued that military dictatorships differ from other forms of authoritarian rule in that the military values its own survival more than staying in power (Geddes 1999). Military elites are more likely than other civilian authoritarian elites to step down voluntarily (see **exit options**), if staying in power impairs their corporate unity and effectiveness (Kieh & Agbese 1993). For this reason, the military is more likely to initiate and negotiate its own exit, making room for democratic elections.

Although a democratic transition from military rule is often a smooth process, the road to democratic consolidation is not. Because the military often negotiates its own exit, it retains a lot of bargaining power (due to its capacity for **repression**). The military uses this power to ensure that safeguards are in place to protect its financial interests (**rents**), its autonomy and its immunity from prosecution. The military will often dictate who can run for office, who can hold important cabinet positions and the types of policies that can be implemented. In Latin America, the military retained many privileges after democratization. The outgoing military elites were able to construct a protective version of democracy that hampered the chances of democratic consolidation.

Much of this depends on the degree of the military's involvement in political affairs. Some military regimes ruled for a short period of time, and were less extensively involved in politics. In negotiating their exit, they had a hands-off attitude to the **transition**, only focused on safeguarding their own interests, public order and national security. Where it is a question of more durable military regimes transitioning to democracy, it is important to implement comprehensive reform of the military and national security agencies. In the case of South Korea, rapid democratic breakdown was avoided by purging a politicized group from the military in order to reassert firm civilian control over the military. Two former military presidents were put on trial and national security came under the control of elected representatives. Cleansing the military deprived the security apparatuses of any privileged status (Im 2004).

However, many military regimes were not able to remove politicized elements from the military. As a result, the military wanted to remain involved in politics, undermining democratic consolidation (Diamond 1997). Years of military rule made it difficult for the military to accept subordination to civilians. For example, after more than two decades of military rule in Brazil, the military can still control its own affairs, free from civilian interference and congressional oversight, and continues to influence economic and social policy (Stepan 2015). In Honduras, the 1957 Constitution stipulated that the military could select the chief of the armed forces, maintain control over the military command and deny executive budgetary oversight (Albertus & Menaldo 2014). In Guatemala, the military instituted legal boundaries that put the military above the rule of law (Karl 1995). Egypt's military gave up power only to reassume it once again, with the election of General Abdel el-Sisi in 2014.

Returning to the example of Myanmar, the military (*Tatmadaw* – 'Grand Army') became a stubborn obstacle, aborting the country's democratic transition. The 2008 Constitution places limits on civilian power, requiring more than 75% approval for any constitutional amendment and stipulating that 25% of all seats in both houses of the legislature are to be filled by the *Tatmadaw*. The *Tatmadaw* also retain control of three key ministries: defense, home affairs and border affairs.

The character of the military also matters. Countries with professionalized militaries may have a better chance of consolidating democracy than those with non-professionalized militaries, or those whose militaries are praetorian in nature. Praetorian militaries are often poorly trained and funded. Characterized by high levels of corruption, they want to take advantage of the spoils of office (Perlmutter 1986). Their recruitment is often based on communal ties and loyalty rather than expertise and merit. Praetorian militaries are not trained to respect civilian politics. Because of this, they frequently intervene in politics.

Professionalized militaries are well trained, organized and cohesive (Finer 1962). More professionalized militaries tolerate the development of political opposition (Barany 1997). In countries with professionalized civil-military relations, the transition to democracy has a better chance of consolidating. For example, in the case of many Eastern European countries, there was no involvement by the military in the transition to consolidated democracy,

making the transition a smoother process (Barany 1997). In the **Arab Spring** the level of professionalization of the militaries proved to be a significant tipping point (Barany 2011). Tunisia's military was a small but professionalized force that did not intervene in the democratic process. In contrast, Syria's military, whose recruitment was mostly based on sectarian identity, chose not to exit but to fight alongside the Assad family (Makara 2013).

The legacy of military rule may also be dependent on whether a presidential or parliamentary system is chosen during the transition. Presidential democracies, which follow military rule, last on average 17 years, compared to 24 years for civilian authoritarian regimes. Although there is only a handful of cases of parliamentary democracies following military rule, these have lasted much longer (Cheibub et al. 1996). Most military regimes deliberately opt for presidential systems over parliamentary ones precisely because they can help to perpetuate the military's active role in politics.

Military institutions vary in influence but remain relevant, at times interventionist, and have to be dealt with. Authoritarian legacies influence a broad range of political, economic and social institutions (Hite & Cesarini 2004) and are often most visible in the operation and behavior of the security forces. In Greece, the lack of full civilian control over the armed forces for a sustained period constitutes one of its most important legacies.

Authoritarian **party rule** (B) may also be able to survive the transition to democracy without losing power through elections. Democratic institutions may disadvantage newer parties, and serve the interests of the incumbent autocratic parties. Loxton (2015) shows that the institutional inheritance of authoritarian successor parties, such as the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* (PRI) in Mexico, shapes their prospect of remaining major actors under democracy. The same could be said of communist parties in Eastern Europe (Grzymala-Busse's 2002). The way that parties are organized and institutionalized during the authoritarian period affects the development of political parties in the post-authoritarian era (Grzymala-Busse 2002). **Revolutionary legacies** matter as well.

There is no consensus about the impact of authoritarian parties. Self and Hicken (2018) argue that the more institutionalized the parties in the authoritarian period are, the more institutionalized they will be in the democratic period, which they see as a benefit to new regimes. They claim that there is greater evidence that an authoritarian successor party may play a positive role, rather than a negative one, by contributing to democratic stability. The reason for this optimism is that the authoritarian successor party may be an institutionalized organization, which is critical to democratic governance. Although authoritarian parties may have previously adhered to authoritarian principles, their experience can support democratic consolidation. Miller (2021) counters, however, that when authoritarian parties flourish, there is a negative impact on democratic survival and quality. Authoritarian ruling parties that incorporated some groups were more successfully able to persist after the transition to democracy, contributing to the entrenchment of **patronage** practices. These authoritarian incorporation strategies can have a powerful legacy (Riedl 2014). For example, in Ghana and Senegal, authoritarian parties' dependence on rural strongmen left parties in a stronger position to compete after democratization.

The impact of prolonged **personalist rule** (C) is covered in the entry devoted to it. Its most prominent characteristics are hollowed-out state institutions, deep distrust, **systemic corruption** and a high probability of violent **transitions**. This combination of structural factors, along with the high risk of political violence, makes democratic transitions unlikely, and, even when they succeed, democratic consolidation remains extremely challenging.

Elections under authoritarian rule can also bequeath a legacy. Some argue that this legacy is positive in that it can develop habits that lead to democratization (Donno 2013). Others see competitive authoritarian regimes manipulating elections in ways that have negative implications for democracy. In Venezuela, Hugo Chávez instituted a biased regulatory agency for elections called the *National Electoral Council* (CNE). In the 16 elections held while Chávez was president, there were 45 incidents of electoral irregularities. There was also biased enforcement of electoral laws, including allowing the ruling party to spend over the limit, arbitrary bans on candidates, inducing state employees and welfare recipients to vote for the regime, harassing voters, and threatening to deny funds to districts that elected opposition candidates. This has had a lasting impact on the quality and legitimacy of Venezuelan elections (Corrales 2015).

Past experience with authoritarianism may mean that elites are not loyal to democracy (O'Donnell 1994). Some studies have looked at authoritarian incumbents' privilege. The more privileged and wealthier they were, the greater the potential of a negative influence. Katherine Hite and Leonardo Morlino (2004) have argued that the more powerful and centralized the previous authoritarian regime was, the greater the chance of authoritarian influence in the subsequent regime. Elites perceive the advantages of certain arrangements and act to ensure their persistence well into the future.

Studies have also looked at the impact of authoritarian and totalitarian forms of rule on **civil societies**. One study demonstrates that countries with longer exposure to such forms will have weaker civil societies; totalitarian regimes suffer comparably more (Bernhard & Karakoç 2007) – see **totalitarian legacies**. Bela Greskovits (2015) demonstrates the weakness of civil society under Central Europe post-communist rule in spite of surveys that reveal support for democracy. Marc Howard (2003) argues that citizens in post-communist countries are less active or interested in joining new organizations than citizens in democracies.

Studies of authoritarian legacies may also consider the mode of **transition**. The mode of transition concerns the way that the transition from authori-



tarian rule favors **incumbents** over others. To what extent can the political elite still appeal to their constituencies (Schmitter & Karl 1991; Linz & Stepan 1996; Munck and Leff 1997)? How violent was the transition? Did authoritarian regimes lose power in crisis or non-crisis conditions (Haggard & Kaufman 2008)? Additionally, how strong were the military, political parties and civil society in this transition, and what role did they play? Frances Hagopian (1993) demonstrates that authoritarian regimes affect the pace and scope of economic reform by directly supporting the economic success or failure of the successor regime and indirectly altering the bargaining power of key actors along with the institutional arrangements under which they operate.

Historical memories of authoritarianism are also important. These memories can be activated and manipulated by social and political actors at given moments. Individuals living in countries that have had negative experiences with authoritarianism, particularly repression coupled with economic failure, will encounter fewer attempts to overthrow the democratic regime when it faces a crisis (O'Donnell et al. 2013). The repression that took place in Uruguay under military rule is an example of this. Nigerians also have memories of high levels of corruption, mismanagement and repression (Ojewale & Appiah-Nyamekye, 2018). The highest level of support for democracy is found in Namibia, which has strong historical memories of being ruled by South Africa's Apartheid regime. Over 70% of Namibia's population supports democracy according to the 2015 Afrobarometer survey. At the time of independence, Namibian elites were committed to democratic institutions. Democratic consolidation is more likely when different sectors' evaluations of the past lead to accommodating attitudes among political forces (Diamond 2015).

But historical memories can cut both ways. Authoritarian regimes unleash polarizing responses, inviting caution, retreat or revulsion and anger, and memories of these regimes can present an interesting set of paradoxes. Legacies can be either a reaction to the past or its continuation (Hite & Cesarini, 2004). While there are countries with positive past experiences of democracy, there are also others with negative memories of democratization. A prior failure may weaken future attempts to pursue democracy. If a regime's prior democratization effort was plagued by conflict and instability, re-democratization efforts will be hampered by any recurring images of crisis. Citizens may respond to the legacy of repression by turning away from politics (Maravall 2016).

Chaotic democratization may unite social actors' support for authoritarian regimes (Slater 2010). The timing of conflict and disarray is also important. Singapore and Malaysia both experienced a bloody, stateless and chaotic prelude to authoritarian rule (Slater 2010). Russian politics experienced upheaval after the break-up of the Soviet Union, which eroded confidence that a democratic system could preserve order. In contrast, much of the contentious politics in South Korea and Taiwan took place prior to democratization.

Authoritarian regimes may also have left positive impressions on citizens. They often use **propaganda** to shape citizens' image of the regime. Studies of Eastern European countries have shown that many Eastern Europeans are nostalgic for authoritarian rule (Neundorff et al. 2023). The authoritarian period is associated with stability, predictability, security and employment. This can lead to positive attachments to an authoritarian leader who is deified, often in a **personality cult**. Longer periods of authoritarian rule also leave more durable imprints on citizens (Pridham 2000).

An authoritarian political culture usually leaves a much more embedded and persistent legacy. How citizens were involved in and socialized into politics is incredibly important. Authoritarian values persisted for many decades after Italy's experience with **fascism**. A 1972 opinion poll showed that 21.5% retained a positive attitude to Mussolini (Morlino 2013). By 1985, only about 6.5% of Italians thought that the fascist experience was positive. According to Morlino (2010), this illustrates that there was no full consensus for democracy in the Italy of the 1950s, which still held diffuse positive opinions regarding the fascist period.

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Authoritarian Nostalgia

There is no greater sorrow than to recall in misery the time when we were happy.
– Dante Alighieri (ca. 1265 – ca. 1321)

Nostalgia is a file that removes the rough edges from the good old days.
– Doug Larson (1926-2017)

Authoritarian nostalgia refers to a nostalgia about, or romanticization of, one's past life under authoritarian rule. Such skewed memories influence voter behavior and political preferences even in post-authoritarian contexts.

DEFINITION Authoritarian nostalgia refers to sentimentalizing life under past authoritarian rule. Contrary to early expectations, citizens who grew up under a dictatorship may be likely to yearn for a return to this period for a variety of economic,



psychological, sociological and political-cultural reasons. There may be different specific things that citizens are nostalgic for, such as a specific type of leadership, a sense of community, certainty, security, or just the past in general. Around the world, this nostalgia has impacted support for democracy in new democracies. The extent to which citizens are nostalgic is debatable, along with the reasons for their nostalgia, but mass surveys of citizens in former autocracies have revealed that there is a nostalgia for life under authoritarian rule.

In some cases, citizens aren't nostalgic for an authoritarian past *per se*, one that they lived through themselves; instead, citizens are nostalgic for a period in their country's history, which may have been illiberal and which they may not have experienced first-hand, but which feels like the 'golden age.' This helps to explain the effectiveness of 'make our country great again' campaigns, and appeals for a revival of the 'Golden Age of Islam.'

SEE ALSO This topic relates to authoritarian imprints resulting from socialization, **indoctrination**, **education** and **propaganda**. The most common form is communist nostalgia, which has received special attention, even in film and culture. Its lingering effects are part of **authoritarian legacies** and they are known to negatively impact **democratic consolidation**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The concept of authoritarian nostalgia puts citizens at the center of attention of authoritarian research, to better understand the relationship between dictatorships and their populations. The concept also brings into focus the legacies of authoritarian regimes along with the feelings and beliefs, not compatible with democratic values and principles, that may persist in post-authoritarian societies. It highlights the challenges facing new democracies in achieving democratic consolidation and illuminates the lasting legacy and imprint of authoritarian regimes.

ORIGIN Nostalgia for strong leadership has been explored in the past (Epstein 1968; Chase 1987; Lapidus 1983; Von Beyme 1988). This has been mainly nostalgia for a specific leader: Stalin, Mussolini, Mao, Saddam Hussein. The term nostalgia comes from the Greek words νόστος (*nóstos* – 'return') and ἄλγος (*álgos* – 'pain'). The term was first coined by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in 1688 to describe the symptoms felt by Swiss mercenaries who served European monarchs. By the second half of the twentieth century, it was more often used to describe a yearning for old times (Davis 1977).

LITERATURE Most of the literature on authoritarian regimes has focused on elites and institutions, but there is less understanding of what life was like for citizens who endured authoritarian rule, and the impact of authoritarian rule on citizens of new democracies.

A small but growing literature has shown that people who lived their impressionable years under autocracy tend to become nostalgic for such a regime. The literature on authoritarian nostalgia builds on work by scholars of socialization to better understand why new democracies have struggled so much to form democratic political cultures. It argues that citizens' experience with autocracy presents a barrier to **democratic consolidation**, as they are more likely to be more critical of and less satisfied with democracy. However, the reasons for why this is the case vary.

The socialization literature argues that citizens indoctrinated about the benefits of an authoritarian regime in their formative or impressionable years are more likely to be more nostalgic for the past, and more critical of democracy (Neundorff et al. 2022). The exact timing of 'impressionable years' is open to debate, but most scholars estimate these as falling roughly between the ages of 4 and 24. Many authoritarian regimes sought to achieve high levels of public conviction about the **legitimacy** of the regime through a process of indoctrination.

By indoctrination, we refer to the inculcation of a doctrine, an ideology and political values beyond merely fostering a mentality of obedience (Brandenberger 2014). **Indoctrination** is a process whereby a subject irreversibly learns an attachment, learning information as if it were universally accepted and true whatever the evidence (Eibl-Eibesfeldt & Salter 1998). Thus, indoctrination closes down alternatives through the promotion of a single view that provides citizens with a narrative of why the incumbent should be seen as legitimate (Sears & Hughes 2006).

Authoritarian regimes successfully used the educational system, the media, and youth organizations and parties to shape the values of citizens from an early age. Ideological messages were instilled in schools and universities, and through the media and the arts. Educational systems were designed to discourage critical thinking and the questioning of authority (cf. **education**).

The educational systems in Cold War-era Latin American right-wing military regimes emphasized nationalism, Christianity, and discipline. Thus, the educational climate to which people aspired was one of respect, order and silence. Additionally, a military model of management was superimposed on the educational institution (Hanson 1996). Textbooks were destroyed and a new curriculum that supported military rule, purged of leftist ideologies, was introduced (Davis 1995).

In the case of Eastern Europe, the curriculum was modified to focus on nationalism and on Communist **ideology**. The goal was to inculcate the principle that communism was morally right and everything that opposed it morally wrong. In Turkey, textbooks focused on Turkish nationalism while simultaneously instilling a phobia of the enemy. No critical thinking was encouraged; instead, rote memorization of state ideology, along with deference to authority, was emphasized (Ince 2012).

The media was also used to disseminate propaganda in favor of the regime. For example, in the case of Argentina under the military regime (1976-1983), a mass media campaign stressed moral conduct and authoritative discipline. Argentines who watched more television were significantly more

likely to agree that people should obey authority, to approve of limits on freedom of speech, and to think a person's poverty to be his or her own fault (Morgan & Shanahan 1991). In Eastern Europe, television and radio programs were heavily loaded with indoctrinating items about the triumphs of the Communist Party (Taborsky 2015). In tandem with this approach, authoritarian regimes ensured that citizens had little access to alternative sources of information that could carry different values (Geddes & Zaller 1989). The result of this strategy was that citizens developed strong convictions about the benefits of the authoritarian systems in which they grew up.

Nostalgia about authoritarian pasts have been become a major obstacle for democratic consolidation. Citizens' formative experience in authoritarian regimes impacts their political preferences after the regimes' democratization. People who spent their formative years under authoritarian rule are more critical of and less satisfied with democracy, compared to people who grew up in democratic periods. Authoritarian regimes cast a long shadow on their citizens even after their downfall. These legacies have important implications for the development of a democratic political culture in transitioning societies. Many of the regimes in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet sphere have struggled to democratize or have seen their democracies erode over time. A lingering authoritarian political culture has meant that citizens facing social dislocation have become nostalgic for the authoritarian era. The *Pew Research Center* survey data has revealed high levels of authoritarian nostalgia in Russia, Chile, Turkey and Brazil, and in many countries in Eastern Europe.

Communist regimes have proven to be adept at political socialization. Older respondents socialized for decades in paternalistic and authoritarian societies are more nostalgic for communism than younger cohorts and cohorts not indoctrinated in their impressionable years (Neundorff et al. 2017). Communist parties provided a more coherent **ideology** than right-wing dictatorships (with some exceptions), one that has had a lasting resonance within these societies. **Communism** has also had a greater 'indoctrinating effect' than a 'resistance effect' (see 'methodological issues' – below). A recent study demonstrates that the longer the exposure to communism, the higher the levels of opposition to democracy (Pop Eleches & Tucker 2014).

In contrast to the socialization arguments, some studies claim that nostalgia derives from the tremendous upheaval that accompanied the dismantling of the socialist economy and the loss of public goods provision (Berend 2007; Dragomir 2009; Louyest & Roberts 2015; Okulicz-Kozaryn 2014; Vassilev 2011). For these authors, the problem was more economic shock than political change to democratic governance. Nostalgia, in their view, arises in reaction to the ills of rapid liberalization such as inflation, unemployment, a decline in living standards coupled with high levels of corruption (Light & Young 2015). According to these authors, nostalgia is a normal reaction in times of shock or upheaval as people search for solace and security. Countries with a recent traumatic experience of democracy are more likely to support autocratic rule (Belmonte & Rochlitz 2020). These authors also claim that communist nostalgia is a response to distrust, disappointment with the democratic system, and the failures of the new regime (Ekman & Linde 2005). This could lead citizens of former autocracies to prefer a certain autocratic status to an uncertain democratic future (Alesina & Passarelli 2019). Those who grew up under socialist dictatorship prefer greater state intervention and redistribution (Alesina & Fuchs-Schundeln 2007). Other explanations of authoritarian nostalgia simply claim that people imagine their lives would be better. In other words, if democracies performed better there would be less nostalgia for the past.

CLASSIFICATIONS There are different types of nostalgia, which may help to better understand the phenomenon of authoritarian nostalgia: (a) personal, (b) collective and (c) national nostalgias. Personal nostalgia (a) is a longing for a personal experience in the past, or may refer to something that someone has experienced first-hand. This differs from collective nostalgia (b), in which longing is for shared experiences that are connected to a social identity or social group (Sedikides et al. 2015; Wildschut et al. 2010; Wildschut et al. 2014). Collective nostalgia entrenches a renewed sense of social identity and may arise in response to threats to self-continuity (Boym 2001; Davis 1979; Hewison 1987). For example, communist nostalgia may function as a mechanism that helps the losers in the market transition cope with economic hardships (Marandici 2022).

National nostalgia (c) is a specific form of collective nostalgia that is based on national group membership, and which regulates intragroup and intergroup attitudes and behaviors of national in-group members. National nostalgia is a sentimental longing for a positively remembered national in-group past (Smeekes et al. 2021). It may include a yearning for a national community or heartland, or an idealized version of the past that is retrospectively constructed (Taggart 2004). In a study based on cross-national surveys in 27 countries, national nostalgia was demonstrated to be a response to a collective fear about the country's future (Smeekes et al. 2018). When national, collective nostalgia is a yearning for an authoritarian past, this has negative implications for support for democracy in post-authoritarian regimes.

MEASUREMENT & EXAMPLES Mass surveys are used to measure authoritarian nostalgia. Such surveys can offer insights into how people feel about the past. Interviewees may be asked questions about how they feel about the past, and what in the past they miss. This is then followed up with questions about how they feel about certain authoritarian periods, and what, if anything, they missed about these periods.

Many of the regimes in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet sphere have struggled to democratize or have seen their democracies erode over time. A lingering authoritarian political culture has meant that citizens who have faced social dislocation have become nostalgic about the authoritarian era. As



mentioned above, the *Pew Research Center* survey data has extensively mapped such nostalgia in its reports (Masci 2017; Wike et al. 2019).

Many formerly communist countries have experienced a longing for the past, sentimentalizing some of the certainties of the socialist era. As early as 1993, *Eurobarometer* surveys indicated that minorities in all post-socialist countries (ranging from 5% in the Czech Republic to more than 25% in Bulgaria) approved of a return to Communist Party rule, even in countries that experienced brutal repression. The emergence of this post-socialist nostalgia surprised many, given people's apparent elation when these socialist regimes were overthrown.

Romania under Nicolae Ceaușescu was one of the most repressive regimes in the Eastern Bloc, and after the regime fell in a revolution in December of 1989, the Romanian population appeared united in its hopes for a better future. By 1993, a *Eurobarometer* survey revealed that 13% longed for a return to communist rule. Ten years later, two-thirds of the population claimed to be nostalgic for communism. In spite of his noted brutality, many older people directly praise Ceaușescu, and voice their desire for a return to the order and certainty of the past (Light & Young 2015). Other *Eurobarometer* surveys of former communist countries in Europe demonstrate that their citizens would welcome a return to **communism**.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The main methodological issues concerning the measure of nostalgia for the past arise when the citizens being surveyed are still living under authoritarian rule. There is not always a guarantee of gathering accurate responses as citizens may be anxious about answering the question in the wrong way. In some cases, there are of issues regarding memory. Citizens who endured repression and authoritarian rule may not be able to remember this period accurately, choosing to repress the negative memories of the past as a coping mechanism.

In relation to measuring the strength of attitudes, Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2019) control for 'exposure' and 'resistance' using the analogy of sunburn. Just as the risk of sunburn increases with more time spent in the sun, exposure to a regime's ideology grows with the amount of time lived under it. However, the effect of this exposure may vary in terms of intensity and resistance. In the context of communist regimes, the intensity of ideological exposure can vary at both country and individual levels. For example, regimes dominated by ideologues may deliver stronger propaganda than those led by technocrats. At the individual level, those who attended school during communist rule might receive a more potent dose of regime messaging. Conversely, factors like pre-existing literacy or religious affiliation can increase resistance to regime indoctrination. People from literate backgrounds or those in communities opposed to communist ideals, like Catholics, might be less influenced by regime propaganda. This model highlights that both exposure and resistance factors can interact to shape individuals' acceptance or rejection of regime-promoted attitudes, emphasizing the need to consider these variables when analyzing ideological influence under authoritarian regimes (Pop-Eleches & Tucker 2019: 11-13).

IMPACT ON POLICY The idea that citizens may be nostalgic for authoritarian rule puts the focus on the importance of democratic education, and civic education in particular.

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Colonial Legacies

Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.
– Chinua Achebe

The extent of colonialism's influence on postcolonial societies is a subject of academic debate. Its breadth can be illustrated with an example from Africa. On the one hand, Jeffrey Herbst (2014) has argued that colonial rule in Africa was ineffective because its administrations could not govern vast colonial territories, controlling only capitals or coastal towns and regions. On the other, Young (1997) claims that the African colonial state was deeply transformative and had an impact on economic, political, and social processes in Africa. According to Acemoglu et al. (2002: 1235), European colonialism caused 'institutional reversal' in Africa, which means that colonial administrations built institutions of private property in poor areas, and, in previously prosperous regions, they introduced extractive practices and institutions. This pattern of change overlapped with population density: poor areas with sparse populations became destinations for European settlement, whereas prosperous, densely-populated areas became sources of forced labor. On the basis of the work by Mazrui (1986), the effect of colonialism may be understood either from the perspective of (A) the 'epic school,' which claims that colonialism meant 'a revolution of epic propositions,' or (B) the 'episodic school,' which sees colonialism as a mere episode in African history (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015). Such debates can be extended to all world regions that experienced colonialism and echoes of these sentiments also appear in **imperial legacies**.

In the study of authoritarianism, the most important colonial legacies include the establishment of extractive and authoritarian institutions, the creation of arbitrary boundaries and centralized state structures, the fostering of ethnic divisions and inter-ethnic competition, and the imposition of economic systems that perpetuated inequality and dependency.

Whether the colonial state is a direct impact of colonialism is similarly disputed. The character of the colonial system (see **colonial states**) had a considerable effect on postcolonial local governance, ethnic politics, conflict, traditional institutions, and land rights (Müller-Crepon 2020: 736). According to Bolt and Gardner (2020), however, it is necessary to focus on the dynamic interaction between elites and the colonial state authorities, rather than just assess the degree of their mutual involvement. In many regions, as in Africa, on the eve of independence, traditional elites won power thanks to their connection to or collaboration with colonial powers, rather than from traditional rights (Ajayi 1982). The legacy of colonialism is still apparent in the political, economic, and social development of postcolonial societies.

The dynamics between colonial authorities and local elites have significantly impacted the emergence and persistence of authoritarian regimes in postcolonial contexts. Colonial powers established authoritarian structures through collaboration with or the subordination of local elites, leading to the empowerment of certain leaders and the under-



mining of societal checks-and-balances. After independence, this collaboration facilitated immediate control and institutionalized repressive governance. Centralization of power during colonial rule enabled postcolonial leaders to assert control over diverse populations, often at the expense of democracy. Ethnic divisions, entrenched by colonial rule, were exploited by postcolonial regimes to maintain authoritarianism. The economic exploitation and elite collaboration established under colonialism persist in postcolonial states, perpetuating authoritarian practices. The use of colonial-era laws to suppress dissent further consolidates authoritarian control (Cheeseman & Fisher 2019; see also Box 5.8 on regimes & repertoires). Additionally, the type of colonial rule has an influence on contemporary attitudes to democracy, which suggests that understanding colonial legacies is essential for the analysis of the challenges of **democratization** in former colonies (Lechler & McNamee 2018).

DEFINITION The political legacies of colonialism include political instability, violence, and ethnic exclusion (De Juan & Pierskalla 2017: 162). Colonial legacies are shaped by prior colonial and native policies (Steinmetz 2008) and influence postcolonial societies' economic, political, and social developments, e.g., the distribution of land, language policies, ethnic and racial exclusionary policies, etc. Colonial experiences create pathways that can develop into path dependencies for authoritarian institutions and for patterns of **repression**, so-called **authoritarian legacies**.

SEE ALSO It is necessary to distinguish colonial legacies from **imperial legacies**. Imperialism may be approached as a concept or ideology (but with practical effects); colonialism is rather a practice. In this volume, we consider the factors that influence the international position of postcolonial states and maintain contacts with former colonial powers as imperial legacies. On the contrary, the subject of this entry is the internal developments influenced by colonialism. For a treatment of the impact of colonial systems on statehood, identities, and institutions in particular colonial contexts, see the **colonial states** entry.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Colonial legacies are used to explain the character of newly independent states. For instance, **neo-patrimonialism** and dysfunctional fragmented states (see **state fragility & failure**) arose after decolonization as a result of colonial systems. Olsson (2009) proposes a temporal approach to analyze the colonial determinants of democracy. According to his findings, a positive relationship between colonial duration and current levels of democracy is driven by former British colonies and colonies established after 1850. Roberti (2019) models the relationship between state capacities and the repression of civilians. He identifies and explains the heterogeneous long-term outcomes in non-democratic colonial regimes, having diverse institutional quality, that go beyond the distinction between settler and non-settler colonies. And, using comparative statistics, he forges and proves links between geographic factors, state capacity, and long-term development.

ORIGIN The impact of colonialism was a subject of discussion already in the nineteenth century, at a time when the conditions of colonized people were criticized, and European colonial powers needed to justify their expansion by stressing their 'civilizing mission' (Maseland 2018). For instance, Rudyard Kipling published his poem 'The White Man's Burden' (1899), which was then used to justify the US annexation of the Philippines (Harris 2007).

Current thinking about the legacies of colonialism can be traced to postcolonial theory. Works such as Frantz Fanon's (1961) *Les Damnés de la Terre (The Wretched of the Earth)*, Aimé Césaire's (1950) *Discourse on Colonialism*, and Albert Memmi's (1957) *Portrait du colonisé, précédé par Portrait du colonisateur (The Colonizer and the Colonized),* explored the psychological, cultural, and structural effects of colonialism on colonized people and raised awareness of the need to address colonial legacies.

LITERATURE The most influential studies on the impact of colonialism on the development of postcolonial states are Acemoglu et al. (2001) and Lange (2006a, 2004). However, as early as 1972, Walter Rodney published his seminal book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Rodney 1972), dealing with the extractive form of colonialism and employing a Marxist theoretical approach. Colonial legacies are the subject of ongoing academic debates. An important overview, which studies these legacies in the context and from the perspectives of political discourse and knowledge politics, local and global contestations, and postcolonial agencies and negotiations, is the special issue of *Third World Quarterly* edited by Swati Parashar and Michael Schulz (2021).

Generally speaking, the legacies of colonialism are the subject of current postcolonial thinking as represented by, e.g., Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015), Homi Bhabha (2004), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), Achille Mbembe (2001), Ania Loomba (2015), Ramón Grosfoguel (2003), and Walter Mignolo (2012, 2002). Coronil (2013) summarizes Latin American postcolonial studies, paying attention to their links to postcolonial studies in other parts of the world – Africa and India in particular.

Generally, colonialism is considered to have a significant impact on the economy (A), politics (B), and social structure (C) of postcolonial states and this is reflected in the literature.

Economic Impact (A) Studies of colonial economic legacies (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Bertocchi & Canova, 1997; Grier 1999; Mahoney 2003) generally deal with underdevelopment and economic stagnation as a result of colonialism. According to Acemoglu et al. (2001), the impact of colonialism on development is based on three premises: (i) different types of colonization policies created different sets of institutions; (ii) the colonization strategy was influenced by the feasibility of settlements, especially the disease environment; (iii) **colonial states** and their institutions persisted even after independence. In addition,

the slave trade and the export of enslaved people from Africa has had a severe impact on African economic development (Nunn 2008), and slavery in the New World (especially Spanish America) resulted in the creation of institutions that were not supportive of economic growth (Engerman & Sokoloff 2002).

The level of development is influenced by the characteristics of colonial systems: British indirect colonial system supported free trade and became important for economic development (Olsson 2009: 535). An analysis of Spanish colonies in America (Mahoney 2003) finds that the density of the Indigenous population and the power of liberal elites between 1700 and 1850 are critical factors that explain development differences between particular South American states. Comparison of regions of India directly administered by the British with those under indirect British control and governed by local princes (Iyer 2010) suggests that the effect of two kinds of rule is not straightforward. The level of postcolonial development depended on local contexts and policies aimed at ensuring equal access to public services, such as education and healthcare.

A comparison of British and Spanish economic models and their impact on the character of their colonies and the development of particular postcolonial states indicates that, since Spain colonized more populous regions, its brand of colonialism harmed development. As the British colonized less populous regions, their form of colonialism was less harmful than the Spanish system (Lange et al. 2006b).

Political Impact (B) The impact on institutions varies across regions. In the African context, authors such as Young (1997) and Jackson and Rosberg (2022) claim that colonial states had a considerable impact on the institutions of newly independent African states, and further that the character of colonial bureaucratic apparatuses, and the need to reform them after independence, may explain the rise of **personalist rule** in Africa. On the contrary, Mahoney (2003: 51) proposes an *"inverse relationship between colonial wealth and postcolonial development in Latin America,"* explaining that the poorer colonies in Latin America under colonialism performed better in the postcolonial era.

Olsson (2009) identifies a positive relationship between the duration of colonial rule and current democracy in postcolonial states. His findings are mainly supported by former British colonies and countries colonized after 1850. The impact of colonial systems on the duration of democracies was studied by Bernhard et al. (2004), who analyzed the *"relative contribution of economic development, social fragmentation, and the relationship between the state and civil society on the duration of post-colonial democracies."* According to their findings, the British colonial system had a positive effect on postcolonial democracies. On the contrary, research on French Africa suggests that the predatory (**kleptocracy**) and (neo-)patrimonial states there are the result of the French colonial administration (Bayart 2009) – see **neo-patrimonialism**. Young (2004) claims that patrimonial autocracies are the legacies of colonial states, and led to decline in the 1980s.

The variance between direct and indirect rule has an impact on the treatment of traditional authorities (see pre-modern **monarchies**) in postcolonial societies (Müller-Crepon 2020: 736). Since the British colonial power used both systems, analysis of the political development of these postcolonial states uses the following indicators: political stability, bureaucratic effectiveness, state regulatory burden, rule of law, lack of government **corruption**, and **democratization** (Lange 2004). Indirect rule left an ineffective *"system of decentralized despotism,"* with empowered local chiefs and ineffective local administrations (Lange 2004). On the other hand, direct rule left the conditions for state-led development (Kohli 1994; Wade 2018).

Similarly, different levels of colonialism led to different socio-political developments in the newly independent states (Lange et al. 2006b). The more extensive Spanish form of colonial administration led to the creation of predatory states; in contrast, British colonialism led to the introduction of the rule of law and effective administration. Different colonial legal systems also had an impact on the legal systems in colonies. Joireman (2001) addresses the British legal system introduced into colonies and its intersection with indigenous legal systems, and also the legacies of colonial legal systems and their respective legal education systems. He claims that, after decolonization, formerly Belgian and Portuguese colonies had almost no trained Indigenous legal professionals.

Japanese colonialism in East Asia, in contrast, strengthened East Asian states, as shown by the case of northern China (Mattingly 2017). However, there is disagreement about the role played by Japanese colonialism in the creation of states in East Asia. The claim that Japanese colonization created a well-trained and effective bureaucracy, crucial for further East Asian development, especially in Korea and Taiwan (Cumings 1984; Kohli 1994; Mattingly 2017), was criticized by e.g., Haggard (1997), who claims that Japan's influence on institution-building and post-war development in Korea was meager. In a similar vein, Doner et al. (2005) claim that the colonial effect was not crucial to Korea's state-building process. Analogously, Ha and Kang (2011) admit that, while Korea's industrialization was influenced by colonial rule, the colonial legacy did not play a crucial part in promoting effective bureaucracy and industrial development in the 1960s.

Different concepts of a 'nation' emerged from colonialism (Ekeh 1975: 106), benchmarked on the colonial powers. Colonial systems have an impact on the creation of identities in two broad senses: (a) the making of the serialized, modernist citizen; and (b) the fashioning of the ethnicized 'native' (Comaroff 1998: 329). Further, colonial administrations created social categories (defined by gender, occupation, ethnic group, religious group, etc.) (Lemarchand 1992).

With the imposition of 'nations' on multi-ethnic territories, violent nation-building transitions (which took centuries in Europe) were accelerated. Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2016) claim that the partition of Africa in the late nineteenth century



led to an increase in violence in the postcolonial era and economic deprivation in certain regions. Many scholars claim that national borders in Africa are the product of colonialism, fail to respect pre-colonial political entities, and cut through ethnic groups (Asiwaju 1985; Herbst 2014; McCauley & Posner 2015; Müller-Crepon 2020: 723). The degree of the arbitrariness of African borders, and their possible consequences, was studied and identified by Englebert et al. (2002). In several states, partitioning according to ethnic groups led to irredentist conflicts, e.g., in Somalia (Adugna 2011), or as in the Illemi triangle (a disputed area between South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya), to delimitation conflicts (Mburu 2003). The arbitrary demarcation of borders in African postcolonial states led to civil wars, for example in Biafra (Simpson 2014).

Social Impact (C) This impact was particularly pronounced in education and knowledge production in and about colonies. Sociologists have identified the key role of Christian missionaries, in particular Protestant missionaries, in generating a democratic legacy in many former colonies, through the spread of literacy, mass printing, and voluntary organizations (De Juan & Pierskalla 2017: 162). Colonial education proclaimed that it brought the 'development idea' to Africa (Windel 2009), even as colonial administrations intentionally underdeveloped and undereducated local people, illustrated by the slogan *"no elites no problem"* (Roberti 2019: 248), which expresses colonial administrations' worries about educated leaders and their ability to start civil conflict. However, early colonial investments had great and persistent effects on current outcomes and spatial inequalities. Huillery (2009) uses colonial investments to explain inequalities in France's former West African colonies, and proves that public investments in colonies, especially in education, had long-term effects on development.

Missionaries' impact on colonial education has been the subject of several different case studies. Bolt and Bezemer (2009), e.g., present a comparison of British and French colonies and of Protestant and Catholic missions in Senegal and Uganda. They find that the British colonial system was more active in providing primary education than the French one. The role of missionaries in education in Cameroon has been studied by Lee (2012). Mattingly (2017) finds that the Japanese colonization of northern China led to increased school enrollment, improved public health, and sanitation, and to long-term increase in wealth. Relations between school enrollment and the character of the regime (either democratic or authoritarian) has been studied by Brown (2000). He sees colonial heritage as a predictor of primary school enrollment in low-income countries in Africa. Variation in school enrollment is caused by the distinct educational policies of British and French colonial states, and this gap has even widened over time. In French colonies, the education was in the French language, whereas the British colonial educational system taught students in their local languages.

The colonial legacy of ethno-racial discrimination (Lange et al. 2006b) can be identified in the South African Apartheid regime (Horáková 2018) – see also Box 4.7 – or in fabricated ethnic identities. For example, the concept of identity in Sudan was the result of historical processes stratifying races, cultures, and religions, and creating the dichotomy between 'South' and 'North' (Deng 1995). Indian identity was based on caste membership and religion (Robb 1997).

Certain institutions and policies, created and developed by colonial powers – such as property rights (Acemoglu et al. 2001), legal systems, tax collection, slavery (Nunn 2008) – had long-term consequences (Iyer 2010). The roots of social security can be traced to the colonial period (Schmitt 2015), as it has been analyzed in the cases of the Spanish, French, and British colonies.

The Nigerian author Chinua Achebe claimed that colonialism was *"the most extreme form of totalitarianism."* According to him, colonialism disrupted the habits and traditions of self-rule and resulted in weak states (Gilley 2016: 649). At the same time, however, Achebe admitted that colonialism had a positive impact on the creation of a consciousness of identity in some territories (e.g., the lower Niger basin). In one interview he said: *"These nations were created in the first place by the intervention of the British which, I hasten to add, is not saying that the peoples comprising these nations were invented by the British (…) this arbitrary creation called Nigeria holds out wonderful prospects. Yet the fact remains that Nigeria was created by the British – for their own ends. Let us give the devil his due: colonialism in Africa disrupted many things, but it did create big political units where there were small scattered ones before"* (cited in Gilley 2016).

Colonial systems have left their legacy in the urban design of colonial cities in Africa. The impact of Italian colonialism on urban architecture, and modes of living in Eritrea has been presented by Chelati Dirar (2007). French colonial urban design and its legacy in Africa has been analyzed by Njoh (2004), who finds that French urban development (in 1700s Goreé Island) preceded French territorial colonialism. Urban planning was considered a tool for modernization in the colonies. Colonial cities were designed to satisfy the needs of colonizers and colonial officers (with residential areas separate from the Indigenous population).

The slave trade and colonialism in Africa had an important impact on defining identities, such as gender and sexual identities and the position of women in African societies (Elnaiem 2021; Sudarkasa 1986; Tamale 2013). In addition, ethnic groups are social constructs created during the colonial era (Posner 2003) by missionaries or by explorers such as Henry Morton Stanley in Congo (Luyckfasseel & Meeuwis 2018: 88; Young 1976: 171). Posner (2003) illustrates how colonial administrations helped to consolidate certain language and ethnic groups in Zambia, which then played a significant role in postcolonial settings. The emancipation and consolidation of these languages were enabled by the activities of missionaries, colonial educational policies, and labor migration to mining regions. A similar case of missionaries impacting the development and consolidation of vernacular languages occurred in South

Africa (Gilmour 2007). Ranger (2012) criticizes the missionaries' role in inventing traditions in colonial Africa, meaning that they did not merely record, but rather created traditions. After decolonization, ethnic and nationalist movements used these traditions to justify their aims.

MEASUREMENT Colonial legacies are difficult to measure. There have been attempts using a temporal indicator, which means analyzing the impact of the duration of colonial administration on economic development (Bertocchi & Canova 1997; Grier 1999). There are also comparative studies claiming that the identity and character of the colonizing power have a significant impact on further development (Bertocchi & Canova 1997). Grier (1999) compares British, French, and Spanish colonial models, and discovers that former British colonies perform better than French ones. Statistical analyses find a positive and significant relationship between British colonialism and development indicators in postcolonial states (Lange 2004: 908). McPherson-Smith (2021) presents a qualitative study of the legacy of different colonial institutions in Africa (e.g., the administration of Somaliland as a British protectorate, whereas Somalia was an Italian colony). In contrast, Sokoloff and Engerman (2000) claim that the *"relationship between national heritage and economic performance is weaker than popularly thought,"* and there are broad disparities between different colonies of the same colonial power.

Bolt and Bezemer (2009) identify four benchmarks for the postcolonial growth of former colonies in Africa: (i) extractive institutions, like those under the Belgian colonization of Congo (Acemoglu et al. 2001); (ii) legal origins (Djankov et al. 2003); (iii) geography (Sachs & Warner 1997); and (iv) human capital (Djankov et al. 2003). Colonial education influenced further development in two ways, by affecting present education levels and by the effect it had on colonial institutions (Bolt & Bezemer 2009: 29).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The majority of the studies on the impact of colonialism in the economic and political spheres mentioned in this entry are quantitative studies that compare a single colonial power's various colonies and their postcolonial development (e.g., Acemoglu et al. 2001). In addition, Nunn (2007) develops a path dependency model that links Africa's past, and colonialism in particular, with its current underdevelopment. William Darity (1992; 1990) and Ronald Findlay (1990) create models of the impact of the triangular trade between Europe, Africa, and America. Barbara Solow (1985) explores the validity of the hypothesis regarding the impact of slavery in the West Indies (Caribbean) on the economic development of Britain articulated by Eric Williams (1966). However, qualitative, in-depth analyses of specific social aspects of colonial legacies, such as knowledge production, and ethnic and national identity dynamics, are still required.

Colonial legacies have become the explanation for all postcolonial countries' problems by postcolonial national elites and also some authors in academia. Used to account for the woes of these countries, they thereby preclude the development of alternative theoretical models. Their impact is often confused with the impact of Cold War geopolitical dynamics and other international and internal political developments and influences (for a discussion of the persisting effect of colonialism on institutions and economic development see, e.g., Maseland 2018). Van den Bosch (2021), for instance, argues that Cold War geopolitics contributed much more to the longevity of **personalist rule** in Sub Saharan Africa than colonial legacies, and that such personalist legacies had a direct influence on violent transitions and civil war.

EXAMPLES Examples of colonial legacies appear in various case studies. Adelman (2012) deals with the colonial legacies in Latin America. Japanese colonial legacies in northern China are studied by Mattingly (2017). The study by Lee (2012) compares British (indirect) and French (direct) colonial systems in Cameroon, highlighting the French policy of assimilation and Western education against the British respect for native traditions. It also addresses the (earlier) German colonial legacy to assess the impact of these various colonial systems on post-independence Cameroon and the challenges stemming from its previous division into French and British colonies.

Also very interesting is the discussion on the Belgian reflection on colonial administration in Congo on the example of the Royal Museum of Central Africa at Tervuren, Brusssels (Ewans 2003). The paper also elaborates on Congo's unpreparedness for independence in 1960 and the problems it brought, such as the ascendancy of Mobutu's **kleptocracy** (see also Box 1.7) to supreme power in 1965 (Ewans 2003: 173).

IMPACT ON POLICY Colonial legacies have a very strong impact on the policy of newly independent postcolonial states. Policy-makers in newly independent states carried on the strategies of former colonial powers and their institutional imprints (Schmitt 2015). According to Christopher Clapham (2004), it was precisely the colonial period that initiated an era of robust political institutions and strong states in Africa, manifested, for example, in the establishment of borders between territories, and the creation of hierarchical government and citizenship rules. During the period of decolonization, states were created in territories into which state power had never reached. Thus, Clapham sees the main problem of collapsed states as lying in a situation in which the international community tries to 'graft' state institutions onto territories and populations that never experienced Western forms of statehood – see **state fragility & failure**.

OTHER LANGUAGES In Czech, Daněk (2000) analyzes the impact of colonialism on the uneven development of states, taking into account various economic, political, demographic, and social factors. In German, Lützeler (1997) provides a critical postcolonial view for Germany, which lost its colonies as a result of WWI.



NEW FRONTIERS New research trends are identified by De Juan and Pierskalla (2017) in their introduction to the *Politics & Society* special issue on *Comparative Politics of Colonialism and Its Legacies.* They urge increased attention to (a) the internal dynamics of colonial intervention; (b) non-institutional transmission mechanisms; (c) the role of context conditions at the time of colonial intervention; and (d) a finer-grained disaggregation of outcomes, explanatory factors, and units of analysis (De Juan & Pierskalla 2017: 159). There have also been discussions on the ongoing impact of colonialism on the institutions and economic development of independent states (Maseland 2018).

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Coup d'État

Les coups d'État se terminent toujours par des tas de coups
(Coups always end in heaps of blows)
– Bernard Haller

Knocking off a bank or an armored truck, he said, is merely crude.
Knocking off an entire republic has, I feel, a certain style
– Frederick Forsyth, *The Dogs of War,* Bantam Books (1982: 120)

A *coup d'état* is the sudden (and violent) overthrow of an existing government by extra-legal means. Haller's statement underlines the ever-present element of violence; the quotation from Forsyth underscores how daring and dangerous such illegal operations are. Not all coups are violent. Sometimes the simple threat of violence during such **ousters** suffices, but it has to be credible for its intimidation to be effective. In contrast to **assassinations** (which may be opportunistic), coups always require an element of preparation and coordination. Coups are expected to have a plan for the takeover and for the ensuing government or regime transition.

DEFINITION Although coups may be hard to define (Powell & Thyne 2011), there is a general consensus in the literature about the basic defining features. The most important feature of a successful coup is that it results in the overthrow of the state. David Rapoport (1966: 59) underscores that a coup involves a state facing an attack against it. Eric Carlton (1997: ix) adds that a coup is *"a particular type of assault on the state."* This corresponds to the etymology of the French word *coup*, which translates as 'a stroke,' 'a blow,' 'a slash,' 'a shot,' or 'an attack' (Bankowicz 2011).

The Polish political scientist Marek Bankowicz (2011: 19) provides a comprehensive definition. A coup d'état is *"the illegal overthrow of the existing political power by a small group of conspirators, who use the strategy of a sudden seizure of neuralgic state institutions and facilities and is accompanied by violence or by the threat of its use. It is the work of conspirators, and thus it is not the political change enforced by mass social forces."* Thus, a key characteristic of coups is that they are discrete illegal events, with a clear beginning and end.

Another key characteristic of a coup is that it is a tool of the 'minority' (Barbé 1979: 295). It is not a social phenomenon with mass participation, which distinguishes it from a **revolution**. Those planning and executing a coup derive from state agencies, e.g., members of or those directing the security institutions (Bankowicz 2011; Carlton 1997; Hebditch & Connor 2005; Ferguson 1987; Luttwak 1979). Revolutions also differ from coups in that they often lead to the basic restructuring of a polity (Sartori 1987: 73). Although coups lead to a change in government, they do not necessarily lead to transformative socioeconomic changes (McGowan 2003).

Coups also occur relatively quickly and are often bloodless, with no casualties (Powell & Thyne 2011). In contrast, revolutions are long, drawn-out, violent affairs that can sometimes lead to civil war. The execution of coups is very different. The goal of a coup is not the direct conquest of an entire country, but to occupy and control critical points, such as the state's communication systems, transport hubs and key industrial enterprises (Malaparte 1931). Once this is achieved, the perpetrators turn their focus to centers of political power, and take over from the current powerholders.

Coups can overlap with **assassinations**, but only if the killing or incapacitation of the ruler is done by elite insiders and there is a comprehensive plan to take over power – see 'palace coups' under classifications. Coups differ from **mutinies**, which are open military rebellions, and usually directed against superior officers, not the supreme power-holders. The demands of military revolts are usually narrowly defined, and do not encompass replacing the **rulership**. Mutinies can play a crucial role in transitions, for instance when army units refuse to shoot or stop protesters during an insurrection. Sometimes the army's grievances, expressed in a mutiny, can spill over into a military takeover. In Latin America, this is called a 'barracks revolt' or *cuartelazo* (from the Spanish term *cuartel* – 'quarter' or 'barracks'), in which a mutiny by specific military garrisons sparks a larger military revolt against the government (Little-Siebold 1996).

Although it is easier for regime opponents to orchestrate coups, compared to other methods of seizing power, they are nonetheless risky. About half of all coups fail (Singh 2014). There are severe consequences for the plotters of a failed coup. Those who participate in a failed coup are most often killed, jailed, or exiled. Coup conspirators, therefore, must carefully assess the chances of success and should only attempt a coup when its expected rewards and probability of success are greater than the costs of failure.

SEE ALSO This entry covers the many aspects of coups d'état and their variants: *Putsches,* palace coups, self-coups (*autogolpes*), *pronunciamiento,* creeping coups, etc. Coups fit within the broader family of regime ousters and can be nested inside the literature on civil-military relations and **praetorianism** as well as that on **coup-proofing**. Coups are related to but distinct from **assassination** (regicide and tyrannicide), **mutiny** and **revolution.**

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The study of coups is deeply integral to understanding the rise and fall of authoritarian regimes. Coups have been the most common means whereby authoritarian leaders leave power,

occurring as often as one third of the time (Geddes et al. 2014). Theories about why coups take place help us understand many other processes, including revolution, protests, and conflict. Coups are also the most commonly used measure of political instability. Of special interest is their (negative) effect on democratization. Since the 2000s a new body of literature has arisen around **coup-proofing**, or the study of what measures regimes take to protect themselves from coups d'état, and the effects of such actions on military performance and long-term regime durability.

ORIGIN The term 'coup' first appeared in 1639 when Gabriel Naudé wrote his *Considérationis politiques sur le Coup d'État* (Bankowicz 2011: 20). However, modern coups became a subject of study much later. Edward Luttwak (1968; 1979) argues that a coup's feasibility derives from the development of the modern state with its professional bureaucracy and standing military, in a permanent location. This created a clear distinction between the political leadership (the regime) and the permanent state machinery. Additionally, since both the bureaucracy and the military were characterized by a structured hierarchy and chain of command, this made it possible to use parts of the state apparatus to take over the entire state.

One of the first early notable coups was Napoleon Bonaparte's of 1799, in which he crowned himself emperor in a bloodless coup. After his return from a failed military campaign in Egypt, Napoleon worked to overthrow the Directory that ruled France. He first tried to convince the legislature (the Council) to put him in power, but when this failed, he resorted to using the military to intimidate the Council (Hunt et al. 1979). Note: Foronda et al. (2005) trace the origins of coups to the medieval genesis of the modern state and posit that it was a widespread constitutive practice in Europe.

In addition to the literal translation *'golpe de estado,'* another Spanish term often used is *'junta'* ('council'), referring both to the takeover and to the military council of the new rulers once established. The term originally referred to the various consultative committees of the Spanish monarchy in the sixteenth century. Another term in (Swiss) German is *Putsch*, which literally translates as 'knock' or 'thrust.'

LITERATURE There is a vast literature on military coups, with classical works analyzing concrete cases. The best-known early examples are Curzio Malaparte (1931) and his book *Le technique du coup d'état*, in which he analyzed several coups, and Karl Marx, who analyzed the case of Louis Bonaparte in his well-known 1852 essay, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

Modern authors have addressed various aspects of the coup d'état, such as the history of coups, the theory of coups, the mechanism of coups, and the causes and consequences of coups, though, comparatively, there less research has been devoted to the history and theory of the coup d'état. Notable examples include French historian Maurice Agulhon (1977) and his book *Coup d'État et République*, which considers the history of coups, and M. Bankowicz (2011), who constructs a theory of coups in his book, *Coup d'État: A Critical Theoretical Synthesis*. Marsteintredet and Malamud (2020) depict the stretching of the concept over time. L. Martinák (2015) provides a similar dissection of coup definitions (in Czech).

Some works have focused on the logical challenges of planning and executing a coup. The most noted author on this topic is Edward Luttwak (1968, 1979 revised 2016). In his seminal book *Coup d'État: A Practical Handbook*, he details how coups are plotted and planned and the conditions under which coups may succeed. Other works include *The state against the state: the theory and practice of the coup d'etat* by Eric Carlton (1997); *Coup d'etat: A practical manual* by Gregor Ferguson (1987); and *How to stage a military coup: From planning to execution* by David Hebditch and Ken Connor (2005). In *Seizing power: The strategic logic of military coups*, N. Singh (2014) draws on 300 hours of interviews with coup participants to delve deeply into the intra-military dynamics of coup-plotting – see also 'methodological issues' below.

An interesting contrasting view, from the perspective of citizen resistance, is *The Anti-coup* (Sharp & Jenkins 2003), on how to counter coup attempts. This stands apart from the literature on **coup-proofing**, since it focuses foremost on the measures civil society can take to prevent coups.

As mentioned previously, most of the literature on coups aspires to identify the factors that drive coups, where they are likely to occur and what their impact may be. In terms of the drivers, many scholars have looked at the level of development of coup propensity (Londregan & Poole 1990; O'Kane 1981; Przeworski et al. 2000). Economic malaise is a condition that commonly precedes coups and impeachments. Londegran and Poole (1990) claim that poverty is a common denominator in almost all coups. Przeworski and Limongi (1997) demonstrate that reaching a minimal threshold of economic development is important to avoid instability. Hiroi and Omori (2013) argue that greater per capita income reduces the risk of a coup across regimes – this upper income limit is known as the 'coup ceiling,' and was popularized by S. Huntington (1995). Volatile economic and political conditions also make coups more likely (Casper & Tyson 2012; Welch & Smith 1974). In particular, an economic crisis makes a country more coup-prone (Johnson et al. 1983; Fossum 1967; Galetovic & Sanhueza 2000; Needler 1966; O'Kane 1981; Kim 2016). Other works focus on economic modernization outpacing the development of a country's political institutions (e.g., Huntington 1968).

Coups can also be explained by diffusion – they can spread over time and space (Li & Thompson 1975; Lutz 1989; Lunde 1991). Some works focus on the opportunities and motives for coups (Finer 1974). Coups occur when their cost is low, for instance when institutions are weak and vulnerable (Aidt & Albornoz 2011). The military may also stage a coup if the civilian government appears to be unstable and inefficient (Huntington 1968; O'Donnell 1973; Tusalem 2010). Personal factors, such as individual ambition or fear of demotion, can also trigger coups (Decalo 1990). A final explanation of their reemer-



gence is the 'coup trap' (see Box 5.2) – when a country has already experienced a history of coups. In such a case, institutions have been weakened, the political culture is accepting of coups, and the military has been emboldened to step in when they see fit (Collier & Hoeffler 2005).

Much of the scholarly work on the impact of coups has mostly highlighted their negative effect. Alesina et al. (1996) argued that coups, as a measurement of political instability, have a negative impact on growth rates. Fosu (2002) finds that, from the 1960s to 1986, abortive coups had the worst impact on economic growth, while coup-plots were also growth-inhibiting. Kim (2016) finds that a one-point decrease in per capita GDP growth, induced by weather shocks, increases the likelihood of a coup attempt by 1.3 to 1.5 percentage points. Blum and Gründler (2020) claim that coups are associated with a decrease in per capita GDP of 2-3 percentage points. Successful coups are also associated with increased levels of corruption, such as the sale of government property for private gain (Bennett et al. 2021).

Most of the literature has been critical of coups' impact on democracy. According to Geddes et al. (2014) at least half of all coups – 56% during the Cold War and 50% from 1990 to 2015 – initiate new authoritarian regimes. As concerns the usual outcomes, violent regime transitions are more likely than ones accomplished through reforms (Buchheim & Ulbricht 2020). For example, coups in Thailand and Mauritania have derailed their democratization processes. However, a handful of scholars offer contrary views. In an empirical study, Thyne and Powell (2016) argue that coups promote democratization, especially in states that are less likely to democratize otherwise. Marinov and Goemans (2014) argue that, after the Cold War, increasing international pressure to democratize has altered the trajectory of coups. Many countries dependent on Western aid have been forced to embrace competitive elections after a coup, leading to a different generation of coups, one less harmful to democracy than its predecessors. Derpanopoulos et al. (2016) counter that coups are not good for democracy. As they see it, the most common outcome is that the ousted autocratic government is replaced by another group of autocrats.

The study of the impact of coups in civil wars is equally mixed. Coups have been linked to civil wars, such as the 1975 coup in Bangladesh that led to 25 years of civil conflict (Powell 2011). Another study counters that coups that take place during a civil war can give a shock to an otherwise intractable bargaining situation, shortening the war's duration (Thyne 2017).

Over and above the long tradition of academic study of the phenomenon, we cannot forget the artistic treatment of the coup d'état. Probably the most classic examples are the novelist Frederick Forsyth's (1974) *The Dogs of War* and the movie *Power Play* by director and screenwriter Martin Burke (1978). In Forsyth's novel, and its later film adaptation, a coup is executed by **mercenaries**. The use of hired guns is rather rare, but such operations have happened in coups in the Seychelles (1977, 1981), the Maldives (1988), the Comoros (1995), and in Equatorial Guinea (2004). Despite their evident preference for small island nations, mercenaries seldom succeed. For more on this rare topic, consult Namboodiri 1982; Taulbee 1989; Taulbee & Head 1993; Musah et al. 2000.

CLASSIFICATIONS Differentiated according to actor, method, goal, level of violence, duration, etc., coups can be logically classified in various ways. Below we provide some of the best-known classifications in the literature and also frame some of the most relevant subtypes regarding the contemporary literature on political regimes. We distinguish between general coups d'état (I), military coups (II), palace coups (III), creeping coups (IV) and – although technically not a coup – self-coups or *Autogolpes* (V), and provide (relevant) subclassifications for them all.

This section adheres to the theoretical framework of L. Marsteintredet and A. Malamud (2020), which identifies three constitutive elements of a coup d'état (A, B, C – see also Table 5.2) and map our recent re-interpretations and variations along the core concept's ladder of abstraction. Any coup d'état involves the following specific, defining characteristics: (A) *Actor/Perpetrator* – Coups are carried out by state actors, such as the military, judiciary, congress, and the civil bureaucracy, excluding external agents as in invasions or revolutions. However, external actors can influence coup-makers. (B) *Victim/Target* – The victims are the government or head of state, coup-makers aiming to change or replace the government or regime. (C) *How/Tactics* – A coup involves illegal or unconstitutional means to remove a government, temporarily suspending the constitutional order. This distinguishes it from legal processes like impeachment or votes of no confidence. Determining legality can be complex, with questions regarding the authority to judge legality and reliance on sources such as local courts, international institutions, or researchers' interpretations, each having its challenges and biases (Marsteintredet & Malamud 2020: 10-11).

Coup d'état (I) & Military coups (II) Samuel Huntington (1957) provides several well-known classifications of coups, using the goal that the perpetrators set themselves as the criterion. Huntington initially distinguishes three types of coups: 1) governmental coup; 2) revolutionary coup; and 3) reform coup. The result of a governmental coup (1) is simply a change of ruler. Revolutionary coups (2) lead to larger political, social, and economic changes in the structures of the state. Reform coups (3) offer a plan for gradual reforms. A later typology by Huntington (1968) reframes these types as: (a) reform coup; (b) guardian coup; and (c) veto coup. In this updated version, reform coups (a) aim to bring a to power a previously excluded group with a plan for creating a new social order. The perpetrators are usually low-level officers. Guardian coups (b) are the opposite. In this case, 'high-level officers' stage a temporary intervention with the aspiration of restoring order, reducing corruption or purging the government. Veto coups (c) are also committed by higher-level officers

Table 5.2 – Key Characteristics of Coups & Related Ousters

Concept	***Key characteristics***			***(*) Remarks & Subclassifications***
	A	**B**	**C**	
(I) Coup d'état	Yes	Yes	Yes	*See:* Luttwak (1968: 1979)
(II) Military coup	Yes*	Yes	Yes	The perpetrator is narrowed down to the military. *See:* Huntington (1957; 1968); Thomson (1973); Albrecht & Eibl (2018)
(III) Palace coup	Yes	Yes*	Yes	Inner circle of the ruler is involved in the ouster. *See:* Chin et al. (2021)
(IV) Creeping coup	Yes	Yes	Yes*	The preparatory process is extended in time and the coup itself is often an expected outcome.
Assassination	Yes*	Yes	Yes	On condition there is a conspiracy to take power.
	No*	Yes	Yes	Opportunistic or there is no plan to take power after incapacitating the head of state.
(V) Self-coup (*Autogolpe*) *(i)* Presidential coup *(ii)* Royal coup α *(iii)* Judicial coup α *(iv)* Constitutional coup α *(v)* Electoral coup α	Yes	No*	Yes	The leadership uses *(i - ii)* executive powers to disable other branches of government (removing checks-and-balances); manipulates *(iii)* judicial interpretation (sometimes improvisation) or *(iv)* amends the constitution to prolong their hold on power; or *(v)* electoral fraud and post-electoral manipulation to renew their political mandate.
Revolution	No*	Yes	Yes	Perpetrators are external actors and not a small group.
Mutiny	Yes	No*	Yes	There is no plan to take power or remove the head of state.
Impeachment β	Yes	Yes	No*	Legal procedure is followed.

A – the perpetrator is a state agency (yes/no)
B – the target is the chief executive (yes/no)
C – the removal is illegal or unconstitutional (yes/no)
α All these listed variations of *autogolpe* are incumbent takeovers and thus, conceptually, not real coup d'états. If these actions serve to benefit other state agencies that target the chief executive, they may be categorized under 'palace coups' or 'military coups' – if opposition forces succeed in an electoral coup, this falls under 'revolution.'
β These should not be labeled parliamentary coups if they are fully within the bounds of the law.
Source: Authors' own work, based on: Marsteintredet & Malamud 2020; Powell & Thyne 2012; Santos & Guarneri 2016.

but intend to prevent or undo radical reforms that threaten either the middle or upper class or the military directly (e.g., military spending budget cuts) (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 97-100). Huntington identifies the army exclusively as the main perpetrator when it comes to coups, thus overlooking several forms of palace coups initiated by non-military actors or the secret services.

Another typology comes from Luttwak (1968: 9-12; 1979), and is based on two criteria – a civil/military dimension and a left/right one. This results in three types of coups: (i) coup d'état, (ii) *pronunciamiento*, and (iii) *Putsch*. While the first is a civil action, the latter two are military actions. The latter are moreover associated with a right-wing orientation, whereas a coup (i) is politically neutral. A *pronunciamiento* ('announcement' – ii) differs from a *Putsch* in that, in the former, the whole army participates. Historically, in nineteenth-century Spain, Portugal and Latin America, this was a highly ritualized (public) process containing a consultation phase (an officer opinion poll), a compromise phase (rewards and role division), a call sign for action, and finally an appeal to the rank-and-file to rally behind their officers in the overthrow (Busquets 1982; Zoraida Vázquez 2006; Fowler 2011). A *Putsch* (iii) is also by the army (formally), but coordination is limited to its appointed leadership – there is no real attempt to win the support of the troops. Its conspirators count on the military chain of command and a shared dislike of the incumbent government (in crisis). Luttwak finds that they are a wartime or immediately post-war phenomenon.

William R. Thompson (1973) proposes a classification of coups based on realization of the perpetrator's goal as a criterion. Accordingly, there are (a) successful coups, (b) aborted coups, and (c) compromise coups. A successful coup ends with the attackers taking power, a failed coup ends in a fiasco, and a compromise coup either ends in power gradually shifting or in a stalemate and a provisional political arrangement.



Many scholars accept Thompson's (1973) definition of a successful coup, one where the 'post-coup ruling arrangement' remains in place for at least a week. Powell and Thyne (2011: 252) find the one-week threshold somewhat arbitrary and that a theoretically stronger approach would be to follow O'Kane (1987: 37-38), who considers a coup to be successful if it leads to the *"installation in power of a government of the conspirators' own choosing."* But, this criterion itself assumes that coup-leaders seek to remain in power (instead of simply attempting to displace the current powerholder.)

When it comes to military actors, Albrecht and Eibl (2018) distinguish between coups 'from above' and those 'from below.' This distinction has been noted in African politics – see 'regional variation' – categorizing coup leaders as either 'elite officers' (high-ranking officers entrenched in the political elite) or 'combat officers' (junior and mid-ranking officers at a distance from the regime). Elite officers often bring changes in leadership without significant shifts in authoritarian institutions, while combat officers tend to instigate more substantial political transitions within autocracies (Albrecht & Eibl 2018: 326). Elite officer-led coup attempts are markedly more successful than those initiated by lower or mid-level members of the military (Albrecht et al. 2021).

Palace coups (III) Palace coups include a readjustment of office-holding within an existing system, involving the removal of the incumbent supreme power-holder by another faction of the inner circle. Often, presidential guards or other trusted protective units are co-conspirators. Since coup-plotters in the inner sanctum have access to the dictator's offices or residence, are familiar with the leader's traveling schedule, and already control several levers of state power themselves, such coups can be executed by a small group, under the radar, relying on only a small part of the armed forces. They are frequently bloodless since they often merely require their military elements to subdue a dictator's bodyguards, and do not involve a raid on the capital. These coups can result in 'regime change' *(coups de regime)*, e.g., if a military faction takes power in a civilian regime; or they can result in 'leader reshuffling' *(coups de chef)*, if a dictator is ousted by his peers in the same organizational structure. There is a subtle overlap with some 'royal coups' (see below), and unapproved (hereditary or non-hereditary) **succession** by an appointed next-in-line can also count as a palace coup. Planned successions, even when followed by **purges**, should *not* count as palace ousters, because the heir apparent is still dependent on the predecessor's network when taking the reins.

Creeping coups (IV) Understudied, this rare subtype is characterized not by sudden action, but by actors using diversion, intimidation, assassination, etc., to prepare the necessary polarized environment and weaken the incumbent government in order to create the optimal structural preconditions for a future coup d'état. In Burundi, after being forced back to barracks in 1993, starting in the same year, Pierre Buyoya prepared a second coup with the assassination of the president, the vice-president, the speaker of the national assembly and even the deputy speaker, eliminating everyone in line for the presidential succession and creating a state of affairs in which no one could legally step up as head of state (Krueger & Krueger 2007: 38-39). This political crisis was manipulated to set up a puppet government, intimidating the ruling party into total obedience to its minority coalition partner, and to provoke civil war (between Hutu and Tutsi), eventuating in an overt coup 'to restore order' in 1996. In Chile, CIA activities against president Salvador Allende (1970-1973) – including sabotage, organizing strikes that led to food shortages in the capital, and the assassination of popular military figures – were aimed at provoking the Chilean military into a *'golpe de estado.'*

Self-coups (V) *Self-coups*, or *autogolpes* in Spanish, are not real 'coups;' they are nevertheless often (confusingly) used synonymously with some subclassifications like (i) 'presidential,' (ii) 'royal,' (iii) 'judicial,' (iv) 'constitutional' or (v) 'electoral' coups.' The self-coup, though often not covered in coup datasets, has received more attention with the rise of populist leaders like Donald Trump, who attack democratic institutions from within with the aim of retaining power. However, it does not meet all required conceptual criteria to be considered a real 'coup d'état,' since it is actually an incumbent takeover and thus falls under autocratization, as shown in Table 5.2 (Marsteintredet & Malamud 2020: 14). Baturo and Tolstrup (2023) classify incumbent takeovers as leader-driven power expansion, which they label as 'subversions by the ruling executive' in democracies and 'personalization' in autocracies.

A *presidential coup* (i) is the most common form of *autogolpe*. It occurs when the sitting president alters the government's structure or its functioning to consolidate power unlawfully. This typically involves the president using executive powers to bypass or dissolve other branches of government, such as the legislature or judiciary, effectively allowing the president to rule by decree or through emergency powers. This type of takeover is marked by the centralization of power in the executive branch, without the pretense of legal or constitutional justification, and overlaps with the concepts of **personalization** and **autocratization**.

A *royal coup* (ii) refers to a specific type of executive takeover involving members of a royal family, either acting against each other or against the current government, to seize control or consolidate power in the state. Royal figures may use their legitimacy, traditional authority, or direct command over certain state or military resources to orchestrate a change in leadership or government structure. It may (a) involve a sitting monarch taking drastic measures to centralize power, (b) a member of the royal family leading a faction against the current monarch, or (c) various factions within a royal family vying for power – in the latter two scenarios (b & c), there is overlap with 'palace coups' (see above); they result in leader reshuffling and a new ruling patronal pyramid (see **patronalism**).

A judicial 'coup' (iii) and a constitutional 'coup'

(iv) are distinct forms of non-violent incumbent takeovers that exploit legal frameworks to achieve political goals. While both processes employ legal mechanisms, they differ in their approach, the first operating through judicial reinterpretation and the second through direct constitutional changes or exploitation.

A *judicial coup* (iii) centers on the judiciary's role in reshaping or reinterpreting laws in ways unintended by the framers of the constitution. This manipulation can lead to significant shifts in the power dynamics within the government structure, even without explicit changes to the constitution itself. The key strategy in this case is to use legal reinterpretation or improvisation to achieve political outcomes, potentially diverging from established legal norms or constitutional principles.

In contrast, a *constitutional coup* (iv) focuses on direct changes to the constitution or the exploitation of existing constitutional provisions to consolidate power. This type of takeover often involves the ruling government or a dominant political faction using legislative processes to amend the constitution, manipulate clauses, or exploit ambiguities to strengthen its hold on power. The methods include altering **term limits**, modifying electoral laws, or influencing judicial appointments, all aimed at centralizing power and limiting opposition effectiveness.

An *electoral coup* (iv) is also not a coup, and is characterized by using existing legal and constitutional frameworks to carry out what is essentially an anti-democratic action. This might involve the incumbent government exploiting ambiguities in the constitution or existing laws to adjust the rules of the electoral game, thereby ensuring its continued hold on power. This could be accomplished through actions such as redrawing electoral boundaries in a biased manner (gerrymandering), changing the rules about who can vote or how votes are counted, or even more overt actions, like delaying elections indefinitely under the pretext of legal authority. Electoral coups maintain a *façade* of legality and constitutionalism, making it distinct from more overt and traditionally violent, real coups. This type of **autocratization** is particularly insidious because it can undermine democratic institutions from within while appearing to adhere to legal norms, thus making it difficult to counteract with straightforward legal or constitutional challenges.

Other coup adjectives The 'soft coup,' 'silent coup' and 'bloodless coup' generally refer to types of coups that are executed without the overt use of violence or physical force. Sometimes, soft coups imply the military is not involved at all, but none of these terms are applied consistently.

A 'parliamentary coup,' however, indicates that the actor is a state agency turned against the government. This should not be considered a 'coup' unless the parliament illegally removed the president (for instance, not having the necessary number of votes to depose the president). If the rule of law was obeyed, this is just 'impeachment' or a 'vote of no confidence' (Santos & Guarneri 2016; Marsteintredet & Malamud 2020: 15-16). The recent label of 'smart coup' (on the analogy with 'smart power') refers to a coup executed with strategic sophistication, employing planning that exercises caution and restraint by taking into account expected domestic and international reaction, and operating behind a guise of popular and institutional legitimacy. It is simply a label for a successfully executed coup.

MEASUREMENT The frequency of coups has ebbed and flowed over time. In the 1950s and early 1960s there were about five coups per year. During the 1960s and 1970s, coup activity rose, peaking in 1976 when there were 19 coups recorded. The post-2010 period has seen the biggest decline in the number of coups. Africa has been the region that has seen the greatest coup activity, followed by Latin America and then Asia. Coups are very rare in Europe, almost all taking place between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s. Coups have also significantly decreased in Africa and Latin America, but the decline is less pronounced in Asia.

Originally, studies that focused on coups were either case studies or regional in scope. A host of regional studies looking at coups in Latin America and Africa was used to understand the nature of coups and their frequency. By the end of the Cold War, more research on coups emerged using a Large-N dataset to identify patterns. The works of O'Kane (1987) and Londregan & Poole (1990) were among the first to use global coup data. Subsequent cross-national research offers more rigorous comprehensive empirical testing (e.g., Alesina et al. 1996; Galetovic & Sanhueza 2000; Belkin & Schofer 2003).

Goemans and his colleagues (2009) came up with a coup dataset, called *Archigos,* based on a database of political leaders from 164 countries from 1875 to 2004. The identities of all leaders are coded, including information about how they assumed and left office. This dataset looks at the way power was transferred from one leader to another to identify events that may qualify as coups.

The first global and comprehensive dataset on coups was presented by Powell & Thyne. The dataset, known as PT11, looks at coups from 1950 to 2010, and expanded previous data collections by consolidating 14 prior datasets. The dataset coded information that researchers could use to understand coup propensity and impact, offering data on the targets, perpetrators, tactics, plots, successes and failures. This dataset helped identify coup incidents over time and space and enhanced the validity of global coup data. The dataset is now updated annually.

Bjørnskov and Rode (2020) created a dataset running from 1950 to 2018, looking at 537 coups or coup attempts that took place in 498 country-year observations, indicating whether a coup succeeded or failed. The dataset also includes the group which led the coup (e.g., civilian or military), the names of the coup leaders, and their military rank or civilian status. The dataset covers detailed information about second or third coup attempts in multiple countries.

Albrecht and colleagues (2021) built the *Coup Agency and Mechanisms* (CAM) dataset which covers all countries from the period from 1950 to 2017. The CAM builds on the PT11 and other datasets to



increase the data on coup episodes. The CAM codes coup occurrences and outcomes along with the agents behind specific coup-plots, and the plotters' relationship to the existing regime. It also codes the incumbent's trajectory after a successful coup, the level of violence, and the resources deployed in coup attempts.

The Cline Centre, at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, produced the *Coup D'état Project* (CDP), which lists, documents, and categorizes coups for 165 countries from 1945 to 2019. The dataset encompasses 426 coups, 336 coup attempts and 181 plots (Peyton et al. 2024).

Chin and colleagues (2021) introduced the *Colpus dataset*, which provides data on coup types and characteristics from 1946 to 2019. The data identifies coup leaders and provides a typology of coups, coding if the coup leaders sought or achieved 'regime change' *(coups de regime)* or 'leader reshuffling' *(coups de chef)*, if they were democratic or anti-democratic, if it was a mutiny or not, or if it was an **assassination**.

Baturo and Tolstrup (2023) merge 11 datasets with original data collection to introduce a new, comprehensive dataset on 495 'self-coups' (incumbency takeovers) carried out by 279 political leaders in 132 countries in the period 1918-2019.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The main challenge facing works undertaken to study coups is the lack of a common definition of coups that is widely accepted by scholars, and of a distinction that differentiates coups from other types of anti-regime activity (Powell & Thyne 2011). For example, some assessments measure coups by the involvement of military actors exclusively, while others include coups orchestrated by non-military actors. Many takeovers or ousters are labeled as coups, even if they do fit its basic defining criteria.

It is also difficult to identify the coup-plotters and to discern their motives. Ethnic perspectives are routinely omitted in the study of coups (Harkness 2016). Even the faction *within* the military organizing the coup often leads to a completely different dynamic, rationale or outcome (see Singh 2014). Albrecht and Eibl (2018) distinguish between *'elite officers'* (high-ranking officers, already members of the political elite) and *'combat officers'* (junior and mid-ranking officers, distant from the regime). The former tend to produce changes of leadership, but not substantial shifts in authoritarian institutions; the latter, in contrast, tend to trigger more substantial political transitions in the form and content of autocracies (Albrecht & Eibl 2018: 326).

Coup attempts led by *'elite officers'* are significantly more likely to succeed compared to those initiated by lower or mid-level ranks in the military. Additionally, top-led coups tend to reinforce authoritarian elite alliances and uphold autocratic governance, typically without paving the way for democratic reforms. On the other hand, successful coups initiated by lower ranks can destabilize authoritarian regimes and create opportunities for democratic transformations to occur (Albrecht et al. 2021).

At the constructivist level, L. Marsteintredet & A. Malamud (2020) portray the stretching of the concept – occurring in tandem with the global decline of the practice – resulting into the so-called 'coups with adjectives.' This is especially noticeable in the contemporary use of the Spanish synonym *'golpe'* in Latin America. With a long list of qualifiers – soft, parliamentary, constitutional, electoral, slow-motion, judicial, etc. – some of these innovations dilute the core concept and label legal ousters (e.g., impeachment or any mandate interruption) as a 'golpe' for politically motivated reasons.

Second, despite considerable efforts made to verify coups and coup attempts, reporting bias may have limited our ability to identify events. This is particularly true for coup attempts in states with a small Western media presence and for events that happened in the earliest time period under investigation. One way to analyze these potential biases is to examine instances where scholars identified coups within the original candidate datasets for which we can find no evidence. This bias is also present in coup datasets (see 'measurement' above) – see Ben Hammou et al. (2023).

Furthermore, there are concerns that the literature on coups lacks a robust model to determine military coups (Lachapelle 2020). This is because most works have been driven by Large-N data. By conceptualizing coups in terms of probabilities, risks, and likelihood, existing studies succeeded in demonstrating that countries plagued by economic difficulties, historical burdens, and waning political legitimacy are more susceptible to coups – see Box 5.2 on 'coup traps.' However, even though there is no shortage of works that focus on how to predict coup risk (see Belkin & Schofer 2003), many questions still remain about the exact causal nature of these known preconditions, making it difficult to accurately make predictions. In contrast, small-n comparative research often cannot leverage its findings beyond the scope of its case studies. (This has led to the exploration of mixed methods to pin down the causal pathways in different world regions, e.g., Arugay 2014).

Finally, despite the boom of new datasets that map coup instances, little attention has been paid to other forms of military involvement in politics (stopping short of deposing civilian leadership); for instance, in the case of a result of mission creep under the guise of counter-terrorism policies (Bove et al. 2020). Croissant et al. (2010: 954) have baptized this blind spot the 'fallacy of coupism' or the belief that, in the absence of coups, civilian control of the armed forces is secure, and civil-military relations are balanced.

EXAMPLES Few countries have experienced more coups than Thailand. The military has had little respect for civilian rule and its intrusion has been a constant, with almost 20 coups staged since the 1950s. Thailand has very dysfunctional civil-military relations. The military believes that it has the right to intervene in domestic politics whenever it wants or feels it needs to, and there is little that the civilian government can do about it. The military uses coups, usually framed as necessary to restore order, as a means to gain greater access to lucrative business

opportunities, such as controlling Thai Airways and the Thai Military Bank. After the 2006 coup the military added other key state enterprises in areas such as telecommunications and transport to its arsenal.

After a brief democratic interlude, in May of 2014, the military staged yet another coup to oust the democratically elected leader Yingluck Shinawatra, the sister of the former president Thaksin. Unlike its conduct in the past, the military made no attempt to pretend that it was going to leave power and ensure the return of multi-party elections. The political divisions between the Yellow Shirts, who supported the monarchy, and the Red Shirts, who supported Thaksin, was used as a pretext to step in. Protests to the coup followed, and a state of emergency was declared for an entire year. Democracy has yet to return to Thailand. A commission was hand-picked by the military to draft a new constitution that would guarantee its influence (Schaffar 2018).

IMPACT ON POLICY Political scientists have investigated which factors might reduce the chances of a military coup. In the field of civil-military relations, scholarship has demonstrated that, when institutions provide a path for military elites to achieve their objectives without overthrowing the chief executive, they prefer this path to the more costly undertaking of staging a coup (Aydogan 2019). Thus, the implementation of meaningful elections, in particular, may provide a deterrent to coups because they allow potential coup-plotters another option if they have issues with a particular administration. Other research has observed that coups are less likely in democracies because democratically elected leaders are perceived to be more legitimate than non-democratic leaders, and government legitimacy (or lack thereof) is an important driver of coups (Finer 1974; Jackson & Rosberg 1982; Lindberg & Clark 2008). Democracies are also less likely to coup-proof their militaries (Pilster & Böhmelt 2012), and the welfare of common soldiers may be better under democracies (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). In a study that looks at Africa from 1990 to 2004, Lindberg and Clark (2008) argue that democracies run less risk of experiencing a coup attempt, but economic development is not controlled for in their study. In spite of some theoretical and empirical support for democratic elections as a coup deterrent, other works have cautioned that democracies face just as many coups as non-democracies, and, more problematically, that coup attempts in democracies are twice as likely to succeed (Bell 2016).

Other studies have looked at civil-military relations as the key to preventing coups, specifically at how the military is treated. Strategies to satisfy and placate the military include increased military spending, weapons acquisitions and greater autonomy for the military (Bove & Brauner 2016; McMahon & Slantchev 2015). Higher amounts of defense spending could prevent coups led by elite officers (Albrecht & Eibl 2018). Other work has shed light on the potential coup risk constituted by the degree to which the military believes that its position in the state is threatened (Hunter et al. 2020). In Latin America, civil-military pacts helped many former military regimes transition to democracy, without it intervening with frequent coups or coup attempts (see **transitions**).

Foreign governments can also play an important role in coups – either by offering support to the coup-plotters (Thyne 2010), or, conversely, deterring coups by threatening to withhold foreign aid or employ sanctions. Regional organizations like the African Union have been instrumental in deterring coups. Several studies have noted that far fewer coups have taken place in Africa since the Lomé Declaration (Powell et al. 2021; Souaré 2014). The Declaration banned coups and issued sanctions against regimes that experienced a coup – and claimed a zero-tolerance policy for military coups. Some studies have also looked at the role of the international community in shaming coup leaders, and in fostering international norms against coups (Tansey 2018).

Deteriorating economic conditions (such as price shocks and high unemployment) and economic crisis have also been cited in the literature as drivers of coups (Johnson et al. 1983; O'Kane 1993; Londregan & Poole 1990), influencing US policy regarding coup prevention strategy. US policy makers have noted that economic support, along with assistance and training for the military and security institutions, particularly in fragile contexts, is a critical policy in coup prevention (Sheehy et al. 2022).

REGIONAL VARIATION Alongside the evolving dynamics of **coup-proofing** and the resurgence of **autocratization**, this part examines how different world regions have contributed differently to our understanding of coups and their causes, as well as topics like military grievances, ethnic tensions, foreign backing, and the impact of postcolonial realities.

Latin America Latin America's long history of independence is riddled with *juntas* – a typical South American country experiencing seven coup events in 107 years (from 1900 to 2006). Most coups occurred between 1930 and 1980, Paraguay being an exception with eight coups between 1900 and 1930. With the third wave of democratization, improved coup-proofing and competitive politics, coup instances have dropped significantly (Lehoucq & Pérez-Liñán 2014; Valenzuela 2004; Rittinger & Cleary 2013), but the specter of military intervention remains present (Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán 2015; Levitsky & Murillo 2019), especially in the Caribbean.

Early research (e.g., Needler 1966; Fossum 1967; Thompson 1975a/b) focused on the intertwined topics of military intervention and **modernization theory**, **bureaucracies** (e.g., **bureaucratic authoritarianism**), and cultural factors (cf. Box 1.10 on *Caudillismo*). Later works (King 1998; McSherry 2002; Olar 2019) look at **authoritarian learning** (in line with the 'immunization effect' – see Weyland 2020) and **authoritarian collaboration** to explain clusters of military rule, or the latter's emergence as a reaction to revolutionary insurrections (Kreiman 2024).

Dix (1994) finds that coup decline is significantly rooted in the enduring impact of military rule. This includes the latter's association with economic set-



backs, the alienation of business allies, international and regional anti-coup norm diffusion (e.g., Cassell et al. 2018), and, notably, internal divisions and declining professionalism in Latin America's military.

While ethnicity is not a recurrent theme in Latin American coups, contemporary scholars sometimes differentiate between power grabs from the 'Left' and 'Right,' each with its respective dynamics (Rittinger 2020; Sánchez 2021). A significant strand of coup-focused work has zoomed in on *autogolpes* and 'parliamentary coups' (e.g., Pérez-Liñán 2007; Santos & Guarnier 2016; Teixeira & Castilho 2018) – with others scrutinizing the legacy and covert contemporary influence of the military in politics (Pion-Berlin 2005; Diamint 2015; Pion-Berlin & Acácio 2020; Jenne & Martínez 2022).

MENA Middle Eastern coups and their causes were all the rage when this world region was swept up in the military takeovers of the 1960s and 1970s. As in Sub Saharan Africa, newly formed 'national' armies were coming to terms with postcolonial realities even as revolutionary ideas divided these militaries. Coup pendulums impelled by revolutionary and reactionary groups locked some countries into entrenched 'coup traps' (see Box 5.2). Between 1950 and 1970, Syria experienced nine and Iraq eight coup events (Powell & Thyne 2011).

Early works (Haddad 1965; Bill 1969; Thompson 1974) explored the military grievances behind this historical coup outpouring. By the 1980s, scholars aimed to explore why these coup traps halted (Be'eri 1982). Autocratic consolidation and foreign backing during the geopolitical crystallization of Cold War alliances brought a halt to the coup traps. For this reason, the Middle East was the first region to be studied from the perspective of **coup-proofing**, especially after the autocratic turn that followed the **Arab Spring** (Cronin 2013). Similarly, MENA experts continue to provide critical perspectives based on case studies from this region (Ben Hammou et al. 2023: Bradshaw & Curtis 2023).

Sub Saharan Africa The history of military coups in Sub Saharan Africa began in Togo in 1963, marking the region's first coup d'état, in which Sylvanus Olympio was assassinated as he sought refuge in the American embassy compound (Nugent 2012: 204). Ever since, Africa has become the most coup-prone region in the world. By the 1980s, the African continent had experienced 67 successful military coups (Kieh & Kalu 2001: 5). By the end of 2023, the number stands at 106 (Al Jazeera 2023).

The post-independence Africa of the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a discernible pattern in military coups, with the emergence of two distinct generations of coup leaders. The initial coups were executed by high-ranking officers trained under colonial regimes, who took pride in their professional military status. These officers were inclined to seize power when they perceived political interference in military affairs (especially when military budget allocations and privileges were threatened), or to address the chaos caused by corrupt politicians. The postcolonial militaries, which were slower to adapt to new societal structures than other state structures, also harbored grievances, particularly regarding the pace of reform, working conditions and salary expectations. Socialist-oriented governments (see Box 4.9 on Fifty Shades of Socialism) disturbed the civil-military balance when they sought to indoctrinate the military or establish civilian militias (threatening the status of the regular armed forces) (Nugent 2012: 207).

As the Africanization of the military progressed and postcolonial economies dwindled, ethnic tensions became more prominent in all spheres of politics. A new wave of coups was executed by lower-ranking officers (e.g., the 'Derg' in Ethiopia in 1974, Samuel Doe in Liberia in 1980), often driven by ethnic grievances rooted in colonial state structures, military rank distribution (missing promotions), or plain greed to profit from **rents** (e.g., Mboku 1994; N'Diaye 2001). Typically, the rank-and-file were recruited from specific ethnic groups and underdeveloped regions, while the officer corps came from more developed areas with better ties to the capital.

K. Harkness (2016: 593; citing Adekson 1979: 154) identifies the colonial origins of this practice: *"British martial race doctrine, developed first in India, stipulated that some ethnic groups were naturally more politically reliable and suited to combat and military discipline than others. Frederick Lugard, the high commissioner (1900-1906) and then the governor-general (1912-1919) of Nigeria, further developed this doctrine in Africa. He proscribed that one ethnic group should dominate the colonial army, provided that that group was both politically reliable and unable to dominate civilian political life (i.e., the local civil service). It was a policy of 'making the politically strong militarily weak and the politically weak militarily strong.'"*

These tensions became more complex as, in response to the initial wave of coups, rulers started to implement **coup-proofing** strategies, such as forming parallel security forces like bodyguards and presidential guards (recruited from their own regions of origins).

By the late 1960s, only one third of African armies was ethnically balanced, and, although ethnicity has been a core *explanans* in African civil war and party politics, only a few works have dealt with this dimension regarding coups, either in the region – Luckham 1971; Ejiogu 2007 (on Nigeria); Cox 1976 (on Sierra Leone); Hutchful 1985 (on Ghana); Lindemann 2011 (Uganda and Zambia – the latter as a coup-free negative case) – or in a comparative setting: Horowitz 1985; Jenkins & Kposowa 1990; Decalo 1990; Roessler 2011; Rabinowitz 2013; Harkness 2016; Houle & Bodea 2017.

After the Cold War, the tolerance for coups declined both in Africa and internationally, and coups became universally criminalized. Such norm diffusion was tied, in part, to African **regionalism** (Clark 2007; Mills 2022). Electoral regimes became the norm after 1990, although opportunistic rebelled coups with foreign backing (e.g., Chad in 1990, Sierra Leone in 1991, CAR in 2003) took place alongside regular military ousters.

Since 2010, there has been a clear autocratic resurgence and an uptick in military coups in West Africa and the Sahel (Ibrahim 2022; Taruvinga 2023; Fain et al. 2024). **Presidential guards** themselves are often the new praetorians derailing faltering democratic transitions, and this wave of military interventions has now made this region a 'coup belt' – see Box 5.2. These are often bloodless 'smart coups' carried out with restraint, and supported by neighboring Putschists vetoing sanctions (Atta-Asamoah 2023). Widespread popular support for such military rule among the countries' young populations (although not always) is also worrying: they are dissatisfied with inept electoral systems and too young to remember the previous wave of repressive military rulers.

Indo-Pacific While most countries had their fair share of coups in the first decades after independence – as in Africa or MENA – many underwent (socialist) revolutions that installed rigid political control over their armed forces (reducing coup risk), and, in others, civilian rule has not yet been challenged by the military (e.g., Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam). Militaries in the Indo-Pacific are very diverse due to their different origins and their various paths to independence (Van den Bosch 2023). (For an interesting take on A. Perlmutter's (1969) typology of militaries in developing countries, see Croisssant & Kuehn 2017.)

Still, this region is characterized by several stubborn outliers like Thailand (Pongsudhirak 2008; Connors 2008; Connors & Hewison 2008; Hewison 2008; Chachavalpongpun 2014; Baker 2016; Farrell 2013; Johansson & Engvall 2022) and Myanmar (Thein-Lemelson 2021; Kapur 2022, King 2022), which are greatly coveted by scholars for their post-coup dynamics.

Few comparative works exist. The special issue of the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (2013, Volume 67, Issue 3) is noteworthy (Mietzner & Farrelly 2013); so is Croissant & Lorenz (2018), for their survey of Southeast Asia.

Eurasia Notwithstanding popular ousters, this region experienced very few 'real' coups – e.g., the *Putsch* against Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Georgia (1991-1992), with failed attempts in Tajikistan (1992) and Kazakhstan (2022). This has been attributed to the **revolutionary legacies** of the former Soviet Union and their Asian counterparts, and the reemergence of Russian hegemony after 2000, which dissuade opportunistic coup-plotting (Van den Bosch 2020: 12-13; Zaporozhchenko 2024).

NEW FRONTIERS With the emergence of new and improved datasets on coups, there are further opportunities to research coups. The recent work by Croissant et al. (2024) provides an excellent state-of-the-art of the contemporary literature.

In view of these developments, more research is needed to understand the rise and fall of anti-coups norms. The latter come from a time when coups were relatively rare, but coups have come back with a vengeance and take different forms. Thyne and Hitch (2020) consider the political trajectory of states after coups and argue that international reactions to coups play an important role in Putschists' move either toward authoritarianism or democratic governance.

Interesting cases also raise questions about our theoretical knowledge. For instance, Banini et al. (2020) find that the case of Ghana challenges the idea that armies engaged as peacekeepers are more likely to mutiny or attempt a military coup against their governments after returning home. Choulis et al. (2023) discover that higher levels of mechanization in militaries reduce the risk of coup, because the costs of coup execution and coordination increase in more mechanized military organizations.

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Box 5.2 Coup Contagion: Coup Belts & Coup Traps

The best time to slap a king is when a fly lands on his cheek
– African proverb

A 'coup belt' (*ceinture de coups d'État* in French) in comparative politics is a (geo-)political region where structural socioeconomic and political factors, contested regime legitimacy, civil society weakness, and past coup frequency determine the likelihood of new military coups.

The term is derived from economic or industrial belts – or geographic regions that are characterized by a significant concentration of specific industrial activities or mining operations – such as the 'copper belt' (stretching from southern DR Congo to northern Zambia) and the 'corn belt' (located in the Midwestern US). Like with **coups**, the term has also been applied to regions that share specific cultural characteristics, e.g., the 'bible belt' (in the southern US) known for its high prevalence of evangelical Protestantism and conservative political beliefs.

The main area referred to as a 'coup belt' in Western media is the region stretching from West Africa, the Sahel, to Central Africa (Engels 2023). This coup belt is foremost a geopolitical construct invented around 2020 to denote the loss of neo-colonial French influence in this region and the foreign policy pivot of these military **juntas** to non-Western great powers (foremost Russia and China). (Bianchi & Sangaré 2023) One of the earliest uses of the term was around 2010, but it had not acquired this geopolitical dimension yet. Before, such diffusion was studied under the label of 'coup contagion.'

Latin America has been historically known as a region prone to coups – most coups occurred between 1930 and 1980, with 37.5% of government changes being via military **ouster** during that period (Valenzuela 2004; Lehoucq & Pérez-Liñán 2014). Southeast Asia is also highlighted as facing similar challenges. Often, coup-prone regions are perceived as 'coup belts' due to some extreme country case outliers. For instance, the Latin American coups in the 1980s were confined to only four countries (Bolivia, Paraguay, Guatemala and Haiti). In South and Southeast Asia, Thailand has taken the crown with 12 coups since 1932, followed by Bangladesh (six) and Myanmar (five) since their independence. (Powell & Thyne 2011; Croissant 2013, Valenzuela 2004)

The African coup belt, in contrast, is not misconstrued because these coup instances are evenly spread out across Sub Saharan Africa:

"Between 2000 and 2023, over eleven (11) military coups have occurred in Africa. In 2022 alone, there were four attempted and successful military coups in Mali, Burkina-Faso and Guinea-Bissau. (…) Mali alone has recorded three coups in just more than a decade. This means that nearly 20 percent of African countries have succumbed to coups since 2013." (Odigbo et al. 2023: 645, citing Siegle 2021)

Coups are rarely linked to **authoritarian diffusion** (Gurr 1970: 169, cited in Ambrosio 2010: 387; Huff & Lutz 1974; Li & Thompson 1975; Lutz 1989; Lunde 1991), but the existence of a 'coup contagion' has been questioned recently (Miller et al. 2018). Coup belts are not treated in this literature because the term is too recent and developed from geopolitics.

'Coup traps' follow the same logic but apply to one country specifically and do not imply a geopolitical dimension. So, in analogy with 'conflict traps' or 'poverty traps,' countries that find themselves in the grasp of a 'coup trap' are likely to experience a coup in the near future.

As a concept, 'traps' are older than 'belts.' J.B. Londregan and K.T. Poole (1990) were among the first to popularize the concept. The term suggests that once a country experiences a coup, it may become 'trapped' in a pattern where the **legitimacy** of government is undermined, and the military or other groups now see coups as a viable means to change the regime. This can lead to a destabilizing effect where the political order becomes vulnerable to repeated power grabs by the military or other factions.

The empirical evidence shows that of all the identified factors contributing to coup-proneness, a previous history of *coup d'état* is the most salient. Of course, it is the combination of an incumbent's lack of legitimacy, interventionist military attitudes, and the current socioeconomic state-of-affairs, etc., that blends and increases the likelihood of future coups. Horowitz (1985: 480-496) labeled such subsequent coups 'see-saw' and 'attritional' coups.

Empirically, 'coups breed coups,' creating a cycle that can be difficult to break. In other words, a history of coups fosters a 'path dependency' where structures (the political and socioeconomic climate) and actors' behavior (militaries or other armed forces) reinforce each other and are likely to repeat the outcome of a military takeover. The same goes for the political culture: By coming to power in a military takeover, the new regime destroys the basis for its legitimacy in the process. (Collier & Hoeffler 2005: 5)

Coup traps are thus a significant factor in the political instability of a country and are associated with a range of other issues, including the greed and grievance motivations for seizing power, the role of resource rents and aid, the importance of legitimacy and narrative for the new regime, and the impact of military conditions on the risk of coups.

The underlying causes of coup traps are systemic and self-reinforcing, making them a critical area of study for understanding political fragility and the challenges of democratization and stability in affected regions. Anti-coup norm diffusion (cf. **coups** – 'impact on policy'), coup-proofing, electoral turnover, and improved socioeconomic indicators can – in time – halt coup traps, but it is an arduous path. K. Harkness (2012; 2016) investigates this symptom (for Africa) during decolonization and democratization. She highlights how, initially after independence, early African leaders ruling over ethnically diverse militaries sought to build military loyalty based on ethnic ties (recruitment, promotion) and thus set many nations on a path of violence. Regarding



democratization, she examines how these previous choices interacted with the third Wave (cf. Box 6.3): Once co-ethnic armies had emerged (e.g., through consequent **purges** – cf. **coup-proofing**), these same institutions viewed electoral liberalization (in a multi-ethnic context) as anathema to their corporate interests and often disrupted or overturned democratization processes.

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Democratic Consolidation

Democracy is a slow process of stumbling to the right decision instead of going straight forward to the wrong one.
– Anonymous

It is always easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them.
– Alfred Adler (1870-1937)

Originally, the term 'democratic consolidation' referred to the challenge of preventing regression to authoritarianism and ensuring that new democracies survived. Over time, it has become a broad concept covering various tasks including the promotion of democratic values, neutralizing anti-system actors, reforming institutions, and reducing poverty. Andreas Schedler (1998: 2), however, finds its essence more narrowly in the classic concern of assessing the likelihood for democratic continuity, a process quite separate from the logic of **transitions**.

DEFINITION The literature presents a complex view of democratic consolidation, highlighting challenges in definition and measurement. Democratic consolidation is not based solely on social, cultural, or economic factors but requires political predictability on a stable political spectrum. This predictability ensures that political outcomes remain within an acceptable range, making democracy, a rules-based order, the only framework for political contestation. Consolidation occurs when political actors consistently adhere to democratic rules. It also depends on citizen support, with both the public and elites viewing democratic institutions as legitimate. In such democracies, people adhere to norms even in the

midst of conflicts, reducing uncertainty in political competition (Hanson 2006; Alexander 2002).

Robust institutions are vital for democratic consolidation as they establish rules and frameworks for legally resolving disputes. Key institutions include elections, constitutions, political parties, free media, independent judiciaries, and a meritocratic administration. External (regional) organizations and (good) neighborhoods play an important role too (Mansfield & Pevehouse 2006; Whitehead 2001).

Democratic consolidation is an ongoing process that involves entrenching practices and norms over time while adapting to changes within democratic systems. It requires careful consideration of political actor behavior, public attitudes to democracy, and institutional strength. More than authoritarian consolidation, this is a multifaceted, multi-actor and context-dependent process, making it difficult to establish universal indicators (Diamond et al. 1997).

Democratization and democratic consolidation are distinct yet interconnected processes in the evolution of **political regimes**. Consolidation goes beyond holding elections and ensuring basic freedoms. It involves deepening democracy by strengthening the rule of law, promoting accountability, protecting individual rights, and ensuring effective representation of citizen interests. In other words, it is the process whereby **democracy** becomes the **legitimate** system (see 'the only game in town' – Linz & Stepan 1996) in the eyes of its citizens (Schedler 1998; Diamond et al. 1997).

SEE ALSO Democratic consolidation or deepening refers to the completion of a democratic **transition** (**democratization**). As shown in Figure 3.1, when juxtaposed to **autocratization** and autocratic consolidation, it is a distinct phase in a broader democratization process, but a crucial one in going from minimalist forms of democracy to more a comprehensive alignment of values, actor behavior, institutions and rules.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The study of democratic consolidation is crucial for understanding political change and ensuring the stability and success of democratic regimes (Schedler 2001). Of course, minimalist forms of democracy can persist for some years, even decades, without fully consolidating. There is nothing teleological about the process. Paradoxically, even long-standing democracies are not immune to democratic decline. The rise of **populism** in some of the world's oldest democracies has led scholars to study the causes of democratic rollback and deconsolidation (Gorokhovskaia 2017).

The study of democratic consolidation involves analyzing the conditions in which democratic regimes develop deep roots in society, reducing the likelihood of their reverting to authoritarianism. It aims to explain why some democracies succeed while others fail, and offers insights for preventing democratic backsliding (Schedler 1998).

Challenges to democratic consolidation include persistent authoritarian enclaves (**authoritarian legacies**), weak institutions, lack of civic engagement, and unresolved social and economic issues. Recognizing these challenges helps us to understand the complexities involved in strengthening and safeguarding democratic institutions (Milačić 2022).

IMPACT ON POLICY The understanding of consolidation informs efforts to support democracy globally, whether through **democracy promotion** or **democracy support & assistance**. By identifying the factors that contribute to democratic stability, policymakers can design effective strategies for assisting countries transitioning to democracy. This includes supporting robust political institutions, a vibrant civil society, and a culture of democratic values.

ORIGIN Scholars began studying democratic consolidation in earnest in the period following the 'third wave' of democratization (cf. Box 6.3), which started in the mid-1970s and extended into the 1990s. This wave saw over 60 countries transition from authoritarian regimes to some form of democratic governance (Schedler 1998: 1). The realization that simply establishing a democracy was not enough to ensure its long-term survival was the primary reason for studying democratic consolidation. Scholars recognized that sustaining democracy posed challenges as significant as those involved in its establishment. The need to understand how to sustain these new democracies led to an increased focus on democratic consolidation.

LITERATURE Consolidation is distinct from **democratization**, as each process is driven by different factors. While there is some debate about the link between economic growth and democratization, most scholars agree that economic growth supports consolidation. The role of **civil society** remains ambiguous in both processes (Gorokhovskaia 2017).

Democratic consolidation, or democratic deepening, involves ensuring that a democracy becomes stable, resilient, and unlikely to revert to authoritarianism. This process can be analyzed in three dimensions – participation (A), representation (B), and stateness (C) (see Heller 2019) – but encompasses many others (D-J).

Participation (A) This is essential for democratic consolidation, as it ensures active citizen involvement in the political process. Key factors include respecting electoral outcomes, with elites accepting results even when unfavorable; non-violent political engagement, without coercion or suppression; and protecting civil liberties so citizens can freely express opinions, assemble, and criticize the government without fear (Schedler 1998; Heller 2019; Milačić 2022).

Representation (B) This ensures that democratic institutions reflect the interests of the populace. Key aspects include inclusive electoral systems, which fairly represent diverse groups; mechanisms for dialogue between citizens and representatives to influence policymaking; and responsive political parties that are accountable to their constituents and capable of articulating their demands (Diamond et al. 1997; Schedler 1998; Heller 2019).



Stateness (C) State institutions must function under democratic control and the rule of law. Key components include the separation of powers to prevent concentration and guarantee checks-and-balances; a professional civil service accountable to elected officials and serving public interests; and a robust rule of law that guarantees equal access to justice for all citizens, regardless of political or social status (Heller 2019; Milačić 2022).

In addition to these three dimensions, several interconnected factors significantly influence the stability and resilience of democratic regimes:

Elite Commitment (D) the genuine embrace of democratic principles and norms by political elites is crucial for reducing the risk of democratic backsliding. Their commitment is reflected in behaviors such as respecting electoral outcomes, prioritizing the long-term stability of the democratic system over short-term political gains, and actively keeping anti-democratic actors from assuming positions of influence.

Economic Performance & Equity (E) A strong economy, which meets citizens' basic needs and fosters social mobility, can bolster support for democracy while diminishing the allure of authoritarian alternatives. When people perceive tangible improvements in their economic conditions, they are more likely to support democratic governance.

Effective & Adaptable Institutions (F) The presence of robust institutions, such as an independent **judiciary** and a professional, meritocratic **bureaucracy**, is vital to effectively manage conflicts and ensure accountability. These institutions help uphold the rule of law and maintain public trust in democratic processes.

Supportive International Environment (G) A favorable international context can significantly bolster efforts to consolidate democracy. This includes the diffusion of democratic norms through international dialogue and cooperation, as well as material and technical assistance from global partners aimed at strengthening democratic institutions.

Historical Legacies (H) Countries with prior experience of democracy may have a stronger foundation for rebuilding democratic systems, even after a period of authoritarianism. Learning from past mistakes and effectively addressing the lingering impacts of **authoritarian legacies** is essential for successful consolidation (Diamandouros in Diamond et al. 1997).

National Identity & Unity (I) Addressing deep societal divisions and fostering a shared sense of national identity are crucial for stability in diverse societies. Ensuring that all groups feel included in the political process can help mitigate tensions and promote social cohesion.

Political Leadership (J) Visionary and committed leaders who prioritize democratic values and foster consensus can significantly enhance the prospects for democratic consolidation. Effective leadership is key to navigating challenges and building a resilient democratic framework.

Milan Svolik (2008) challenges traditional views on democratic survival, offering a nuanced understanding of consolidation and breakdown dynamics. Svolik argues that many democracies are in fact consolidated, facing little risk of reverting to authoritarianism, with about 42% achieving this status between 1789 and 2001. He emphasizes that consolidation, rather than mere survival over time, is crucial for democracies to endure. Consolidation involves becoming 'immune' to typical reversal factors; some democracies may survive due to favorable conditions, but remain vulnerable were those conditions to change.

Svolik highlights that whereas the duration of a democracy aids consolidation, economic and institutional contexts significantly influence this process. Higher economic development at the time of transition increases the likelihood of consolidation, making wealthier democracies more resilient. However, economic recessions pose immediate threats to transitional democracies, increasing reversal risks in the first decade after transition. Institutional factors, like a history of military rule and a presidential system, negatively impact the odds of consolidation (Svolik 2008).

MEASUREMENT Consolidation is dynamic and ongoing, requiring constant nurturing and adaptation to maintain resilience. Relying on a single indicator is insufficient. In addition, measurement involves more than simply observing democratic institutions; it requires assessing their resilience, their acceptance by political actors, and their capacity to withstand challenges. In essence, measurement involves assessing subjective judgments about the future stability of regimes, and these are not directly observable (Schedler 2001). Some potential indicators and approaches for measuring this complex process are listed below.

A key indicator of consolidation is the behavior of political elites during crises or in political competition. This includes their commitment to democratic rules, such as respecting electoral outcomes and resolving disputes through established institutions, without resorting to extra-constitutional means or violence. Elites should also reject anti-democratic tactics and marginalize actors espousing such views while respecting opposition rights. Monitoring instances of disloyalty to the democratic system is crucial. This includes rejection of democratic **legitimacy**, attempts to subvert democratic processes through violence or fraud, and appeals to extra-constitutional actors like the military.

Strong and enduring public support is crucial for democratic consolidation. Public opinion surveys can gauge support for democracy by measuring belief in democratic principles, **trust** in institutions like the electoral system and judiciary, and tolerance for opposing views. Understanding the views of elites is also vital, including their commitment to democracy as the only legitimate form of government and their confidence in the system's long-term survival (Schedler 2001; Alexander 2002).

Consolidation requires robust institutions, like an independent judiciary that upholds the rule of law, a professional bureaucracy resistant to corruption, and a functional party system representing societal interests (Schedler 2001). While not determinative, economic development and social equality can influence democratic stability. Economic growth and equitable wealth distribution often correlate with greater stability (Beetham 1994).

Schneider and Schmitter (2004: 67-68) provide coding criteria for the phenomenon. The twelve items they use to measure democratic consolidation (CoD) focus exclusively on the observable behavior of political actors, not their attitudes. While these items have an 'electoralist' bias – assuming that competing parties engaged in fair and regular elections help channel conflicts and ensure accountability – the measure goes beyond purely electoral mechanisms; indeed, several items constitute additional forms of representation through which citizens can hold leaders accountable.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The concept of democratic consolidation is disputed. Some scholars see it as a tautology: consolidated democracies are those that survive, and those that survive are considered consolidated. Time plays a key role in studies of regime endurance. However, even long-established democracies face the threat of declining democratic quality (Gorokhovskaia 2017).

Nevertheless, some scholars apply the concept as a way to refer to avoidance of democratic breakdown or backsliding (Hanson 2006). Others see it as the completion of democratic transition (especially for regimes that suffer from **authoritarian legacies** (Schedler 1998)). Still others view it more neutrally as the 'deepening' of democracy by improving its quality and responsiveness (Heller 2019; Milačić 2022).

Measuring democratic consolidation is challenging, even when there is an agreed-upon definition. Inherently subjective assessments often rely on interpreting the behavior and stated beliefs of political actors, and these may not accurately reflect their true intentions or predict future actions. Additionally, it is difficult to distinguish between 'consolidated' and 'unconsolidated' democracies because consolidation exists on a continuum, making precise thresholds look arbitrary or overly simplistic (Schedler 1998).

Researchers may slip into selection bias by focusing on cases that support their preferred theories or hypotheses while ignoring those that contradict them. Svolik (2008) criticizes traditional survival models for treating democracies homogeneously, instead employing a split-population survival model to obtain a more accurate analysis. His research underscores the importance of economic and institutional factors in democratic endurance, offering insights into why some democracies thrive while others falter.

Additionally, there is a risk of teleological bias, which assumes a natural or inevitable progression to democratic consolidation – a linchpin of transitology (Box 5.3). This perspective can lead one to overlook or underestimate the potential for backsliding, stagnation, or alternative political development trajectories.

Furthermore, some approaches may overemphasize structural factors, such as socioeconomic conditions or institutional design, while neglecting the critical role of political agency and the strategic choices made by actors.

An overemphasis on formal institutions can overshadow the importance of informal institutions, power dynamics, and political culture in shaping democratic consolidation. Milačić (2022) highlights the often-overlooked importance of 'stateness' in consolidation. Unresolved issues related to national identity, territorial integrity, and state institution functionality can challenge consolidation even when there are formal democratic structures.

Additionally, inadequate consideration of external factors can impact a country's trajectory toward consolidation. The international context, including regional organizations, global norms, and external actors' actions (e.g., **black knights**) plays a significant role (Whitehead 2001).

REGIONAL VARIATION Comprehensive case studies can be found in Hanson 2001; Zielonka 2001; Pravda & Zielonka 2001; Kaldor & Vejvoda 2002; Eriksen 2009 (on Central and Southern Europe); Hagopian & Mainwaring 2005 (on Latin America); for a comparison of the two latter regions, see Roniger 1989; Higley & Gunther 1992.

Regarding the Indo-Pacific, see Sridharan 2012 (coalition governments in India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Japan); Osaghae 1999; Mengisteab 2020; Chari & Dzimiri 2023 (Africa); for a comparison of these two world regions, see Daly & Samararatne 2024. See Sadiki (2009) for failed consolidations in MENA before and after the **Arab Spring**. Volpi & Cavatorta (2013) provide a comparative overview of the wider Muslim world.

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Democratization

Democracy is the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage
– H.L. Mencken

Демократция – не картошка, не весде растёт
(Democracy is not a potato, it doesn't grow everywhere)
– Bakytbek Orozbayev

It has only been in the last two centuries, and especially since the early twentieth century, that there has been an increase in the number of democratic polities in the world. The biggest rise happened between the mid-1970s and the end of the twentieth century, when the number of democratic polities grew and authoritarian regimes declined. Southern Europe embraced democracy in the early and mid-1970s; many Latin America countries underwent democratic transitions by the 1970s and 1980s, while some parts of East Asia followed suit. Central and Eastern European countries, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and other socialist regimes, moved toward democratization in the 1990s, as did Sub Saharan Africa (Welzel et al. 2018: 1). The democratization processes and subsequent **democratic consolidation** in these countries have, however, been highly complex and frequently divergent in character. Still, in the 1990s, this third wave of democratization (see Box 6.3) fostered an optimistic view of the future of democratic **transitions** world-wide, with hopes for democracy to become 'the only game in town' (Linz & Stepan 1996). By 2010, the scholarly community was openly discussing the possibility and nature of an autocratic wave.

DEFINITION Notwithstanding the routine contestation of concepts in the field of political science, the concepts of democratization and democratic **transition** do not experience this conflict. Although different definitions exist, they share similar components: the change processes, with new possibilities and the reasserted right of citizens to engage in political activity and organize in competing parties to participate in elections, marking a stark departure from previous modes of governance that operated on illiberal principles (Linz & Stepan 1996; Stepan 1988; O'Donnell & Schmitter 1990; Huntington 1991).

Linz and Stepan (1996: 3) emphasize the necessity of distinguishing between democratization and liberalization. Liberalization can occur in non-democratic regimes, and can entail reforms like reduced media **censorship**, more rights for working-class organizations, toleration of opposition, greater rule of law, etc. But liberalization does not necessarily entail the core element of democracy and democratization, which is based on the right of the people, and their various representative parties, to express their political beliefs and compete in elections for

controlling the government (for a stipulated period of time). So, democratization implies liberalization, but there can be liberalization without democratization. *"Liberalization refers fundamentally to civil society. Democratization involves civil society, but it refers fundamentally to political society"* (Stepan 1988: 6).

Huntington (1991: 9) argues that *"if popular election of the top decision makers is the essence of democracy, then the critical point in the process of democratization is the replacement of a government that was not chosen this way by one that is selected in a free, open, and fair election. The overall process of democratization before and after that election, however, is usually complex and prolonged. It involves bringing about the end of the non-democratic regime, the inauguration of the democratic regime, and then the consolidation of the democratic system."*

Although there is less unanimity among scholars about the definition of democratization, there is minimal agreement that this transition has to reach a certain threshold. At a minimum, the process covers the period between the breakdown of an authoritarian regime and the establishment of democratic institutions, such as the first democratic (free and fair) national elections. (Figure 3.1 portrays these concepts in juxtaposition to **autocratization**.) Beyond that point definitions vary, and the process can be divided into two main phases: the transition phase, which involves the initial shift from authoritarianism to democracy, and the consolidation phase, which involves the institutionalization and stabilization of democratic practices (political culture). Despite the assumptions of the transitologists of the 1990s (see Box 5.3), this is not a unilinear process, and episodes of democratic backsliding (**autocratization**) may occur. Many studies and **classifications & typologies** have proposed defining cut-off points where democracy ends and authoritarianism starts (see also 'dichotomous classifications') in the context of such democratic erosion.

SEE ALSO In the view of this encyclopedia, **autocratization** or executive aggrandizement is classified under **regime behavior**. This entry falls under **transitions** (from autocratic rule). Democratization is a broad term, here used first of all todenote the domestic processes in polities, in contrast to **democracy promotion**, which falls under externally-influenced regime change or **regime promotion**. Democratization processes are closely associated with party politics, electoral contestation, and upholding the rule of law. Once such transformations stabilize, it is possible to speak of democratic deepening or **democratic consolidation**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Although the topic of democratization and the reasons why and how democracies emerge – hence the question of democratization – have been present in political science since Aristotle, it gained true prominence in the last four decades with the expanding number of democratic polities, and with the new challenges to democracies in the twenty-first century, currently considered on the defensive.

The rather clear definition of democratization and its distinction from liberalization make the concept operational. However, the multiplicity of theoretical approaches, combined with the various explanations of the causes and conditions required for democratization processes to take off (and consolidate), along with the relatively small pool of cases, too small for any true statistical analysis, lead to unclear or contrasting explanations of certain democratization processes and democratic backsliding.

ORIGIN The concept is old, its origins traced to Aristotle's *Politics* and its consideration of the necessary conditions for a democratic polity to emerge (even as an undesired outcome, since democracy was considered a deviant form of government – see **Plato & Aristotle**).

Alexis de Tocqueville (2000) supplied one of the early classic accounts of the preconditions for democratic transition. His seminal work, *Democracy in America* (*De la démocratie en Amérique*, 1835-1840) analyzes the conditions that led to a democratic revolution in the US and the reasons for its persistence. Yet the now classic and systematic research on democratization came to the fore with the institutionalization of political science in academia after WWII during the second wave of democracy (Box 6.3).

LITERATURE The study of democratization in political science encompasses various approaches (A-E) that offer distinct perspectives on the transition from authoritarianism to democracy. *Modernization theory* (A) posits that economic development fosters democratization by creating favorable social conditions, such as a more educated populace and a burgeoning middle class. This theory suggests that as societies industrialize and become wealthier, they are more likely to adopt democratic institutions. Modernization theory has been revisited, particularly in light of the third wave of democratization, which saw rapid de-industrialization in many regions after liberalization.

Structural approaches (B) emphasize the influence of social, economic, and political structures on democratization. They consider factors such as economic development, social inequality, and historical legacies as critical determinants of the likelihood and success of democratization. This approach provides detailed, context-specific explanations but can be complex due to the multitude of interacting factors. *Elite-choice approaches* (C) focus on the strategic decisions and actions of political elites during transitions. This perspective highlights the importance of negotiations and compromises between authoritarian leaders and opposition groups, emphasizing the role of key actors in shaping the democratization process. While theoretically concise and handy for generalizations, it may lack the depth and context-specific insights provided by structural approaches.

Transitology and *consolidology* (D) are focused on two complementary processes. Transitology (see Box 5.3) examines the strategic interactions among political actors during the transition phase (**elite pacts**), while 'consolidology' analyzes the conditions necessary for sustaining democracy once it is estab-



lished. These subfields highlight the importance of both the initial transition and the long-term stabilization of democratic norms and practices. *Neo-institutionalism* (E) is a related approach that emphasizes the critical role of institutions in shaping political outcomes. It focuses on how formal and informal institutional arrangements influence democratic transitions and consolidation, highlighting path dependence and historical legacies. Institutions are seen as the 'rules of the game' that structure political interactions, creating incentives for democratic behavior or autocratic resilience. This approach also examines the design and impact of different constitutional and electoral systems, emphasizing gradual institutional change and the interplay between structural conditions, actor choices, and cultural factors in shaping democratization processes. (Note: it is simplistic to pigeonhole scholars into one discipline exclusively, as their work and methods naturally evolve over time, and insights from other approaches diffuse and lead to mutual influences.)

Modernization Theory (A) S. Lipset (1959) was the first to establish a link between economic modernization – especially GDP per capita – and democracy. He posited that economic development leads to decreased tolerance of non-democratic and repressive political regimes. A rise in GDP per capita, **Lipset** argued, causes a transition to democracy. Large-N studies have tested this modernization thesis (Dahl 1971; Burkart & Lewis-Beck 1994). Boix and Stokes (2003) claim that the significance of GDP per capita for democratization after WWII has been negligible, although statistically it may appear important. Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi (2000; hereafter PACL) find that the elementary hypothesis of **modernization theory** – that political regimes more or less automatically transition to democracy as GDP per capita rises – does not hold true. Thus, a rise in GDP per capita is not a causal factor in democratization processes. That is, democratic transitions can occur in different settings and contexts, sometimes intentionally, sometimes randomly. But when a democratic transition has been undertaken, those countries with higher a GDP per capita tend to remain democratic.

Contrary to PACL, Epstein et al. (2006) find that the modernization thesis is accurate. Epstein et al. (2006) include a third category – partial democracy – which has some but not all democratic characteristics, whereas PACL accounted for only two categories: democracy vs. autocracy. Epstein et al. claimed that *"What we learn from these efforts is that higher per capita incomes increase the likelihood of a movement away from autocracy as well as decrease the likelihood of a movement away from democracy. That is, we find reason (contra PACL) to support the modernization hypothesis. In our view, democracy is a process, not an end state. And as is often the case, the journey is more important than the destination."* (Epstein et al. 2006: 552).

Structural (B) and elite-choice approaches (C) Almond and Verba analyze the influence of civic and political culture on democratization (1963); L. Diamond follows the argumentation line (1999). Dahl claims that democratization can occur when the costs of tolerating a political opposition decrease, meaning that the opposition can be given political rights and opportunities to challenge the existing order, or when the costs of suppressing the opposition grow too great (Dahl 1971: 15-16). Moreover, he argues that democratization occurs mostly when power is spread across society, when it has a pluralistic nature.

When the (ideological) 'end of history' was proclaimed at the beginning of the 1990s (see F. Fukuyama), proposing that liberal democracy and market economy were victorious, Samuel Huntington (1991) published his famous book *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. The main argument of his book concerned the explanation of why and how (from 1974 to 1990) more than thirty countries around the world had become democratic. Huntington went on to distinguish between three waves of democratization (see Box 6.3): (i) the first between 1828 and 1926; (ii) the second from 1943 until 1962; (iii) and the third starting in 1974. He also included two counter or reverse waves: (a) the first from 1922 until 1942; (b) and the second from 1958 until 1975. Huntington (1991) has identified 27 different factors that contribute to promoting democracy.

According to Huntington (1991: 106), the third wave of democratization was made possible by *"higher levels of economic well-being, which led to more widespread literacy, education and urbanization, a larger middle class, and the development of values and attitudes supportive of democracy."* Despite these favorable conditions, Huntington argues that the *"the emergence of social, economic and external conditions favorable to democracy is never enough to produce democracy. Whatever their motives, some political leaders have to want it to happen"* (Huntington 1991: 108).

According to Charles Tilly (2000), democratization can occur within an interdependent set of relations consisting of public politics, inequality and networks of trust. The crucial element of any process of democratization is the decline of political inequality between citizens, which leads them to acquire *"relatively equal claims on a government's agents, activities, and resources."* This also leads to a different approach to governmental vigilance and control: people begin relying on governmental control and involve public authorities in their private and economic relations and commitments (Tilly 2000: 8). Bates (1991) and Tilly (2004) stress a different aspect of democratization: 'No taxation without representation.' According to them, democratic transitions occurred – in the form of representative political institutions – because monarchical and authoritarian elites needed to raise taxes to form a stronger central state apparatus.

Therborn (1977) emphasizes the importance of the working classes and their struggle in the historical processes of democratization: *"The most important allies of the working class in the struggle for democracy were the following: victorious armies of foreign bourgeois states, the small and the self-employed petty bourgeoisie, and a section of the ruling class itself"* (Therborn 1977: 34). Moore (1966) claims that the rise of the middle

class, and the specific way it is politically incorporated, is crucial for democratization. His analyses look at the importance of introducing market relations into agriculture and on the important role of the bourgeoisie. He famously argued: *"No bourgeois, no democracy"* (Moore 1973: 418).

D. Rueschemeyer, E.H. Stephens, and J.D. Stephens (1992: 58) claim that the crucial impetus for democratization is the specific class nature of capitalism, capitalist economic development and the rise in the power of the organized working classes.

Transitology & Consolidology (D) O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) explain that transitions to democracy can happen only when there are certain conflicts and splits among the authoritarian ruling elites, and that they grow more liberal only when they are pushed towards political liberalization. The authors claim that no kind of democratization would be possible without a split in the ruling bloc: *"We assert that there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence – direct or indirect – of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself, principally along the fluctuating cleavage between hard-liners and soft-liners"* (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986: 19). Moreover, they also observe that *"it is possible to offer a few generalizations. (...) First, all previously known transitions to political democracy have observed one fundamental restriction (...) the property rights of the bourgeoisie are inviolable"* (1986: 68-69).

In the early 1990s a distinct approach began to emerge, one focused, mostly but not exclusively, on the democratic transition of post-socialist countries, coupling these processes with economic transition, i.e. the introduction of a capitalist market economy. Haggard and Kaufman (1995) claim that the primary mechanism that leads to democratization is economic crisis, which eventuates in popular discontent with non-democratic regimes. Scholars have been preoccupied with the role of economic crises and their impact on democratization, but also on the 'sequencing' of the dual transition and reforms (Haggard & Webb 1994; Haggard & Kaufman 1995; Encarnación 1996).

Linz and Stepan (1996) guided a research project on democratic collapse, which had a major impact on the literature on democratization. They did not focus on economic and social conditions, but rather on the specific political choices of various political actors. Linz and Stepan (1996) claim that the type of democratization processes very much depends on the nature of the preceding non-democratic regimes.

Neo-Institutionalism (E) Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) have developed an approach to democratization based in political economy. They differentiate between *de jure* and *de facto* power. In non-democratic regimes the *de jure* power is in the hands of small elites. However, in certain circumstances, especially when social and economic inequalities are very persistent and obvious, the people may start to pose a true revolutionary threat, which will gather them together and give them *de facto* political power. Elites will want to secure their ruling position and forestall any sort of revolution. As a result, they have to make promises of 'pro-majority policies.' To give these promises credibility, they will also have to change the political system in order to give citizens some tools to exercise influence and control over political authorities. In this sense, elites would also give political rights and political power to the majority. Thus, Acemoglu and Robinson's approach and understanding of democratization processes is based *"not only the role of crises but also the importance of social unrest, the threat of revolution, and generally the de facto power of those without de jure political power in inducing a transition to democracy"* (Acemoglu & Robinson 2006: 67).

In the study of democratization processes, a focus on internal and external factors became one of the most important themes. In the example of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the influence of the rise of civil society as a counter-power to authoritarian regimes was emphasized as one of the crucial internal elements, along with the split within the elites (Pridham & Vanhanen 1994). Niklasson (1994) explores the relationship between the Soviet Union's Gorbachev era and the democratization processes in the Soviet-influenced CEE. He argues that it was internal liberalization and decoupling from the USSR that impelled democratization processes, with the Gorbachev reforms in the USSR playing an important auxiliary role, although even without the latter the CEE was slowly been inching toward greater political liberalism. Hyde-Price (1994) argues for the importance of democratic-oriented regional organizations, like the *European Community* (EC, a predecessor of the EU), the CSCE (*Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*) and the *Council of Europe*. Later EU integration and EU **democracy promotion** have also been considered important factors in the democratization of the CEE (Whitehead 2001).

REGIONAL VARIATION Democratization and democratic backsliding have been happening across the world. However, it is crucial to emphasize, that not all world regions have experienced the same levels of democratization at the same time. The process in Latin America has been markedly different and determined by its postcolonial legacy, military **juntas** and the strong (isolationist) *Monroe doctrine* and outside interference. The literature on Latin America has produced numerous volumes and articles about democratic transitions (Linz & Stepan 1978; O'Donnell 1979; O'Donnell et al. 1986; Diamond et al. 1989; Karl 1990; Remmer 1992; Close 1995; Stepan & Linz 1996; Hagopian & Mainwaring 2005).

In parallel, other scholarship has focused on southern Europe (O'Donnell et al. 1986; Opello 1985; Gunther et al. 1986; Stepan and Linz 1996; Whitehead 2001a); where, by the 1990s, interest shifted to the democratization processes of post-socialist countries (Lijphart 1992; Pridham & Vanhanen 1994; Kaldor & Vejvoda 1997; Kolodko 2000; Whitehead 2001b; Schneider & Schmitter 2004; Aliyev 2015). Few initially focused on democratization in the Arab world and the Middle East (Brumberg 2003; Rahbaek 2005; Harrigan & El-Said 2011), but the region got much more attention after the **Arab Spring**. Democratization processes in Africa have waxed and waned



since the mid-1990s (Joseph 1997; Diamond & Plattner 1999; Osaghae 1999; Lynch & Crawford 2013).

MEASUREMENT & METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Several methodological and measurement issues arise in the field of democratization studies. The first methodological problem concerns the problem of defining and delineating democracy. In this sense, classifying regimes on a democratic-authoritarian continuum (incrementalism) yields different results from typologies that assume a dichotomy between autocracies and democracies (Maerz et al. 2021).

Second, various theoretical positions have pointed to different causal elements and conditions that lead to democratic transitions; however, selection bias remains an issue. Where this is concerned, there are too many factors, and not enough Popperian falsification ('all swans are white until a counterexample is provided') in theory development. It can be highly counter-productive when scholars only use cases that confirm their theories and causal effects, and neglect other dyads of causal interrelations.

Third, the problem of too small a number of case studies to make any serious statistically informed argument is a constant challenge in political science. Any general conclusions based on statistical analysis will thus always be limited.

Fourth, there is a great problem about variance in history. This is due to different conditions and different democratization processes over the past 300 years. These processes took place in very different settings, and what people once considered to be a 'democratic turn' par excellence is today (in hindsight) usually regarded as the beginning of an authoritarian or even totalitarian regime (the October Revolution, for instance). On the other hand, the history of the slave-owning Western countries (US, UK), including their road to democratization, is often posited as the norm, despite the very undemocratic nature of their polities even according to (exclusively) liberal democratic standards until relatively recently (when slavery was abolished and suffrage was extended to all men and women).

Fifth, since democracy is considered a Western invention, a normative bias stubbornly dominates in the Western-liberal world, where native democracies are seen as the most democratic and as a norm. Many adherents of this view remain insensitive to different cultural, historical and economic conditions in different regions of the world, and neglect or even refuse to acknowledge different democratic practices around the world – see also 'origins' under **elections**. They also ignore democratic deficits. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, the US judged and ranked the progress of countries toward democratization in other world regions, at a time when racial discrimination was still fully embedded in its own domestic political system and processes.

Sixth, democratization processes are complex and involve many moving parts. There is always an inherent instability and unpredictability in political actions, especially when significant structural factors interplay with such transitions, because they are performed by humans. As a result, thus far, no single theory of democratization can reliably predict a democratic transition.

For instance, modernization theory, which suggests that an increase in GDP per capita leads to democratization, has been both embraced and refuted by scholars. It has been empirically proven wrong in several cases. O'Donnell (1973) argues against modernization theory by highlighting the democratic collapses in Latin America, where income levels did not prevent political instability. In fact, numerous military coups occurred in some of the wealthiest countries on the continent, suggesting that economic factors alone do not determine democratic outcomes.

Considering the various challenges and issues surrounding democratization, two things are evident. (I) Democracies can emerge under a wide range of conditions and settings. This is supported by the work of scholars like Przeworski et al. (2000), Wantchekon (2004), and Gassebner et al. (2013), who demonstrate that there is no single set of conditions necessary for the emergence of democracy. (II) There is no single path to achieving democracy. Different countries have followed diverse routes to democratization, as highlighted by scholars like Rustow (1970), Collier (1999), and Tilly (2004). These studies emphasize that the process of democratization is influenced by a variety of historical and contextual factors, and that multiple pathways can lead to democratic governance at different moments in history.

NEW FRONTIERS Although it could appear that the large body of scholarship produced would soon lose its appeal and relevance, we can conclude that the theories engaged with democratization and transition processes are still highly relevant today. If the turn of the millennium was greatly optimistic about the trend of democratization, the second decade of the twenty-first century witnessed a growing scholarship dealing with new challenges to democracies and the rise of **hybrid regimes** (see Levitsky & Way 2010; Lindberg et al. 2018; Diamond 2002). Indeed, Lührmann & Lindberg (2019) – following Huntington's thesis about the three waves of democratization (Box 6.3) and two waves of autocratization – explain that a third wave of **autocratization** has been at work in the last few decades. Crucially, contemporary autocratization processes have adopted the guise of the legal framework of democratic politics, but with a different content: *"regime change is typically gradual and slowly leading to hybridization into electoral authoritarianism instead of sudden, dramatic transitions"* (Lührmann & Lindberg 2019: 1102). In this light, democratization processes – colonized by the specter of liberal democracy and liberal values, and with the already described pitfalls and limits – face new challenges in a time when the form of the polity and the content of policies are further and further apart. This opens up new opportunities to retest old and conceptualize new theories of democratization and autocratization, while also, possibly, developing less value-biased approaches and providing more case-specific explanations.

Box 5.3 Transitology – An Ongoing Debate

The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward Justice.
– Martin Luther King

This concept refers to the teleological expectations that all regime transitions move toward a democratic end goal. This assumption has old roots in **modernization theory** and the ideological 'end of history' (see Fukuyama 1992, and others), where democracy is made out to be the best (available) governance system and the final stage in human development.

By the 1990s a generation of scholars had genuine reasons to be optimistic as the so-called third wave of democracy seemed to be unrolling indefinitely: First the disappearance of **fascism** and **corporatism** in southern Europe, followed by the **military regimes** in Latin America starting in the late 1970s, to the democratization of some of the East and South 'Asian Tigers' (cf. Box 7.3), to the implosion and disintegration of the **single-party regimes** of the Soviet Union by 1990, triggering 'the wind of change that shook the coconut trees' in Africa in the early 1990s, accumulating to widespread liberalization and more democratic governance in all continents.

It should be noted that the study of transitions can be traced back to Rustow (1970) and thus before the start of the 'third wave,' but other instrumental works that inadvertently led to the popularization of the paradigm myth are O'Donnell et al. (1986) and Karl & Schmitter (1991).

After a brief honeymoon period right after the Cold War, this paradigm, of course, by the early 2000s started to receive criticism. Democratic progress was stagnating or reversing in many countries and no longer matched the analytical frames of transition.

The essay by Thomas Carothers (2002) and the lively (and diverse) reactions that followed soon after in the *Journal of Democracy* (2002, Volume 13, Issue 3) revealed the sizzling debate (see O'Donnell 2002; Hyman 2002; Wollack 2002) – especially around the post-communist world (Müller & Pickel 2001; Gans-Morse 2004) – but the transitology frame still ran deep at the time of the **color revolutions** and the **Arab Spring** (Diamond et al. 2014).

The paradigm, as originally set out and qualified by Carothers (2002: 6-9), involved five core assumptions: (a) any country moving away from dictatorial rule can be considered a country in transition toward democracy; (b) democratization tends to unfold in a set sequence of stages (opening – breakthrough – consolidation) – this progress can be halted or stalled, but is assumed to follow this path; (c) elections are a key generator for further democratic reforms down the line; (d) culture, political history, socio-economic contexts and other structural factors matter less than elite commitment to democracy; and the last assumption is that (e) democratic transitions take place in functioning states with democracy-building and state-building being treated as mutually reinforcing endeavors or even as two sides of the same coin.

While the universality of Carothers' theses was nuanced in the existing literature, there is a consensus that were these assumptions applied as listed, they would generate dangerous methodological pitfalls. However, the importance of understanding transitions, both for dictatorship scholars and experts engaged in democracy support, remains undiminished; thus, coaxing the debate into several avenues: (a) What lessons from the third wave are still useful? (b) What alternative frames (if only regional and temporary) can be used instead? For instance, see Ambrosio's (2004) 'consolidation paradigm' for the post-Soviet states. (c) How can we fix the paradigm? (see Mohamedou & Sisk 2016).

The debate has shed a new light on several analytical practices in regime studies prevalent in the late 1990s: The pitfalls are related to **hybrid regimes** (or equating democracy with elections) and to placing democracy and non-democracy on a linear scale. Reappraisal has revealed the need to benchmark the core concept of democracy (at least) according to its minimum (free and fair elections) and maximum definition (including the protection of political, human, economical rights, etc.). There is a new appreciation of autocratic resilience, consolidation and survival and the beginning of the study of **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning**, but also the juxtaposition of state-building and democratization processes (i.e. **state fragility & failure**) and what this means for **democracy promotion**.

In any case, one can expect a cyclical return to the debate, and its undeniable impact on the field has left scholars sensitive to nuance and able to debunk trendy paradigms more speedily, the most recent examples being 'democratic recession' (Levitsky & Way 2015; Lührmann & Lindberg 2019) and the 'backsliding paradigm' (Cianetti & Hanley 2021).

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Elite Pacts & Pactology

If you want to make peace with your enemy,
you have to work with your enemy.
Then he becomes your partner.
– Nelson Mandela

An elite pact is an agreement between a select group of political elites. It seeks to redefine the rules governing the exercise of power while ensuring mutual guarantees for the vital interests of the parties involved. Such a pact is often made during transitions from authoritarian rule to democracy, but it can also be used to maintain stability in authoritarian regimes. (The role of elite pacts in peace treaties or ceasefires, in the context of conflict studies, lies beyond the scope of this entry – see De Juan 2008)

DEFINITION & CLASSIFICATIONS When surveying the literature and the application of elite pact frameworks, one can distinguish two main types of elite pacts. Transition pacts (A) are agreements between rival elite factions during a transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one. These pacts are designed to ensure a smooth and controlled **transition** by establishing rules and guarantees that protect the interests of the key actors from both the old regime and the opposition. They involve cooperation between elites in power and those in the opposition, and aim to redefine the rules governing the exercise of power post-transition with mutual guarantees for those entering into the pact. Transition pacts often include compromises regarding sensitive issues, such as securing property rights or ensuring non-prosecution for past actions. Although criticized for being 'unjust,' they are considered crucial for successfully establishing democracy, as they include significant political actors whose interests must be respected to gain their consent to the new political regime.

In contrast are regime pacts (B), or those pacts internal to the ruling elite of an authoritarian regime. They are designed to maintain the regime's grip on power by managing internal divisions and preventing challenges from within the inner ranks.



These pacts focus on preserving authoritarian rule by enshrining collegial rule, sharing power and resources among elites, aiming to prevent internal conflict, and suppressing potential challenges to the regime's authority. Security forces often play a key role in enforcing these pacts and maintaining stability within the regime. Elite pacts are crucial for preventing **coups d'état**, which are a common cause of extra-constitutional transitions in authoritarian regimes.

The term 'pactology,' then, refers to the study of political pacts, particularly those involved in transitions from authoritarianism to democracy (A). It involves analyzing how these agreements are formed, their impact on political transitions, and their role in establishing stable governance structures.

Elite pacts, also known as 'elite settlements' or 'political settlements,' are rooted in elite theory (see under 'origin' below). Such pacts involve negotiations among elites to manage uncertainties and share power.

There is no universally accepted typology of elite settlements. Scholars tend rather to focus on their complexity and variety, emphasizing dimensions such as scope (the number of actors involved), degree of elite unity, formalization (written or informal), and durability. Factors like elite autonomy from mass pressures, crises prompting compromise, and strategic calculations by key actors are crucial in understanding these settlements (Burton & Higley 1987; Gel'man 2003).

SEE ALSO Elite pacts are intrinsically linked to **transitions** (A) and regime **longevity, stability and resilience** (B), particularly **succession**. In transitions, crises combined with expected **exit options** push elites to the negotiating table in order to control transitions, with mixed results regarding **democratization** and **democratic consolidation**.

ORIGIN Elite theory, which seeks to explain the power dynamics in modern society by stipulating that a small minority holds the majority of power (and treats this as inevitable), has its roots in the Italian school of elitism developed by theorists such as Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), and Robert Michels (1878-1936) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These scholars emphasized the concentration of power in a small group of elites, who influence key political, economic, and social decisions. Pareto (1916, 1935) introduced the concept of governing and non-governing elites. Mosca (1896; 1939) described society as divided between a ruling minority and a ruled majority, highlighting the organized nature of elites in contrast to the unorganized masses. Michels (1911, 1915) contributed his 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' (see Box 5.4), which suggested that all organizations inevitably become oligarchic as they grow, concentrating power in the hands of a few (Maloy 2023).

LITERATURE & KEY SIGNIFICANCE Pactology became particularly influential in the 1970s and 1980s, during the 'Third Wave' (see Box 6.3) when it was first applied to explain **transitions** in Latin America and southern Europe (O'Donnell et al. 1986; Karl 1990; Higly & Gunther 1992). During this time, political pacts were seen as crucial for facilitating transitions from authoritarian regimes to democratic governance. Scholars viewed these elite pacts as mechanisms to manage the uncertainties of transitioning to a democratic regime by allowing political actors from both the outgoing regime and the opposition to negotiate compromises and share power, thereby enhancing the probability of a successful transition to a viable democracy.

However, since the 1990s, the popularity of elite pact theory has declined. There have been criticisms regarding its effectiveness. Some scholars argue that pacts can 'freeze' democratic transitions by empowering already powerful actors, potentially undermining democratic principles and practices, stalling socioeconomic progress, fostering **clientelism** and **corruption**, limiting political competition, and obstructing the growth of a democratic **civil society**. The theory's focus on successful transitions also means that less attention was paid to instances when pacts failed to achieve democratization, resulting in a limited understanding of the conditions necessary for their success.

Additionally, there is a lack of empirical support for the assumption that pacts lead to frozen democracies (Encarnación 2005). Cases like post-Franco Spain demonstrate that pacts can indeed contribute to successful democratic transitions: *"while parting does produce birthmarks, parted democracies are not necessarily frozen, but rather can be transformed into more competitive democracies"* (Field 2002: viii).

O'Donnell et al. (1986) argue that pacts are more likely to occur in contexts where civil society, especially the working class, is politically weak and inactive, allowing elites to negotiate with minimal interference. Colombia and Venezuela in the 1950s exemplify such transitions, in which pacts helped establish limited democratic systems. However, during the Cold War, much of South America had an active working class and parties representing their interests, complicating elite-driven pacts. This highlights the crucial role of the nature of civil society in shaping transition dynamics.

Additionally, O'Donnell et al. (1986) suggest that robust party systems can facilitate pacts, as seen in Spain and Italy, where strong leftist parties negotiated transitions. In contrast, Latin American politics often featured populist parties with weaker working-class ties, making elites hesitant to engage in formal pact-making.

Gennadii Iakovlev (2021) identifies several preconditions as crucial for successful pacted transitions. (a) Both the authoritarian regime and the democratic opposition must have moderate factions willing to engage in negotiations. These moderates are essential as they can mediate between hardliners and radicals within their groups, facilitating a smoother transition process. (b) The regime must be sufficiently weakened, either by internal divisions or external pressures, to consider negotiation as a viable option for maintaining some level of influ-

Box 5.4 The Lingering Iron Law of Oligarchy

Who says organization, says oligarchy
– Robert Michels (1915)

The 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' is a sociological theory formulated by Robert Michels (1911: 1915) in the early twentieth century. It asserts that all organizations, regardless of their democratic intentions, will inevitably develop oligarchic structures. This theory suggests that true democracy within organizations is unattainable because the need for efficient leadership and decision-making leads to a concentration of power among a select few, forming an oligarchy.

Michels developed this theory based on his observations of European socialist parties, particularly the *German Social Democratic Party* (SPD). He argued that the technical and tactical necessities of organizational life require centralized leadership, which inherently leads to oligarchic structures. This centralization is necessary for maintaining efficiency and order as organizations grow larger and more complex. Michels also incorporated psychological elements into his thesis, suggesting that members of an organization tend to be passive and prefer being led by those perceived as more competent or charismatic.

However, Michels' 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' has faced significant criticism over time. Critics have pointed out exceptions to Michels' law, such as organizations that have maintained democratic practices over long periods. Additionally, some scholars argue that Michels' theory is not universally applicable or inevitable. They suggest that democratic organizations can implement structures to resist oligarchization through mechanisms like rotating leadership roles, participatory decision-making processes, and maintaining checks and balances. H. Drochon (2020) highlights that while Michels' law points towards oligarchic tendencies, it also allows for a dynamic conception of democracy where continuous challenges to elite rule can occur. This perspective suggests that democracy involves ongoing efforts to contest and limit the power of elites rather than a static state.

Furthermore, critics like T. Diefenbach (2019) argue that alternative organizational forms exist that can avoid oligarchization by promoting egalitarian structures and collective decision-making processes. These include worker cooperatives, participatory democracies, and other non-hierarchical models. Despite these criticisms, Michels' 'Iron Law' remains influential in discussions about organizational dynamics and power structures. It serves as a reminder of the challenges inherent in maintaining democratic practices within complex organizations and the constant vigilance required to prevent the concentration of power among a few individuals or groups.

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ence or control. (c) The opposition must be strong and unified enough to pose a credible challenge to the authoritarian regime. Its unity is crucial for presenting a cohesive front during negotiations and ensuring that any agreements reached are respected by all of the opposition's factions. (d) There must be credible guarantees for both sides regarding their vital interests, such as personal safety, political participation, and economic interests. These guarantees help build trust and reduce fears of retribution after the transition. (e) Pacted transitions often occur in contexts in which there is an existing institutional framework that can be reformed rather than completely dismantled. This framework provides a basis for negotiation and helps ensure continuity and stability during the transition process.

Intra-regime pacts (B) contribute to the **longevity, stability & resilience** of ruling networks and their institutions. They are most necessary after power takeovers (**coup**, **revolution**) and the creation of a new regime, or at a later stage after a leader transfer (**succession**) within the regime. When regimes are rocked by large **protests & uprisings** the ruling coalition can be broadened by co-opting opposition figures. Real or perceived tendencies of **personalization** erode these pacts and increase the likelihood of regime infighting. **Purges** are usually symptoms, either the prelude to a supreme powerholder breaking (or renegotiating) the pact, or the punishment of a rebellious inner circle faction for breaking a truce. This type of pact has not been researched in a systematic fashion due to a lack of credible data and because of the difficulty of obtaining sources that are located in still authoritarian contexts.



METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The theory's emphasis on elite agency has been criticized for downplaying the role of structural and historical constraints in shaping transitions, leading to an incomplete understanding of democratization processes. Alternative explanations have also emerged, focusing on other factors driving transitions, such as economic development, institutional design, and civil society. These shifts reflect a broader trend in political science toward more comprehensive frameworks, incorporating not only elite negotiations but the roles of non-elite groups and broader societal dynamics.

Despite its decline in popularity, elite pact theory remains relevant to understanding political transitions. Contemporary scholars recognize the need to analyze pacts in conjunction with other factors, such as the broader political and historical context, the institutional design of new regimes, and the role of (un)civil society. Elite pacts are not inherently good or bad for democracy; their impact depends on the specific context and how they are implemented.

REGIONAL VARIATION Elite pacts were less formalized during the Cold War, when externally-imposed transitions, often backed by external forces, were more common (e.g., West Germany and Japan). The end of the Cold War brought renewed attention to elite pacts, with two important shifts: a regional focus on Eastern Europe, and a greater emphasis on understanding **democratic consolidation**. For comparative works, see Burton & Higley 1987.

Latin America This region has consistently been a focal point for studying elite politics and transitions, both during and after the Cold War (Karl 1987; 1990; Higley & Gunther 1992; Higley 1992). Its history of authoritarianism, combined with waves of democratization, offers numerous cases to examine the role of elites and pacts. **Authoritarian legacies** in Latin America also play a role. Effective pacts require a shared understanding among political actors that violating agreements harms all involved. However, past authoritarian reversals, and instability, may undermine trust among elites, reducing their willingness to commit to binding agreements (O'Donnell et al. 1986).

Southern Europe Countries such as Spain (Encarnación 2003; Sanchez 2003), Portugal (Costa Pinto 2006; Costa Lobo et al. 2016; Castaño 2024) and Greece (Karakatsanis 1996; Gursoy 2017), which transitioned from authoritarian rule in the 1970s, have garnered significant comparative attention (Linz 2019). The Spanish transition, especially, is often cited as a model for successful pacted transitions (Field 2002). A less-studied case is Albania (Margariti 2021).

Eastern Europe Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe became a key area for analyzing elite politics and transitions (Higley & Pakulski 1999; Pakulski et al. 1996; Frič et al. 2014). Scholars have used pact frameworks to explore the diverse democratization paths of countries like Poland (in Polish, Szelényi et al. 1995; Pakulski & Wasilewski 2006), Hungary (Tökés 1996; Seleny 1999), Czechoslovakia (Baylis 1998; Szomolányi 2019), Russia (Lane 1996; Gel'man 2003; Petrov et al. 2022), and Ukraine (Flikke 2008).

Regarding the rest of Eurasia, Luong (2002) and Collins (2002) are notable works for Central Asia (see **clan politics**). In the case of African countries, the lens of ethnic politics (Opalo 2011; Bedasso 2015) is usually used to explain their lack of durable elite pacts, but pacts still feature in the context of post-civil war negotiations (Le Van 2011).

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Exit Options & Leader Fates

Jak się nie ma, co się lubi, to się lubi, co się ma.
(If you don't have what you like, you've got to like what you have.)
– Polish proverb

Nadzieja matką głupich.
(Hope is the mother of morons.)
– Polish proverb

Everybody worries about the future; dictators particularly. The comparative study of possible exit scenarios – how certain types of leaders leave power – has made it possible to model political transitions and, sometimes, even to make informed predictions. In democracies, leadership turnover is institutionalized, expected and desired to make way for new generations of politicians and to keep polities accountable to their electorates. In dictatorships, losing power has unappealing consequences which, according to rational choice theories, shape the ruler's behavior. Still, there is a lot of variation among types of authoritarianism.

DEFINITION Exit options and the fate of rulers refer to the various ways in which political leaders, especially autocratic leaders, can leave power and the potential consequences they face after leaving, such as punishment, exile, or a peaceful retirement.

'Exit options' are a product of game theory frameworks. These scenarios compile the predetermined rational choices rulers can make when their regime is threatened and they are likely to lose power. The menu of available choices and the scope of rulers' agency are, in turn, considered dependent on the (organizational) structure of their respective **political regimes** and their available resources, in combination with the precise nature of the threat (**foreign invasion**, **coups**, **revolutions**, **rebellion**, **protests**, etc.), the international context, and mitigated by the 'repertoire' of contestation (see Box 5.8). Note: mass non-violent forms of protest can be more dangerous to rulers than violent contestation (Gleditsch et al. 2023).

'Leader fates' are the actual outcomes and consequences of **ousters** or (electoral) defeats. They are shaped by various factors, including the manner of leaders' exit, the nature of the successor regime, and the presence of domestic or international pressure to hold them accountable for past actions. Such patterns can be mapped and studied as separate variables in transition studies, especially with an eye on democratization trends (resulting in liberalization and democratic consolidation), on the one hand,



and the likelihood of civil war and failed democratic transitions, on the other.

SEE ALSO Exit options are integral for understanding regime change and **transitions**, either **democratization** and **democratic consolidation**, or 'failed' transitions resulting in renewed autocracy. They are related to time horizons (see Box 5.5) and, domestically, influence various aspects of regime behavior (**repression**, **coup-proofing**, hoarding), as well as their international **performance** (e.g., **conflict** behavior). Autocratic exit options are one of the main explanatory features of the typology by **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** and relate to regimes' ability to negotiate **elite pacts** and avoid lustration (Box 3.7), **purges**, or other forms of persecution.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE This research field, which focuses on leader exit options and fates, is crucial for understanding the dynamics of authoritarian regimes. By analyzing the decisions leaders make when faced with the prospect of losing power, and its consequences, researchers can gain insights into the **longevity, stability & resilience** of these regimes.

Given (relatively) attractive exit options, rulers might be more inclined to step down voluntarily, facilitating a smoother transition of power. Conversely, if leaders anticipate severe punishment (or death) upon losing office, they may cling to power, increasing the risk of violent conflicts or repression (Goemans 2008; Radtke 2020). This helps explain variations in leader behavior, as leaders consider their well-being (and that of their families and friends) after they have left power, and this influences their decision-making while in office.

This research has significant implications for policymakers aiming to promote democracy and stability, particularly in regions with (long) authoritarian legacies. By identifying conditions that favor peaceful and democratic transitions, such as safe exit options for outgoing dictators, policymakers can design effective interventions.

Additionally, understanding the destabilizing effects of exiled leaders can inform strategies to mitigate risks and promote lasting peace. Despite its importance, the study of leader exit options and fates, especially the long-term consequences of exile (and possible return), remains under-explored compared to other areas, like leader survival (Escribà-Folch & Krcmaric 2017; Krcmaric & Escribà-Folch 2022).

Overall, this research field offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between leaders, domestic politics, and international relations. It contributes to more accurate theories and – sometimes – provides the only predictive frames available during autocratic transitions, which are notoriously volatile and chaotic (Baturo 2016).

ORIGIN The origins of 'exit options' are unclear and diffuse, but by the late twentieth-century political scientists adapted rational choice frameworks to political systems. William H. Riker (1920-1993) and Anthony Downs (1930-2021) were among the first to do so. By the early 1990s, rational choice theory began to gain sustained attention in comparative politics. The typology of **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** was one of the first to apply the theory, differentiating it to various forms of authoritarianism.

Anthony Downs' (1957) political choice theory was a seminal contribution to political science, offering an economic perspective on democratic processes. By applying similar economic principles (like firms and investors tend to do), it explores how political actors, including voters and parties, behave in a democracy. Together with Riker (1962), Downs' work is recognized as one of the earliest to introduce the concept of rational choice theory into comparative politics, analyzing how individuals make decisions based on their preferences and the information available to them.

LITERATURE The literature consistently illustrates that dictators are profoundly concerned about their fate after leaving office, a concern that significantly influences their decision-making while in power. Rather than focusing solely on preserving their position, dictators strategize to maximize their well-being in case they are ousted.

Dictatorships, particularly **personalist regimes** where power is highly concentrated, often lack mechanisms for the safe and stable transfer of power. This absence of security leaves deposed leaders vulnerable to various negative outcomes, including exile, imprisonment, and even death. These risks are not merely theoretical. Goemans (2008: 772) finds that while only about 8% of leaders who lost office in a regular manner suffered exile, jail, or death, fully 80% of leaders who lost office in an irregular fashion suffered one of these punishments.

Exile emerges as a prominent theme, representing both a potential escape route and a source of continued uncertainty for dictators. On the one hand, the option of fleeing to a foreign country that is willing to offer protection provides a powerful incentive for a dictator to relinquish power, especially when facing domestic unrest or violent uprisings. Exile offers a way to escape the immediate threat of retribution and potentially retain some assets or influence. However, exile is not a guaranteed solution, and its attractiveness depends on several factors. Dictators must weigh the likelihood of finding a host country against the possibility of extradition, prosecution, or a less comfortable life in exile.

These calculations are complex and involve assessing factors such as the following. (a) Transnational ties (see **linkage & leverage theory**): Dictators are more likely to find refuge in countries with which they have strong pre-existing connections, such as a shared colonial history, formal alliances, or economic ties. (b) Geographic proximity: Distance matters; countries geographically closer to the dictator's home country are more accessible and may offer logistical advantages. (c) The political stability of potential hosts: Dictators seek out stable countries where the risk of policy reversals, such as a change in leadership that could lead to extradition, is lower. Dictators are more inclined to seek exile in neighboring states that have previously hosted other dictators, are militarily strong, and share colonial links,

formal alliances, or economic ties (Escribà-Folch & Krcmaric 2017).

The issuance of international arrest warrants, such as those by the *International Criminal Court* (ICC), can deter countries from offering refuge to dictators, due to the potential legal and diplomatic repercussions of harboring individuals wanted for serious crimes, like genocide or crimes against humanity (see the Mogadishu line in Box 3.12). On the other hand, it also affects ousted dictators' choice of exile destinations. If these are too limited, insecure or unattractive, this increases their overall willingness to cling to power by all means necessary, instead of taking their chances in negotiations (Goldsmith 2003). Before the rise of the international human rights regime in the past three decades, asylum was an effective tool to encourage autocrats to step down, often as part of negotiated transitions to democracy. International actors played a key role in this process by offering asylum to fleeing rulers, convincing leaders to leave, or brokering agreements with local authorities to facilitate the departure of authoritarian leaders when they lacked credible domestic protections (Escribà-Folch & Wright 2015: 63-64).

The experiences of their predecessors provide crucial information for dictators contemplating their own exit strategies (see **authoritarian learning**). Dictators observe the fates of those who came before them, learning from their successes and failures. A history of dictators from the same country or region facing severe consequences after leaving office can deter a current leader, fearing a similar fate, from stepping down. Conversely, if previous dictators managed to negotiate peaceful exits or secure comfortable retirements, this can encourage their successors to consider similar paths (Baturo 2016).

Dictators' assessment of their potential exit options and post-tenure fate permeates various aspects of their decision-making. Dictators who believe they have limited options for a safe exit may be more likely to engage in risky foreign policies, such as initiating conflicts, to maintain their grip on power. They might even escalate existing conflicts, hoping for a victory that could bolster their standing and deter challenges (Goemans et al. 2009).

When dictators perceive high stakes and few guarantees for their safety after leaving office, they are more likely to resort to repression and violence to suppress dissent and secure their hold on power. This can create a vicious cycle of instability and conflict, making peaceful transitions less likely (Escribà-Folch & Wright 2015). Goemans et al. (2009) reveal that transitions to democracy (in the third wave) were more likely to fail when autocratic rulers were punished after leaving office, suggesting that punitive measures against former autocrats might destabilize nascent democracies rather than strengthen them. (See also Albertus & Menaldo 2014; Albertus 2019.)

In an effort to retain power and potentially improve their post-tenure prospects, dictators may manipulate constitutional rules, for instance by extending **term limits** or consolidating power, to make it harder for them to be removed (Baturo 2011; Miller 2021). Even after a peaceful, negotiated transition, a breakdown of the **elite pact** and of immunity, an overstepping truth commission (Box 5.7) or the sudden announcement of 'lustration' policies (Box 3.7) can result in violent reactions from former regime networks.

Dictators are strategic actors who consider not just their time in office, but also their life after power. Their decisions are shaped by the perceived costs and benefits associated with different exit options and the potential consequences they might face, making the study of leader fate an essential aspect of understanding authoritarianism.

CLASSIFICATIONS The **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** classification identifies four types of autocratic regimes: (a) personalist rule, (b) single-party regimes, (c) military regimes, and (d) monarchies (Geddes et al. 2014). In this ruler-focused typology, game theory is applied to posit the internal power dynamics of a regime type, helping to predict the most likely exit strategies for rulers and, consequently, the most probable transition scenarios.

Military regimes have institutional mechanisms, like power-sharing agreements, that help manage leadership transitions. These regimes are more likely to transition to democracy after hostile military interventions by foreign countries or international organizations (Debs & Goemans 2010), which often aim to restore democratic rule. Military defeat can weaken domestic support for both military and party-based regimes, further facilitating democratic transitions. To maintain military unity, officers usually negotiate a return to barracks that protects their careers and benefits (**elite pacts**). When one faction of officers initiates a coup, others tend to support the change. A civil war, in which they have to fight their own troops, is the worst outcome for them. Pure military regimes are also unlikely to compete in transitional elections, reducing opposition harassment and fostering democratic transitions. Leadership rotation and power-sharing may prevent any one individual from concentrating power; compared to other types, such collegial military regimes are the most likely to transition to democracy. Shaming campaigns are often effective in pushing military regimes to retreat, especially in nations with a history of democracy. Military **juntas** are common targets for democratic interventions that aim to restore overthrown democratic governments. Such interventions, especially ones that physically remove the regime from power, significantly increase the likelihood of democratization. They are more inclined to transition to democracy, anticipating a lower risk of punishment – including death – under a new democratic order than by being replaced by another dictator. Their threat of mounting a coup can leverage exit guarantees from successor regimes (Debs 2016; Kendall-Taylor & Frantz 2014; Kim & Kroeger 2017; Escribà-Folch & Wright 2015).

Party-based regimes also rely on institutional arrangements to handle leadership transitions. Dominant-party regimes often have formal and regular succession mechanisms that reduce factional con-



flict and ensure continuity. Peaceful leadership rotation is common, as institutions guarantee that factions have future opportunities to gain power. This reduces the likelihood of violent takeovers. Party regimes can protect the interests of former elites by using party institutions to gather support and retain influence in a new democratic order, thereby avoiding punishment. With **patronage** networks and **propaganda** machines in place, these regimes often perform well in post-transition elections, offering leverage for former elites to minimize the costs of their departure (Escribà-Folch 2013; Escribà-Folch & Wright 2015; Kendall-Taylor & Frantz 2014; Davenport et al. 2021). Autocratic ruling parties often remain influential in democracies as a consequence of advantages retained from their authoritarian past, such as policy experience, ethnic bases, and organizational strength. These parties frequently succeed in democratic transitions by maintaining these advantages rather than undergoing radical changes. The extent of their success depends on the degree to which their autocratic legacies translate into democratic competition and on whether the new political rules disadvantage new parties. Therefore, former autocratic parties significantly shape young democracies and can negatively impact democratic survival and quality (Miller 2021).

Personalist regimes, which dismantle institutions that could constrain the leader or serve as power bases for rivals, are most vulnerable during protests. These regimes are brutish, but institutionally fragile, with leaders usually having a narrow base of support based on personal ties. They are the least likely to transition to democracy and the most resistant to peaceful exits. Since they cannot count on a safe future outside of power, personalist leaders – with few exceptions, see Box 3.6 – cling to their position, renege on promises of reforms, and make their transitions violent. This escalatory violence, in combination with hollowed-out institutions and (extreme) **systemic corruption**, makes a transition to democracy unlikely and democratic consolidation even rarer (Van den Bosch 2021). When these regimes collapse, or their last stronghold is about to be overrun, leaders either flee into exile or face punishment. The longer a personalist spell (Box 2.4), the more likely it is that a successor regime will also be(come) personalist or that the country descend into civil war (Escribà-Folch & Wright 2015; Radtke 2020; Van den Bosch 2021; Kim & Kroeger 2017; Kendall-Taylor & Frantz 2014).

The **monarchies** still present in today's world are a durable regime type with regulated modes of **succession**. In contexts where there is no compromise, **revolution** and violence are required to enforce regime change. Possessing traditional **legitimacy**, monarchs under pressure can either negotiate an exit, in which they abdicate in favor of a more acceptable successor, or bind themselves to constitutional constraints, thus becoming a figurehead (retaining their influence, wealth and prestige in exchange for real power).

MEASUREMENT *Archigos* (Goemans et al. 2009) is probably the most comprehensive and widely used dataset for measuring leader fates and regime exits. Multiple sources draw on this dataset when making claims about leadership characteristics, regime type, post-tenure fate, the way leaders assume and leave power, and the length of their stay in power. *Archigos* contains four categories regarding the post-tenure fates of ousted leaders: (i) okay; (ii) exiled; (iii) jailed; and (iv) killed. The dataset records the highest level of punishment a leader faces within one year of leaving office. This limitation, however, has been criticized. For instance, Kubota et al. (2022) developed the unique *Leaders in Exile* dataset, which tracks outcomes for exiled leaders in the long term. Their study systematically examines whether exile truly functions as a form of punishment. Specifically, it investigates whether exiled leaders were able to return to their home countries, how they were treated upon their return, and whether their experiences in exile were favorable.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As a sub-focus of rational choice theory and the behaviorist tradition of comparative politics, this approach has faced criticism for its perceived reductionism and failure to account for cultural and historical contexts. Critics argue that the theory oversimplifies political behavior by focusing solely on self-interest and rational calculations, ignoring the complex (psychological) motivations (e.g., **leader personality**) and cultural settings that influence political decisions (Roskin 2024).

Examining only the immediate aftermath of a leader's departure from office might not fully capture the long-term consequences of their rule or exile. The influence of a former leader might persist for years or even decades, potentially shaping political events and instability long after leaving office.

Broad regime labels such as 'military' or 'party regimes' can mask important variations in their internal dynamics and leadership structures. For example, is a military regime run by the top brass, junior officers, a strongman or rebels? Such distinctions matter when it comes to how they perceive threats, how they interact with domestic and international actors, and how they estimate their chances in a new order.

NEW FRONTIERS Adam and Tsavou (2022) combine the *Archigos* dataset with a cross-country dataset on terrorism, from 1970 to 2015, to shed light on leader fates after terrorist strikes. After experiencing terrorist attacks, autocratic leaders are more vulnerable to overthrow than democracies due to the former's reliance on a narrow support base, one riddled by increased factionalism as a result of the **terrorism**. Electoral autocracies, which contain a platform for opposition forces to rally against the incumbent, are especially prone to leadership changes following terrorist attacks.

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Box 5.5 Time Horizons – A Ticking Clock

Fugit irreparabile tempus
(Time flies, never to return)
– Virgil

Time horizons refer to how long a regime expects to be in power, an idea that has been used to explain a host of different outcomes in authoritarian regimes. The theoretical framing of time horizons originates from broader studies of inter-temporal decision-making in political science, economics, and psychology, such as Robert Axelrod's (1984) notion of the 'shadow of the future' in cooperation theory and subsequent research on how actors weigh short- versus long-term benefits. Autocracies with longer time horizons are more likely to invest in their publics compared to those with short time horizons. This is known as the 'stationary' versus the 'roving' bandit theory, originally articulated by Mancur Olson (1993).

An autocrat who does not know when they will be ousted from power will have a strong incentive to engage in predatory economic behavior, confiscating as much as possible. Rulers who are unable to make any prediction about the timing or nature of their **ouster**, nor possess any guarantees about their **exit options & leader fates** are influenced by this uncertainty, which leads them to steal as much as they can, while they have the power to do so.

In contrast, autocratic regimes that believe that they will be in power for the long run, usually have a secure way of rotating elites, are more likely to provide public goods and develop long-term strategies. Because the regime knows they are in it for the long haul, they have an incentive to invest in things like property rights enforcement, which in turn, will increase economic growth (Clague et al. 1996; Knutsen & Fjelde 2016; Wright 2008). Research has also shown that autocracies with longer time horizons are also more likely to invest in healthcare (Yan & Lin 2020). Further research from China has also demonstrated that shorter time horizons of local officials has also corresponded with less investment in environmental protection and fighting climate change (Eaton & Kostka 2014).

Personalist rule, which lacks institutionalized mechanisms of turnover in power (and thus cannot provide leaders any certainty over their tenure) are more likely to have short time horizons. Because of this, it is more often than not, that personalist regimes engage in predatory behavior (**kleptocracy**). In Zaire under Joseph Mobutu (Box 1.7), the president's share of the economy rose to 95% (Reno 1997). On the other hand, **single-party regimes** which have clear methods of rotating elites and enjoy low coup risk and have stable regimes will try to make investments in the country's future, such as was the case with Singapore in generating economic growth and improving human development (Tushnet 2014).

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Box 5.6 Dictators' Bodies: Burial, Memory & Necropolitics

Alla fine del gioco, il re e il pedone finiscono nella stessa scatola.
(After the game, the king and the pawn go into the same box.)
– Italian proverb

Before I died, I told my wife
I didn't want a parade.
It's in my will.
Nothing fancy.
A twenty-one-gun salute will do
– R. Zamora Linmark (2018)

The second quote above is extracted from the poem "The Dictator en Route to His Burial at the National Heroes' Cemetery" by R. Zamora Linmark, published in *The Massachusetts Review* in 2018, and touches upon the enormous controversy of repatriating the body of the brutal Philippine dictator, Ferdinand Marcos (1917-1989) for burial in a cemetery reserved for national heroes, presidents, and military figures. The burial was seen by many as part of a broader trend of historical revisionism in the Philippines, particularly under (authoritarian) President Rodrigo Duterte (reign: 2016-2022), who supported the burial and had close ties with the Marcos family.

The fate of dictators' bodies after death is not merely a matter of burial logistics or familial decisions; it is deeply intertwined with the political, social, and symbolic struggles that persist long after their regimes have ended. Whether a dictator dies in office, in exile, or through violent ouster, their body becomes a contested site of power, memory, and necropolitics. The treatment of these bodies reflects broader societal efforts to reckon with their legacies and the impact of their rule.

When revolutionary dictators die in office, their bodies often become symbols of the state they led and transformed. These bodies are sometimes preserved and displayed as part of a broader effort to maintain the regime's **legitimacy** and perpetuate the leader's **personality cult**.

For example, Vladimir Lenin's embalmed body has been on display in Red Square since he died in 1924. Despite ongoing debates about whether it should be buried, his body has been so symbolic and so political that there have now been more attempts at desecrating his corps than assassination attempts during his life: In March 1934, Mitrofan Nikitin, an agricultural worker disillusioned by corruption and famine, attempted to shoot Lenin's body as an act of protest, though he missed and turned the gun on himself. A more successful assault occurred in July 1960 when a man named Minibayev shattered the sarcophagus glass (by climbing on and kicking it) and damaged Lenin's face and hands with shards. In 1973, a more deadly attack took place when a man detonated a bomb inside the mausoleum, killing two bystanders and injuring several others, though Lenin's body remained unharmed.

The continued presence of Lenin's body highlights the complexities of reckoning with the past and the enduring symbolism attached to such figures. Even Putin (who frowns upon revolutionaries) does not want to resolve the issue: *"As far as the body is concerned, in my opinion, it should not be touched."* (Daily Sabah, 2024) Similarly, other leaders like Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, and Kim Il-Sung were embalmed and placed in mausoleums to project an image of immortality and ensure that their ideological legacy would endure beyond death.

However, not all dictators who die in office are treated

with such reverence. In some cases, regimes seek to distance themselves from a deceased dictator by removing their body from any place of honor and burying it in a less prominent location. This often signifies an effort to dismantle the dictator's cult of personality and diminish their legacy. A prime example is Joseph Stalin's removal from Lenin's Mausoleum in 1961 and his subsequent burial near the Kremlin Wall. This act was part of Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization (Box 3.4) campaign aimed at erasing Stalin's influence from Soviet politics and society. (Kattago 2017)

The other way around is also possible: After Robert Mugabe's death in 2019, a dispute arose between his family and the Zimbabwean government over his burial. While the new regime wanted to honor him at the *National Heroes Acre*, emphasizing his role in the liberation struggle, Mugabe's family insisted on a private burial in his hometown, reflecting distrust and a desire to control his legacy by those who ousted him in a palace coup (Burke & Chingono 2019; BBC, 2022).

When dictators die in exile, their bodies can become contentious symbols for both supporters and detractors within their home country. The decision to repatriate or bury them can ignite political debates about the legacy of their rule. In some cases, dictators who die in exile are denied burial in their home countries due to the negative sentiments surrounding their regimes. For instance, Idi Amin, the former leader of Uganda, died in exile in Saudi Arabia in 2003 and was buried there because his repatriation was deemed unacceptable by the Ugandan government. His burial in Saudi Arabia reflects both his ignominious fall from power and Uganda's desire to distance itself from his brutal regime.

In other cases, repatriation becomes a protracted and controversial process due to ongoing political divisions over the dictator's legacy. Ferdinand Marcos (mentioned above) provides a striking example: after dying in exile in Hawaii in 1989, his body was preserved by his family while they lobbied for his burial at *Libingan ng mga Bayani* (Heroes' Cemetery) in the Philippines. His body remained on display for decades until President Rodrigo Duterte allowed his burial there in 2016 – a decision that sparked widespread protests from those who viewed Marcos as a corrupt and brutal dictator responsible for **human rights** abuses on a mass scale during his imposed martial law. (Martin 2019)

Francisco Franco, the Spanish dictator, was originally buried in the *Valley of the Fallen*, a controversial mausoleum near Madrid that became a symbol of fascist glorification. (Biddiss 1994) His burial there sparked long-standing disputes, as the site also holds the remains of thousands from both sides of the Spanish Civil War. In 2019, after years of legal and political debate, Franco's remains were exhumed and moved to *Mingorrubio Cemetery* following a ruling by Spain's Supreme Court. The exhumation, part of broader efforts to address Franco's legacy, aimed to transform the Valley of the Fallen into a site of reconciliation rather than one honoring the dictator. (Anderlini 2021)

Dictators who are violently ousted often face a very different fate than those who die peacefully or in exile. Their bodies may be subjected to public humiliation or disposed of unceremoniously as part of an effort to erase their memory or prevent their graves from becoming sites of veneration for loyalists. This treatment reflects both symbolic revenge against their oppressive rule and an attempt by new regimes to assert power over their predecessors.

One infamous example is Benito Mussolini's execution by Italian partisans in 1945. After being shot alongside his mistress Clara Petacci, Mussolini's body was dragged through the streets before being hung upside down from a metal girder in Milan's Piazzale Loreto – a deliberate choice meant to evoke earlier fascist executions at that site. Mussolini's public humiliation served as both catharsis for Italians who had suffered under **Fascism** and a stark demonstration that his power had been decisively broken. (Matus 2005)

After Adolf Hitler's suicide on 30 April 1945, in his Berlin bunker, his body and that of Eva Braun were burned by his aides to prevent capture. Still, Soviet forces later discovered their charred remains, including fragments of Hitler's jawbone and teeth, which were identified through dental records. The Soviets kept the remains secret, moving them several times. In 1970, under KGB orders, the remaining fragments were exhumed, cremated, and the ashes were scattered in a river to prevent any Nazi shrine from forming. Only a few dental fragments remain in Russian archives.

Similarly, Muammar Qaddafi's capture and execution by Libyan rebels in 2011 followed a pattern of public display meant to humiliate him posthumously. After being found hiding near drainage pipes outside Sirte, Qaddafi was beaten and killed by rebel forces; his body was then displayed publicly before being buried in an unmarked grave to prevent it from becoming a rallying point for loyalists. The treatment of Qaddafi's body reflects both revenge against his brutal regime and an attempt by Libya's new leadership to erase his lingering influence.

In some cases where dictators are killed or ousted violently but not publicly humiliated like Mussolini or Qaddafi – such as Cambodia's Pol Pot – their remains may be disposed of quickly without ceremony as part of efforts by new regimes either out of fear they might become martyrs or symbols of resistance for opposition movements. (Guillou 2018) These discussions also pertain to Saddam Hussein's body. Eventually, after his execution on 30 December 2006 at Camp Justice in Kazimiyah, his body was transported by a US military helicopter to his birthplace of Al-Awja, near Tikrit, Iraq, to be buried in the family plot. (Santora 2006)

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Box 5.7 Truth Commissions

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free
– Holy Bible, Gospel of John 8: 32.

Truth Commissions (TCs) are temporary bodies established to investigate patterns of past human rights violations. They aim to promote democracy by fostering transparency, accountability, and reconciliation. By uncovering the truth about past abuses, TCs can delegitimize authoritarian networks and contribute to a culture of democratic behavior. However, their impact on **human rights** and societal transformation remains a subject of debate.

Eric Brahm (2009) highlights the challenges in TC research, including definitional ambiguities and methodological inconsistencies, which have led to divergent findings about their efficacy. While TCs are often praised for their potential to advance accountability and reconciliation, their effectiveness varies significantly depending on their design, implementation, and context. Olsen et al. (2010) argue that TCs alone often fail to improve human rights protections and may even have a negative impact. This is because they lack enforcement mechanisms to deter future violations or ensure justice. However, when combined with trials and amnesties in what the authors call a 'justice balance,' TCs can positively contribute to accountability and stability.

Despite these limitations, TCs influence societies through multiple mechanisms. Politically, they can encourage institutional reforms and human rights policies through their recommendations. They also mobilize civil society, amplify victims' voices, and foster public dialogue on past abuses. Judicially, TCs may provide evidence for prosecutions or shape judicial processes, advancing accountability for human rights violations. However, they risk promoting impunity if amnesty provisions are included or if their recommendations are not implemented.

Overall, the effectiveness of TCs depends on external factors such as political will and pressure from human rights organizations and victims' groups. When integrated into broader transitional justice strategies, TCs can play a meaningful role in addressing past injustices and fostering democratic governance.

However, Nalepa (2022) finds that their impact on democratic stability can vary, as they may not always lead to significant improvements in democratic governance. Despite this, truth commissions can play a crucial role in rendering authoritarian networks obsolete and promoting democratic values. In relation to other measures (like lustration (Box 3.7), she finds: *"Whether the transparency regime takes the form of lustration or truth commissions depends on our time horizon. In the short-term, truth commissions are effective. By applying to everyone and not only persons running for office they reveal the skeletons in the closet and prevent blackmail as well as undermine authoritarian networks."* (Nalepa 2022: 256)

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Imperial Legacies

Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate.
– Edward Said

Empires and imperialism have affected the economic, political, and social development of colonized territories and metropoles. Imperial legacies explain the uneven development in former colonies, the nature of political regimes, and the various social developments in former colonies. Imperialism also affected identity creation in both the colonies and the metropoles.

DEFINITION Imperial legacies include the memories and sentiments apparent across the territories of former empires (Walton 2019), as well as practices such as the persistence of bureaucratic systems inherited from British, French, and other imperial traditions. According to Mulich (2018: 696), the legacies of imperialism are a *"complex web of hierarchical relations and diverse practices."* Imperial legacies are the result of the expansionist policies of empires and the ideology and practice of imperialism.

Empire is, according to Jordheim and Neumann (2011: 154), *"a key concept for thinking about hierarchy between polities."* They explain the conceptual history of the term 'empire,' presenting it in wider regional contexts and tracing its nuances. The conceptual history of an empire contains themes and problems such as forms of rule, race, culture, civilization, political orientation, and so on. It is rather a 'cluster of concepts' or a 'semantic field' than simply a single concept. Jordheim and Neumann (2011: 155) *"hold empires to be polities where middlemen with a territorial base play a central role in key practices, and where the power bargains between the center and the middlemen are not uniform, neither ideally nor in practice."*

Different approaches to the characteristics of empires are possible (Mulich 2018): (i) empires can be seen as expansive units not different from other types of states (see, e.g., Butcher & Griffiths 2017); (ii) or empires can be viewed as qualitatively different from nation-states. For instance, Nexon and Wright (2007) define ideal-typical empires as different from other types of hegemonic and unipolar orders, find that the former combine two characteristics: rule through intermediaries and heterogeneous contracting between imperial cores and constituent political communities. Empires are systems in which cores are connected with peripheries, but peripheries themselves are disconnected (Nexon & Wright 2007: 253). According to Centeno and Enriquez (2010: 345), the main characteristic of empires is multi-ethnic composition accompanied by power asymmetries.

A similar definition is provided by Howe (2002: 30), who claims that *"an empire is a large, composite, multi-ethnic or multinational political unit, usually created by conquest and divided between a dominant center and subordinate, sometimes far distant, peripheries."* According to Reynolds (2006), empires are entities *"consisting of a ruling polity (sometimes called the metropolis) and subordinate polities (peripheries or colonies). They came together, moreover, not by a voluntary (or supposedly voluntary) federation but on the initiative of what thus became the metropolitan polity, often by some kind of armed conquest."*

Mulich (2018: 696) suggests approaching empires as *"particular configurations of networks, often hierarchical, consisting of specific power relations and repertoires of practice."* According to him, building on previous historical and sociological scholarship, empires have three main characteristics: *"1) the differentiation of and inequality among subject groups, 2) a hierarchical relationship between different components of the empire, and 3) an expansionist impulse towards territory and/or subjects"* (Mulich 2018: 696). Defined as networks of relations, empires are composed of social ties and specific practices or a repertoire of practices. These practices are embedded in a historical and social context and bundled together in repertoires (Tilly 1978, see Box 5.8).

Imperialism can be understood as a concept or **ideology**, and colonialism as a practice. According to Said (1994), colonialism is a consequence of imperialism; it is a manifestation of imperial power. Modell (1974) defines imperialism as a *"policy of extending a country's power beyond its borders for the purpose of exploiting other lands and other peoples by establishing economic, social or political control over them."* Edward Said builds on this definition, even extending it by claiming that *every practice intended to rule distant lands and people is called imperialism* (Said 1994).

"Imperialism … operated from the centre as a policy of the state, driven by the grandiose projects of power" (Young 2001, cited in Blunt 2005: 176). It is "*control of the weak by the rich and powerful, not necessarily using the exercise of direct authority*" (Stone 1988: 57), forming the basis for establishing Europe-Africa relations, for instance. Howe (2002: 30) presents a similar definition, claiming that "*imperialism is used to mean the actions and attitudes which create or uphold such big political units – but also less obvious and direct kinds of control or domination by one people or country over others*."

If scholars view imperialism in similar ways to Lenin (1917), as the highest stage of capitalism, then it can only be applied to the era after the 1880s, according to Gallagher and Robinson (1953). The rise of imperialism in the nineteenth century has to be seen in relation to the dynamics of free trade. They define imperialism as a *"sufficient political function of this process of integrating new regions into the expanding economy."* It is important to make two important notes on the relations between economic development and imperialism: *"First, imperialism may be only indirectly connected with economic integration in that it sometimes extends beyond areas of economic development, but acts for their strategic protection. Secondly, although imperialism is a function of economic*



expansion, it is not a necessary function" (Gallagher & Robinson 1953: 5-6).

Imperialism is a policy pursued by imperial powers that "*may set out with a deliberate plan of exploitation, in which local inhabitants and territories are subordinated to imperial aims of aggression, expansion and enrichment"* (Jackson 1957: 412). Four fundamental topics have been discussed regarding the British Empire by proponents of imperialism: (a) the emigration of British labor overseas; (b) the profitability of investing money to support capital formation in the empire; (c) the potential profit from trade and commerce between Britain and its colonies; and (d) the kingdom's security (O'Brien 1988). British imperial policy was a *"by-product of exploration, settlement, and trade"* (Jackson 1957: 412-413).

SEE ALSO Colonial legacies refer to colonial-system treaties and their impact on postcolonial states' economic, political, and social development. On the distinction between postcolonialism and post-imperialism, see, e.g., Göttsche (2017), who illuminates this nuance through the case of the German empire and the loss of its colonies after WWI. In this entry, we present the impact of imperialist **ideologies** on the development of both colonial territories and metropoles. Alongside **colonial legacies** and **colonial states**, this entry presents insights into and the literature related to imperialism. The Japanese Imperial Shōwa regime (Box 4.2) is an interesting case, both a colonizer and an imperial non-Western actor.

The influence of imperial legacies on contemporary **political regimes** remains insufficiently explored, despite scholarly efforts to understand imperialism's impact on modern governance. While these legacies are often associated with colonial systems and their aftermath, not all are inherently negative. For instance, many contemporary West European parliamentary systems have been shaped by their monarchical predecessors. Imperial legacies can be observed, not only in former colonies, but also in the metropolitan centers themselves. Mukherjee (2010) highlights this by arguing that *"economic development in Europe both in terms of the rise in living standards in human development and in the sense of the structural breakthrough with the rise of capitalism was closely linked with Europe's relationship with the rest of the world from about the 15th century."* He examines the British Empire's relationship with India as an illustration of how this imperial connection influenced industrialization in Europe.

Examination of the legacies of empires offers a valuable framework for understanding systemic changes, given their historical dominance and their challenge to unit-centric theories of world politics. Colonial expansion played a significant role in 'political experimentation in local configurations,' blending elements of colonial power dynamics with local contexts and driving transformations at a systemic level (Mulich 2018). Within this framework, the 'imperial' nineteenth century is viewed as a pivotal period of transformation (for further discussion on the significance of this particular century, see Phillips 2016; Bayly 1998).

ORIGIN The study of imperialism and its legacies figures in Marxist theory. Among the first treatises on British imperialism in India were two newspaper articles, *The British Rule in India* and *The Future Results of the British Rule in India*, published in *The New York Daily Tribune*, on 25 June and 8 August 1853 by Karl Marx (Marx 1853a/b; Kumar 1992). Adam Smith also criticized imperialism from an economic point of view in his famous *The Wealth of Nations,* arguing that *"colonies imposed heavy and unfair burdens on British taxpayers, distorted the allocation of investible funds, and increased threats of war and the probability of political corruption at home"* (Smith, cited in O'Brien 1988: 164).

There are various approaches, particularly postcolonial ones, to the analysis and discussion of the legacies of imperialism in terms of power dynamics, manifested in politics, the economy, and social relations. For instance, Osuri (2017) examines imperialism and colonialism in the postcolonial geopolitical context to make visible the coloniality of the (post) colonial nation-state (Osuri 2017: 2428). The transformation of imperialism into neo-imperialism, and its impact on former colonies, was first explored in the 1960s by figures such as Kwame Nkrumah (1965), who detailed this transition in his work *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. According to Nkrumah, neo-colonialism involves maintaining economic, political, and military influence over former colonies.

LITERATURE The academic study of imperial history and legacies occupies a prominent place in history and political science, with numerous books and papers assessing the politics and ideological foundations of empires. Niall Ferguson's (2004) *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* portrays British imperialism as a civilizing force, a view critiqued by Price for neglecting the perspective of the colonized (Price 2006: 606). Price suggests alternative narratives, viewing empire as a 'process of contact, encounter, and interaction,' as discussed in Bill Nasson's *Britannia's Empire: Making a British World* (Price 2006: 606-607).

The 'New Imperial History' examines imperial politics from the viewpoint of the colonized, focusing less on political economies and more on cultural power dynamics (Price 2006: 607). Kathleen Wilson's *A New Imperial History* explores how empire shaped British society and identity, emphasizing the interplay between empire and domestic culture (Wilson 2004). Sir John Robert Seeley (1883) earlier proposed that *"the history of England is not in England, but in America and Asia,"* highlighting the interconnectedness between British history and its empire. David Cannadine introduces the notion of 'ornamentalism' to describe the way that British culture intertwined with empire through class perspectives rather than racial differences (Price 2006: 620).

CLASSIFICATIONS & REGIONAL VARIATION The legacies of imperialism may be traced through the economic (A), political (B), and social aspects (C) of postcolonial societies:

Economic Legacies (A) Marxist economic interpretations argue that imperialism and colonialism impoverished the Third World. Roy (2015) explores British imperialism in India, examining various approaches and interpretations of colonialism's economic impact, while also proposing new strategies to address imperialism in India. Mudimbe (1988) discusses how European imperialism underdeveloped the non-Western world, particularly Africa, which is also the subject of Rodney's seminal book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Rodney et al. 2018). Demissie (2007) analyzes the social consequences of economic relations, focusing on the legacy of raw material extraction and its link to urbanization and worker migration.

Kenneth Pomeranz' *The Great Divergence* (2021) compares the development of Europe with China and Japan, attributing the Industrial Revolution's Western origins to coal deposit locations and New World trade. Haberly and Wójcik (2015) examine how historical developments, especially British colonialism – Hong Kong, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates (UAE)/Dubai, and Mauritius acting as key regional offshore nodes – influenced current offshore FDI networks. Bhattacharya and Zachariah (1999) analyze development as a form of imperialism in colonial India post-WWII.

Japanese imperialism's economic legacies in Korea, Taiwan, and Northeast China are linked to industrialization. Japan uniquely transferred heavy industry to its colonies, laying the groundwork for further industrial development (Cumings 1984). Japanese investments in infrastructure, education, and economic enterprises (tobacco, salt, opium, railways) played a significant role in capital accumulation and economic involvement (Kohli 1994).

Imperialism also impacted the metropolis. For instance, Britain's emergence as an industrial nation was facilitated by exchanging manufactured goods for colonial primary produce (O'Brien 1988). Cain (2012) reviews British imperialism's economic consequences, highlighting topics like imperial expansion economics, the creation of its 'sense of Britishness' and British cultural superiority. He references John Darwin's *The Empire Project* (Darwin 2013), which details the history of the British Empire from 1830 to 1970.

Political Legacies (B) Imperial rule had an important impact on the formation of nationalist ideas and political and legal regimes. Centeno and Enriquez discuss the impact of the characteristics of empires on state formation and trace the links between imperial phenomena and national state outcomes. They argue that *"variations in national state development from imperial metropole origins can be explained, at least in part, by variations in the imperial administration, finance, development, identity, and inequality"* (Centeno & Enriquez 2010: 343). Bunce (2005) studies the imperial impact on the creation of nationalist ideas and political regimes in Central Europe. She argues that "*the political empowerment of the national idea continued when imperial dynamics returned to the region with the rise of communism"* (Bunce 2005: 406). She distinguishes the legacies of the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian empires from the territories ruled by Britain, France, and Spain in terms of nation-building. Bunce perceives communism as an imperial system and the anti-communist movements in the Eastern Bloc states as *"anticolonial struggles waged against the empire in the name of sovereignty, equality, and freedom for the nation"* (Bunce 2005: 429).

Imperialism also had very important consequences for legal systems. According to Joireman (2001), for instance, the British believed that the imposition of their 'civilizing' judicial institutions was one of the greatest legacies of colonialism. For the imposition of imperial legal systems in Spanish, Portuguese, British, and French colonies and the consequent elimination of Indigenous legal systems (in the case of Spanish and Portuguese colonies) or their accommodation into new legal systems (in the case of British colonies), see Schmidhauser (1997). There are also evident legacies in terms of law. For example, Han and O'Mahoney (2014: 268) investigate whether *"British colonialism is largely responsible for the criminalization of homosexuality around the world."* Wilets (1994) claims that the legacy of British colonialism makes the decriminalization of homosexual conduct less likely.

Anna Bocking-Welch (2012) examines the transformation of British moral geography during the decline of the British Empire, focusing on international campaigns against hunger in the Commonwealth. She argues that Britain played a pivotal role in conceptualizing hunger as a global issue, marking it as a legacy of its colonial empire. Bocking-Welch (2012: 892) suggests that decolonization did not signify the end of empire, as *"imperial interest and global reach continue to the present."*

Charbonneau (2014) explores the imperial legacy in international peacebuilding, analyzing the ways that historical imperial capabilities have been adapted in modern contexts. He finds that, in West Africa, French imperialism involved a history of inclusion and exclusion, tied to its civilizing mission. Post-decolonization, France maintained close ties with former colonies through 'military cooperation,' which allowed African political elites to exploit resources of these relations, thus securing their autonomy (Charbonneau 2014; Bayart 2009).

Imperial legacies are also expressed in ideas of regionalism. The idea of *Mitteleuropa* associated with federalist claims was rediscovered in Italy in the 1970s. Discussions of *Mitteleuropa* in Germany of the 1980s raised ideas of reunification. In Central Europe, it meant weakening the ties with Eastern Europe and establishing relations with the West (Ballinger 2003: 95). For the relations between imperialism and cartography, see, e.g., Stone (1988), who claims that maps legitimized the imperial ambitions of great powers and were simultaneously symptoms of *"change from imperial to colonial control"* (Stone 1988: 61). The imperial ambitions clearly expressed during the Berlin conference (1875) had an important impact on the cartography of and map making in Africa.

Aware that imperialism had an impact on metropoles as well, Reynolds (2006: 162) discusses



"how much and in which empires repression abroad has affected ideas about the rights of subjects or citizens at home."

Social Legacies (C) The social legacies of imperialism are evident in both formerly colonized societies and metropolitan centers, manifest in various aspects such as demography, architecture, language, and societal structures. The consequences of slavery have been the subject of several academic works (e.g., Nunn 2008; Law et al. 2016; Arowolo 2010). A critical approach to the study of the impact of colonial violence on penalty, from a postcolonial perspective, can be found in a special issue of the Journal *Punishment and Society,* edited by Black and his colleagues (for the introduction to this issue, see Black et al. 2021).

Imperial legacies in terms of demography, both in metropoles and in former colonies, are considerable. For example, Cohen (1980) studies the case of Algeria and the exodus of French settlers from Algeria to the Metropolis – the *Pieds Noirs* (lit. 'Black Feet'), the *Harkis,* i.e. Algerian Muslims who collaborated with the French authorities, accompanied by Algerian migrant workers. Decolonization generally led to massive population transfers. From British colonies (as Britain administered its colonies using an indirect form of rule) it was only around 10-15 thousand people. From French colonies, it was around 1.5 million people: French settlers from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Indochina, and Sub Saharan Africa (Cohen 1980). Migration from the British West to the East Indies between the 1770s and 1830s, consequent on the loss of the American colonies and acquisition of territories in Asia, caused a demographic change in these territories and the creation of the Second British Empire. These processes were influenced by the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 and had an impact on the establishment of a settler colony in Australia, where some former Caribbean slaveowners moved (Lester & Vanderbyl 2020: 165). Kuzio (2002), for example, has discussed the case of the Soviet Union, the Russian in-migration to non-Russian territories, thanks to which large numbers of settler-colonists were sent to Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Kazakhstan.

Imperial architecture persists as a visible legacy in postcolonial cities. There has been a debate about African postcolonial cities (see Demissie 2007), where urban planning was intended to establish political domination and control over resources. Colonialism was not just an economic, political, or military project, but also a spatial one. The colonial buildings constructed at different times, and characterized by the different architectural and urban planning traditions of the various European colonizing powers (Portugal, Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Germany, and England), are a reminder of this (Demissie 2007: 157).

Colonial cities were built on the coasts to help export raw materials extracted from the colonies' interiors. All major colonial cities in formerly French Africa were constructed in line with French colonial urban planning, and the process was controlled by territorial governments. At the same time, urban planning in Africa was used as a tool for modernization by the French authorities, the result being racially segregation, as French colonial cities were planned mainly to benefit Europeans (Njoh 2004). Mawani (2003) discusses imperial legacies in the case of Stanley Park in Vancouver. She covers the effacement of Indigenous landscape identity, creating a new one based on the colonial project of constructing Vancouver as a settler colonial city, eradicating Indigenous people. The latter are commemorated in the park's commodified representations of totem poles and Northwest Coast Native art. This process was connected to the renaming of coastal places and eliminating the original Indigenous toponymy. The inauguration of Stanley Park was perceived as the birth of a 'civilized imperial city' and the park itself seen as a 'little piece of empire,' constructed as a contrast to the *"racialized primitiveness of Aboriginal peoples"* (Mawani 2003: 110).

Imperial legacies are apparent in the language used. This forms part of a wider idea, as in the case of *francophonie* in the French former colonies. The spread of the French language, supported by France itself, was part of extending France's influence in former colonies. Xavier Deniau, ex-colonial administrator and cabinet minister in charge of overseas territories, claimed that *"language is one of the elements defining national identity (...) language needs to be treated as a crucial element of foreign policy."* For discussions of imperial legacies in the context of language and geopolitics, see, e.g., Cohen (1980: 118).

MEASUREMENT Imperial legacies are very difficult to measure. However, we can study the impact of imperialism by tracing the postcolonial 'imperial transition,' which consists of four aspects: nation-building, state and institution building, and, in some cases, democratization and marketization (Kuzio 2002: 250). An issue affecting the assessment of the impact of imperial legacies on economies is the lack of reliable comprehensive data. Available data only record the part of the flow of British savings channeled through London to the empire (O'Brien 1988: 171). Edelstein (1976; 1982) conducted an analysis of home and overseas returns from paper assets traded on the stock exchange between 1870 and 1913 in Britain.

Vogler (2023) develops a theory of *imperial pervasiveness* and proposes a set of quantitative tests to measure the impact of imperialism on the different levels of **bureaucracy**, combining them with a qualitative analysis of people's perception of bureaucratic effectiveness. He presumes that resistance to foreign rule makes the application of colonial bureaucratic systems more problematic and less effective.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES There are methodological issues stemming from the very conceptualization of the term 'empire' and the periodization of imperialism (see 'definition' above). For example, Reynolds (2006) discusses the conceptualization of empires as European state polities and the reservation of the title 'emperor' for European rulers. According to her, these conceptualizations throw up obstacles for the comparative studies of empires, especially when it

comes to non-European empire-like entities. She suggests that *"looking directly at the variety, not to say confusion, of words and concepts that we have inherited may make it easier to lay both words and concepts aside for the moment and concentrate on deciding what seem to be the most important characteristics of the phenomena with which I think that historians of empires, particularly more modern empires, are concerned."* She proposes a proper operationalization of the concept of empires to enable comparative historical analyses.

As for the specific methodologies used to study the impact of imperialism, Walton, for instance, suggests the study of imperial legacies using the method of textured historicity, emphasizing *"the distinctive, embodied encounter between the subject in the present and the objects that convey the past in the present"* (Walton 2019: 357).

EXAMPLES Imperial legacies explain variants in public administration in former colonies. Vogler (2019) studies the relations between imperialism and public administration in the case of Poland, which was split between three empires – Russia, Prussia, and Austria. He finds that there are still noticeable differences in public administration as a result of this diverse imperial past, even finding evidence that *"bureaucracy in the former Austrian partition, which evolved from a decentralized model, is more efficient than bureaucracies in both the former Russian and Prussian partitions, lending additional limited support to the view that decentralized rule has positive developmental effects in the long run"* (Vogler 2019: 809).

Imperialism influenced identity creation in both former colonies and metropoles. The legacy of Russian domination over the Kazakh lands has been studied by, e.g., Zardykhan (2004), who addresses the position of the Russian minority in today's Kazakhstan, as well as Kazakhstani identity-building after independence from the USSR – the policy of 'Kazakhization.'

Assimilation and 'Russification' policies in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus are thoroughly examined by Kuzio (2002). These policies aimed to integrate these regions more closely with Russia by promoting Russian language and culture, often at the expense of local identities and languages. Katz (1994) discusses the dissolution of the USSR, which he describes as the last European colonial empire, and its impact on nationalism and democratization in newly independent states. He argues that authoritarian regimes in some post-Soviet states manipulated ethnic identities and national sentiment to maintain power. Meanwhile, Russia continued to exert influence in these newly independent states, often intervening to support Russian-speaking populations abroad.

Göttsche (2017) explores the anti-imperial rejection of colonialism in Germany, comparing historical discourse from WWI and the 1990s. This work highlights how historical memories of colonialism influence contemporary attitudes to imperialism. Stone (1988: 58) characterizes European colonialism and imperialism in Africa as 'collaborative internationalism' with historical continuity. In contrast, colonialism is seen as a brief period marked by competitive European nationalism.

Academic works have compared the legacies of European and Asian empires, highlighting their distinct characteristics. Cumings (1984: 8) presents Japanese imperialism as differing from Western models, emphasizing: *"It involved the colonization of contiguous territory; it involved the location of industry and an infrastructure of communications and transportation in the colonies, bringing industry to the labor and raw materials rather than vice versa; and it was accomplished by a country that always saw itself as disadvantaged and threatened by more advanced countries. Japan was 'weak and puny.'"* Adas (1998) discusses parallels and differences between European and Qing imperialism.

Several papers and books focus on British imperialism in India and its consequences. India's imperial relationship with Kashmir can be understood as a legacy of British imperialism in India, treating Kashmir as a part of India (Osuri 2017). The impact of British colonial rule on India and its post-independence development is discussed, e.g., by Rajan 1969; Tharoor 2018.

IMPACT ON POLICY Imperialism ideas became part of the expansionist policies of the great historical empires. For example, the myths of French imperialism in Algiers, as crucial for the development of the state, have become part of French foreign policy (Cohen 1980: 97-98). Since 1960 the French government has attempted to establish a kind of Commonwealth of French-speaking states. President Giscard d'Estaing revived the idea of Eur-Africa, including the Arab world, and called for a 'trialogue' between Europe, Africa, and the Arab world because of their common historical past (Cohen 1980).

Imperialism had an impact on problematic nation-building processes in various parts of the world. According to Crawford and Lijphart (1995), *"the legacy of incomplete nation-building is perhaps the most important threat to the project of economic and political liberalism in Eastern Europe."* The imperial and colonial past of the Russian and Soviet empires greatly impacted nation-building in post-Soviet states. Ethnocultural definitions of nationhood in post-Soviet states were the legacy of Soviet nationality and imperial policy. This necessitated searching pre-Soviet history for legitimization of their independent existence.

In Belarus, for example, the idea of Russia as a 'brother nation' prevailed, with Soviet historiography as part of the new nation-building process. In Ukraine, on the other hand, the nation was built as contrary to previous historical memory, and Ukraine could no longer use Soviet historiography (Kuzio 2002: 247). Kuzio (2002) discusses current historical narratives in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Kazakhstan (especially regarding Russia). Bhabha (2004) deals with identity creation in colonies from a critical, postcolonial perspective: *"The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types based on racial origin, to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction."* Colonial historiography or manipulation of historiography of the colonized serves these



purposes.

Imperial nostalgia is, according to Rodriguez (2020), a constitutive part of identity security, one which has a considerable impact on individual states' policies regarding migration and security, for instance. He studies the development of anglophone empires, Great Britain in particular, and British imperial legacies in the US, Australia, and Canada. According to him, the imperial idea first animated the expansive colonial foreign policy of Great Britain, especially in the nineteenth century. It was adopted by its rivals – Germany, Japan, and Italy. The United States, inspired by Great Britain, developed its own expansionist policies. The concept of the 'Anglosphere,' as a legacy of British imperial policy, consists of ideas of British exceptionalism, and elements such as a free market economy, Protestantism, respect for the law, and parliamentary democracy. Rodriguez discusses the connection between British imperial nostalgia and the vote for Brexit, and Britain's special relationship with the US, especially in the 'war on terror.' Similarly, Graham (2013) links *"security and military doctrine in the cities of the West with those on colonial peripheries,"* and explains them in the context of legacies of colonialism and imperialism.

More critically, and focusing on discourse, Rosaldo (1989) covers imperial nostalgia and analyzes movies about and anthropological writings on the colonial period in the Philippines, Africa, and Mexico, among others, discussing the portrayal of 'white' European colonizers and colonized subjects. He finds that the portrayal of colonial times contains a huge amount of nostalgia, considered a 'civilizing mission;' at the same time, Indigenous peoples are treated as 'vanishing savages.'

The 'imperial turn,' as discussed by Richard Price (2006), can be linked to imperial nostalgia and signifies the creation of the very idea of Britain as a legacy of the English imperialism that defeated Scottish imperialism. Price argues that British history is the result of a mutually constituted history between Britain and its empire. Price refers to the book *Africa and the Victorians* by Robinson et al. (1995), first published in 1961, which presents the 'peripheral' view of empire through the 'official mind' of the metropole, meaning that *"empire in Africa grew out of the way that events on the outskirts of the empire were processed through the official mind in London"* (Price 2006: 604).

NEW FRONTIERS Current research on imperial legacies may broadly build on the 'turn toward memory' in anthropology, history, and the social sciences; and focus on historical empires' shared memories and nostalgia (Walton 2019). 'Imperial nostalgia' for the Habsburg monarchy, in the case of Trieste, has been analyzed by Ballinger (2003). Current discussions on imperial (and also colonial) legacies are informed by postcolonial theory in particular, analyzing postcolonial cultural discourses and power dynamics from a critical perspective (see, e.g., Göttsche 2017; Bhabha 2004). New studies address the mutual creation of identities, building on Said's *Orientalism* (Said 1979) and the conceptual 'other' – the colonizer in contrast to the colonized. Lester (1998) offers an example, focusing on the identities created during the Second British Empire (from 1770 to 1840) in the peripheries of the British Empire – the Eastern Cape colony – and reveals how *"the frontier between Europeans and Africans was imagined in various ways from different colonial positions."* Kuzio (2002: 244) covers the creation of 'otherness' in Ukraine during the Russian/Soviet empires, with Ukrainians denoted as 'peasants' and 'unfit for the modern world' in order to justify their conquest.

Building on the works by Foucault, several authors deal with the imperial boomerang effect, that is, the effect of imperialism on the metropolis (Graham 2013). According to Foucault, colonization *"had a considerable boomerang effect on the mechanisms of power in the West and the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself"* (Foucault, cited in Graham 2003). The imperial boomerang then served as a means of 'white' European self-conceptualization (Woodman 2020). Employing Foucault's concepts of biopower and biopolitics, a similar analysis has been conducted in the context of creating 'white' sexuality, in opposition to colonized women who were objectivized and sexualized (Stoler 1995).

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Longevity, Stability & Resilience

Maybe then you will offer me an elixir of youth and energy (...) Just find me an elixir.
– Nursultan Nazarbayev, founding president of Kazakhstan (2010)

Every autocratic ruler departs his or her post one day – either being forcibly deposed, resigning voluntarily, or succumbing to the natural law that binds every living being. However, some leaders manage to stay in power for truly impressive periods, even decades, and some political regimes last longer than others. How is such longevity possible? Are these rulers unchallenged, or do they possess unique personal skills or charisma, allowing them to face every challenge? Are some autocratic regimes by definition more durable than others? And if so, which factors are at play?

KEY SIGNIFICANCE History shows that autocrats and autocratic regimes are almost never enlightened, benevolent, or just. Neither are democratic politicians. However, the latter can be regularly challenged and changed through elections. The long rule of a wise autocrat or group may benefit a country significantly, but more often, a power-greedy autocrat plunges his country into misery. The longer that rule lasts, the longer its consequences usually endure; and these consequences matter not only to the domestic population but also to its neighbors and other states through the many channels of a globalized world.

ORIGIN During the era of monarchies, long rule was usually expected from kings, emperors, or shahs, as their power had a divine origin and could not be questioned, let alone actively contested. However, as democratic election practices spread worldwide, and autocratic leaders started to use them as a facade to gain legitimization and as a tool to co-opt political opponents, this discrepancy became more and more apparent. Even if these leaders cast aside formal procedures and remained in power by other means, their governance was often marred by human rights abuses, corruption, or violence, attracting attention and criticism either way.

SEE ALSO Many factors are associated with regime longevity. Autocrats' abilities (**authoritarian learning**), effective **coup-proofing**, building up **legitimacy**, adherence to **political ideology**, the formative experience of the regime (e.g., **revolutionary legacy),** resources and assets (e.g., **resource curse),** and the neighborhood in which they function at the international level (**authoritarian collaboration**).

DEFINITION Longevity, stability, and resilience all have particular, but overlapping meanings in the study of dictatorships, and are thus treated together in this entry. Longevity is the outcome or effect of upholding regime stability. Resilience is a regime's ability to adapt to a changing world and successfully deal with (domestic) challenges.

Longevity, the long duration of a ruler's life, is primarily a concern in **personalist rule**, where the individual's longevity is closely intertwined with the lifespan of the regime as a whole. Based on the criteria discussed below, some autocracies manage to survive their long-lived rulers; but some do not, and effectively collapse with their rulers' demise. When applied to regimes, longevity represents the perseverance of the founding power structures and practices through time, without significant and fatal episodes of discontinuity.

Stability can be examined from two perspectives. The term 'stability' implies a *status quo*, an unchanged situation. In this regard, attention should also be paid to 'stabilization,' processes, actions, and trends leading to higher stability. While relative instability and the regular change of power is typical of democracies, autocracies usually require stability to survive. However, stability in this context is understood as the removal of uncertainties, especially during the crucial phases of an autocracy's lifetime, such as successions, or when they are susceptible to external pressure. Democracies reduce uncertainty through formal laws and procedures; autocracies need to find

other ways.

Resilience refers to the regime's capacity to return to a previous state (or a state as close as possible to a previous condition) after suffering a significant difficulty. Resilience is essential when the regime's active defenses fail to provide protection. Emphasizing proactive and dynamic aspects, resilience is a function of continuous adaptive institutional change, rather than an attempt to maintain the *status quo* at all costs (Dimitrov 2013).

LITERATURE The academic debate over autocratic durability *vis-à-vis* powerful autocracies in the 1930s and 1960s used the totalitarian prism, with specific attention to and emphasis on dimensions of **repression** and political **ideology**. The so-called second wave, up to the 1980s, looked more closely at the functional aspects of autocracies, especially economic motivations, the power of **bureaucracy**, and incorporation of local specifics, such as **neo-patrimonialism**.

The 1990s introduced the concept of institutions and other stabilizing mechanisms into the academic debate. Seminal works by Barbara Geddes (Geddes 1999; 2018) and Jennifer Gandhi & Przeworski (2006; 2007) and their followers elaborated on the toolbox of how authoritarian regimes utilize various state (and regime) institutions, even those mimicking democratic procedures, such as parliaments and political parties or demonstrative elections. The actors involved and the prism of their political survival constitute an alternative analytical point (see **selectorate theory** by Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003: 273-288), along with the prosperity related to the question of elite cohesion and the loyalty of units vital to the regime's functioning. In this context, repression emerged as an option rather than as a defining factor, although the stability and reliability of the security apparatus remain an essential component.

Furthermore, researchers in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have had the opportunity to follow autocratic states, and all the diverse challenges they encountered, during their entire life-cycle. Challenges may come from outside the regime (public protests, political **opposition**, or an attack by a foreign actor) or from the inside (**coups**, intra-regime destabilization).

In his seminal paper, Johannes Gerschewski (2013: 13-28) theorizes the defensive strategy of autocracies as built on three pillars. He argues that legitimation, **repression** and **co-optation**, if used efficiently, can be combined to withstand public uprisings, organized oppositions and intra-elite splits. In other words, academic debate has focused on functional mechanisms within autocratic regimes, as well as their consolidation, survival mechanisms and strategies to prevent challenges.

The literature on the internal cohesion of autocracies suggests that consolidated **personalist rule** and **single-party regimes** contain internal loyalty-based mechanisms and incentives that reduce the risk of splits. This argument is based on the assumption that elite arrangement in non-democracies, lacking security protection for ousted rulers, enables a never-ending struggle for survival (Izquierdo-Brichs & Serra-Massansalvador 2021: 1-39). As there is no opportunity for political prosperity outside the ruling structures, the risks and dire consequences of defeat, and the perspective of benefiting from the regime in the long run, dominate elite relations.

The survival prism offers empirical material for cases in which splits have actually emerged in consequence of the failure of intra-elite bargaining, linked to legitimacy collapse (Ulfelder 2005: 312). However, since both one-party and personalist regimes, by design, prevent and de-incentivize the formation of alternative power (and legitimacy) centers, the system may run on elite cohesion and a *status quo* preference virtually indefinitely, or at least until a fundamental threat emerges.

Military regimes are relatively fragile in this respect, as the private and career interests of officers may surpass their interest in regime cohesion. Large-scale public opposition to their rule is risky, however, especially when it rises to the level of violent protests and riots, since the main legitimization of military rule is often the declared mission to preserve public order and safety. Military officers may react either by retreating or, on the contrary, by tightening their rule, using even more force. They both often signal the end of the regime.

The processes of the establishment of revolutionary regimes define the stability and durability (see also **revolutionary legacies**). As Levitsky and Way observe (2010: 181-235), in an early phase, such regimes usually destroy prior or other independent power centers, establish cohesive ruling parties with political control over the security forces, and generally rely on powerful coercive apparatuses. They are relatively coup-proof, as the previous (and possibly oppositional) military structures have been dismantled early on in their formative phase, that is, during the **revolution**. Revolutionary regimes can verbally sustain their 'revolutionary' phase for quite a long time, contributing to their internal cohesion (Lachapelle et al. 2020: 557-600).

Nevertheless, the durability of revolutionary regimes lies in the ability of their internal loyalty mechanisms to continuously evolve for both elites and the masses, and to adapt to international conditions. Martin Dimitrov (2013: 183-234) demonstrates this kind of success in communist one-party regimes, which have been the most durable, outlasting both non-communist single-party regimes and other nondemocratic monarchies. Dimitrov argues that its natural life-cycle reflects economic conditions (from a siege mentality in the early years to technical-bureaucratized stabilization later) as well as the varying intensity and extent of repressions imposed. Naturally, even in an institutionalized system such as the Soviet Union, the personality of the leader is important and his decisions can push it to either prosperity or collapse, as in the case of Mikhail Gorbachev. Nevertheless, if the revolutionary regime manages to avoid early burnout and is stabilized, it may survive both incompetent leaders and policy disasters. Other authors have also developed this idea from other perspectives, especially



ideology (Kailitz & Stockemer 2017: 332-348) and mass organization (Reuter 2022: 1014-1034).

Besides the durability of political systems and regimes, researchers focus on the durability of specific regime institutions or functions (Magaloni 2008). The former Soviet states provide especially rich material, since the institutionalized links were stronger than in the case of the British or French empires. For example, Erica Marat points to the durability of the structures of security services (Marat 2016: 531-548). On the international level, Maja Bovcon demonstrates the persistence of political structures of the international regime, with France contributing to the stabilization and survival of newly independent political leaders in Africa (Bovcon 2013: 5-26). With the deepening of global economic and infrastructural connectivity, the appropriation of rents for the survival of ruling groups, especially those based on natural resources (Wright et al. 2015: 287-306), became a vital topic for the critical regions of MENA and Latin America (see **resource curse**). Under this general heading belongs the rich and expanding research on various forms of cooperation among autocracies (see **authoritarian collaboration**), ensuring the durability and stability of regimes, although not necessarily the survival of specific individuals within a regime, and spheres of **authoritarian learning**, emphasizing the diffusion of 'best practices' (Tansey et al. 2017: 1222-1223) in stabilizing regimes, taming the opposition and ensuring smooth power transfers from one leader to another (Cottiero & Haggard 2023: 1-15).

The subject of **repression** and the coercive capacities of autocratic states has remained on the table since the totalitarian phase of dictatorship studies (Gandhi & Przeworski 2006: 1-26; Dukalskis et al. 2022: 1-17). Depending on the context, authors have defined and categorized repression based on means, intensity (high and low), or targets (mass, selected). However, one of the advanced practices in modern autocracies is to prevent engagement in costly repression, if the situation permits (Keremoglu et al. 2022: 136-152). Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor (Frantz & Kendall-Taylor 2014: 332-346) describe **co-optation** as one of the alternative mechanisms available, either formal (into the ruling party) or informal (through **neo-patrimonialism**), but both *ad hoc* and strategic. Autocracies are, in general, reluctant to make alliances and frequently use enemies (both real and imagined) to rally support to their flag. Nevertheless, co-optation of groups and individuals, as well as reversed strategic appointments to office, may serve as a useful **coup-proofing** mechanism. Prevention of palace putsches and military **coups** has been an important topic, especially for scholars focused on Latin America, MENA, and Southeast Asia (Quinlivan 1999: 131-165; Sudduth 2017: 3-15), as military ousters in the former Soviet space have been rare.

Regimes with strong personalist features constitutes a specific case in the literature. In such a case, obviously, the leading individual (whether president or king) needs to ensure his or her own longevity first. However, no regime exists in a vacuum and every leader, or leading group, needs institutions to facilitate and protect their rule and prevent the ruled from taking over. At the same time, modern autocracies have realized that it is virtually impossible to sustain dominance based on repressive force exclusively, at least in the long run, and to prevent exhaustion from the constant struggle for survival. For this reason, every political regime needs to establish some form of **legitimacy**.

The dissolution of the former British and French empires in the twentieth century and the Soviet Union in the 1990s introduced a special representative group of personalist autocratic leaders, founding fathers of newly independent countries. In some, the new political arrangement resulted not merely from a declaration of independence, without popular demand for regime change, as in the case of post-Soviet Central Asia, but from a revolution. Research on those 'founding generations' provides rich empirical material for studies of longevity and its factors. According to Levitsky and Way (2013: 14), these state- or nation-building actors were able to use their historical role to legitimize their regime, despite its possible dire economic and social performance. This has also proved relevant for specific actors inside the state, as Erica Marat notes in the example of Central Asian security services: dominant nation-building discourses go hand in hand with designing the basic features of the state according to their specific needs and preferences (Marat 2018: 1-44).

Since some leaders manage to remain in power for truly impressive periods of time – Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo has been at the helm of Equatorial Guinea since 1979; Fidel Castro spent almost five decades in office – the question has arisen of whether the mere fact of such a long tenure in office plays a role in sustaining the *status quo*. The answer seems to be, as in most cases, context-dependent. Jason Brownlee claims that rulers' longevity in office before a power transfer may play a vital role in the success of the entire process: *"dictators who sufficiently entrenched themselves to survive in power past age sixty cleared the biggest hurdles to orchestrated leadership transitions, including hereditary handovers"* (Brownlee 2007: 602). On the other hand, Betts and Huntington (1985: 121) claim that if there is no designated successor or established succession process, the low institutionalization of the regime makes it prone to conflict and collapse. In this case, the shorter the ruler remains in office, the less the instability that follows their demise (Anceschi 2021: 660-680).

MEASUREMENT The ultimate measure of a regime's longevity is the long-term survival of its core ruling group and the basic architecture of power distribution. Assuming that every ruling group in an autocracy wants to stay in power at (almost) any cost, failure to do so should be considered a failure of resilience and of the stabilization mechanisms outlined above. Hence, the first task of any research should be to determine these essential regime features, and its actors, and follow their shape and development over time.

To date, authors have measured both entire regimes and their specific features. Among the semi-

nal datasets of state-level regime survivals is the one gathered by the collective around Barbara Geddes (Geddes et al. 2018), which uses Large-N datasets to examine the durability-ensuring role of social revolutions. Others, such as those composed by Michael Miller (2020), elaborate on the origins of autocratic ruling parties and how they impact longevity.

While a leader's survival is frequently a question of a mere dichotomy, measuring the abstract components of autocracies is more difficult. Joseph Wright and Daehee Bak (2016: 1-7) delve into measuring legitimation based on expectation and delivery (performance) or ideology. These measures need to be context-specific and to account for the regime type, the level of repression, and any potential external patronage favoring the ruling group or individual (Ramzan Kadyrov in Chechnya or Bashar al-Assad in Syria may serve as examples).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Identifying the primary sources of stability for a regime or a personalist autocrat might constitute the first methodological obstacle. In many cases, they seem to be obvious: ruthless repressive governance, omnipresent ideology, or abundant financial resources allowing the elite to buy off any potential opponents or critical sentiments. However, their combination with other, less visible but not less relevant, factors should always be presumed and tested.

External factors especially should not be omitted. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union supported 'its' autocratic clients with significantly greater enthusiasm than its Western counterparts for, among other reasons, ideology and their shared indifference to human rights violations. From another perspective, a broader regional consensus among states might appear about whether to support or condemn specific autocratic leaders, because their ouster is considered riskier or more costly than their current actions (the stability-democratization trade-off – see also Box 1.7 on Mobutu). Last but not least, a ruler may remain in power simply because there is no one in the international arena interested in mounting a challenge.

The problem with this analysis is the scarcity of available information. This usually concerns the security dimension of the regime, as any information about it is not readily available or accessible. To mention the most obvious case, the sudden demise of the Soviet Union caught many unprepared and by surprise, even those with abundant resources and access to classified information.

In all probability, even in the future, a coup, an intra-regime power struggle, or unofficial transnational power operations will not be predicted in advance but revealed only as they are already taking place. Furthermore, any information about it will be written by the winners, resulting in the blurring of even the scarce amount of data available. For this reason, all sober research will rely on degrees of probability and possible scenarios rather than any definitive statement.

EXAMPLES *Former Soviet Central Asia*. While the Baltic part of the USSR departed the Soviet orbit as quickly as it could at all levels, structures in Central Asia proved to be interestingly stubborn (Hale 2019). In all cases except Kyrgyzstan, the elementary elite power architecture remained largely the same, with former Communist apparatuses transforming into new national parties. However, even Kyrgyzstan, initially casting out the previous power structures through democratic reforms, gradually converged with the rest of the region.

Postcolonial Africa. For decades, following the collapse of French dominance in Africa, Paris has sustained the so-called *'Françafrique'* policy, which offers semi-formal support for the rulers of newly independent states in exchange for the protection of French business and power interests (Bovcon 2013: 5-26). In other words, although the formal institutional arrangements between France and the African states changed profoundly, an informal network of power and practices proved significantly resilient.

The Islamic Republic of Iran. After the 1979 Islamic revolution, the governing system in Tehran demonstrated another way of ensuring regime longevity. A combination of ideological (religious) backing and separation of the supreme body from everyday politics proved to be a useful mechanism (although not the only only) to ensure regime durability despite enormous, long-term economic pressures from external actors.

NEW FRONTIERS The current globalized world provides autocrats and autocratic regimes with new opportunities to secure their wealth and related positions. For example, the global Western-originated financial system allows them to extract abundant financial resources from the state budget and use them for their personal benefit, including power stabilization (Cooley et al. 2018). Or they can use global institutions and legal systems for the transnational repression of their opponents (Cooley & Heathershaw: 2017). In both cases, they are effectively removing threats and strengthening their positions in ways that have recently gained broader academic attention (Sanghera & Satybaldieva 2021: 257-278).

Another under-explored frontier is the effect of durable regimes on their subjects and opponents, and the possibly looming withdrawal of significant global advocates for democratization, the rule of law, and human rights (see **authoritarian legacies**). This effect goes hand-in-hand with the much-debated rise of alternative world orders and normative approaches to Liberalism, such as the diffusion of the so-called 'democracy with Chinese characteristics' in the 'Third World.' Such authoritarian diffusion, driven by powerful, long-lasting autocracies, enables and emboldens similar regimes and autocratic rulers in some world regions. Beside the routinization and normalization of autocracy, these clusters could also lead to more obstacles to gaining objective information, with reduced access and disinformation serving to confuse researchers and the wider public.

New methodological and theoretical approaches are likely to appear in areas where autocratic research meets decolonialization. Above all, specific actors, their agendas and positionality are enjoying



significant renewed attention (Brandsen 2001: 2-14; Kailitz 2013: 39-60). They offer valuable opportunities for cooperation beyond and in addition to the traditional theoretical prisms of Western academia.

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Ousters, Depositions & Abdications

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.
– Thomas Jefferson (1787)

In political science and comparative authoritarianism, an 'ouster' refers to the process of removing someone from a position of power or authority. This can occur in various contexts, as when a politician is pressured to leave office or a leader is forcibly removed from their position. An ouster implies a forceful or coerced removal, often involving political maneuvering or external pressure.

The literature does distinguish between violent and non-violent ousters. (**Assassination** is the most violent and irrevocable mode on this spectrum.) With most **coups** and all **foreign invasions** and **revolutions** pigeonholed into the former camp, and impeachment, (unexpected) electoral defeat and some 'palace coups' and 'royal coups' into the latter. **Protests & uprisings** often act as catalyst factors and can be pivotal during **transitions**, but other forms, like rebellions, can of course also oust regimes.

When ousters affect **monarchies**, they are often called 'depositions,' especially if they involve legal or parliamentary methods. In contrast to the voluntary relinquishing of royal power, an 'abdication' that usually involves an actual ceremony or proclamation of giving up power or renouncing further claims to **legitimacy**, a 'forced abdication' is nothing more than a royal ouster or deposition that employs this public ritual.

Note that 'ousters,' 'depositions' nor 'abdications' (as terms) imply regime change *per se*. They often solely concern the supreme powerholder and open the path to **succession** through a leader transfer.

The study of ousters is intrinsically linked to the literature on regime breakdown, **transitions**, **exit options & leader fates**, and **protests & uprisings**, depending on the push-and-pull factors involved in their exact dynamics.

Protests & Uprisings

RIOT, n. A popular entertainment given to the military by innocent bystanders.
– Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911)

Some of the largest protests in world history have taken place in the last decade – and on a wide range of topics, from the worldwide campaign against systemic **racism** (sparked by the George Floyd murder), to the protests that broke out for **gender equality** (sparked by the '#MeToo' movement), to the climate strikes demanding action on climate change, to the 2024 protests on university campuses calling for an end to the war in Gaza. But a significant number of protests have broken out in resistance to **autocratization** and **authoritarianism**. In some cases, protests asked for small democratic reforms (**democratization**, **human rights**); in others, protesters aimed for the removal of an autocratic leader (**ouster**); in still other instances, the citizenry was fed up and hoped for complete regime change and a **transition** to democracy.

Protests generally arise due to some kind of grievance, on the one hand, and the presence of an opportunity or opening, on the other. Common grievances include political injustices, deteriorating political conditions, economic crises, corruption and fraud (Brancati 2016; Brancati & Lucardi 2019; Hale 2019). Other authors claim that political protests are driven by openings or opportunities, particularly in non-democratic societies (McAdam et al. 1996). These openings in authoritarian regimes may occur during changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations, offering an opportunity for meaningful change. A growth in resources available – such as additional financial resources, connective structures and networks – can also help movements organize and mobilize.

For this reason, some scholars argue that the rise of social media would help protest movements in authoritarian regimes by helping to facilitate coordination and communication (Breuer 2016; Jost et al. 2018). Social media can connect leaders and activists to ordinary citizens, and expand the network of individuals willing to take action. Dense connections help ideas spread more rapidly and social media has been used by citizens living in autocracies to exercise freedom of speech.

The 2019 Hong Kong protests, which erupted over a proposed bill that would allow individuals to be extradited to China to stand trial, were one of the most widely covered protest movements. These protests evolved into a broader movement against the increasingly repressive environment in Hong Kong, and the fact that its leadership has come completely under the control of Beijing. At one protest, in June of 2019, at least 2 million people, out of Hong Kong's 7 million, came on to the streets (BBC News, 2019). Although young people have been at the forefront of these protests, a broad range of groups joined the protest as well, including many working professionals. These protests have largely been leaderless, but activists have coordinated using secure apps, such as Telegram, to avoid being identified. Social media was also a factor in motivating people to participate in the protests because it served as an echo chamber, giving the impression of a homogeneous climate of opinion, one opposed to the regime (Shen et al. 2020).

Pro-democracy protests also notably broke out in Iran in 2022, in Myanmar in 2021, and in Belarus in 2020, all calling for the implementation of reforms. While they were significant in terms of the risks taken by protesters to voice their displeasure with their leaders, none of these protests led to any significant changes. In fact, most protests fail to achieve their aims. In a study of protests from 1989 to 2011, almost two-thirds attracted fewer than 10,000 participants in their single largest rally; most ended in three days or less; and less than 10% led to the government being ousted, with less than 25% extracting any concessions from the government (Brancati 2016). Instead, most protests are shut down with brutal force and crackdowns (see **repression**). When they are not considered a threat, authoritarian regimes may allow small-scale protests as an information-gathering tool to identify discontented social groups and monitor local governance issues, as seen



in the Chinese context (Lorentzen 2013).

In Belarus, security forces arbitrarily detained thousands of people with hundreds subjected to torture (Human Rights Watch, 2021). In Myanmar, more than 15,000 people were arrested and several protesters were killed (Ratcliffe 2022). In Iran more than 500 people, including 69 children, were killed during the protests (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Given this gloomy picture, what makes a protest successful? Protests are more likely to be successful when they are non-violent (Brancati 2016; Carey 2010; Chenoweth & Stephan 2011); when they involve women (Chenoweth & Marks 2022); when they involve labor (McCallum 2013); when they are part of a global protest cycle (Della Porta 2017); and when they are large and intense (Chenoweth 2021). Protests that have mobilized large numbers of people can persuade holdouts to join the winning team, and generate a sense of inevitability. For protests to be successful, according to one study, 3.5% of the population would need to protest during the peak of a protest movement (Chenoweth 2021).

Mass protests – consisting of hundreds or thousands of people taking to the streets to demonstrate against a particular grievance – are the most common form of collective resistance. There are many forms, and opposition movements alternate, blend and adapt them to circumvent or address regime responses to such contention – see regimes & repertoires (Box 5.8).

Marches (a) involve large groups walking along a set route to demonstrate their stance on an issue, often culminating in rallies. These events are effective in drawing public attention and media coverage, which can influence public opinion and policy decisions. Marches also serve as a platform for solidarity among participants and can increase political engagement.

Similarly, *rallies* (b) gather people to express their views through speeches and performances. They are effective in energizing participants and drawing public attention to specific issues. Rallies can amplify the message of a movement and increase its visibility, potentially influencing public opinion and policymakers.

Picketing (c) involves demonstrators standing at or walking in front of a specific location, like a politician's residence, a government building, a place of business, often in an attempt to dissuade others from engaging in some behavior or activity. Pickets can also be used to draw attention to broader social causes or political movements. (It is commonly used during labor strikes, and is effective in applying direct pressure on employers by disrupting business operations and drawing public attention to labor disputes.)

Sit-ins or *occupations* (d) involve occupying a (public and) symbolic space and refusing to leave until demands are met. They are effective in highlighting perceived injustices and forcing negotiations by creating a physical disruption (Zick 2021). Sit-ins can draw significant media attention and public sympathy, increasing the pressure on authorities to address protesters' demands. The **Arab Spring** protests were famous for occupying central squares in capitals.

General strikes are a form of protest levied against governments as policy-setters. Unions usually call them to protest policies that retrench the welfare state and deregulate labor markets, but they can support other political goals. For example, the general strike in Russia during the revolution of 1905 forced the tsar to promise constitutional reforms.

Successful general strikes mobilize a broad group of citizens, attract media attention, cause economic disruption, and signal widespread opposition to government policies. Strikes have historically been a critical tool used by labor movements, especially during the Industrial Revolution when they became more common due to the rise of mass labor in factories and mines. While purely political strikes (meant to force a government to resign) are illegal and fall outside the internationally recognized 'right to strike,' strike action can still pressure governments to alter policies when workers' social or economic interests are threatened (Creighton et al. 2020: 5).

Most democracies afford protection for strike activity. Under authoritarianism, strikes can be particularly challenging due to potential **repression** and legal restrictions. Contrary to the existing literature, which attributes strikes to union membership or characteristics of the information environment, Robertson (2007) argues that labor protests emerge when they align with the interests of powerful elite factions or when economic conditions become truly desperate.

However, strikes can still be effective under certain conditions. Those that mobilize broad public support and attract international attention can exert significant pressure on authoritarian governments by highlighting grievances and undermining the regime's legitimacy. The famous *villes mortes* (dead cities) campaign in Cameroon, during the early 1990s, was a significant civil disobedience movement involving general strikes, work boycotts, and tax evasion as methods of undermining the government's fiscal base by shutting down economic activity in major urban centers.

But protests are just one form of political behavior. Though not widely studied by political scientists, riots and mutinies constitute forms of public collective (meaning the involvement of more than one person) behavior arising from some form of grievance.

Riots, in particular, are a pejorative term for activity that protests social, political, judicial and/or economic conditions. Many researchers see riots as a manifestation of legitimate grievances and alienation (Lapeyronnie 2008; Kokoreff 2018; Schwartz 2017; Slooter 2015; 2019); however, the media portrays riots as largely (though not always) uncoordinated destructive behavior that involves vandalism, looting, arson or other attacks on property (Yarrish 2019). Riots are therefore usually depicted as unpatriotic forms of rebellion, often involving young people from marginalized groups (Gadinger et al. 2021; Umamaheswar 2020; Brown & Harley 2019).

Mutinies constitute another form of rebellion, usually involving members of the army or navy – or some form of organized group of workers (or pris-

oners) who challenge authority. Their aim is often very specific – to overthrow the group's superiors, or change the chain of command. Mutinies can involve bold and risky action, such as seizing control of facilities or refusing to follow orders. As with riots, mutinies are always grounded in grievances about conditions, leadership, or other injustices. Unlike riots, which are typically unplanned and spontaneous, mutinies usually involve some planning and organization (Carey 2010). All of these actions are considered serious offenses, and can involve severe repercussions.

Defections, in the context of military mutinies, are distinct forms of resistance. They can manifest in two primary forms: a softer form, known as a loyalty shift; and a harder form, which is the execution of a **coup**, and falls under **ousters**. (Note: defections refer to abandoning one's own military and joining the other side; 'desertions' simply involve leaving the military.)

A loyalty shift occurs when the military refuses to use large-scale force, despite orders from the dictator. This can involve the military remaining inactive, as seen in the cases of the South Korean army in 1960 and the forces of communist Czechoslovakia and East Germany in 1989 (Croissant et al. 2018a: 143-144). A more active form of loyalty shift involves the military signaling its support for regime opponents without launching a coup. Examples include the Philippine military's backing of anti-Marcos protests in 1986, the Romanian army's initial support for anti-Ceaușescu forces in 1989, and Tunisian troops fraternizing with demonstrators against President Ben Ali in 2011. Both passive and active loyalty shifts indicate that a dictator can no longer rely on military support, significantly undermining their hold on power (Croissant et al. 2018a: 144).

Recent research has captured mutinies and defections, thus enabling researchers to use a database to gain a better understanding of civil-military relations (Johnson 2021). Studying defections is particularly important because the number of defections can heavily influence the outcomes of nonviolent protests against authoritarian regimes (Nepstad 2013). This was especially salient during the **Arab Spring** in the case of Tunisia, which saw its security institutions quickly defect in favor of the citizens (Haas & Lesch 2013), the police as well as the military (Holmes & Koehler 2020). Militaries are likely to defend a dictator against popular uprisings if their leaders' physical and economic well-being depend on the dictator's continued rule (cf. **exit options**). Conversely, military leaders will only abandon the incumbent regime if they anticipate that supporting the opposition or orchestrating a coup d'état will serve their interests better than remaining loyal (Croissant et al. 2018b). Personalist rule is conducive to military defections when such regimes are pressured by protests (Lee 2014).

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Box 5.8 Regimes & Repertoires of Contention (Charles Tilly)

Composing is improvisation slowed down.
– Wayne Shorter, Jazz saxophonist

Charles Tilly (1929-2008) was a prominent theorist of social movements and protest, and was a central figure in the debates around this literature. The contribution of Tilly to social movements theory largely involved his understanding of social movements in terms of performance.

According to Tilly, 'repertoires of contention' refer to the established set of methods and strategies of claim-making in a society as well as the collective set of available methods and performances by which groups make claims (including, but not limited to, street protests, strikes, petitions, international appeals, terrorism) (Tilly 1978; 2006). Repertoires are specific to a societal, cultural, and regime context, and vary according to factors such as language, culture, as well as regime type and historical context.

Repertoires of contention are culturally distinct, meaning that a society's collective memory impacts upon the forms that collective action takes within it. Repertoires continually evolve as a result of innovation and lesson-drawing from previous examples of contention. When considering the quote by musician Wayne Shorter (above), actors of contention can either strategize and plan out their actions, or act spontaneously, but in both cases their actions will be in line with what they know, and fall back on familiar repertoires. The link between repertoires and improvisation is not accidental. Tilly finds that genuinely unfamiliar performances almost always misfire, but exact repetition of one performance in the next breeds boredom and indifference on the parts of claimants and their objects alike (Tilly 2006: 41). This is thus a paradox that underscores the

Table 5.3 – Tilly's Four Regime Ideal Types & Contestation Performances

Governmental Capacity (A)	**Openness (B)**	
	High capacity + Nondemocratic = many prescribed, narrow range tolerated, almost always forbidden, high involvement, medium violence	High capacity + Democratic = few prescribed, medium range tolerated (with a lot of overlap), low forbidden, high involvement (often as third parties), low violence
	Low capacity + Nondemocratic = few prescribed, medium tolerated, much forbidden, low involvement, high violence	Low capacity + Democratic = few prescribed, broad range tolerated (with a lot of overlap), low forbidden, medium involvement, medium violence

Source: created by the author, based on Tilly 2006: 27, 81.

inherent dynamism of social relations.

Tilly makes special reference to the example of the barricade, which is 'inscribed in the history' of French contention, and thus emerges time and again as a familiar symbol utilized by activists to draw on the national collective memory (Tilly 2006: 30). However, repertoires are not always bounded by nation-state borders. In the twenty-first century, other authors find that repertoires take an increasingly transnational character, and can be bundled into 'modular repertoires' easily transferred between contexts, claimants, and claims, as shown by the wave of **color revolutions** in post-communist Eastern Europe (Beissinger 2007) or the **Arab Spring**.

Regimes themselves are also defined in terms of performance for Tilly; he defines a regime as the set of repeated, regularized interactions between major political actors. Depending on the regime in question, the major political actors may include institutions, political parties, businesses, activists, media organizations, etc.

Tilly's work relies on a categorization of regimes according to two dimensions: governmental/state capacity (A) and regime openness (B). This (crude) two-dimensional categorization of ideal types helps to explain the divergence between different authoritarian regimes' responses to similar forms of contention. Note that on this spectrum, regimes cannot exist at either of the extremes: e.g., a minimal amount of state capacity is required to keep regimes in power.

Governmental capacity (hereafter state capacity – A) is defined as the *"degree to which governmental actions affect distributions of populations, activities, and resources within the government's jurisdiction, relative to some standard of quality and efficiency"* (Tilly 2006: 21). Openness (B – called 'democracy' by Tilly) is defined as the *"extent to which persons subject to the government's authority have broad, equal rights to influence governmental affairs and to receive protection from arbitrary governmental action"* (Tilly 2006: 21). At one end of this dimension there are closed (non-electoral) dictatorships; at the other one finds democracy.

Tilly's *Regimes and Repertoires* has relevance to the study of **repression** and **co-optation**, because it theorizes when and why regimes respond to political performances.

Tilly distinguishes three types of response to an act of contention – coercion, capital, and commitment. A country, according to its regime type, can be expected to use these three tools in different ways to produce outcomes reinforcing either the prescribed, tolerated, or forbidden nature of a contentious act (Tilly 2006: 74). Common to all regimes is the use of these three tools to respond to threats to the regime perceived as existential, whether violent insurgence in Uganda or Nazi resurgence in Germany. The difference lies in what is considered an existential threat, and what is considered necessary to ensure the regime's survival (see: **longevity, stability & resilience**).

By reviving (contested) theories of political opportunity structures, Tilly's work offers a categorization of regime responses to political performances along the two dimensions of state capacity (A) and openness (B), as depicted in Table 5.3. In this typology, repertoires of political performance are categorized as either prescribed, tolerated, or forbidden. These dyads include the involvement of government agents in contestation (often as principals) and yield different levels of violence.

Table 5.3 – Tilly's Four Regime Ideal Types & Contestation Performances

In high-capacity, non-democratic regimes (e.g., **totalitarianism**), there is a high level of control over the citizen's public life, meaning that the amount of prescribed and forbidden performances is high, whereas the number of tolerated types of political participation is low. One example is China, which as a **single-party regime** mandates regular performances of loyalty to the party and forbids dissent as well as insults to the party and its leadership. Nonetheless, some localized protests and complaints about lower levels of the party administration are tolerated (Chen 2012).

In high-capacity democratic regimes (typically highly-developed democracies), there is a higher amount of tolerated and legitimized political performances. In some cases, political performances that are essential to the continuation of the regime, such as voting, are prescribed in these regimes. Some political performances, especially those considered to endanger the regime, are forbidden. One example might be Germany, which tolerates many forms of performance, even those which are highly contentious such as insulting politicians or religious figures, but prescribes some repertoires and forbids others, notably Nazi-related symbols and speech.

In low-capacity non-democratic regimes (see **fragile & failed states**), there also is a high level of tolerance, as the state does not have the ability to control the citizen's public life as closely. Very few types of political performance are prescribed, and those types which are forbidden are punished at random, as the state does not have the capacity to punish consistently. Tilly points to Uganda in the 2000s as a country scoring low on both state capacity and democracy, which passed laws forbidding political violence and terrorism and banned all parties other than the president's, but was not able to fully enforce these laws in rural territories where insurgents were active (Tilly 2006: 82).

Low-capacity democratic regimes are typically middle- or lower-income democracies, where the state rarely prescribes or forbids political performances, and where most repertoires are in the category of tolerance. As a result of poor control over the polity, the regime has less capacity to punish contentious acts. The example of Jamaica shows that, although it is a democratic country with regular multi-party elections, it differs from high-capacity democracies in that vigilantism and police killings are commonplace political acts, which would not be tolerated in a high-capacity state.

For more on C. Tilly and his legacy in sociology, see Van der Linden (2009); Krinsky & Mische (2013); Demetriou (2018). For an appraisal for his contribution to repression (as a political science concept), see Davenport (2009).

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Revolution

Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime.
– Aristotle, *Politics*

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.
– John F. Kennedy, 1962

Revolutions have many different meanings. The modern concept of revolution comes out of the experience of the American and, especially, the French and Russian revolutions. In particular, the French revolution became *the* revolution, synonymous with all other revolutions, because it had a structure, clear causes, a clear break with the previous regime and system, and it was easy to explain and understand.

EXAMPLES & REGIONAL VARIATION Revolutions are very diverse and time-bound and many caused a significant ripple effect in their respective regional international systems. They often occur in transnational waves. Firstly, socioeconomic processes operate on a regional or (now more often) global scale, weakening states and encouraging popular uprisings. Secondly, interstate wars weaken states and generate grievances, affecting multiple countries simultaneously. Thirdly, revolutions possess a 'demonstration effect' for other countries (see also **authoritarian learning**), inspiring imitation of ideologies, strategies, and tactics. Lastly, successful revolutionary movements may provide both material and military assistance to others. However, not all movements within a wave have succeeded, and attempts to export revolution have often failed.

The French revolution (1789-1797) meant the end of the feudal system, the *ancien régime*. It introduced the power of capitalism at the political level. The English revolution of 1688 was the first of this kind but was not successful, as both the monarchy and feudal structure survived.

The American revolution of 1776 was *de facto* a secession event, and one of the first successful anticolonial rebellions; it did not attack the core of the feudal system. It was simply a breakaway from the English colonial feudal system, adopting a new dominant means of production, partly based on the slave-owning system. According to Nelson (2014), Americans did not propose a new political concept to George III in 1774-1775; their vision of the British (or English) nation as a set of self-governing communities, linked by loyalty to the same monarch, was essentially the vision they had held since the seventeenth-century establishment of the colonies. Thus, the Americans did not attack the existing feudal principles of the time and were not as 'revolutionary' as the French revolutionaries when it came to installing a new (ideological) order; or when compared to the Haitian revolution (1791-1804), a successful, anticolonial slave insurrection.

The French revolution was only partially successful, and was forced to extend into the following century as the forces of change intensified. The most important and decisive of these were the March revolutions of 1848 – the 'Spring of Nations' (cf. Box 6.4) – which destroyed some elements of the feudal system. However, monarchies and the special privileges of the Roman Catholic Church and Muslim communities, including the special position and power of the **aristocracy**, were safeguarded in Europe and 44 states around the world.

Where the French revolution was bourgeois, the Russian one was proletarian. With the 1917 October revolution in Russia, a new type of revolution emerged, catapulting new political actors to the forefront: proletarians, peasants, and soldiers, who tried to realize their perception of an anti-capitalist and anti-feudal system, one which called for socialism under the leadership of the Communist party. The Russian (1917-1921) and Yugoslav (1943-1948) revolutions eliminated monarchies, the monopoly of churches in political life, and reformed the semi-feudal system by introducing agrarian reforms. At the same time, they introduced and d the process of industrialization and commodification in the form of state capitalism. The Yugoslav idea of self-management and societal ownership lasted only twenty years and, in fact, increased the accumulation of capital on both the local level and that of the republics. None of the socialist revolutions were able to develop

new postcapitalist forms of production of life capable of surviving. That is why they all ended up as capitalist systems, including the Russians, Yugoslavians, Chinese and Cubans. (The only self-proclaimed socialist state remains North Korea.)

The growing clash of ideological beliefs that fueled the decolonial struggles resulted in political, economic and social transformations after WWII, but with a great deal of variation in the timeframes and modes of contestation (see **colonial legacies** and **imperial legacies**), resulting in several outcomes too nuanced for the scope of this entry. For instance, in Latin America, the Cuban (1953, 1959) and Nicaraguan (1979) revolutions were the start and end point of a series of mostly failed attempts at Che Guevara-designed *'Foquismo'* (see Box 5.9) – a period characterized more by the reactionary military counter-revolutions that dominated politics from the 1960s to the 1980s than for the social change that triggered these interventions.

Many observers argue that decolonization processes are still ongoing, ranging from the *Black Lives Matter* movement targeting systemic **racism** to the recent coups d'état in Africa, exposing dissatisfaction with the neocolonial position of African states *vis-à-vis* the great powers, which find it increasingly difficult to assert their dominance on the global stage.

The **color revolutions** and **Arab Spring** were the latest waves, characterized by (initially) non-violent mass protests driven by political aspirations and socio-economic grievances.

DEFINITION A revolution is defined as a swift and deep (structural) change of society and of the political system. In some definitions, violence is added as a necessary instrument for change, though some authors see violence as primarily generated by counter-revolutionary forces. Some definitions concentrate on violence, describing a revolution as a violent attempt to change a government, regime, or system. The geographical unit of a revolution can be a particular state (or polity) but also the total system of production in the world.

In common usage, the concept of revolution is employed to describe any kind of (often not very fundamental) changes in society. In the modern world, revolution is almost synonymous with notable change or innovation in every possible field of human practice. Contrasted to evolutions, revolutions often mean a quick, sudden change; evolution, on the other hand, describes gradual long-term changes, which can be more or less formal but not as far-reaching. In this broader sense, the unit of revolution is a particular practice, a pattern of thinking, feeling or other micro-level of human living.

SEE ALSO Revolutions are considered both a cause of **transition** (regime **ouster** through mass mobilization) and a mode of transition (when the old regime is successfully replaced by a new order). A revolutionary process can be undone by a counter-revolution or by a **coup**. Note that coups may become 'revolutions from above' if the usurpers implement radical political or socioeconomic changes. Revolutions affect both autocracies and democracies and can thus result in either **democratization** or **autocratization**. Regimes created from (violent) revolutions have some special characteristics as described in **revolutionary legacies** – for a comprehensive overview, see Levitsky & Way (2022).

ORIGINS Revolution initially meant the return to a point of origin, *revolutio* (in Latin). It has been used in mechanics and astronomy for describing the action performed by a physical body as it rotates on its axis. Before the seventeenth century, it was usually used to characterize a dynastic restoration (e.g., restoring a legitimate monarchy after ousting a tyrannical usurper). Thereafter, it was used to describe some significant improvement or deterioration in the political sphere.

The concept of revolution should also be considered in contrast to the concept of counter-revolution. The latter aims to bring revolutionary results back to a previous stage, no matter what the cost. There is a great dispute about which is more violent, revolutions or counterrevolutions.

LITERATURE This part provides a short overview of the most influential authors in the mainstream literature before moving on to works that study the drivers and outcomes of revolutions.

The works of Theda Skocpol (1979; 1994) explore the correlations between revolutions and the social circumstances that preceded them, emphasizing the role of the proletariat and the importance of branched networking within classes. Skocpol's ideas extend the first- and second-generation concepts of the theory of revolution, focusing on the social system failures, reasons, and consequences of revolutions in the context of revolutionary modernization.

Jack A. Goldstone (1980; 1982; 2001; 2009) writes about revolutions and their roots in societies. He challenges the dominant model of 'Western exceptionalism' and argues that early modern and modern European and Asian societies have more in common than previously recognized. He proposes a four-stage process of revolution that includes fiscal crisis, inter-elite conflict, mass mobilization potential, and the breakdown and remaking of culture and ideology. Goldstone's work has influenced the creation of multiple theoretical models and has been central to early twenty-first-century sociology. He also examines revolutions in history, from ancient Greece and Rome to the **Arab Spring**. Goldstone emphasizes the pursuit of social justice as a driving force in revolutions and the creation of new political institutions

The edited work by J. Foran (1997) focuses on the 'Third World,' integrating insights from diverse fields (civil resistance studies, international relations, social movements, terrorism, etc.) to offer new ways of thinking about the study of revolution, beyond the dichotomous, considering structure and agency as mutually reinforcing processes. Contention is not simply violent or nonviolent – it is a messy process that usually involves both strategies. Revolutions do not just succeed or fail – they achieve and simultaneously fall short. And causal conditions are not just domestic or international – they are depend-



ent on the interplay of the two.

Jeff Goodwin (2001) offers a comprehensive analysis of the rise of revolutionary movements and revolutions during the Cold War period. Using examples drawn from Southeast Asia, Central America, and Eastern Europe, the book explores how authoritarian regimes inadvertently fuel popular resistance, leading to radical and often violent outcomes. Drawing on T. Skocpol's state-centered approach (see Goodwin & Skocpol 1989), and echoing Trotsky's assertion, he illustrates how revolution became the sole recourse for opposition to entrenched regimes. Through comparing over a dozen countries, Goodwin demonstrates that revolutionaries sometimes orchestrated opportunities to seize state power rather than merely exploit existing conditions.

Charles Tilly (1978; 1993) writes extensively about revolutions. He explores the core themes of revolutionary classes, revolutionary violence, and the outcomes of revolution, building upon the work of his teacher Barrington Moore (1966). Tilly's work on revolutions and state-building demonstrates the way in which state building and contentious mechanisms combine to produce both terror and the foundation for mass politics. A central aspect of his writings is the concept of collective action, developing a structuralist perspective into a more relational and interactive model.

A revolution always has roots or causes. For 'shallow science,' the causes are observed in the abysmal living circumstances of the lower classes: monarchs were often uncompromising and brutal in their treatment of their own populations. The most common way of explaining the drivers of a revolution is to try to discover individual decisions, or some very well-organized group of individuals, or a group of ideas, as the cause of the revolution. However, this type of explanation overlooks the composition of the polity as a whole, which, through the development of its own contradictions, has become ripe for change.

Drivers of revolutions Goldstone et al. (2004) assert that three major approaches have dominated the discussion: (i) *Economic theories*, such as the 'J-curve' theory and relative deprivation theories, suggest that economic downturns or frustration with poor economic conditions relative to expectations can trigger revolutionary discontent. (The J-curve theory – developed by J.C. Davies in 1962 posits that revolutions and social unrest are more likely to occur when a period of improving economic and social conditions is followed by a sudden downturn, leading to a gap between heightened expectations and reality.) ***Modernization theory*** (ii) posits that as countries become wealthier, tensions arise between the political aspirations of the middle and professional classes and the exclusionary institutions of autocratic states, making autocracies in modernizing nations prone to revolutionary conflicts. The *institutionalist approach* (iii) emphasizes the importance of the specific form and function of state institutions. It suggests that states are most prone to revolution when their political institutions are under stress and undergoing reform. The stability of a regime is not simply a function of the degree of its democracy or autocracy but depends on detailed institutions and the nature of political participation.

Goldstone et al. (2004) employ global data from 1955 to 2001, and show that regime type is the dominant factor behind revolutions, ethnic wars, and the overthrow of democratic regimes. Their **trichotomous classification** of regimes finds that most unstable regimes are 'hybrid regimes,' which combine elements of democracy with significant aspects of authoritarian rule. Full democracies and full (or closed) autocracies can both create stable states, but such stability varies in relation to the specific characteristics of their political institutions. Regime type seems to matter as it often correlates with variations in state power. Slinko et al. (2017) find a similar U-shaped relationship between regime 'types' (but they measure the scale of all political regimes using a **continuous measure**); established autocracies and consolidated democracies are less susceptible to revolution.

There are other important observations. For example, economic factors like infant mortality and trade openness affect stability, but less than institutional factors. Colonial heritage and ethnic composition have almost no effect on political stability once economic development and political institutions are accounted for – see **colonial legacies**. In Sub Saharan Africa, the effects of regime type on stability are even stronger, but ethnic composition has no direct impact on stability unless combined with active political discrimination against particular groups (Goldstone et al. 2004).

Revolutions develop from popular uprisings, fueled by perceived injustices within an existing political regime, and are often catalyzed by economic and social upheaval. Some, termed 'social revolutions' or 'great revolutions,' usher in profound economic and social changes. The success of a revolution often hinges on the weakening or collapse of the old regime's infrastructural power, its ability to impose its will on society (Goodwin & Green 2008). Several salient aspects of the incumbent's infrastructural power remain under-researched, like their international leverage to solicit support from allies during times of crisis (see **black knights**, **linkage & leverage**).

Outcomes The fate of revolutions is thus influenced by various factors, including resource endowments, prior economic development levels, and socioeconomic structures. International constraints like external dependencies and involvement in conflicts against foreign adversaries can also shape their outcomes. Furthermore, historical variables, such as population pressures and fluctuations in inflation or deflation cycles, are additional factors that can impact the course and results of revolutions (Zimmermann 1990).

Hellmeier and Bernhard (2023) point out that mass mobilization plays a dual role in shaping **transitions**, as it can either bolster democratic institutions or fortify authoritarian regimes. Pro-democratic mobilization contributes to an enhancement in democratic quality and raises the likelihood of successful **democratization**; on the other hand, mobilization in support of autocracy tends to erode democratic

principles. General disillusionment with the lack of (promised socio-economic) progress is another major factor that can halt or derail democratization processes.

While global data show that pro-autocratic mobilization has waned following the dissolution of the USSR (Hellmeier & Bernhard 2023: 25), scholars should not take democratic claims by revolutionary movements at face value, nor should they underestimate the risk of counter-revolutions or creeping coups by military elements when a new order is being negotiated – see **coups**. A good example is the coup by General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Egypt, which sidelined the democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi after the successful ouster of Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) by mass protests in Egypt's '**Arab Spring**.'

Systemic change Revolutionary governments may encounter difficulties instilling mass behavioral shifts aligned with their ideals, potentially influencing the revolution's success and outcomes. The exact conditions required to ensure that revolutionary change lasts are under-explored, and dependent on fostering psychological change in the collective behavior of polities. Possible ways of achieving this are by building alliances with like-minded groups, **indoctrination** (educational programs and campaigns) and co-opting citizens into the system (Moghaddam 2023). Marxist thinkers, especially, underline these non-materialistic aspects of systemic change.

In the third of the *Theses on Feuerbach* Karl Marx defines a revolution as follows: *"The coincidence of the transforming of circumstances and of human activity or self-transformation [Selbstveränderung] can be grasped and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice"* (Marx 2022). According to this definition, revolution has always been not only the transformation of material circumstances, but also self-change, a change in the subject of revolution, a change of individuals' consciousness. Marx believed that a revolution must remake the core of capitalism as a world system. According to Marx, we also have a perception of revolution in a sense that is inherent to the capitalist system and the logic of capital. In *Grundrisse*, his unfinished manuscript, he writes: *"In accord with this tendency, capital drives beyond national barriers and prejudices as much as beyond nature worship, as well as all traditional, confined, complacent, encrusted satisfactions of present needs, and reproductions of old ways of life. It is destructive towards all of this, and constantly revolutionizes it, tearing down all the barriers which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces"* (Marx 1973).

Analyzing the Italian polity, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) introduced the distinction between a passive revolution, or war of position, and a rapid revolution or a sudden surge. According to Gramsci, in Western societies, a Russian-type revolution is not possible as such revolutionary change requires a gradual, long-term transformation of civil society, but civil society in Western societies is highly developed. In Russia, where there was no civil society, it was possible to attack the state directly and that is why Russian revolutionaries had to work hard after the revolution to build a suitable civil society that would express the change to a new order.

As shown in Box 4.9, Lenin believed that a socialist revolution would be possible as a world revolution, starting in the country that was the weakest link in the capitalist chain. When that did not happen, he believed that Soviet socialism should catch up and overtake capitalism. Stalin then stepped away from the whole 'world change'-oriented idea and stressed the idea of socialism in one country. Step-by-step, country-by-country, socialist revolutions would change capitalism according to the doctrine of the new *Comintern* (Communist International with its center in Moscow, led by the Communist Party of the USSR).

Some believe that revolutions are possible only if an old regime is first destroyed completely. This is called catastrophism: first, a catastrophe must happen, and then a new society or state can be built. That is also the position of Lenin in his pamphlet *State and Revolution* (1918).

In bringing the 'social question' to the forefront of international legal debates, the Mexican and Russian revolutions offered new ways of thinking about foundational concepts of property, statehood and non-intervention – and indeed about the very nature of law itself (Greenman et al. 2021).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Several issues should be taken into account when studying and comparing revolutions.

The French bias When studying revolutions, one should be aware of divergences from the French revolution taken as a typical model. Over the years, revolutions – the Mexican revolution, the Iranian revolution, the post-communist revolutions, and the Arab Spring – have demonstrated that the French case is not representative. These examples suggest that revolutionary outcomes often fail to fulfill the promise of progressive social change, instead resulting in more centralized or authoritarian regimes. One critical consideration is the misreading of revolutions through a normatively optimistic lens, often based on the French model. (In 2011, the 'Arab Spring' ushered in an era of misplaced hope.) The essential difference between the French and other revolutions is that the French one destroyed feudalism, while all the others wanted to overthrow capitalism. This turned out to be impossible, so they were unable to fulfill their set goals and promises.

Delineation Scholars do not agree on the constitution of a revolutionary process, and bicker about how to demarcate between revolutions, uprisings, rebellions, **coups**, and civil wars. Some focus on revolutionary movements attempting to change society or political regimes, while others concentrate on revolutionary situations involving violent contests for state power. Additionally, there are differing perspectives on whether a revolution is defined solely by



its ultimate outcomes, such as a discernible transfer of power and large-scale social change.

Time-bound phenomenon If revolutions reshape states and, sometimes, the societies they govern, it follows that revolutions could only occur on a significant scale after the emergence of consolidated national states, and these began roughly in the past two centuries. Prior to the modern era, there was no institution, apart from perhaps the Catholic Church, with the capacity to consistently exert control over substantial populations occupying contiguous territories. Once political authorities acquired this kind of infrastructural power, revolution became feasible and, for many, appealing. Thus, although political strife has existed for all of human history, the ability to profoundly alter a 'society,' 'nation,' or 'people' – the economic, political, and/or cultural structures of a large population under state governance – is intertwined with the advent of the modern state system, originating in Europe and subsequently propagated globally. Unlike certain types of political conflict, revolution is thus a distinctly modern phenomenon (Goodwin & Green 2008: 1871).

The need for violence Violence is often seen as a common element in revolutions, but its role is complex. Definitions of violence vary, and there are questions about when violence is pivotal in a revolution. Furthermore, the presence or absence of violence does not definitively determine the qualification of a situation as a revolution. Structural contingencies and the actions of organized social movements also play significant roles in revolutionary processes.

CLASSIFICATIONS The old-new dimension can assist with divisions: changes from the old to the new regime are *revolutions,* and changes from the new to the old regime are *counter-revolutions*. Nietzsche originated the term *conservative revolution*, which experienced a strong development in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, and has often been described as part of the counter-movement to the French Revolution. According to this definition, it extends before the twentieth century as a tradition of militaristic, authoritarian nationalism, which rejected liberalism, socialism, democracy and internationalism.\ (Woods 1996). The conservative revolution is a slow, long-term counter-revolution.

Revolutions can also be divided in terms of the depth of change: a *political* revolution only changes the group in power; a *social* revolution aims to change social relations, which means first of all an intervention in property (agrarian reform, collectivization, nationalization, privatization) and then the social structure; a *cultural* revolution aims to change people's behavior patterns, and values. Note: social revolutions are also referred to as 'great revolutions' (Goodwin & Green 2008).

Kamrava (1999) identifies three ideal types of revolutions: spontaneous, planned, and negotiated. The balance between structural factors and human agency varies depending on the nature of the revolution: (a) *spontaneous revolutions* are deeply influenced by existing structural conditions, particularly those that weaken state institutions and foster the mobilization of social groups. Conversely, in *planned revolutions* (b), self-proclaimed revolutionaries take charge of mobilizing supporters and undermining state authority, often with a detailed ideological, tactical, and strategic plan for seizing and consolidating power. *Negotiated revolutions* (c) represent a fusion of structural forces and human intervention. While the groundwork for revolution is laid out, structural conditions alone are not sufficient for success. Representatives from the state and society must engage in negotiations for the revolution to potentially thrive and be firmly established.

Revolutions can be divided into *violent* and *non-violent*. When we consider the depth of change brought about by revolution, it is also possible to distinguish between *rapid* revolutions, which are shallow and operate in the short term (e.g., the October revolution), and *gradual*, or as Gramsci called them, *passive* revolutions, which introduce deep changes in the long term (e.g., the *risorgimento* or unification of Italy). Revolutions can also be distinguished by the doctrine they impose: *liberal, socialist, fascist, national, conservative*.

Revolutions can also be divided according to the field where they operate. Of this kind of revolution, the *sexual* revolution of the 1960s was the most radical, because it profoundly reduced social distance, liberated sex, de-patriarchalized the family, allowed people to behave more naturally, and changed lives and the mode of production of life. A special case is constituted by *technological* revolutions, through which society prepares the ground and produces the need for new technologies, which then accelerate transformations in directions set for the development of societies – see also **digital authoritarianism**.

NEW FRONTIERS Revolution constitutes a great and profound change in society, in the mode of production of life and the reproduction of social relationships. In this sense, there has been only one great revolution – the French revolution, which introduced capitalist relations and the capitalist mode of production of life into one particular nation-state and thereafter into the whole world. All so-called socialist revolutions have hitherto only had the function of introducing the capitalistic mode of production through the form of state capitalism. The introduction of the capitalist mode of production has not yet finished. Commodification processes are still going on and the potential to revolutionize new spheres of social life still exists.

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Box 5.9 Foquismo: A Deceiving Manual for Insurrection

La revolución no es una manzana que cae cuando está madura. Tienes que hacerla caer.
(The revolution is not an apple that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it happen.)
– Ernesto 'Che' Guevara

Even while his violent death prevented Ernesto 'Che' Guevara de la Sarna from competing with Fidel Castro's long list of publications, the fellow Cuban revolutionary did have a notorious bestseller: *La Guerra de Guerrillas* (*Guerrilla Warfare,* 1961). While Mao Zedong covered the same topic in 1937 (to convince fellow decision-makers on strategy during the war with Japan), Che Guevara aimed for a different audience: future insurrectionists. His is a manual about the preparation, organization and feasibility of a guerrilla *foco* (a guerrilla unit, 25-30 fighters). His three fundamental lessons are that (a) popular forces can win against a regular army, (b) one should create the conditions for **revolution**, not wait for them, and (c) that the underdeveloped Latin American countryside is the most suitable basis for insurrection.

Alas, Che Guevara's *foco* theory (*foquismo*) was solely deduced from his hands-on experience in the successful Cuban revolution, ousting the personalist US puppet, Fulgencio Batista. Che's original document acknowledged this subjective vision, but as Childs (1995) has shown, the final manuscript experienced quite some interplay with (internal) Cuban politics and **propaganda**, overstating the importance of the rural component, stressing practice over (Marxist) theory, and exaggerating the universal applicability. The final doctrine proved terribly ill-suited to the political, social, and cultural context of most countries, as violent guerrillas flared up and were easily defeated. The first lesson (a) remained an unproven statement. The second (b) was pure heresy in established Marxist thought. But the third (c) was a final nail in the coffin of his Latin American insurrectionist followers. Not only did it sideline urban insurrection, *foco* warfare treated the (Latin American) peasants as a unified class, with a coherent set of demands – a crucial mistake as in many cases villagers seldom supported the guerrillas, even aided in tracking them down, swayed by government promises (of land reforms).

As a Marxist heresy, *Foquismo* contributed to the rift in the Leftist Latin American front and resulted in much unnecessary bloodshed. H. Brands finds that: *"In fact, the foco was better suited to radicalizing the Right than radicalizing the masses. In no case during the 1960s did a Latin American guerrilla movement achieve sufficient strength to seize power, but foquista violence and Cuban support provided militaries, security services, and conservative elites with both a reason and a pretext for internal repression"* (Brands 2012: 52).

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Revolutionary Legacies

Так закалялась сталь!
(That's how the steel is tempered!)
– Russian idiom referring to the title of Nikolai Ostrovsky's social-realist novel

Revolutionary legacies differ significantly from regular authoritarian legacies, particularly in terms of regime durability, state-building, and the relationship between the state and society. These differences are manifest in several key areas as shown by Levitsky & Way 2016a/b; 2022.

Revolutionary regimes tend to exhibit a higher degree of durability when compared to their non-revolutionary authoritarian counterparts. This enhanced durability largely derives from the formative process during which revolutionary regimes arise. Typically, these regimes emerge from the violent overthrow of existing power structures, necessitating the consolidation of power in the midst of intense domestic and international resistance. Scholars refer to this process as a 'reactive sequence,' which compels revolutionary regimes to develop robust state institutions in the face of existential military threats emanating from counterrevolutionary movements or external conflicts (Lachapelle et al. 2020, citing Mahoney 2001). Revolutions (or the threat thereof) can also enable authoritarian 'protection pacts' in counterrevolutionary movements (Box 1.2) (see Slater 2018).

One of the formative features of revolutionary regimes is the presence of cohesive ruling elites (i). The shared experience of revolution and the continuous threat from counterrevolutionary forces foster a strong sense of unity (**trust**) among these elites, simultaneously ingraining widespread practices of surveillance, control, and the suppression of dissent in society as a whole (Mello 2018). For elites, this cohesion significantly reduces the likelihood of elite defection, a common cause of breakdown in authoritarian regimes (Smith 2005; Levitsky & Way 2010; Slater 2018).

Moreover, revolutionary regimes often possess a powerful and loyal coercive apparatus (ii). The imperative to suppress counterrevolutionary movements and defend against external threats leads these regimes to establish large and effective security forces that are deeply loyal to them. This loyalty is reinforced by the fact that revolutionary armies are typically newly created, staffed by veterans of the revolution, and closely tied to the ruling party (Levitsky & Way 2020).

When dealing with army recruitment, revolutionary regimes often balance necessity, ideology, and pragmatism. Conscription becomes crucial in prolonged conflicts, as seen with the Continental Army during the American Revolution, which expanded its recruitment criteria to include diverse groups (Kestnbaum 2000). Beyond mandatory enlistment, regimes also utilize ideological persuasion and material incentives. The Chinese Communist Party's recruitment during the Civil War exemplified this blend of ideological fervor and tangible benefits to motivate individuals to join (Zhou 2023).

Additionally, revolutionary movements' activities often result in the destruction of rival organizations and power centers (c). By sweeping away existing social structures and institutions, revolutions eliminate potential sources of opposition. This allows revolutionary regimes to establish a more dominant presence in society, making it considerably harder for opposition movements to take root and challenge their authority. (This also facilitates **totalitarianism**.)

In contrast, authoritarian regimes often lack these sources of strength. They may come into power through less violent means, inherit existing power structures, and face less intense opposition. As a result, they are more vulnerable to internal divisions, **coups**, and popular uprisings. This inherent vulnerability makes regular authoritarian regimes generally less stable than their revolutionary counterparts.

In terms of **personalization**, revolutionary legacies have mixed outcomes due to the nature of revolutionary parties and their formation. Van den Bosch (2021) identifies five factors that can either hinder (a), facilitate (b, c) or have truly mixed effects (d, e) on the eventual personalization of power within revolutionary regimes.

Revolutionary parties often have pre-established

decision-making procedures (a) that can act as obstacles to personalization. These procedures are designed to maintain unity and prevent any single individual from consolidating excessive power. For example, Lenin's Bolshevik party established collective decision-making processes that were later reinstated after Stalin's personalist escapade.

The civil-military relations specific to revolutionary regimes make military coups unlikely (b), and this can support the personalist ambitions of incumbent rulers. A cohesive ruling party and a tightly controlled coercive apparatus reduces the likelihood of military insubordination.

During the formative phase of a revolutionary regime, leaders who emerge victorious from violent struggles often possess significant **charisma** (c), which can aid in personalizing power. Leaders like Fidel Castro and Mao Zedong used their revolutionary credentials to centralize authority and shape institutions to their liking.

A strong revolutionary **ideology** (d) can deepen military obedience and provide legitimacy for individual leaders acting as ideologues, which may facilitate personalization. However, ideologies can just as easily prescribe collective governance structures that resist personalization.

As already stated, revolutionary regimes often face external threats or counterrevolutionary challenges, which reinforce elite cohesion and the coercive apparatus. This environment (e) can either support a leader's personalist ambitions, by eliminating rival centers of power, or solidify collective governance, by uniting leaders against common threats.

While some revolutionary regimes successfully personalize power, others do not. For instance, North Korea managed to personalize under Kim Il-Sung despite his not founding the ruling party; on the other hand, regimes like Angola (MPLA), Laos (LPRP), Mozambique (FRELIMO), Nicaragua (FSLN), Vietnam (PRP), Zimbabwe (ZAPU-PF) upheld collective governance structures without personalization.

Revolutionary regimes often enjoy long lifespans thanks to their strong institutional bases and ideological foundations. **Personalization** is more likely to occur in the early stages of a regime, but over time, successors often return to collective governance models, as seen in the USSR post-Stalin and China post-Mao (Van den Bosch 2021: 254-256).

Revolutions significantly influence the **transition** and establishment of revolutionary regimes using several key mechanisms.

Firstly, the emergence of revolutionary movements is often preceded by periods of intense social and political unrest (A). These movements mobilize against perceived injustices, aiming to overthrow the existing order. The dissatisfaction with the *status quo* fuels the momentum needed for revolutionary change.

Secondly, revolutions are marked by the breakdown of the existing state apparatus (B). This collapse or weakening of previous structures creates a power vacuum, which revolutionary movements can exploit to seize control; and, in doing so, they begin constructing new institutions and power structures that align with their revolutionary ideals.

The role of ideology (C) is another critical factor in revolutions. **Ideology** shapes the goals and strategies of revolutionary movements and significantly impacts the durability of the resulting regimes. Revolutionary elites driven by ideology often pursue radical policies that challenge established interests. These actions can provoke counterrevolutionary reactions, which in turn may harden the control of the revolutionary leaders as they respond to these challenges. However, a regime's immediate pragmatic needs (aimed at survival) may overshadow the pursuit of more egalitarian ideological goals (Arendt 1951).

Regarding stabilization, it matters who rules (D). Goldstone (2023) finds that radical and moderate revolutionary leaders contribute to different revolutionary outcomes and resulting regime types. Radical leaders, aiming for sweeping societal changes, often face resistance, and this leads to the establishment of coercive apparatuses and durable authoritarianism. This can result in cycles of radicalization, as seen in Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao's China. Conversely, moderate leaders may guide revolutions toward **constitutionalism**, but face challenges like factionalism and military influence, which can threaten more rule-based systems.

Finally, violence and coercion are aspects inherent to **revolutions**. The process often involves armed struggle (**conflict**), **repression**, and the use of force to achieve political objectives. This violence is not only a means to an end but also a formative characteristic of how revolutionary regimes establish and maintain their authority in the face of opposition. (Note that Arendt (1951) considers violence as a sign of weakness. She argues that true political **power** stems from the collective action of citizens, while violence is a sign of its absence.)

The evolution of revolutionary regimes typically follows a general pattern, although the specific stages and their characteristics vary in different cases. This evolution can be broadly divided into three phases: (i) the formative phase; (ii) the stabilization phase; and (iii) the post-revolutionary phase. It is important to note that not all revolutions follow a linear path of development; many regimes do not survive their 'reactive sequence' and some revolutionary regimes collapse before reaching the post-revolutionary phase. Furthermore, even within these broad phases, revolutionary regimes exhibit considerable diversity in their trajectories and outcomes.

In the formative phase (i), revolutionary regimes have the experience of the initial seizure of power and the establishment of a new government. This period is often marked by intense instability and violence (i.e. the 'reactive sequence') as the regime attempts to consolidate control. During this phase, a charismatic revolutionary leader often emerges, playing a central role in shaping the regime's ideology and direction.

If a revolutionary regime survives this tumultuous beginning, it enters the stabilization phase (ii). Here, the focus shifts to building new institutions, con-



solidating power, and suppressing any remaining opposition. During this time, the regime may undertake extensive social engineering (even totalitarian) projects aimed at reshaping society according to its revolutionary ideology.

Such institution-building is still very dependent on unique historical contexts as evidenced, for instance, by comparing the Chinese (CCP) and Soviet commissar systems. The USSR maintained a clear separation between political and military roles, supported by access to resources and professional military structures. Commissars focused on political **indoctrination** and military experts handled technical matters. In contrast, the CCP's system blurred these distinctions due to resource scarcity, its reliance on guerrilla warfare, and (historical) fears of **warlordism**. As a result, commissars took on multifaceted roles, integrating political and military functions. The CCP emphasized political work and adaptability, often critiquing Soviet **bureaucracy** for being detached from the masses (Zhou 2023).

As revolutionary regimes age, they enter the post-revolutionary phase (iii). In this stage, there are often significant transformations as the initial revolutionary fervor fades and the founding generation of leaders passes from the scene. The regime may face new challenges to its legitimacy and authority, and embark on new self-legitimization strategies (Loff 2014). Although revolutionary legacies – such as strong state institutions and a weakened civil society – can endure for decades, they are not permanent. Over time, these regimes may become more vulnerable to internal divisions, corruption, and popular unrest.

Nevertheless, even as the revolutionary ideology wanes (see post-**totalitarianism**), and the first generation is replaced (**succession**), the persistence of authoritarian structures and practices (**authoritarian legacies**) as well as memories (**authoritarian nostalgia**) remain significant. The 'powerful coercive apparatuses,' forged in the crucible of revolution and counterrevolution, often remain intact, ensuring the regime's capacity for repression even as its ideological underpinnings shift or erode. For this reason, revolutionary regimes are considered a form of 'durable authoritarianism.'

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Succession

For princes like crabs have a notorious tendency of eating up their begetter.
– Kautilya, *Arthashastra*, Chapter XVII, Book I.

The state is left without a ruler or regular government, and is in imminent danger of destruction, just as a ship without a master is liable to be wrecked by the first wind that blows.
– Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (1575)

It is worth opening with the words of Dankwart A. Rustow, who aptly exposes the temporal link between the polity and its rulers: *"The problem of political succession is implicit in the human condition:*

it is posed by man's mortality and frailty. The founders of a commonwealth intend their work to endure through the centuries, and loyal citizens rarely put its permanence into question. But the impermanence of rulers is abundantly clear even in the most solidly founded state and even to the most loyal citizen. It is guaranteed by the hazards of health, the risks of fortune and the certainty of death" (Rustow 1964: 104).

In political regimes, leader succession constitutes a vulnerable moment and a dangerous process for dictatorships. Autocratic regimes, unlike democracies, do not all have established rules for this. And even if they do, the transfer of supreme power from one individual to another is a process where old (informal) rules can be renegotiated or a new order can be imposed.

For this reason, incumbents and the regime as a whole both face a major dilemma. If an incumbent ruler prepares a successor to take over, will the latter wait until the former steps aside, or speed up the process? Secondly, do other elites in the inner circle accept the successor? Do they consider this prospective ruler as competent and the right choice to safeguard their interests? Will they respect such a takeover once the incumbent relinquishes power, is incapacitated or dead?

DEFINITION Any high office intra-regime succession constitutes a leadership change of the supreme power position within the same ruling network. If the leadership is replaced by another network, this is a **transition** and a regime change.

According to Sir John (Jack) Goody (1966), the first issue to be considered is whether the polity itself can be divided among eligible successors, even if fair divisions do not preclude ambition and future strife intending to reunite the polity. Secondly, the exact timing of the successor's accession determines many dynamics of succession politics. A new ruler may either ascend immediately upon the death of the incumbent, after a reasonable interval of time, or while the latter is still in power (Goody 1966: 7-9).

To systematize these key moments: political succession consists of two sub-processes (A & B) stipulated in time. The 'selection process' (A), which identifies successors, and the actual 'transfer of office' (B), where the key moments of 'exit of the incumbent' (a) and 'entry of the successor' (b) are also of paramount importance.

If A takes place before B, we are in the realm of grooming (with 'a' before 'b') or co-rulership (with 'b' before 'a'). Note that when there is a split between religious and political authority (e.g., pope and emperor), this is also a form of co-rulership, where smooth succession in either branch can be supported (or sabotaged) by the other as a parallel authority.

If a successor is yet to be identified after the demise of the ruler ('a' before A) the polity has to deal with an 'interregnum' before A allows for 'b' and the conclusion of B.

'Interregnums' are very vulnerable moments for regimes, as elites can negotiate new ruling pacts without a *primus inter pares* to settle escalating conflicts. For this reason, agreed-upon 'stand-ins' (regents, deputies) are recognized to take the wheel while elite consultations, selections or elections are carried out. 'Stand-ins' usually do not have the **legitimacy** or **power** to highjack high office outright themselves, but many have been known to unduly influence underage, inept or inexperienced successors, becoming *de facto* rulers over time.

The section on 'literature & classifications' below provides some partial frameworks to understand the nature of the incumbent's exit (see 'B') and its impact on succession, as well as various modes of identifying successors (see process A) and their trade-offs for the stability of polities.

Succession processes are challenging for autocracies because they lack independent institutions to ensure an orderly transfer of power, unlike democracies, and violence remains the ultimate arbiter (see Svolik 2012) within autocracies. Democracies, on the other hand, excel at managing succession through free and fair **elections** (their central defining feature), rendering them inherently durable if their rule-based order is upheld by all political actors involved and sufficiently adaptable to mitigate structural change and sudden shocks.

In dictatorships, when many contenders vie for leadership, elites are unsure where to place their loyalties, often preferring to avoid a brutal struggle by agreeing on a good-enough successor. However, coordinating to identify a successor is difficult. Designating an heir supported by law and tradition can provide a focal point for elites, reducing the risk of rebellion against a weary ruler. Kings are also known to protect property rights better (Knutsen & Fjelde 2016).

Yet this 'crown prince' can become an incumbent's most dangerous enemy, as their own path to power necessarily involves the ruler's demise. With a designated successor, the loyalties of elites begin to coalesce against the **incumbent**, rendering the ruler a 'lame duck' (Box 3.14). This issue is particularly acute if the successor is from the same generation as the ruler and cannot be certain of eventual inheritance (Kokkonen et al. 2022: 206).

To maintain (authoritarian) stability, over time regimes have experimented with various arrangements to address succession challenges. But no matter how elaborate or regulated these schemes are: *"No system of succession is completely automatic, (...) high office generally demands some particular qualities of its incumbents, even if only 'mens sana in corpore sano.' The health of the king often has a direct link with the health of the kingdom; and in a next-in-line system not all the automatic successors can meet the minimum demands of royal fitness. Hence some flexibility must exist or the dynasty will find itself out of power through inadequacy or incompetence"* (Goody 1966: 13).

SEE ALSO A successful succession is a cornerstone for authoritarian **longevity, stability & resilience**. The tense relation between incumbent and heir-apparent (the so called 'crown prince dilemma') is one key source of conflict; another is the process of designating a new ruler *after* the demise of the previous supreme powerholder and upholding that **elite pact**. Successions are vulnerable moments for most **political regimes**, less so for **democracies** that have institu-



tionalized the practice as a key feature, and thus face different **exit option & leader fates** after the ruling group loses office.

LITERATURE & CLASSIFICATIONS Different types of **political regime**s developed various organizational predispositions to manage succession. As regards the 'eligibility' of candidates, **selectorate theory** covers the range of endowments members of the inner circle need to possess (their background) to operate at the highest echelons of the regime, alongside the ruler, but such theoretical frameworks do not describe the precise nature of the power relations between a ruler and his ruling coalition (they focus foremost on the size of the latter).

In essence, the size of the **ruling coalition**, its **background** (competences and political culture), the type of leadership structure and the level of fragmentation are all key elements that influence successions (or **transitions**). But these (theorized) factors then meet reality, where successions are conditioned by time, place and context, and the whole process can thus be high-risk, unpredictable, and have grave consequences for all involved.

For this reason, it is quite impossible to 'model' successions (or transitions for that matter). Below are listed the relevant insights from the literature about mitigating factors, like the organizational basis of regimes (A), the nature of the incumbent's exit (B), the mode of the envisioned succession process (C), the successor's background (D), and the influence of spoilers or fate. All these dimensions may be salient in a succession, and because they all interrelate and affect one another they make intra-regime leader transfers very complex and unpredictable.

(A) Regime Organization Various regime **classifications & typologies** can be applied to distinguish organizational structures, but none were specifically designed to study political succession; so, below, I have mixed several classifications and borrowed categories to highlight how regime structures can affect succession.

Succession in **monarchies** (I) is too often conflated with the practice of primogeniture (see Box 5.10), but traditionally this regime type espoused various methods of succession, including 'open succession,' designation, election, and procedural systems. The more these systems favor legitimate birth and hereditary rule, the more fellow elites can rely on royal **dynasties** to ensure longevity. With a strong royal **bureaucracy** and a large pool of potential successors, the risks during leader transfers can be mitigated. Sometimes this worked to such a degree that the occasional regicide (**assassination**) to dispose of a disliked or incompetent monarch (royal **coup**) did not actually hamper a smooth transition (Bagge 2019: 172). Of course, not all monarchs were equally powerful and their *potestas* could range from impotent ceremonial figurehead (where reigning was separate from ruling) to virtually unconstrained **absolutism**.

The takeaway is that monarchies, in contrast to popular representation, have experimented with various succession methods throughout history. Elites' agency to disavow, select, elect, endorse or merely tolerate a new ruler is as varied as the manifestations of such rulership in past millennia. Nonetheless, blood and name (and often sex) mattered when it came to circumscribing the potential pool of eligible and legitimate candidates for the throne according to custom or law (**traditional rule**), and claiming **legitimacy** by descent from a founding figure (**charismatic rule**).

With high infant mortality, pre-modern healthcare and a hazardous political climate for competing royal progeny (often spearheaded by their mothers and in-laws), elites often clustered their alliances among the surviving offspring by the time the incumbent was incapacitated. Note that many royal courts were additionally separated into outer and inner parts (like harems – see Box 5.11), and the border between them might have been impassable for many elites, thus depriving them of crucial information regarding succession plans. For instance, outsider elites were forbidden to enter the inner sanctum; some royal family members were forbidden to leave; while eunuchs and select servants (maidens, pages) traveled both realms and acted as gatekeepers and messengers.

Describing or sub-classifying all monarchical succession practices as part of a single entry is, of course, absurd since these encompass millennia of forms of human rulership from all over the world. So, the focus is on just three main features (a, b, c) that differentiate monarchies from their regime type counterparts. For a deeper study of succession practices in pre-modern kingdoms and empires, see Duindam (2015) (global comparison); Goody 1966 (for (pre-)colonial Africa); Ertman 1997; Kokkonen et al. 2022 (Europe); Woodacre et al. 2019 (selected cases); Duindam 2021 (gender). For reference works on modern succession, see 'regional variation' below.

The first feature (a) is that monarchies, once established and consolidated, can typically rely on the **legitimacy** of **traditional rule,** filling a psychological-biological human need, in any social unit, to have a leader (Ludwig 2002: 8). Today, this is an asset that modern authoritarian regimes struggle to obtain or create since legitimacy is often grounded in legal-rational **rulership**. Monarchs, mirroring their predecessors, offer a familiar, historically-proven stability to other elites if they set up clear succession rules or appoint an heir-apparent early enough. This does not remove the 'crown-prince dilemma.'

Secondly, **dynasties** (b) are the real cornerstones of monarchies. Such aristocratic or oligarchic networks coalescing around rulers (sometimes even conglomerates of ruling families, e.g., in the case of alternating dynasties) actually largely correspond to the regime network itself in the modern definition of **political regimes** (if 'dynasties' are not too narrowly defined). Still, the historical divide between pre-modern kingdoms and empires with their static, long-lived dynasties, on the one hand, and modern monarchic autocracies with their dynamic regime networks, on the other, persists. Scholarship would benefit from designing theoretical frameworks that would link both sets of cases, highlighting that dynasties (then and now), were often short-

lived patronal networks (see **patronalism**), which attempted to uphold continuity through impromptu measures and to safeguard their legitimacy through self-legitimizing acts stressing permanence and tradition (Duindam 2015: 74).

Third (c), in contrast to other contemporary regime types, women, though still too often overlooked, have always played key roles in monarchies, either as (indirect) rulers (**female rulers**) or as wives, mothers, and concubines, leveraging their proximity to male rulers to advocate for their own interests, promote the aspirations of their sons, and shape political decisions (see harems in Box 5.11). Women are crucial actors in monarchic successions and in upholding dynasties, beyond their logical biological role (producing heirs), or their position as daughters, sisters, and aunts in strategic marriages and alliance-building.

Succession in **party-based regimes** (II) involves risks like factionalism and intra-party conflicts, weak institutionalization, and potential challenges from the military wing. These risks arise when a long-ruling leader departs, leading to power struggles and instability. Succession practices often involve formal rules and procedures, such as party congresses and central committee elections, but also rely heavily on informal power dynamics. The outcomes can range from orderly transitions, which maintain continuity, to instability and potential regime change if succession fails (Zhu & Mukhin 2021; Battera 2023).

Military regimes (III) face succession risks primarily from coup attempts and military interventions due to the lack of strong civilian institutions. If **personalization** often concentrates power in a single leader, this makes succession unpredictable. Practices typically involve **juntas** or military councils where senior officers play a crucial role in the selection of new leaders. In the absence of succession rules, reshuffling **coups** *(coups de chef)* are one way to alternate between ruling factions, often contributing to 'coup traps' (Box 5.2). Outcomes can either continue military rule or transition to civilian rule, depending on internal pressures and negotiations, affecting **exit options**.

Personalist rule (IV) is highly vulnerable to succession crises due to the hyper-centralization of power in one individual. The absence of institutionalized mechanisms for succession often leads to uncertainty despite a tendency to set up dynastic succession. Succession practices may either involve designating an heir or relying on informal networks. Outcomes frequently result in regime collapse or the emergence of a new strongman – notwithstanding temporary depersonalization under the successor (Van den Bosch 2024); however, succession crises can also open paths for demands for political liberalization (Brossier 2024).

In a **democracy** (V), succession refers to the orderly transfer of power from one leader or government to another, ensuring continuity within the political system. In parliamentary systems, changes in leadership, such as appointing a new prime minister, often coincide with shifts in the party composition of the government. However, in some established parliamentary regimes, between elections, new prime ministers may inherit their position from predecessors in their own party, reflecting a succession without a complete governmental transition. In coalition governments, a change in party composition does not always entail a change in leadership; the dominant party may continue to lead with new coalition partners. In presidential systems, distinguishing between 'succession' and 'transition' can be challenging. If a newly elected president takes office without altering the party makeup, this is considered succession; however, significant changes, often made by new presidents, can make these successions resemble transitions. The extent to which there is a transition also depends on executive-legislative relations. For example, in the US, if the president's party controls one or both legislative chambers, this can significantly affect governance and policy implementation (Helms 2020: 331).

(B) Incumbent Exit The nature, mode and context of an incumbent's exit matters a lot for succession. Even perceived **exit options & leader fates** influence regime behavior.

Sudden vs. Expected Sudden exits, often the result of unexpected death or incapacitation (e.g., an accident, rapid decline in health, or **assassination**), create a power vacuum that can lead to instability and violent power struggles, particularly in personalist regimes where power is highly centralized. These abrupt departures heighten uncertainty as there is little time for the regime to prepare for a transition, often leaving no clear successor. This lack of a designated heir can intensify competition among elites, leading to fragmentation and potential violence as various factions vie for control (Kokkonen et al. 2024).

In contrast, expected exits, such as those due to natural causes, **term limits**, or voluntary retirement, allow for more managed transitions. These scenarios reduce uncertainty because the ruling elite has had time to prepare for the leadership change. The presence of a designated successor can serve as a focal point for elite consensus, minimizing the risk of destabilizing power struggles. Established succession rules and procedures further contribute to smoother transitions by setting clear expectations and reducing ambiguity (Zhu & Mukhin 2021; Kokkonen & Sundell, 2020; Zeng 2020).

Violent Ousters Violence can significantly influence succession outcomes regardless of whether an exit is sudden or expected. In many cases, violence – through **coups**, **assassinations**, or post-succession **purges** – has been a tool for determining leadership transitions in regimes lacking institutionalized mechanisms for peaceful power transfers. Even when an exit is non-violent, the threat of violence often looms large, influencing elite behavior and shaping the transition process. Thus, while sudden exits tend to breed instability and increase the likelihood of violent struggles, expected exits offer opportunities for more stable transitions only if



accompanied by clear succession mechanisms and consensus-building among elites (Kokkonen & Sundell, 2020, Kokkonen et al. 2022; 2024).

Incumbent Age The age of an incumbent leader significantly influences succession dynamics by affecting the urgency of the succession process and the strategies of both the incumbent and any potential successors (**age & health**). In a way analogous to 'lame ducks' (Box 3.14), as leaders grow old the likelihood of a leadership transition becomes more apparent and pressing, especially in systems based on informal rules. This can lead to growing urgency and potential instability, especially in **personalist regimes** without an acceptable designated heir. In systems with **term limits**, the incumbent's age is less of an uncertainty factor, although it may still impact elite infighting and instability if incumbents extend their rule by casting such term limits aside, putting off successor designation or even delaying the successor's takeover date (Lucas 2012; Kim & Edge 2022).

In contrast, younger leaders often have longer time horizons (Box 5.5) and may prioritize institutionalizing clear succession rules, thus contributing to stability. However, they might also pursue dynastic ambitions by grooming successors early in their tenure, as observed in Togo and Gabon (Brossier 2024). Ultimately, although the age of a leader is not determinative, it influences succession dynamics alongside other factors like regime type, succession mechanisms, and the strategic choices made by incumbents and successors. These elements collectively shape the outcome of the succession process.

(C) Unregulated vs. Regulated Kurrild-Klitgaard (2000) differentiates between 'eligibility rules' and 'selection rules' in historical succession contexts. Eligibility rules determine who is eligible to inherit power, often emphasizing brother inheritance or father-to-son successions in hereditary regimes, or shared membership in the same ruling organization in non-hereditary contexts. In monarchies these rules focus on familial lineage to establish the line of succession. In contrast, selection rules involve choosing leaders through some form of election or acclamation, indicating a more participatory approach in which leadership is confirmed by broader approval or consensus from the **winning coalition** (see **selectorate theory**).

Succession models in pre-modern dynastic polities navigated the challenge of selecting competent leaders while avoiding civil war. We can identify four main systems for polities that were not equally divided among eligible heirs. Some still apply to modern times: open succession (I), designation (II), procedure (III) and election (IV), each with variations and combinations.

Open Succession (I) Survival of the fittest, common in military polities with nomadic roots – with no tradition of strict land ownership – emphasized merit and allowed for infighting, trusting that the strongest 'eligible' candidate would prevail. This system transferred to settled polities, as with the first Ottomans (Fletcher 1979, cited in Haeri 2020), and often adopted hereditary elements to maintain the integrity of royal estates.

In some cases, the lack of clear succession mechanisms led to cyclical instability. For instance, the Byzantine Empire, lacking a defined process for selecting leaders, experienced frequent coups and civil wars. Similar patterns of chronic instability, caused by succession issues, were observed in Mamluk Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. In extreme examples, *"civil war and rebellion become, in effect, the regular means of selection and elimination"* (Goody 1966: 18, cited in Kokkonen et al. 2024).

Designation: Groomed vs. Appointed (II) Selecting successors while the incumbent is still in power separates the actual 'selection process' from the 'transfer of office,' thus mitigating some uncertainties (Goody 1966: 15) and restructuring leader-elite and intra-elite conflicts (Konrad & Mu 2017).

This is effective if there is a pool of suitable (eligible and capable) candidates to choose from. Of course, this 'eligibility' of candidates can easily be extended to adopted children and protegees. 'Grooming' a candidate, by offering them several years in a top position in the regime, is likely to prepare them for the highest office. (Even under open succession (I) potentials heirs can be groomed by appointing them to a governor-like position in a distant province far from the capital.) However, the process of nominating and grooming a successor should not begin too early, as the heir-apparent might become impatient and attempt to hasten their ascent, leading to the 'crown-prince dilemma.'

Zhou (2023) models the dynamic between a ruler and their successor as a delicate balance. The ruler grooms a successor to ensure a smooth transition of power but is wary of being overthrown by them, while the successor fears being dismissed by the ruler. To manage this, the successor quietly amasses power without posing a threat to the ruler, maintaining a low profile to extend their relationship. Over time, the ruler grows increasingly intolerant of the successor's rising influence but becomes less motivated to replace them as they near the end of their reign. This makes conflict most likely in the middle of their relationship. Additionally, having a predetermined order of succession can heighten the chances of conflict by limiting the ruler's options. In scenarios with multiple candidates, a strong candidate may have an edge, but the likelihood of conflict increases.

Logically, the voice and choice of the current supreme powerholder dominates any discussion on this topic (Goody 1966: 15). The longer their tenure (and the stronger their position), the more likely it is that their dynasty will persevere (Abramson & Rivera 2016). Gray and Smith (2023) highlight that while nepotism (Box 1.1) is commonly associated with incompetence, successors chosen this way also inherit functioning neo-patrimonial networks, which offer several advantages for regime **longevity, stability & resilience**.

Without established rules, there is never the complete assurance that fellow elites will honor an outgoing ruler's choice. The situation worsens if a ruler dies early, unexpectedly (or in battle) *without*

appointing a successor, as this effectively results in open succession (I). Such circumstances could lead to civil war or invite foreign invasion, supported by competing inheritance claims – an outcome that is a nightmare for elites seeking to protect their privileges and possessions.

Procedure (III) In **traditional rule**, hereditary practices provided clear succession schemes for monarchies through agnatic seniority or primogeniture (Box 5.10), predominantly favoring male heirs. This reduced conflict by establishing predictable lines of succession. The phenomenon was more common in larger polities (Gerring & Knutsen 2019). Despite its stability, hereditary rule faced challenges when monarchs were inept, or died young and unexpectedly, either heirless, or with designated successors who were still infants or children (too young to rule and unable to produce their own offspring to secure the dynasty) – but while this was true of all hereditary ruling systems, (European) monogamous royal marriages were more at risk than their polygamous counterparts. Harems (Box 5.11) served as **coup-proofing** systems by isolating legitimate successors from conspirators and managing court politics. These systems aimed to balance competence with order, and all had their strengths and vulnerabilities in the maintenance of stability and the continuity of leadership.

As regards contemporary regime types and legal-bureaucratic rule, Frantz and Stein (2017) find that formalized succession rules reduce the likelihood of dictators confronting coups. Meng (2021) finds that an effective succession rule must address two key challenges: ensuring a peaceful exit for incumbents and a peaceful entry for successors. Firstly, the system should allow incumbents to leave power without the threat of coups. Secondly, it should enable the designated successor to assume power smoothly. Constitutional rules are instrumental in addressing both issues, especially when they designate the vice-president as the successor. The latter's access to material resources operates as a deterrent against other factions contesting the succession process; on the other hand, appointing successors who lack a power base proves ineffective.

Finally, with established succession mechanisms in authoritarian parties (especially those that predate the incumbent) it becomes much harder to install one's offspring. North Korea is a notorious exception (Brownlee 2007).

Election (IV) Elective monarchy offered a more peaceful alternative with rules and procedures, like the Celtic tanistry system: a (clannish) elite electoral process to choose a capable chief as well as his immediate successor, both being of full age and worthy of leadership, inspiring competition among potential candidates. However, this did not work for larger and more complex polities: compared to primogeniture, electoral monarchies were more unstable as rulers were forced to call upon parliaments to confirm power-sharing arrangements or to address unpopular policies (e.g., raising taxes) (Kokkonen et al. 2022: 142).

When the authority to choose successors shifts from an individual to a collective body, as in a politburo, a party congress, or a broader electorate, it becomes significantly harder, if not impossible, to designate a successor to ease succession struggles. A competitively selected candidate is less likely to have had an apprenticeship in national leadership tasks, creating an opportunity for opposition parties to gain electoral ground (Zeng 2020: 787). In addition, elected candidates in party-based regimes are beholden to their 'selectorate' and more likely to reduce economic volatility (in order to avert criticism of their leadership) (Doces & Lupton 2023).

Democratic systems are uniquely adept at managing peaceful successions due to inherent structures and norms that prioritize the orderly transition of power. **Democracies** by definition have established procedures (constitutional rules and electoral processes) that facilitate the smooth transfer of authority. The peaceful transition of power is central to democratic governance, where the outgoing leadership hands over control to newly elected officials without any party resorting to violence or coercion.

In consolidated democracies the losers of ruling coalition-building processes act as a loyal opposition, or accept such temporary setbacks, and retain influence. Furthermore, the predictability and regularity of elections in democratic systems reduce the likelihood of power struggles, as leaders are held accountable to the electorate and can be peacefully replaced if they lose public support (without suffering bad **fates**).

(D) Hereditary vs. Non-Hereditary Hereditary succession provides predictability and reduces uncertainty by establishing a clear line of succession. It allows the early grooming and preparation of successors, ensuring they are well trained for leadership roles. Goody (1966: 26) finds that it is not the lineage itself that gives rise to strain; rather, it is the 'presence of a plurality of royals' and their competition for the crown (i.e., title, office, lands, wealth), seen as common property. Hereditary rule provides a focal point for selection successors and thus minimizes power struggles among supporting elites, as long as succession is not disputed by the eligible heirs, compiling their own 'winning coalitions' and thus splitting elite loyalties in the process.

The generational age gap of 'primogeniture' (Box 5.10) allows the grooming of the designated heir, who is patient enough to inherit power peacefully. In contrast, siblings might not wait very long (Brownlee 2007; Tullock 1987). Additionally, hereditary succession can contribute to dynastic stability and a long-term vision, as power is consolidated within a single family, fostering policy continuity and predictability.

However, as already mentioned, rigidly-arranged hereditary succession risks putting incompetent or unpopular rulers in power based solely on lineage, which can lead to instability. Furthermore, it limits the talent pool by restricting leadership to a specific lineage, potentially excluding capable individuals from outside the ruling family. Non-hereditary succession offers meritocratic potential by allowing



leaders to be chosen based on competence and popular support, rather than birthright. This system provides flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances, enabling alternative leaders to be selected if necessary. (Prescribed rotating or alternating dynastic succession is a hybrid system that counters the growing inequality between elite families, as each dynasty (in turn) identifies the next successor.)

Last but not least, hereditary succession does appear in democratic systems. Smith (2012) finds that 'legacy' candidates enjoy an 'inherited incumbency advantage' (cf. Box 8.2) in both the selection and election stages of their careers. However, the extent of the advantage conferred by inherited incumbency differs greatly depending on the institutional contexts of the electoral system and the candidate recruitment process within parties. Chandra (2016) and Ghosh (2023) look closely at Indian political **dynasties**.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES One key challenge is defining and conceptualizing 'succession,' which can be ambiguous and open to contestation. While it is often seen as the formal transfer of power from one leader to another, this process is rarely straightforward, and may or may not include **ousters** or account for *de facto* rulers highjacking the process (temporary regents or *éminences grises* – cf. Box 2.3 on invisible rule).

In assessing regulated succession, researchers must consider multiple aspects of succession, such as its antecedents, the events creating a power vacuum, the means and procedures of transfer, and its consequences. This entails grappling with the complexities of these stages and acknowledging both the interplay between formal rules and the informal practices that shape succession dynamics, and that all successful successions are **elite pacts** that require negotiation and consultation.

Identifying causal mechanisms and isolating variables constitute another challenge. Succession outcomes are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including institutional structures, informal power dynamics, individual agency, and historical contingencies (e.g., the proximity of eligible candidates to the locus of power at the moment that a ruler is incapacitated). Disentangling these factors requires careful research design and methodological rigor. Additionally, accessing reliable data is difficult, especially in authoritarian regimes where such data may be secretive and unavailable; details of historical data may be lost in time.

Succession dynamics also vary in different regimes, time periods, and cultural contexts. Generalizing findings across diverse settings requires sensitivity to specific historical trajectories and cultural norms. Balancing quantitative and qualitative approaches is crucial. While the former can reveal broad patterns, qualitative methods, like case studies and archival research, provide insights into the nuanced power dynamics that shape individual cases.

REGIONAL VARIATION *Latin America* remains rather under-explored, although Behrend (2021) covers Mexico. Other regions have received much more attention.

Sub Saharan Africa See Ammutabi & Nasong'o 2013 (various case studies). Older publications include Hughes & May 1988 (the Cold War); Govea & Holm 1998 (covering 102 successions from 1963 to 1988); Londregan et al. 1995 (on the relation of ethnic politics to succession); Nwosu 2012; Battera 2023 (for 1990-2020). For the tension between succession and democratic rules in South Africa, see Delius 2021.

MENA Herb (1997; 1999) was one of the first comparative works. For cases and specific topics, see Lucas 2012 (for the Gulf States); Billingsley 2009 (on the role of tribal codes); Stacher 2011; Yates 2022 (for Syria); Joffe 1988 (on Morocco).

Eurasia Above all, contemporary Central Asia, where most founding (personalist) presidents did not have eligible sons, has been the subject of comparative speculation as much as analysis regarding succession. Of course, both have a long tradition (see Box 3.2 on Kremlinology): Ambrosio 2015; Isaacs 2015; McGlinchey 2016; Horák 2018; Lemon 2021; Anceschi 2021.

Indo-Pacific For a comparative analysis of hereditary rule and the dynasties in the region, see Thompson 2012; Purdey 2016; Teehankee et al. 2023; Kenawas 2015. For case studies, see Ebrey 2013 (on China); Schafferer 2023 (on Taiwan); Ockey 2005; Nishizaki 2022 (on Thailand); Kenewas 2023 (on post-Suharto Indonesia); Basu 2016; Chandra 2016; Ghosh 2023 (on India). For the infamous case of North Korea, see Park 2011; Cumings 2012; Park & Park 2022; Kim & Edge 2022; Yates 2022.

NEW FRONTIERS Despite how crucial the topic is for autocratic survival, Large-N historical comparative succession research has only recently gained traction. Its indirect influence on the creation of proto-parliaments, and the ensuing democratization as a result of succession crisis in European monarchies (Kokkonen et al. 2022), and a reappraisal of gender and succession dynamics (Duindam 2021) are but two examples of this burgeoning field.

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Box 5.10 Primogeniture: Optimal Hereditary Succession

Le roi est mort, vive le roi!
(The king is dead, long live the king!)
– traditional proclamation

Primogeniture is a preference in inheritance (of an office or estate) given to the eldest child by law, custom or usage. For **monarchies** this means the throne should go to the oldest child of the ruler, or – in case there is no (legitimate) offspring – to the ruler's younger sibling. Throughout history, most monarchies have been patrilineal, meaning only sons (or brothers) can succeed. Sometimes women were considered if there were no direct male heirs. Matrilineal hereditary rule used to be common in early human kinship communities, but neither anthropologists nor evolutionary biologists can agree amongst themselves on how widespread the phenomenon was, or on the factors that displaced it with patrilineal forms. Yet, up to this day, pockets of this practice can be found in Africa, South and Southeast Asia and among some indigenous peoples in the Americas. In Eurasia it is very rare, although the Picts practiced it from the first until the fourth centuries. Some practices, like the 'Salic Law' (*Lex Salica,* 507-511 CE) were dusted off in medieval Western Europe to explicitly deny any succession by women (or even the male offspring by daughters of rulers) (Woodacre et al. 2003: 414; Middleton 2015). By extension, some of the most powerful women on the throne in Eurasia were usually wives of (deceased) kings or their mothers but seldom their daughters (cf. **female rulers & powerful women in regimes**).

As a **succession** practice, patrilineal primogeniture has many purposes: it prevents the division of a household's *patrimonium*, keeping the estate of the deceased *pater familias* intact. In agricultural societies with dense populations, it was a way to halt the partitioning of land. It was also a way to lower sibling infighting, by providing clear succession rules (traditional legitimacy) and equipping the eldest to defend the inheritance and bestow office (in case siblings challenged the claim). This forced younger siblings to become more ambitious and entrepreneurial (to make their own way and provide for themselves), channeling many into the church or military service. At another level, widespread primogeniture protected the power and prestige of the aristocracy (from trans-generational erosion and diffusion of wealth). From a state-building perspective, it kept aristocratic tax bases intact, making it easier to centrally measure and extract state revenues.

While European monarchic **dynasties** had universally adopted the practice by 1801 – or perished (Kokkonen & Sundell 2014) – in China the custom was introduced as early as the northern Wei (386-535) (McMahon 2013). The Ottomans in contrast, never installed a lasting system of (patrilineal) primogeniture to regulate succession; they either adhered to the (nomadic) Central Asian tradition of 'survival of the fittest' (until the sixteenth century) – by sending all sons (and their retinues) to provinces as governors and letting them fight it out after their father's death – or adopted agnatic seniority from the seventeenth century onward, which is a patrilineal system placing younger brothers before sons in the line of succession (Quataert 2005: 91-92).

Succession practices always meandered between the need to identify competent successors and avoid

succession struggles spilling into civil war. Those descending from nomadic pasts – untethered by strict land ownership – aimed at fostering meritocracy and the display of charisma among eligible candidates, either by appointment or 'open succession', accepting the risk of infighting. At times, even such traditions were adjusted to halt the erosion of the royal estate, for instance, by embracing the *levirate* system, where a widow would be married to a brother of her deceased husband (McMahon 2013: 137-138). A more peaceful alternative would be a variation of the Celtic system of *tanistry* – a (clannish) elite electoral process to choose a capable chief as well as his immediate successor, both of mature age and worthy of leadership, inspiring competition among potential candidates.

A. Kokkonen and A. Sundell (2014) aptly describe the dilemmas of (monarchic) rulers regarding primogeniture, arguing that the risk of elevating an incompetent eldest child to the highest office was still a better alternative to the risk of open succession (violent elite struggles) or the appointment of siblings (who might be capable, but too eager to speed up the process and thus depose the incumbent). The generational age gap of primogeniture allows the grooming of a designated heir, patient enough to inherit power peacefully (Brownlee 2007). Children (unlike siblings) still lack the network (or expertise) to oust their father, nor are such youngsters able to convince other elites that they are competent enough to rule in his stead (e.g., military skill for external defense), thus lowering the threat of ouster for the incumbent. Additionally, the system provides clear succession rules, offering a framework of order and stability (a long time-horizon) to other (non-royal) elites, rallying around the heir-apparent and currying favor, allowing the former to realign their positions and the latter to consolidate power over time.

However, the system is not foolproof. Political crises emerge when monarchs are incapable of ruling, or die young and unexpectedly, either heirless, or with appointed successors still infants or children (too young to rule and unable to produce their own offspring and secure the dynasty), but this is true of all hereditary ruling systems. The main issue with primogeniture is that inexperienced youngsters and children could be unfit to organize and manage a state's external defense. So, in the short run, Kokkonen and Sundell (2014: 448) find that many European polities were hesitant to adopt the practice, until the long-term effects of domestic elite stability paid off and became an attractive feature rendering primogeniture the most common succession method.

In contemporary times, patrilineal primogeniture is still dominant (and effective) among today's surviving autocratic **monarchies**. Hereditary succession has also been identified as a characteristic feature of **personalist rule** or neo-sultanism (cf. **sultanism & neo-sultanism**) where local contexts permit.

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Box 5.11 Harems, Concubines & Consorts

The tree the leopard mounts no other animals dare climb
– Benin proverb

Polygyny has always been an affirmation of male potency in patriarchal ruling systems and "some form of polygamy was the rule rather than the exception in royal courts throughout the world." In most cases it was institutionally regulated and even under systems of Christian monogamy the practice of polygynous mating was common, with mistresses and 'bastards' often able to obtain positions of power and wealth (McMahon 2013: 11).

The foremost sedentary (centralized) polities developed elaborate systems with radical socio-spatial separations between the 'inner and private' and the 'outer and public' into which they sorted (and kept) the household members of rulers. J. Goody (1976: 53) finds that dowry-systems, in which marriage bonds are conditional on the transfer of property to brides, are bound to foster a sharp distinction between 'wives' (formally married with property allocation) and concubines (informal, no property), similarly distinguishing between their offspring's inheritance rights (and 'step-parenthood' animosity). Such cultural differences transferred to the ruling households of such polities would shape the level of institutionalization. For instance, more egalitarian, polygynous systems in Sub Saharan Africa differentiated 'co-wives' according to seniority, but did not have a separate word for 'concubine' (or step-parent, for that matter) (Goody 1976: 63).

This box reflects upon the function of various 'harem systems' as a political institution in different world regions. Slave trading was a foundational pillar to maintain a steady influx of girls, boys, women and men who were forcefully assigned various roles, ranging from handmaids, servants, dancers to eunuchs and concubines. For a select few, upward mobility was possible, but this *"was little compensation for the experience of the many more women and girls* [and boys] *uprooted from their homes and families to be objectified, assaulted, and violated. No matter its size, the royal harem could not account for the untold numbers trafficked into this condition and unable to significantly alter their trajectories"* (Gomez 2018: 302).

A harem (حريم – *ḥarīm* in Arabic) refers to the restricted section within a Muslim household as well as its members, most of them female. While often translated as 'forbidden' or 'unlawful' the Arabic root *h-r-m* also translates as 'sacred,' 'inviolable' or 'taboo' and it is in the latter sense the concept should be interpreted, as 'sanctuary' or 'sacred precinct' (Peirce 1993: 3-4). A sixteenth-century Italian synonym was *serraglio* (*sérail* in French) – derived from the Persian *sarāy* (palace) and probably adapted in contamination with the Latin *seraculum* and *serrare* ('enclosure' and 'to lock up'). On the Indian subcontinent, the word *zenana* exists, from the Persian *zan, zanāna* ('woman, female'). Scholars have noted similarities to the Sanskrit word *anthapura* (अन्तःपुर), translating 'inner apartment' of a household, meaning the practice predated Mughal rule (Sharma 2009).

While embedded in notions of sexual propriety – specifically, the belief that unmarried men and women who might lawfully enter into a sexual relationship must be kept apart – 'sexuality' was not the ordering principle within this part of the household. It is true that Muslim males, historically, could have up to four wives legally, and an unlimited number of (slave) concubines, if they could afford it, but the harem was also the home for children (also boys until they reached puberty), the (widowed) mother, and any unmarried, divorced or widowed female relatives of the husband. In addition, the harem included different classes of female slave servants (and eunuchs), who could be owned by either the women or the men in the family (Peirce 1993: 5-6).

The Ottoman Imperial Harem (Harem-i Hümâyûn) grew out of the need to manage, educate and control a sultan's offspring and integrate his extended family into the state's patronage system in line with each individual member's status. It was run by wealthy and powerful women, who became patrons of the arts and commissioners of fine public buildings in their own right, but were confined to the harem premises, leaving only under the tight surveillance of eunuch guards.

Long before Mehmed II the Conqueror (1432-1481) codified the practice, the fratricide of a new sultan's rival siblings was the norm (usually by strangulation so as not to spill royal blood). Any surviving rival heir to the throne could be become the nexus of an opposing faction at court or – worse – a puppet ruler to legitimize a coup by disgruntled Janissaries (cf. **presidential guards & praetorians**), the sultan's slave regiment).

By the seventeenth century, **succession** was regulated by agnatic seniority (brothers trumping sons), replacing the earlier system of 'open succession,' an unregulated process where sons fought to claim the throne. The ancient practice of royal fratricide (to get rid of the competition) once the throne was assured, now turned into the more humane confinement of younger brothers in the *kafes* (cage), a separate, secluded part of the harem complex, where they were kept under house arrest in luxury with their own servants and (barren) concubines. In this gilded cage brothers could spend decades waiting for their fate to be decided (sudden execution or being called to the throne), resulting in a series of unfit Ottoman rulers, maladapted to the overwhelming reality outside the *kafes*. The use of the *kafes* faded out when the *Topkapı* palace was abandoned in favor of the *Dolmabahçe* palace in 1856. From then only the younger (half-)brothers to the heir were kept in the harem.

In opposition to common belief, and often missed by historical Western sources on the functioning of the Imperial Harem, it was not the sultan's wife or favorite concubine who held the most important position in the harem system, but his own mother, the *valide sultan* (lit. 'mother sultan'). Note that the term was only bestowed on living 'legal' mothers. Biological mothers who passed away before the designated heir became sultan did not receive the title, and instead another legal caretaker

would take her place and sometimes her title (Peirce 1993: 126-127).

Motherhood (not sexuality) was one of the criteria to accord status: A *valide sultan* would get a daily stipend of two-three thousand *akçe* (*aspers* – silver coins) and thus outranked the favorite concubine or chief consort, the *haseki sultan* (*ḫāṣekī sulṭān* – translated as 'exclusively belonging to the sultan'), whose daily stipend would hover around a thousand *akçe*. As the mother of a potential future ruler, her status towered over the sultan's own sisters and aunts (the princesses of the ruling dynasty), despite the fact she had no blood relation to the ruling family and most often had slave origins. *Haseki* was a title for life, and retained in retirement; meaning the period *after* the death of the ruler, but *before* her son ascended the throne – following the logic of seniority – and she became *valide sultan* (Peirce 1993: 127-128). By the late seventeenth century, *haseki* was replaced by the less-prestigious title of *kadın* ('consort') to signal more equality among concubines, as well as to reduce their public influence (Peirce 1993: 104-108).

Of course, not all concubines were elevated to the level of 'favorites' and the harem thus counted a large number of women undocumented by historical records: e.g., mothers of princesses or princes too far removed in lineage to ever ascend the throne. These slave concubines were labeled *umm walad* (mother of their master's child) and according to Islamic Law their offspring would be free from bondage (if the master acknowledged them), meaning the mother could not be sold, and automatically would become free themselves after the master's death (Gomez 2018: 301). Concubines unable to get pregnant were often sold off – underlining the importance of procreation as the harem's basic function.

Other important functions in the harem were: the *daye khatun* (Sultan's wet nurse), a filial relation with great ceremonial status; the *ketkhüda khatun* (harem stewardess) – the senior administrative officer of the harem; and a sophisticated system of servant classes and eunuchs.

The Ottoman harem system was clearly designed to contain the emergence of inimical factions in court (**coup-proofing**). The removal of younger brothers, together with the uncertainty about which wife or concubine would produce the next designated heir, would keep disgruntled factions in the capital from coalescing around one candidate. The influx of outsider (but loyal) slave women and their elevation to top positions (as mothers or favorite consorts) purposefully limited the systematic influence of aristocratic families over ruling dynasties. If anything, the harem system exposed the political precariousness of Ottoman rulers, and highlights the key role of non-Muslim slave women in maintaining the adaptability of this absolute monarchy.

The Mughal Zenana differed from the Ottoman system in that the mothers of the Delhi sultan (*walida*) wielded much less political power, although many rulers revered their sisters and foster mothers (wet nurses of noble descent – *anagas*), bestowing upon them important ceremonial functions, and even the title of *sadr-i-anas* ('chief of women') – head of the *zenana*.

Mughal royal women were less secluded than their Ottoman counterparts. They engaged in international and domestic trade (some even owned fleets), acted as mediators for noblemen, patronized the arts and construction works, some taking key positions in the royal administration. Beyond the extended royal household, the remainder of the *zenana* was made up of entertainers (*kanchani*) and servants (*bandis*). Quite unique were the *(urdu)begis,* a guard regiment composed of female slave warriors, highly skilled with the bow and lance, which existed alongside the traditional *khwaja sara* eunuch guard-servants and their *nazir* supervisors (Lal 1988; Shivram 2007: 375; Sharma 2009: 161-168; Bano 2008).

The Mughal court was often on the move between capitals, so the *zenana* infrastructure spanned several palaces and forts, with only a selection of wives and concubines (with their retinues) traveling alongside the sultan every time. Since Mughal rulers appointed their successors themselves, the *zenana* did not share the Ottoman function of dividing and ruling subversive court factions; although it did serve as an additional line of defense within palaces and, on, average sultans spent most of their down time inside these safe premises. If anything, the *zenana* had a more integrative function in the Mughal empire, accepting girls and eunuchs given as tribute, and routinely marrying off princesses (once they came of age) to local lords with the goal of strengthening the latter's ties to the ruling family.

The Chinese concubine system was likewise designed to foster and manage the male offspring of the current ruler. To avoid jealous reprisals and chaos at court, the system with multiple wives became more institutionalized and hierarchical over time with only one empress or 'principal wife' towering in status over all secondary wives: the latter group roughly divided in royal consorts (妃 – *fēi*) and other concubines (妾 – *qiè*). Throughout the dynasties many complex hierarchy systems would be established, with old categories like *ying* (媵 – *yìng;* additional brides granted as dowry) to be replaced by a plethora of other categories (McMahon 2013: 17-18, 23). The recruitment pool varied: In dynasties where emperors wanted to break the power of aristocratic families, they drafted concubines from commoners; when they wanted to tie the royal family to important elites, they selected women from the nobility (Walthall 2008: 138).

This political world was similarly divided between an inner, household (內 – *nèi*) and an outer, public (外 – *wài*) realm. The whole system was accompanied by prescriptive moral guidelines for the correct, exemplary behavior of all parties, structured by ritual, ceremony and protocol. Like in many other systems eunuchs were primary gatekeepers between both worlds (McMahon 2013: 29, 34, 45).

The emperor's mother (dowager or queen regent) usually asserted most political influence over her son, while the empress was preoccupied with the running of the 'harem' section of the court, which would later be known as the 'back palace' (後宮–*hòugōng*). If the primary wife died, no secondary wife could assume her status. If she failed to produce a son, she would adopt one from the second wives. Any intrigues (like unbridled philandering by the emperor or favoritism toward the sons of concubines) could perturb the conjugal harmony of the ruler and empress, upset this established hierarchy, and thus end up fraying the traditional legitimacy of the royal court. Blood relations between wives – as sisters,



cousins, or aunt and niece – were expected to diminish any jealousy among them (McMahon 2013: 23-27).

The Japanese Shogun (1185-1868) and Korean (*Chosŏn*) dynasties (1392-1910) developed more bureaucratic systems, divided into offices, called the 'Great Interior' (大奥 – *ōoku*) and the 'Inner Court' respectively. Besides the empress, all palace women were formally employed as servants, ranked according to merit and seniority. All were sexually available to their masters, but none were elevated to high positions until they had given birth to a ruler's child. In Japan, only the mother of the heir apparent got a top position. Other legitimate sons were not allowed to stay in the palace. Concubine servants were recruited mostly from middle-class families (often nieces recommended by aunts), groomed from an early age (sometimes as young as three), receiving special training in the arts, crafts, music, and management, and kept in seclusion in the palace. They were a holistic part of court rituals and ceremonies. Of course, they could not marry during their employment, but did meet men in the course of their daily duties, and were also able to visit their families on official leave. Elaborate retirement systems were in place for loyal 'matrons' who had dedicated decades of service to the palace (Walthall 2008: 175-188, 281-294). The institution never operated as a **coup-proofing** measure.

Southeast Asian polities found themselves on a spectrum, with those (on the mainland) closest to Chinese culture, embracing stricter hierarchies that clearly separated a primary wife of noble descent (usually a relative (cousin) of the ruler) from other concubines. B.W. Andaya notes that Islamic rulers in this world region followed the practice of temporarily divorcing wives to marry pregnant *sĕlir* (abbreviation for *silĕrilan* – "chosen ones" in several Indonesian languages) to stay within the designated number of four wives. (Note: women only received the title *sĕlir* after they got pregnant.) Southeast Asian succession did not mandate primogeniture and the region had a valiant tradition of matrilineal **rulership**, so the main function of harem systems was **spectacle politics**, radiating power and prestige through large courts, boosting legitimacy by symbolically linking male virility to land fertility (Walthall 2008: 24-30; Kumar 2003: 62).

African harem systems are understudied, especially non-Islamic and precolonial ones. Although heavily influenced by Islamic practices (and mostly regulated by the same customs), the elevation from slave to 'co-wife' was a cornerstone of (Western) African polities. Slave women and girls were either captured through military conquest, or traded or gifted as tribute to royal courts. Their potential to produce the next male heir would give their territories of origin an important stake in collaborating and identifying with the ruling regime.

Therefore, African rulers often applied a policy of inclusion encompassing co-wives of disparate backgrounds and ethnic origins, indirectly contributing to the political unification of rival factions and remote regions, strengthening state-building through strategically arranged marriages with their freeborn offspring. Moreover, these women brought with them knowledge about the traditions and customs of their homes, and could genuinely advocate for their communities.

In contrast to other systems, F.E.S. Kaplan finds that in some periods African harems were less secluded and more egalitarian, with royal co-wives overtly active in politics, and enrolled in the state's bureaucracy, often granted means of economic independence for herself and her children. The senior (but not necessarily first) co-wife was usually in charge of the harem. Despite the revered role of queen mother, in some cases she had no role in running the king's harem and even resided in a separate palace (as in Benin/Dahomey) (Walthall 2008: 115-135). For instance, in Kano (northern Nigeria) they were co-opted into the state's grain distribution (a tax commodity) and the royal monopoly on indigo-dyed cloth (Gomez 2018: 303; Nast 2005).

In Latin America, we know less of Mayan practices. Takeshi Inomata notes that there was male-female segregation and that women had their own meetings, rituals and spaces, but there is absolutely no evidence of closed harems: Classic Maya court women were highly visible both to other elites and non-elites, even though they remained in the shadow of more prominent men. Still, they actively participated in court politics and rituals, and probably the palace economy (Walthall 2008: 45-64). S.T. Evans finds that the Aztec practice of large female households for rulers and nobility had primarily an economical function (women produced valuable cloth) and thus conveyed splendor, but were not crucial for managing reproduction or **coup-proofing** (Walthall 2008: 219). The same is true for the Incas – the *sapa inca* ('unique leader') who usually married a full-blooded sister as primary wife (*coya*), but could have around a hundred secondary wives (from noble families or conquered peoples). None of their offspring would become rulers; instead, they would be employed in the state bureaucracy (Somervill 2005: 62-63).

To summarize, all harems, other than the polygamy systems in the Americas, developed over time to regulate, monitor, and keep in check the rulers' progeny. All these acted as training centers for slave girls to groom future 'wives' and integrate them in a reward system for loyalty, dangling the ultimate prize – becoming the mother of the next ruler – in front of them.

Almost all had an integrative function, tying noble families, newly conquered territories (and their elites) or valuable interest groups to the royal seat of power by offering them a stake in its survival. This was more pronounced in the less centralized polities of Africa or the expansive Delhi sultanates. The Ottoman harem and Chinese concubine system were elaborate in their coup-proofing function, keeping influential aristocratic families guessing about the next heir, thus countering the emergence of factions. Women were much more than just "borrowed wombs" and their role in *protecting* the ruling dynasty and maintaining authoritarian control over other elites has thus remained overlooked. The higher levels of seclusion in Ottoman and Mughal courts also rendered them safe havens for rulers during mutinies, defended by loyal guard regiments (eunuchs or *urdubegis*).

Egalitarian cultures made less sharp distinctions between principal wives and 'concubines' and greatly determined the level of freedom and power palace women could obtain. All these pre-modern institutions were deeply tied to systems of slavery and servitude, and any 'modern' equivalent under dictatorships, like that of Muammar Qaddafi (Cojean 2013), can only be

established on similar systematic human trafficking, routine abduction and serial rape, but *without* the veil of traditional legitimacy.

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Totalitarian Legacies

The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the dedicated communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, true and false, no longer exists.
– Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)

You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them.
– Ray Bradbury (1920-2012)

Like the societies it engineered, scholars are coming to terms with the heritage of **totalitarianism** and how it differs from **authoritarian legacies** (Borejsza et al. 2006; Tucker 2015). Totalitarian legacies are distinct from other political legacies due to their comprehensive and pervasive impact on society. Unlike **authoritarianism**, which primarily focuses on the maintenance of political power – and thus may tolerate existing social structures if they do not pose a threat – totalitarian regimes aim for a complete societal transformation that affects every aspect of life, including social structures, culture, and even language. This comprehensive reach leaves a profound and lasting legacy that persists long after the regime itself has collapsed (Linz 2000).

Totalitarian regimes engage in systematic social engineering to align all aspects of life with their guiding **ideology**. This involves transforming family structures, educational systems, and leisure activities to fit their ideological mold. The legacies of such deep social penetration can persist even after the regime's fall. For instance, there is significantly lower participation in civil society organizations in post-totalitarian societies than in those with authoritarian legacies (Bernhard & Karakoç 2007), highlighting the destruction of organic social bonds beyond formal structures. In post-communist countries, the mean participation level in civil society organizations is notably lower (0.69) than in countries with an authoritarian legacy (1.13), illustrating the long-lasting effects on civic engagement (Bernhard & Karakoç 2007: 553). The dynamics behind these findings are given greater nuance by Riley and Fernández (2014).

In a way similar to **revolutionary legacies**, these regimes dismantle pre-existing institutions and eliminate potential alternative elites during intense periods of revolutionary upheaval. This creates a void in the post-totalitarian period, often resulting in a continuity of personnel and practices that hinder genuine democratic development. (Former elites transition from political to economic dominance.) The absence of alternatives extends beyond the replacement of figureheads to affect available forms of civic action. The duration of a totalitarian regime plays a crucial role in determining the success of democratization efforts, as seen in the challenges faced by post-totalitarian states in fostering protest



behavior and civic engagement (Tucker 2013; 2015: Linz & Stepan 1996).

Totalitarian regimes manipulate language to eliminate nuance, distort meaning, and hinder independent thought – a concept extensively explored by George Orwell and observed in real-world examples like the USSR. This manipulation extends beyond **propaganda**, affecting data interpretation and reporting during the regime's existence. In post-totalitarian contexts, analyzing data requires careful consideration of the 'wooden language' (Linz 2000) used under the regime, highlighting how deeply ingrained linguistic manipulation can be. Authoritarian regimes use propaganda without necessarily distorting language itself.

Tucker (2013) specifies three enduring linguistic legacies of late-totalitarian ideology. First, it undermines the ability of language to convey meaning about the world by gradually erasing the distinctions between different and even opposing concepts. When words or concepts can mean their opposite, they lose their ability to differentiate aspects of reality, rendering language ineffective and meaningless. Second, this ideology normalizes the use of logical fallacies as standard forms of argumentation. Third, totalitarian legacies perpetuate a fragmented view of the individual as merely a collection of basic needs and fears, stripped of personality, responsibility, and communal identity, making individuals susceptible to manipulation based on these needs and fears.

Filipache (2022) finds that these systems harm individuals by damaging their self-esteem and identity. It discusses the psychological trauma and societal oppression faced by people living under such regimes, using Romania's communist past as a case study. Neundorf and Pop-Eleches (2020) offer a theoretical framework to study the heterogeneous socialization processes of indoctrination in such disparate legacies.

The pursuit of a Utopian vision often leads to a disregard for due process and the rule of law. Thoroughly compromised **judiciaries** were part of a security apparatus aimed at repression and control, not to check, constrain or judge elites and their actions. *"There were 'judges' and 'policemen,' courthouses and 'lawyers,' 'constitutions' and 'law schools.' However, all were entirely subservient to the totalitarian state, eviscerated of their meanings in liberal contexts. Judges and policemen were low-level officials in the united executive hierarchy, trained and disciplined to follow instructions from above. The low salaries of judges, the dilapidated state of their offices and court houses reflected this status. Prosecutors had better salaries and facilities, as befitting their higher position in the same hierarchy"* (Tucker 2015: 60).

Show trials, arbitrary arrests, and extra-judicial killings created a legacy of injustice that is difficult to address in the post-totalitarian period. Even when aiming for retributive justice in the latter, concepts of justice have been warped. In various cases, 'lustration' (Box 3.7) was only partially implemented in post-communist states, indicating that the very framework for achieving justice had been compromised.

Such levels of **repression**, state terror and invigilation erode political **trust**. Totalitarian regimes institutionalize paranoia and encourage citizen surveillance more pervasively than authoritarian regimes. Combined with **indoctrination** and **propaganda**, this fostered a feeling of cynicism and distrust toward political institutions among the populace.

Monistic totalitarian legacies pose significant obstacles to democratic development. Having fostering an environment where pluralism is unfamiliar, they thereby hinder the establishment of democratic institutions. The pervasive legacy of fear and apathy – in line with the epigraph from Ray Bradbury at the top of this entry – further complicates efforts to build these institutions. Additionally, the destruction of independent social organizations leaves citizens unprepared for democratic participation, as they lack the experience and structures necessary for engagement. This is compounded by a legacy of atomization and distrust, which makes rebuilding social capital a challenging endeavor. The intellectual sphere is not immune to these effects, as some public intellectuals remain attracted to totalitarian ideas even after regime change, perpetuating the influence of these ideologies.

Last but not least, the transition from a state-controlled market resulted in significant economic turmoil. This was seen in post-Soviet states, riddled by **systemic corruption** during the 1990s – a decade marked by hyperinflation, asset stripping, and the rise of oligarchs (since rapid privatization processes favored former elites).

Understanding totalitarian legacies requires recognizing their multifaceted nature and persistence over generations. They continue to shape social, political, and cultural landscapes in subtle and obscure ways long after regime change. **Totalitarianism** leaves a distinct mark on the social, political, economic, architectural, educational, linguistic, etc., fabric of these polities. Nonetheless, it is necessary to go beyond the commonalities between totalitarian regimes because their differences are the key to analyzing the variations in post-communist pathways (Bozóki et al. 2017).

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Transitions

You can do anything you like with bayonets except sit on them.
– Prince Talleyrand (1754-1838)

The principal imperative and instinct of non-democratic regimes is self-preservation and survival (Izquierdo-Brichs & Serra-Massansalvador 2021: 1-39). Yet no regime in the world, whether autocratic or democratic, goes unchanged and unchallenged forever. The changes it encounters may come from within (internal reform, personal reshuffle of elite members, coordinated ascendance of the new ruler – succession) or from the outside (**coup** d'état, **revolution**, **foreign invasion**, collective action of the **opposition**). To meet such challenges, a regime possesses various tools, depending on its internal features and the nature of the challenge, and inevitable transitions may take various shapes and occur in accordingly different circumstances (even violent ones). After all, the change of supreme powerholder(s) represents a significant change for the entire system of power constructed around the leader(s), and may even result in an existential threat to the polity if the transition process goes wrong.

This entry concerns the internal dynamics of regime transitions – that is, it does not address transitions caused by the fatal intervention of significant external actors initiating the process (foreign military intervention, revolution, etc.). It explores the factors that play a role in power transfers from one group or individual to another. It is worth mentioning that a transition from a form of autocratic rule does not automatically imply **democratization**, or even a 'better' form of autocracy, accompanied by better governance.

DEFINITION A transition in comparative authoritarianism means a significant, fundamental change in an existing authoritarian power structure that brings a new group to power to influence policy and leadership choice. In contrast to intra-regime power transfers (a palace **coup** or a **succession**), in this case the composition of the previous ruling group is replaced by another **ruling coalition** made up of stakeholders from different regions, religions, ethnicities, or tribes. With reference to the theoretical framework of Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), both the **winning coalition** and **selectorate** are affected by such transitions. At times such a power shift can eliminate civilian collaborators from the inner circle or replace one military faction with another (Geddes et al. 2018: 6-7). Depending on their context, such changes may result in a fundamental alteration in the nature and execution of governance, recomposing a new blend of formal and informal institutions and practices.

SEE ALSO For **ousters** driven by actors outside the regime, see **revolution** and **foreign invasion**. A coup d'état is usually committed by state actors, quite often regime actors (see 'palace coups' under **coup**). Purely internal processes fall under **succession**, and require at least some degree of coordination and negotiation. **Democratization** usually occurs once divided regime elites (in part) side with actors pushing for liberalization. The paradigmatic assumption that all transitions bend toward democracy is called 'transitology' (see Box 5.3).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Given the current position of autocracies globally, and the rise of authoritarianism in spheres previously considered democratic (Apolte 2022: 162), it is difficult to overestimate the study of autocratic systems, regimes and governance features, and all transitions merit a closer look.

Understanding these transitions helps scholars and policymakers predict and manage future changes, offering opportunities for policy learning and adaptation. By examining past transitions, stakeholders can identify successful strategies and avoid previous mistakes, leading to more effective governance and policy-making. Furthermore, political transitions are often accompanied by significant social, economic, and political upheavals, especially when transitions fail and result in state collapse (see **state fragility & failure)**.

Analyzing these processes aids in mitigating negative impacts and promoting stability and development during and after transitions. Additionally, transitions can drastically affect **human rights** and governance structures, making it essential to study these changes to promote democratic values and protect human rights during periods of political change.

Distinguishing between transitions from authoritarianism to democracy and those from one form of authoritarianism to another is essential due to the fundamentally different dynamics and outcomes involved. Transitions to democracy (**democratization**) involve building new democratic institutions and practices, whereas transitions within authoritarianism often involve power consolidation or redis-



tribution among elites. The strategies and policies required to support a transition to democracy differ from those needed to manage a transition within an authoritarian regime. For example, promoting civil society and political pluralism is crucial to democratization, while maintaining stability and elite cohesion are more relevant in authoritarian transitions.

For the scholarly community, distinguishing between these transitions permits more precise theoretical frameworks and empirical research, which require adequate **classifications & typologies**.

In addition, international organizations and foreign governments often tailor their support and interventions based on the type of transition. Understanding the specific needs and challenges of each transition type ensures that **foreign aid** and **democracy support & assistance** are effective and appropriate.

ORIGIN Western scholarship has started the in-depth study of autocratic transitions, especially following the development and expansion of democracy studies (O'Donnell et al. 1991) and the (presumed) necessary link with markets and economic prosperity, thus framing **democratization** as a means of political modernization (Rustow 1970: 337-363). Now that the vision of the ultimate prevalence of democracy at the 'end of history' has collapsed, and the global turn to democracy has not materialized, the time has come for a greater focus on the internal mechanisms of autocracies.

At present, significant attention has been paid to the countries of the former Soviet Union and the dynamics of their (in)complete democratization (incomplete state-building). This can be explained by their geopolitical importance to Europe and the momentum of the **color revolutions**. Previously, the decolonized and newly independent countries of Africa and Asia (Van den Bosch 2021) and Latin America (Stoner & McFaul 2013; Brinks et al. 2014) were the main focus after the start of the third wave of democratization (see Box 6.3).

Undoubtedly, the unmet expectations of a looming widespread democratization partly stemmed from researchers' own assumptions and general popular belief; however, in some cases, the heads of the newly independent (post-Soviet) states did play with the idea of introducing at least some elements of democracy and liberalism – before changing their minds and opting to consolidate and secure their own power instead (Isaacs & Frigerio 2019).

LITERATURE In the 1970s and the 1980s, research on autocracies was predominantly undertaken in opposition to studies of democracy and democratic diffusion, at the expense of non-democratic forms of governance (Huntington 1991).

However, the dissolution of the bipolar world in the 1990s, and the democratization of East European countries, while initially encouraging democratic optimism, occurred side by side with the persistence of authoritarianism in other regions. Academic debate turned on both the perceived rollback (Diamond, 2015) and the specific conditions undermining or supporting democratization, such as the level and direction of economic development (Geddes 1999: 115-144) and the role of institutions in the back-and-forth processes (Wright & Escribà-Folch 2012: 283-309). Other authors argue that the perceived democratic slowdown is more a correction of the initial excessive optimism than a genuine retreat (Levitsky & Way 2015: 45-58), and in part a reaction to the decline of external autocracy-sustaining patronage and aid (Marinov & Goemans 2014: 799-825).

The debate on **democratization** and **autocratization** has so far proceeded in tandem, with growing contribution from non-Western contexts; it is likely to extend further (Mohamedou & Sisk 2017; El-Affendi & Al Anani, 2021). Besides growing academic inclusiveness, the research reflects rising global non-democratic actors and their normative influence, especially the People's Republic of China.

Academic and political research into the persistence and even prosperity of autocratic regimes naturally explores the reasons for their survival, evolution and diffusion, attentive to the dynamics within the regimes and to external, systemic causes.

Abandoning the disputable democracy-dictatorship dichotomy, sectoral and topical approaches were developed to study autocracies, including regime changes and the evolution of regimes in the autocratic realm. Among these, there is the seminal work of Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, which examines the economic aspects and functioning of nondemocratic regimes and their transitions (Acemoglu & Robinson 2001; 2006). Other vital works focus on different factors, such as institutions in autocracies (Gandhi 2008) or their motivations for adapting seemingly democratic institutions to local authoritarian contexts (Schedler 2006).

However, the transition literature covers a myriad of autocratic transition types, and their consequences regarding regime stabilization, civic participation, as well as system analyses of dictatorships in the international arena. A semi-independent research tradition has sprouted from each of these topics, as shown below.

CLASSIFICATIONS Different transition scenarios have been devised based on various dyads between the previous regime type and how its power structure stands up to changes (A), the mode of transition itself (B), or the actors driving the changes (C). All these factors have been known to affect transition scenarios and the likelihood of democratization. Whether transitions are for the better or the worse, their effects (D) on the regime and the rulers are studied separately.

Sorted by regime type (A) As covered by the section on **classifications & typologies** the **Geddes, Wright & Frantz** classification distinguishes between (a) personalist rule, (b) single-party regimes, (c) military regimes and (d) monarchies (Geddes et al. 2014). For each regime type, game theory is applied to the internal power constellation to determine the (most likely) **exit options** for rulers and thus their most likely transition scenario.

Note that all transitions are power transfers, but not all power transfers are transitions. The differ-

ence is sometimes difficult to classify (because new leaders might radically alter the organizational basis of their regime after taking supreme power); however, a key indicator of the type of change is whether the power transition was planned by the existing regime (managed transition) or not.

Personalist rule, as a key regime feature, is defined by the supreme, unconstrained, arbitrary power of the leader as a person rather than of the office or institution they occupy and represent. (This does not necessarily denote omnipotence, however.)

The critical condition of a personalist regime transition is the transfer of *de facto* power, and not merely the nomination of another face to occupy a formal office. Examples of fictitious or incomplete transitions can be found in the Putin-Medvedev tandem in Russia; following the appointment of Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in Kazakhstan; or in President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov's promotion of his son Serdar to higher office, while still hold the reins, in Turkmenistan. In all of these cases, the previous presidents retained power despite formally leaving office. Nevertheless, in the Kazakh case, the so-called Bloody January events in 2022 demonstrate the possibility of a formal succession turning into a genuine regime transition.

Depending on the context, informality can play a significant role in the arrangement and distribution of power, stretching from being one functional component among others to playing the decisive role in communication (instead of hollowed-out institutions) (Ezrow & Frantz 2011; Betts & Huntington 1985: 141).

Usually, there are two principal, possibly fatal challenges to this regime type: the death or incapacity of the ruler or a significant blow to the ruler's economic sources, which holds his power base together through rent distribution. The rich research on personalist autocracies concludes that, given the organization of the power base under an individual rather than an institution, such regimes rarely survive their leaders (Ulfelder 2005: 311-334), as too many power links need to be rearranged around the new leader. Furthermore, if the elite is uncertain about the future sustainability of economic rents (for example, when the president becomes seriously ill and there is a high risk of death), this uncertainty might even lead to a preemptive strike and an attempt to impose a new guarantor of stability (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz 2016: 156-171). De-personalization can also happen under certain conditions (Van den Bosch 2024).

Single-party regimes – even in this regime type, individual politicians and other actors may prosper and navigate their affairs outside of party structures. Nonetheless, the party and its related structures are vital for every major decision or political appointment. This does not necessarily mean strict adherence to every single written rule of the party (for example, a leader might be selected by informal consensus). However, the party framework serves as the main reference to integrate new recruits and validate their loyalty, assigns a hierarchical structure inside the regime network to identify key decision-makers, doles out **patronage** and co-opts challengers. The party oversees military structures and often creates its own militia or paramilitary to protect its supreme power-holders (**coup-proofing**).

Party regimes usually set up procedures for the succession to the highest office; therefore, when they have consolidated, they can enjoy a longevity sometimes spanning multiple generations. In the case of revolutionary regimes, where the party alone bears public legitimacy, generational turnover within the party can almost mimic regime change. The first generation of 'true' revolutionaries usually shared a different threat perception, ideological fervor and/or *esprit de corps* than their successors, who focus more on stabilizing and running the system from a bureaucratic perspective. The change might also involve the demise of a charismatic first-generation leader and his replacement by a collegial elite pact (Dimitrov 2013; Smith 2005: 421-451; Herz 1952: 19-40).

Military regimes – when the state is controlled by soldiers following a **coup** – take different forms. Its rulers do not necessarily represent the leading positions in the state, but the **junta** determines who occupies critical positions and controls the main political strategies of the state. The main source of their **power** is the (near-)monopoly on the physical repression of civilians. Their effectiveness depends on their capacity to intervene in civic politics and the state economy, both in the short term (such as the cyclical interventions of the Pakistani military) and in the long term (e.g., Pinochet's rule in Chile). They often pose as a non-politicized, effective, stabilizing force in opposition to corrupt, incompetent politicians.

Any internal power transition requires respecting the formal military hierarchy, making the regime vulnerable to other ambitious individuals. Alternatively, the military may select a new civilian leader and hold on to power behind the scenes, especially when large-scale public opposition and unrest are likely to undermine the regime's legitimizing image of stability. In such cases, a consolidated military dictatorship needs to rely on civilian infrastructure and institutions to sustain long-term rule. Such (over-)reliance renders it structurally vulnerable as non-military institutions tend to clash with military control and instill mission creep.

Forced transitions open up other scenarios, in which the military can negotiate an exit with opposition forces (**elite pacts**) and return to barracks, rather than engage in open war with the masses or in civil war (being forced to fight its own troops). Such transitions might lead to **democratization**, but they usually include immunity provisions for the key military decision-makers and do not dismantle their power base, thus providing options for continued political interference.

Monarchies have been widely prevalent throughout history. As long as the source of the ruler's legitimacy was presumed to be divine will or tradition, challenging the power arrangement meant challenging the prevailing order (although criticism and deposition of incompetent individual rulers could emerge – see 'regicide' under **assassination**). Monarchical regime changes have been closely linked to much broader socio-political reforms (and **revolu-**



tions) outside the regime. Internally, transitions mostly take the form of (mostly hereditary) **succession**, although, historically, monarchies have known a plethora of leader transfer methods.

At present, absolute monarchical bastions remain in the Islamic world areas of the Middle East and in the Indo-Pacific. The Middle Eastern regimes proved resilient *vis-à-vis* the most significant wave of popular discontent in the region, the so-called **Arab Spring**, due to a combination of factors, such as stronger distributive power (utilizing rents from **resource curses** to lower economic discontent), religious legitimacy and a stable security apparatus. Some, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain experienced coup attempts, which the ruling elites frequently attributed to alleged foreign sponsorship (Scholvin 2009: 78-96).

Mode of transition (B) Changing the supreme power holder, **succession**, is mostly defined as a planned regime decision, and entails the orchestrated public introduction of a new ruling agent (person) to the highest office. When endorsing a successor, the existing ruling elite counts on preserving the regime as a whole, including the *status quo* of power distribution within the network. In contrast, a regime change assumes the fundamental reorganization of the attached power sources and power structure.

There are two primary ways to pigeon-hole modes of transition, by measuring the accompanying violence (violent/non-violent) and by measuring control over the process (controlled/managed/uncontrolled).

Violence may emerge as a pretext for regime change, for example, by triggering public protests to speed up the collapse of a regime. Usually, some degree of violence can be found in any form of non-democratic regime transition, because new elites need to ensure their position when taking over the economic and security capacities of the state, which requires pushing out their predecessors.

Various factors may contribute to the intensity of violence. In general, lack of control and uncertainty strengthen the risk of violence, incentivizing clashes between various intra-state actors, such as the security services (Crescenzi 1999: 192-212; Gledhill 2012: 43-82), who fight to ensure their position in the new order.

When new rulers feel insecure or need to establish their ideological credentials, they may feel the need to deter the previous elite from even contemplating an attempted comeback. In the most extreme situations, rulers may strive for full elimination – the Bolsheviks murdering the Russian tsar and his whole family during the Russian civil war being a notorious example. A much less Draconian example is Kazakhstan after Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's emancipation. His predecessor Nursultan Nazarbayev's affiliates were persecuted to various degrees (**purges**); however, for the sake of Tokayev's international reputation, to preserve the rest of Nazarbayev's legacy as founder of the state, and the necessity of co-opting existing power structures, the purges were limited to the political level. Hence, violence may take place both during the regime change and afterwards, as a consequence of creating a new political arrangement. In less stable and less consolidated autocracies, the moment of regime change may inspire opportunistic actors within the state to use violence in order to demand more concessions from the new rulers in exchange for their loyalty.

Furthermore, some political systems may be especially prone to violence during regime change. Gino Vlavonou demonstrates such a risk in the case of neo-patrimonial, personalist system in the Central African Republic, where every regime change unbalanced and jeopardized vital economic lifelines to accommodate multilevel social groups and their clients, thus ousting former elites (cutting them off from rents) and providing them with strong incentives to fight back (Vlavonou 2016: 123-142).

Regime change imposed or initiated from abroad may contain elements of *Putsch*, coup or revolution, except when it operates indirectly and incentivizes domestic actors to act on their own – for example, by increasing the pressure for change through imposing **sanctions** (Levin & Lutmar 2020). Although a foreign actor may succeed in deposing the existing elite, installing a durable regime afterwards, whether democratic or autocratic, might be a much tougher challenge, as multiple great powers have realized in recent decades in the case of Afghanistan.

Sorted by actor (C) During regime change, individual decisions and preferences may determine the outcome. Elites in autocracies expect much harsher treatment than their counterparts in democracies due to the absence of the rule of law, institutional guarantees of safety and the low potential of making a comeback in the future (Goemans 2008: 771-794). A credible chance of retaining their freedom with protections for the property rights of former leaders and their affiliates might significantly lower their urge to fight to the very end. Naturally, the reluctance of battered leaders to use violence against protesters, even at the cost of their own position, can itself be a violence-reducing factor, as in the case of Sooronbay Jeenbekov in Kyrgyzstan during the 2020 protests.

In addition to leaders and their allies, there are two relevant actors who may challenge the regime in power: those in the ruling class and those excluded by the regime (Gandhi 2008; Schedler 2013). Researchers have elaborated on the numerous context-specific mechanisms in which actors play a role, on how their motivations may shape transition dynamics (Driscoll 2015), and on regime responses to such threats and challenges (Svolik 2015; Magaloni & Kricheli 2010: 123-143).

Theories of political transitions often focus on different sets of actors, and this shapes their perspectives and conclusions. For instance, actor-centered transition theories emphasize the strategic interactions among political elites, highlighting how their negotiations and power struggles can drive or hinder regime change. In contrast, structuralist approaches might focus more on the role of institutions and economic actors, considering how entrenched systems, institutional legacies, and economic interests influence transitions. The inclusion of civil and **uncivil society** actors, such as NGOs and

grassroots movements, underscores the bottom-up pressures that can catalyze democratization, while the exclusion of these actors might lead to an overemphasis on elite-driven processes. Theories that incorporate international actors examine the external influences on transitions, such as foreign aid and diplomatic interventions, which can significantly alter the dynamics of regime change. By including or excluding certain actors, theories can either provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of transitions or risk oversimplifying the complex interplay of forces that drive political change. Regimes and repertoires (see Box 5.8) also matter, meaning that transitions' contestation script builds on previous interactions between such actors.

At times, intra-elite clashes resulting in regime change and the ouster of **incumbents** can take place in weak and unstable autocracies, in which multiple groups compete for power by electoral and other means, perhaps even utilizing public discontent against each other. The 2010 protests in Kyrgyzstan are sometimes analyzed through this lens (Collins 2011: 150-164). In this perspective, civil war resulting or accompanying regime change could constitute an extreme example. Frameworks of **patronalism** are well-equipped to capture such intra-elite infighting.

The effects of transitions (D) Not only is the change in leadership important for the study of political regimes, but also its aftermath – in particular, the fate of the previous autocratic ruler, his close allies and the winning coalition.

Autocratic leaders' expectations about their post-tenure fate significantly influence regime behavior during transitions. Leaders fearing severe consequences, such as exile or death, are more likely to engage in aggressive action to maintain power. This is particularly evident in **personalist regimes**, where power is concentrated in one individual, often leading to violent ousters and harsh post-tenure outcomes.

Factors affecting leaders' post-tenure expectations include regime type, economic performance, and time in office. Poor economic conditions and longer tenures increase the likelihood of violent transitions and negative outcomes. Additionally, reliance on foreign aid and political instability in neighboring countries heighten the risk of adverse fates, prompting leaders to take aggressive actions to stave off potential ousters (Frantz et al. 2014).

The method by which regimes come to power in the first place also plays a role. Leaders who come to power through irregular means often face irregular and violent exits (see 'coup traps' in Box 5.2). In contrast, regimes with institutionalized succession processes tend to ensure safer retirements for outgoing leaders. Understanding these dynamics helps explain why some autocratic regimes are more prone to conflict and less likely to democratize during transitions. Leaders who anticipate severe post-tenure consequences are more likely to cling to power and engage in belligerent actions to prevent their ouster, affecting regime behavior during transitions (Frantz et al. 2014).

Kate Gillespie and Gwenn Okruhlik (1991: 77-95) use the example of corruption-linked political cleanups to illustrate the relationships between new and old elites based on the way they came to power. In a post-coup situation, the newcomers have an incentive to continue assaulting the old elite both to legitimize their action and to prevent revanchist actions. On the contrary, post-succession and post-election situations require maintaining the perception of continuity, regardless of the degree of genuine regime change behind the scenes.

Kai A. Konrand and Stergios Skaperdas (2007: 623) outline two general approaches to negotiations regarding (mainly) the fates of outgoing during leadership transition in non-democratic regimes, a 'conclave strategy' and a '*divide et impera* strategy.' In the latter, a new leader strengthens their power at the expense of the predecessor's elite, usually stripping them of their power and position. The conclave strategy provides space for the survival of even those in the elite ranks who were 'defeated,' assuming they are willing and able to demonstrate sufficient and credible loyalty.

Escribà-Folch (2013) examines the post-exit fate of dictators (**exit options**), focusing on regime types and performance. He finds that **personalist regimes**, characterized by concentrated power and patronage, are more likely to result in dictators being exiled, imprisoned, or killed. Anceschi (2021: 673) confirms that every completed power transition includes 'de-personalization' – removing the influence of the former leader – and 're-personalization' by the usurper. This process is highly relevant for building public legitimacy, but also to prevent the previous regime from attempting a return. The dynamics of succession are more context-dependent, and the mode of transition affects these processes (Van den Bosch 2024).

Military and personalist leaders face higher risks of imprisonment compared to monarchs or leaders of single-party regimes. Economic crises and military defeats increase the likelihood of punishment for dictators, as poor performance signals incompetence and corruption (Escribà-Folch 2013).

Military regimes, while remaining threats to their successor regimes (and thus a likely target for repression post-exit – see Frantz et al. 2014), are nevertheless more agreeable to a transition to democracy, because they expect that punishment – including death – would be less likely from a new democratic order than from other dictators (Debs 2016).

Dictators from party-based regimes (**single-party regimes**) also face less punishment if succeeded by democracies, as the latter often provide exit guarantees (see **elite pacts**) for former elites. Dominant party regimes can safeguard former elites' interests by leveraging party institutions to mobilize support and maintain power in new democratic systems, thus preventing punishment. These regimes often perform well in post-transition elections, ensuring favorable exit options for former elites and reducing exit costs. In Communist Europe's single-party systems, transitional justice was avoided because **opposition** members had collaborated with the political police. Consequently, new party leaders upheld



promises of amnesty to avoid exposing their own past. Such negotiated transitions can protect former elites, ensuring a peaceful and stable political shift (Escribà-Folch 2013: 163).

Escribà-Folch and Krcmaric (2017: 4) describe the risks for the leaders of the transition process *per se*. If the transition does wrong, or if the relationship with the new leader deteriorates, a ruler may expect severe retribution or punishment from the new elites. Such punishment may include being stripped of power and wealth, even imprisonment or death, including for family, relatives and other close associates.

Hence, regarding post-transition exit options, leaders are likely to seek refuge abroad in exile. There are several reasons why exiled rulers seek to stay in foreign countries relatively close to their home countries, running from a leader's limited radius of action (if fleeing in haste) to the opportunity of indirectly influencing the situation at home.

Conversely, some countries may have an incentive to offer refuge to deposed autocrats. One is the motivation to provide shelter to avoid their fighting to the bitter end, thus prolonging the power struggle and related violence. The reputation of the leader also plays a role in whether they are welcomed or barred entry (see Mogadishu line in Box 3.12); and this signals the difference between Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the former shah of Iran (who eventually ended up in the US), and the ousted war criminals Charles Taylor of Liberia and Mengistu Haile Mariam (Ethiopia), who were denied entry to several countries due to their human rights abuses or active international arrest warrants. In Libya, Muammar al-Qaddafi's inability to find a country that would realistically host him safely may have contributed to this dictator's decision to prolong his fight for survival in the civil war.

Understanding what happens to dictators after they leave power provides valuable insights into predicting the behavior of autocratic regimes. It can help us assess how leaders are ousted, their likelihood of transitioning to democracy, and the policies they may implement while they are battered, but still in office. Under pressure, a leader who expects exile, imprisonment, or execution after being deposed will make very different decisions than one who anticipates a peaceful retirement – especially in matters of international conflict (Frantz et al. 2014).

MEASUREMENT The comparative analysis of regime transitions emerged hand-in-hand with designing regime typologies (Alvarez et al. 1996: 3-36; Gasiorowski et al. 1996: 469-483). They have also accompanied the debate between transitologists (Box 5.3), who assume a dichotomy between autocracies and democracies, and incrementalists, who emphasize a continuum between the two (Maerz et al. 2021).

Geddes et al. (2014: 313-331) have made the best-known and probably most frequently employed autocracy-autocracy dataset on regime change in the critical post-1990s period. It still serves as a valuable referential framework for studying transitions. Another dataset designed to study democratization, by Hadenius and Teorell (2007), updated by Wahman et al. (2013), finds that electoral institutions matter in transitions to democracy.

According to the regime transitions dataset between 2000 and 2015 elaborated by Gianni Del Panta (2019: 139-155), after the fall of a dictatorship, it was almost twice as likely that a new authoritarian regime would be installed than there would be steps toward democratization. Alongside criticism of an inherent expectation of democratization in the 1990s, the 'failure of democratization' should be considered a valid criterion in cases where there was a provable attempt to introduce democracy.

Newer datasets have deepened our perspective, looking beyond the unified regime layer to obtain richer and more nuanced understanding of regimes' features and their actors' agendas (Bjornskov & Rode 2018; Maerz et al. 2023).

The *Episodes of Regime Transformation* (ERT) dataset (Maerz et al. 2023), which allows a unified analysis of **democratization** and **autocratization**, addresses the limitations of previous approaches by considering regime transformation as an uncertain and continuous process. It finds that not all episodes of transformation lead to actual regime transition. Only about 40% of autocracies that liberalize transition to democracy, while 77% of democracies experiencing autocratization eventually break down.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Research about transitions under authoritarian rule faces the same challenges as any other research concerning autocracy – including a lack of available, verifiable data. Power transitions are usually the most vulnerable and uncertain moments in authoritarian life cycles, and their stakeholders voluntarily share even less credible information than usual. Many regime changes remain a black box for many years; others are lost in time, with valuable data destroyed in their chaotic aftermaths.

Because of the lack of credible information, the difference between regime change and **succession** might not be very clear in some cases, and even regime change may predate or follow formal succession by a significant period of time. The criteria and thresholds to classify changes as either one or the other, predetermine research findings.

Furthermore, as all regimes evolve over time, transition trends change. The patterns of change are influenced by a myriad of factors, including the geopolitical situation, technological and economic opportunities – or else they are closely linked to information-sharing and **authoritarian learning** and **collaboration**. Since these factors often have a transnational character, transitions may occur in clusters, perceived as waves of democratization or autocratization (see Box 6.3).

Specific methods may help overcome these blind spots, such as detailed process-tracing (Pedersen & Beach: 2019) or comparative case studies. Furthermore, as a consequence of the fast-growing literature on autocracies, prevalent regime typologies have become more nuanced and hyper-specific, and therefore sometimes terminologically confusing, with categories that do not fully overlap, further

complicating quantitative comparisons. On the other hand, the higher capacity for research has opened more opportunities for qualitative and context-specific understanding.

For example, special attention needs to be paid to the situation when the founding generation of revolutionary regimes or regimes of newly established states is in the process of disappearing, either politically or because of old age. The 'founding aureole' is a unique, hardly transferable legitimization tool, allowing them to remain in power even when their political and economic performance was poor. Regardless of how they ascended to power, the subsequent second generation of leaders must inevitably find another model for legitimizing and enforcing their rule. Usually, in this second phase, much more attention is paid to the economic performance of the regime and anti-corruption campaigns – marking two fundamentally different types of transitions with different sets of data for comparison (Levitsky & Way 2013: 5-17).

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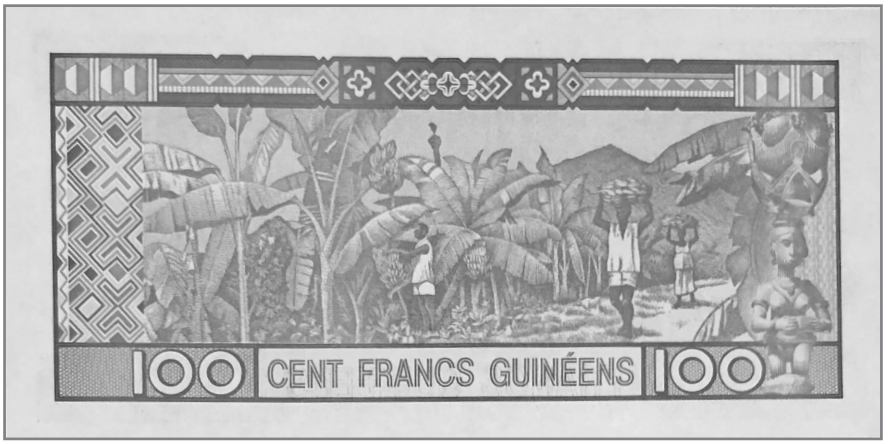
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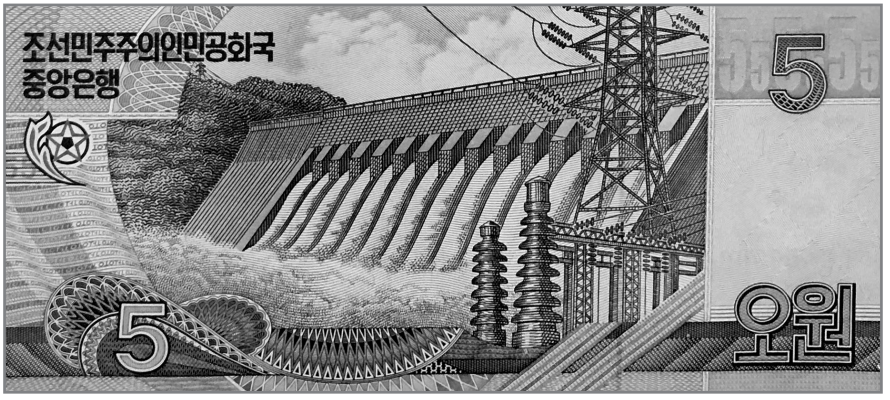
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SECTION 6
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS







100 Francs, Guinea (1998-2012), depicting a collective peasant work scene in a plantation of bananas.

500 Kip, Lao People's Democratic Republic (1988), depicting workers harvesting coffee beans in Boliven Plateau.

5 Won, Democratic People's Republic of (North) Korea (2006), featuring the Hwanggang hydroelectric dam and power station.



Arab Spring

The people want....
– Protestors across the Arab geography (2011)

The Arab Spring refers to the series of popular uprisings and revolutions that began in Tunisia (Dec. 2010-Jan. 2011) and traveled across the Middle East and North Africa. Its implications and consequences are still in the offing. This tsunami of bottom-up political change rebuffed the notion of 'Arab exceptionalism' (see Box 6.1) that had long exiled the region from studies and expectations of democratization.

DEFINITION The Arab Spring can be defined as the set of uprisings and revolutions traveling from Tunisia and across the region (Sadiki 2015a). Protestors demanded freedom and dignity, seeking to oust dictators in countries where various brands of authoritarianism had entrenched repression, corruption, and underdevelopment since independence from colonial rule in the mid-twentieth century. Chanting in public squares from Egypt's Tahrir (Sadiki 2012) to Bahrain's Pearl Roundabout, protestors also made adept use of technological tools such as social media (Tufeki 2011). Initially successful in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, publics removed rulers and created democratic openings in a series of processes that began to dismantle authoritarian institutions. Reverberations of the Arab Spring were felt across the entire region, including Saudi Arabia and Palestine (Haddad et al. 2012). The revolutions came up against counterrevolutions, however. In some cases, they devolved into armed conflict (Libya, Syria, Yemen, and later Sudan). By Summer 2021, the coup in Tunisia cemented the counterrevolutionary trend (Mnasri 2023) and democratic degeneration has taken hold across the board.

SEE ALSO A number of concepts and phenomena themselves 'sprang' from the **protests** and popular uprisings, and **revolutions** beginning in 2011. In its initial changes, the Arab Spring opened the door to **democratization** through parliamentary and presidential elections and new constitutions (Sadiki 2014). The backlash against these revolutions sparked a number of counterrevolutions by authoritarian leaders, eventuating in democratic setbacks.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE This was the first set of regional uprisings since independence from European (British and French) rule. Regional post-independence structures came unstuck in the Arab Spring. Accumulating and interrelated problems became unsustainable. These were economic (dependency, crony capitalism and liberalization), political (monarchical and republican authoritarianism operating through repression, clientelism, and corruption), and social (dashed and frustrated expectations where publics did not find the sought-after freedom or self-realization promised by independence).

Normatively, the Arab Spring is rooted in an ongoing popular mobilization or *hirak* (حراك), years and decades in the making before 2011 (Sadiki 2016). This traveling peoplehood was an intensified version presaged, for example, by the popular bread riots of the 1970s and 1980s in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. In the latter, marginalized publics protested the withdrawal of state subsidies compelled by international financial institutions, paradoxically resulting in some form of political liberalization in the respective countries. Hence, the Arab Spring was a riposte to Orientalist accounts that attributed passivity and acquiescence to authoritarianism to the region's publics. The Arab Spring uprisings demonstrated the moral repositories of protestors, who invoked values not far from the familiar Western liberal ones: freedom, justice, equality, inclusiveness, gender parity. Above all, the Arab Spring confirmed the unequivocal agency of Arabs for whom neither authoritarian rulers nor Western Orientalists or policymakers actually 'spoke.'

Pedagogically, the Arab Spring lends itself to learning more about the bottom-up dynamics of change and what happens below the state. Specifically, it draws attention to the forces and discourses contributing to a new brand of politics (cooke 2022), one that interrogates post-independence history marked by rigid authoritarian rule. The variety of Arab authoritarianisms, both monarchical (see **Arab monarchies**) and republican (see Box 4.5 on Baʿath parties), can be summarized by the absence of several features critical to democratic governance: participation and contestation, the rule of law, and a vibrant civil society. In this regard, the Arab Spring introduces a new stock of values, marshalled by individuals and groups, conducive to democratic practice. If allowed to thrive, this 'democratic learning' (Sadiki 2015b) could represent the promise of evolution of democratic government in the region.

A second pedagogical implication of the Arab Spring is that its diverse cases offer live and contemporary material for deep learning in classroom practices. Since 2011 there has been a proliferation of subaltern voices that 'speak' and express agency. From Morocco to Yemen, the varied unfolding of protests, uprisings, and revolutions provides abundant resources for investigation. The experiences and struggles of political parties, civil society organizations, activists, and former prisoners who have penned poignant memoirs supply a rich canvas of stories about social and political change.

ORIGIN The term is an English neologism applied to the Arabic-speaking region. Its translation in Arabic is *ar-rabīʿ al-ʿarabī* (الربيع العربي), and commonly used across the region. On the one hand, the term rebuts the *exclusivity* of the concept, in this case extending to the Arab World. The idea of 'Spring' hearkens back to Prague, the **color revolutions**, the historic 'Spring of Nations,' etc. However, these other (Western) instances of spring are analogous to the ones in the locale. In this, 'Arab Spring' also signals a *connectiv-*

ity to prior events. For instance, the Tunisian 'Spring of 1968' was replete with university student activism that preceded that of Paris and other European capitals, coinciding with a worldwide wave of university student unruliness at the time. Thus, the moral symbolism of political and social rebirth (Sadiki & Saleh 2024) resonates in the Arab setting.

LITERATURE Some works have approached the phenomenon comparatively, in edited collections (Lynch 2014; Brownlee et al. 2015), sometimes investigating relative successes in **democratization** across cases (Fraihat 2016; Mako & Moghadam 2021). Even when scholars dispute the extent to which the Arab Spring uprisings were full-fledged **revolutions** (Tripp 2013), there is a consensus that they ushered in an era of immense social and political upheaval (Bayat 2022).

In the years prior to the uprisings, many scholars puzzled over 'authoritarian persistence' in the region, using a number of theoretical paradigms, from state institutions to international influence (Hinnebusch 2006). The stalling of democratization can be due in part to the 'coercive' or 'co-optative' capacities of authoritarian regimes, according to Hinnebusch (2015) – see also **repression** and **patronage**. Similarly, Eva Bellin (2012) did not much alter the contours of her pre-Arab Spring argument about the centrality of the 'coercive apparatus' and of its organization to 'robust' authoritarianism, even in the face of popular protest (2012). From the viewpoint of authoritarian studies, the Arab Spring and its counterrevolutions pushed topics like **authoritarian collaboration** (von Soest 2015) and **authoritarian learning** into the mainstream.

Seeking to avoid the fate of Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Mubarak, leaders such as Assad in Syria used violence 'strategically,' for instance, while Gulf leaders pre-empted the impetus for protest by distributing financial largesse (Heydemann & Leenders 2011). The deployment of similar strategies, when authoritarians learn from one another and exhibit 'policy transfer' to confront popular protests, is sometimes evident across different regions, from Arab leaders to China, Russia, and other post-Soviet states (Hall & Ambrosio 2017). Also, the topic of monarchical resistance gained traction recently, with a few studies exposing the **black knight** behavior of Western democracies towards their autocratic allies in the region.

CLASSIFICATIONS Some call the initial revolutions the 'first wave' of the Arab Spring. These countries where protest and revolution broke out in 2011 include Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and, to a lesser extent, Morocco.

Another smaller group of revolutions comprised what some consider the 'second wave' of the Arab Spring, including Algeria, Sudan, and Lebanon in 2019 (Osman 2022). In Palestine, the Great March of Return took place in the Gaza Strip (2018-2019) to protest the Israeli blockade and demand the return of refugees to the occupied territories.

Unlike the **color revolutions** (e.g., Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, the former Yugoslavia, etc.) that took place in post-Soviet states, the Arab Spring was not set off by contested election results. Instead, the popular uprisings erupted in authoritarian systems characterized by 'elections without democracy' (Sadiki 2009) – or expectations of it by the masses. Furthermore, the Arab Spring was not staged under the ideological umbrella of Western/American liberal democracy in the manner of the color revolutions.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The Arab Spring took most observers and even researchers by surprise (Aarts 2012). Epistemologically, the recent phenomenon has cast doubt on dominant lenses through which Middle East politics has been studied. This was (and sometimes still is) characterized by a twin focus on the various 'upgrades' of 'robust' authoritarianism and state structures and institutions. The uprisings and revolutions of 2011 demonstrated that the neglect of other types of political protests, online activism, etc., namely those from below, through new social movements (Beinin & Varel 2011), renders investigations of the region's politics incomplete. The result has been a subversion of the dominant intellectual approaches and a paradigm shift.

Consequently, any methodology for studying the Arab Spring and its ongoing implications must take into account the popular 'pulse' (Mariz 2012). It is important to analyze the discourses and behavior of social movements, civil society actors, media and new media, as well as wide-ranging and dynamic public opinion. Collecting data in the form of official statistics or statements by policymakers or state news outlets will yield a wholly incomplete picture. Even quantitative or qualitative measures of armed conflict in places such as Libya and Syria cannot provide an adequate picture of civic activism (Saleh 2018), politics from below, or expressions of dissent. Additionally, historical methods can be suitable for understanding the 2011/2018 uprisings, their precursors and the numerous protests since then. Finally, intra-regional and international factors have been paramount in shaping the trajectory of the Arab Spring in each country. These influences must be examined as well for any historicized, contextualized study of the Arab Spring in any single country or as a region-wide phenomenon.

Country-by-country approaches, as opposed to a regional brush, are one way to study the Arab Spring. Much can be said for in-depth case studies of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, or any other country, for instance. Against the backdrop of commonalities inherent in the region-wide *hirak*, specificities inhere within each case. These are well-deserving of study in this new set of watershed events in the Arab world. Furthermore, the theoretical and empirical value of the comparative method (Whitehead 2021) is at a premium. This is one method for outlining the anatomy of the Arab Spring, identifying similarities and differences and enhancing our understanding of the manifold complexities at hand.

IMPACT ON POLICY On the one hand, the Arab Spring brought the democratization agenda to the forefront of Western policies towards the MENA



region. The European Union (most prominently Germany, through bilateral aid and its political foundations) and the United States have provided extensive funds to civil society across the region (Huber 2013). Additionally, International Financial Institutions were quick to step in through the Deauville Partnership for the Arab countries 'in transition,' with an eye to stabilizing the region in 2011 (OECD 2011). The United States has also invested heavily in security reform in countries like Tunisia. Here the contest between 'freedom' and 'order' has been marked. The security agenda of the United States (Saleh 2017), exemplified in its war on ISIS (see **Islamic states**) that began in 2014, has often crowded out policies of **democracy promotion** since the onset of the Arab Spring.

NEW FRONTIERS Given the complexity and geographic breadth of the phenomenon, recent research on the Arab Spring has taken a number of different angles. One is the role of women and the study of gendered revolt (Khalil 2016), sometimes linked to activism in the years before the 2011 uprisings (Pratt 2020). **Political Islam** and Islamist movements are another topic of research, since the story of the ascent and unraveling of Islamist political parties and their democratic performance (Esposito et al. 2018) in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia (McCarthy 2018) has been a major plotline of the Arab Spring. Youth activism (cf. **youth bulge**) and contentious politics (Sika 2017) are another avenue for scholarly investigation. The nexus of the Arab Spring and authoritarianism, including the sharpened skills and tools of ruling elites, warrants study, from puzzling allegiance to longstanding dictators in conflict (Wedeen 2021) to democratic reversals. Democratic setbacks since 2011 have prompted conceptual and comparative work (Sadiki & Saleh 2023).

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Box 6.1 Arab Exceptionalism: A Stubborn Myth

Confragosa in fastigium dignitatis via est.
(It is a rough road that leads to the heights of greatness)
– Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 BCE – 65 CE)

Most homegrown national 'exceptionalisms' have been positive constructs until they are used against the nation after a geopolitical fallout. History is full of them, as the examples below show.

American exceptionalism is rooted in the idea that the United States is unique due to its revolutionary origins and commitment to liberty, democracy, and individualism. This sense of moral superiority and a belief that the US has a special mission to promote these values globally has (at times) been central to its foreign policy and domestic identity.

Chinese exceptionalism (中国例外主义 – pinyin: *Zhōngguó lìwài zhǔyì*) is modeled on China's millennial history as a civilization-state and its distinct political culture shaped by Confucian values (and ethnic Han culture). It emphasizes China's unique path of development and governance, often contrasting it with Western models of liberal democracy. Chinese leaders have framed their country's rise to global hegemony as peaceful but distinct from Western norms, positioning China as a model for development, especially under the leadership of its current leader, Xi Jinping (i.e., the 'China dream' – 中国梦 – pinyin: *Zhōngguó mèng*).

Russian exceptionalism and its contemporary revitalized ideological manifestation of 'Eurasianism' (евразийство) is rooted in Russia's own belief in its spiritual and civilizational uniqueness. This idea often emphasizes Russia's role as a defender of Orthodox Christianity and its (once) distinctness, (now) opposition to Western liberal values.

Japanese Exceptionalism (日本人論 – *Nihónjinron*) refers to a body of discourse or theories about the uniqueness of the Japanese people, culture, and society, stressing its imagined cultural uniqueness and (ethnic) homogeneity. This discourse highlights Japan's distinct social structures, work ethic, and historical isolation as factors that set it apart from other nations, particularly Western democracies. Its more extreme forms are associated with nationalistic or xenophobic ideologies.

German Exceptionalism (*Sonderweg* – 'special path') also has a long history that has been twisted and turned for various political ends. Originally it took pride in the modernizing German authoritarian imperial model – the 'golden mean' between European democracy and Russian autocracy. After WWII, it became a retrospective interpretation used by historians to explain Germany's unique path to **Nazism**. In recent decades, historians have also explored how post-war West Germany consciously distanced itself from its pre-1945 past by embracing liberal democracy and aligning itself with Western Europe. This shift has been interpreted by some scholars as marking the end of Germany's *Sonderweg*, suggesting that post-war developments brought Germany back onto a more 'normal' path within Western democratic traditions.

The Israelis, French and British also have their exceptionalisms, but Arab exceptionalism has been truly unique in the sense that it is fully imposed, covers a diffuse area with several polities, is a normatively negative assessment and has dominated the academic **transition** literature for the Middle East and North Africa.

Arab Exceptionalism refers to the notion that Arab states are uniquely resistant to **democratization**, distinguishing them from other developing nations. This concept has been widely debated and critiqued for its methodological flaws, problematic comparisons, and potential to perpetuate stereotypes about Arab societies.

The concept is rooted in Western perceptions of the Arab world, shaped by historical tensions, colonial stereotypes and biases. These frame Arab societies, utterly permeated by **informality**, **clientelism** and **patronage**, as inherently incompatible with democratic (read: Western) values. Colonial legacies have influenced such views, Orientalist thought, and geopolitical interests that have historically portrayed the region as resistant to political liberalization.

Arab Exceptionalism gained prominence in social science research during the late twentieth century. Organizations like **Freedom House** (FH) played a significant role in popularizing this idea through their cross-national surveys that purportedly revealed a 'democracy deficit' in Arab states when compared to other regions (Freedom House, 1980). However, these studies have faced significant criticism for their methodological shortcomings (and Cold War bias).

Still, these findings and their circulation have had a considerable impact on academic and policy discussions. Scholars such as Alfred Stepan and Graeme Robertson (2004) presented overwhelming evidence that non-Arab Muslim states tend to be more electorally competitive than their Arab counterparts. Eva Bellin (2004) found that the prerequisites are just not there. While the authors acknowledged this gap, they refrained from attributing it to any essentialist qualities of Arab societies.

Critics have raised several key objections. First, methodological weaknesses undermine the validity of the imposed 'exceptionalism' thesis. The inconsistencies and biases inherent in measurement techniques used by organizations like FH cast doubt on the accuracy and reliability of their findings (Harik 2006). Second, the assumption that all Arab countries are uniformly resistant to democratization ignores significant variations in their political systems, histories, social structures, and economic conditions. Third, the concept of a cohesive 'Arab' political community is tenuous due to the diverse ethnicities, cultures, and political experiences within the region. Fourth, focusing exclusively on 'Arab' identity often neglects the role of Islam in shaping political outcomes. By excluding Islamic factors from the analysis, scholars risk oversimplifying the complexities of political development in the region. Fifth, emphasizing **elections** and institutions as the primary indicators of

democracy overlooks other crucial aspects of democratic governance, such as freedom of expression, the rule of law, and the protection of civil liberties. Finally, stereotypes and biases stemming from colonial history and Western-Arab relations can cloud objective assessments of political development in the region.

In the end, it was solely the unmet expectations of Western observers (cf. transitology – Box 5.3) that resulted in this label. The fact that MENA states have been fluid and moving (incrementally) along various measured continuums in both directions (toward and away from democracy) shows there is nothing static about these regimes, although they have proven to be resilient.

Some scholars offer alternative evidence that challenges the notion of Arab exceptionalism. For example, Iliya Harik (2006) argues that many Arab states have made strides toward democratization since the 1970s, albeit at varying paces and not on the indicators usually benchmarked to measure 'democraticness.' Attributing their lack of progress solely to 'exceptionalism' oversimplifies the complex dynamics driving political change in these countries, as shown in the in-depth case study of Kuwait by Dazi-Heni (2015). The 2011 Arab uprisings (**Arab Spring**) challenged the notion by demonstrating that these regimes were not as stable as previously thought, but the authoritarian crackdown that followed has, in turn, strengthened the myth and dashed hopes. (Massoud 2015)

The main distortion of 'Arab exceptionalism' is that it has ignored the regional and international political context while being unable to (convincingly) prove any essentialist causal factors at the country level. (Grimm 2013) The geopolitical tensions (and high stakes) in the Middle East have always provided **gatekeeping** possibilities for local autocrats (Salamey 2009). In addition, the oil wealth of Arab Gulf **monarchies** has put them in a unique position to leverage their influence in neighboring countries (Beck 2015), effectively acting as 'authoritarian gravity centers' (Box 6.2) and **black knights** as became overly clear in the wake of the Arab Spring. Therefore, theoretical frames of **authoritarian collaboration**, **authoritarian learning** and **authoritarian regionalism** are likely to bring us much closer to explaining Arab exceptionalism than any explanations tied to the inherited undemocratic nature of Islam or the Arabs.

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Authoritarian Collaboration

There is no 'I' in team
– American saying

Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable
– African proverb

Authoritarian collaboration refers to general collaboration between authoritarian regimes at the international level. This can occur as either formalized collaboration, as in regional organizations or (cyclical) summits (e.g., **authoritarian regionalism**), or in informal forms such as *ad hoc* consultations and personal ties.

DEFINITION Authoritarian collaboration is the deliberate, intentional coordination between two or more authoritarian regimes in economic areas, political consultation, the sharing of military intelligence, and mutual support. Autocracies work together to share best practices, techniques and laws. We limit the definition to cases where authoritarian regimes work together and the primary intended or unintended consequence is the maintenance of authoritarian stability. Therefore, we exclude instances of collaboration in war or trade.

Authoritarian collaboration has mostly been reactive, undertaken in order to stave off unrest and suppress dissent. Authoritarian regimes collaborate when there is a perception that support is needed to bolster a beleaguered like-minded autocrat, particu-

larly those in the same neighborhood. Authoritarian regimes can support each other during crisis events by providing reliable information quickly. Authoritarian regimes provide electoral support when an autocratic ally faces defeat by a challenger who plans democratic reform, or some form of undesired regime change. For example, Russia collaborates when there are protests and ruptures for reform in neighboring countries, like Belarus, which threaten Russia's geo-political ambitions and its own political survival (von Soest 2015). More recently, there have been cases of pre-emptive authoritarian collaboration. In these, autocracies collude not in response to any immediate threat, but more generally to counter **democracy promotion**.

Authoritarian collaboration does not refer to authoritarian imposition by a great power, or a country with significantly more powerful capabilities and resources *vis-à-vis* other countries. Nevertheless, authoritarian collaboration can be characterized by a degree of asymmetry.

SEE ALSO Other similar terms used include 'authoritarian coordination' and 'authoritarian cooperation.' Christian von Soest (2015) refers to 'collaboration' instead of 'cooperation,' because the latter is viewed as more formal and entails adjusting behavior to the actual or anticipated preferences of others (Keohane 2005: 51).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE with the rise of authoritarianism around the world, more attention has been paid to the factors – both internal and external – that may be to blame for this. Authoritarian collaboration explores the deliberate actions of authoritarian regimes to actively support each other and offers an international explanation for why authoritarianism may be more robust. It also helps shed light on the behavior of authoritarian regimes towards one another and on their objectives, in particular thwarting **democracy promotion** by democratic actors.

ORIGIN Authoritarian collaboration has occurred for some time now, but the way in which it takes place has evolved over time in the face of new threats. Much of the authoritarian collaboration of the past involved sharing methods of repression. For example, during the Cold War, the Southern Cone countries that were part of *Operation Condor* traveled to Brazil to learn interrogation techniques and other methods of repression (McSherry 2002; Olar 2019). Since the 1980s, the Arab League has also met regularly to share new technologies of repression (Yom 2016). Today, authoritarian regimes collaborate more to share techniques on how to deal with NGOs, civil society groups, opposition parties, election monitors, and, more specifically, on how to win elections.

LITERATURE Scholars have been increasingly interested in how collaboration between authoritarian regimes contributes to authoritarian persistence (Bader et al. 2014; Dobson 2013; Vanderhill 2013; Aleprete & Vanderhill 2013). One question in this area of study concerns how to differentiate deliberate forms of authoritarian collaboration to fend off democratization pressures from learning, on the one hand, and general authoritarian diffusion and contagion, on the other. While some scholars place all forms of authoritarian collaboration in one category, authoritarian collaboration is more commonly associated with more *direct forms* of collaboration.

Direct collaboration refers to processes that result from proactive and intentional efforts by autocracies to share best practices with others. This collaboration takes place through networks and relationships, both at government and non-government levels (see **linkage & leverage theory**). Passive collaboration is more indirect and is sometimes referred to as emulation, demonstration effects or **authoritarian learning.** Regime officials learn from the mistakes and successes of other authoritarian states and behave accordingly. In this entry, we only focus on direct forms of collaboration.

Generally speaking, there are mixed views on the impact and intensity of authoritarian collaboration. Some scholars argue that authoritarian collaboration plays a role in deterring democratic development around the world. The rise of authoritarianism provides like-minded leaders with alternative sources of support that facilitate the maintenance of authoritarian regimes. Some argue that authoritarian regimes are increasingly trading with one another as part of a larger survival strategy to foster linkages with like-minded regimes that will build support for the *status quo* (Tansey et al. 2016).

Other scholars question whether or not this collaboration has any impact, arguing instead that domestic factors are far more important in explaining democratic decline (Brownlee 2017). Nevertheless, although there is no clear evidence that regimes are becoming increasingly authoritarian because they collaborate with one another, greater cooperation is taking place among authoritarian regimes.

Scholars have noted that collaboration and cooperation between authoritarian regimes does not come as naturally as it does for democracies. Laurence Whitehead (2014) claims that authoritarian regimes would struggle more to collaborate and cooperate compared to democracies due to much higher levels of mutual distrust. Authoritarian regimes are less likely to enter legally binding agreements which would weaken sovereignty. They are also less likely to engage in symmetrical forms of policy coordination (Mattes & Rodríguez 2014).

Von Soest argues that this is because authoritarian collaboration is nothing more than a 'self-serving project' and that authoritarian states, in fact, do not intend to promote autocracy. Instead, collaboration takes place to strengthen power at home. Autocratic powers only spend resources to help another autocratic regime if there is something to gain from it (Tolstrup 2015). This collaboration is far from ideological; it is pragmatic.

MEASUREMENT It is difficult to measure authoritarian collaboration, as this entails looking at instances where authoritarian regimes have coordinated and assisted one another, but not as simply a case of modeling, learning or diffusion. It may be measured by looking at points of policy and/or behavior har-



monization between authoritarian regimes. As the section that follows explains, it is hard to establish that policy or behavior harmonization took place due to interactions between two or more authoritarian regimes. More expansive definitions of authoritarian collaboration might refer to instances where authoritarian regimes work together, as in a conflict effort or in trading with one another. We highlight that it is important to exclude cases of cooperation or alliance in conflict, and would argue that measurement should focus on instances whose primary aim is authoritarian stability.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES As stated earlier, the biggest methodological issue is that it is hard to prove that best practices were shared, and some interaction between authoritarian regimes has occurred. Policy transfer may have taken place, but changes may have taken place independently. As also stated previously, because the outcome of authoritarian collaboration is so similar to that of authoritarian modeling, learning and diffusion, it is difficult to distinguish and measure these concepts. Another issue is that some authoritarian collaboration is passive or covert, which makes it difficult to know when (and whether) collaboration took place.

For those interested in measuring greater levels of authoritarianism as a result of authoritarian collaboration, there are also issues. It is difficult to decide whether you are looking at clear cases whose outcome resulted in greater levels of authoritarianism or simply at the process of authoritarian regimes providing horizontal support to other like-minded regimes.

EXAMPLES There have been numerous examples of authoritarian regimes collaborating with each other, particularly to resist efforts at democratization or reform. China, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Russia have engaged in extensive collaboration to help support other authoritarian regimes in their neighborhoods.

One example of collaboration is for one autocracy to provide electoral support for an autocratic ally to win an election. For example, during Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's 2011 re-election campaign, Hugo Chávez provided low-interest loans on oil payments to Nicaragua, which helped Ortega appeal to voters by funding social programs and keeping energy prices low. Chávez also offered advice on how to eliminate opposition television stations.

During the **Arab Spring**, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) supported monarchies in the region facing protests (Odinius & Kuntz 2015; von Soest 2015). In response to the **Arab Spring**, some authoritarian leaders began to share information-blocking technology.

In other instances, military and financial support was offered. Saudi Arabia supported Bahrain with $500 million to boost the Bahraini economy while also sending over 1,200 armed troops to help quell protests (Hassan 2014). The GCC provided a $10 billion development fund to both Bahrain and Oman, as well as a five-year aid package to non-member states Jordan and Morocco (Theodoulou 2011). These actions were not imposed on the Gulf states; instead, the Gulf states were willing partners.

Authoritarian collaboration also takes place before the precipitation of a crisis. After the Cold War ended, many African leaders began to advise each other about how to hold democratic elections without being voted out of office (Bratton 1998). Russia and China have broadcast to other authoritarian regimes way to resist threats to their control; some autocratic leaders are more active in seeking out advice from Russia and China.

Since the 1990s, the Russian government has supported a wide range of autocrats in the region with military and financial aid: Alexander Lukashenko (1994-present) in Belarus, Eduard Shevardnadze (1995-2003) in Georgia, Vladimir Voronin (2006-2009) in Moldova, Emomali Rahmon (1994-present) in Tajikistan, and Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005) in Ukraine. Russia also made serious attempts to back former Ukrainian prime minister and president Viktor Yanukovych during the presidential election in 2004 and mass protests in 2013.

After the **color revolutions**, Putin offered training to other countries to deal with these types of threats. Russia shared techniques and laws to suppress dissent, which have been adopted by a number of states, such as Belarus, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Kazakhstan, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. Both Russia and China also share technology on how to monitor online dissent, what surveillance technology to use and how to target opposition leaders (Ademmer & Borzel 2013; Koesel & Bunce 2013).

China also shares best practices by providing training programs for foreign officials and government managers, involving discussion of how its regime has managed to open up its economy, maintain a supportive middle class and avoid socio-political instability (Kurlantzick & Link 2009). Since 1990, China has supplied Myanmar with more than $1 billion in military equipment and offered military training. Russia and Iran also coordinated to help prop up Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Organizations also play a role in facilitating authoritarian collaboration, to help preserve authoritarian systems (Ambrosio 2008). Regional organizations like the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (SCO) and the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (ASEAN) have encouraged cooperation amongst autocrats and have actively defended fellow authoritarian regimes (Cooley 2015). ASEAN has provided Myanmar with 'ideological support' because the organization refuses to criticize the internal affairs of other member states. China has also become more active collaborating with other states in the *Like-Minded Group* (LMG) in the *UN Commission on Human Rights*. This group of countries in the latter's successor after 2006, the *UN Human Right Council*, have been a key source of support for China's positions, including its resolutions. Working together, authoritarian regimes in this group aim to constrain the UN's human rights regime and weaken its ability to hold states accountable when violations occur (Inboden 2022).

Authoritarian regimes have also collaborated to

help mitigate the costs imposed by Western **sanctions**. In August 2011, a European-sponsored draft attempting to impose UN sanctions on Syria included asset freezes, travel bans and an arms embargo. Russia and China opposed it, which emboldened the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad. Russia props up Belarus by exporting energy resources at below market price, costing Russia about $2.4 billion a year (Slobodian & Ptasnyk 2018). Both Russia and Iran have offered significant support for Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro and Assad. China provides Kim Jong-Un massive amounts of food and fertilizer, and over $55 billion in exports (Davies 2021). China continues to be Russia's main source of support in weathering the onslaught of sanctions from the West since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS Democracies have collaborated for some time now. Democracies assist and support each other, and have shared best practices. As authoritarian regimes have learned to collaborate more with each other, sometimes in the areas of conflict and sometimes in the area of authoritarian stability, democracies have sought to better understand how to respond. The response to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine is a good example of both democratic collaboration and authoritarian collaboration. In response to the unprecedented sanctions, Russia has benefited greatly from China's support. Because authoritarian regimes collaborate whether or not they are in crisis, this complicates the policy response by democracies, which have fewer options about how to isolate or punish authoritarian regimes that engage in dangerous behavior.

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Authoritarian Diffusion

The spread of evil is the symptom of a vacuum. Whenever evil wins, it is only by default: by the moral failure of those who evade the fact that there can be no compromise on basic principles.
– Ayn Rand (Alisa Z. Rosenbaum)

Authoritarian diffusion is the process by which an authoritarian innovation or precedent in one country increases the probability of its imitation or replication in a variety of other countries.

DEFINITION Authoritarian diffusion involves a process in which an earlier authoritarian practice by one actor affects the probability of its being adopted by other actors, who have not yet employed this practice (Strang 1991). More broadly speaking, authoritarian diffusion is concerned with how different authoritarian innovations and political phenomena travel – such as the adoption of institutions, organizations, ideas, policies, strategies and norms that are designed to strengthen, protect and establish authoritarian rule (Ambrosio & Tolstrup 2019; Koesel & Bunce 2013; Starr 1991; Weyland 2017). Diffusion has also been defined more generally as the process whereby an innovation is communicated over time (Rogers 1983).

In contrast to **authoritarian collaboration** or coordination, diffusion is unintentional and uncoordinated. Diffusion arguments focus on structural conditions such as geographic proximity, as well as social, cultural, political and economic linkages, which could increase the chances of ideas traveling. Diffusion spreads inadvertently from one actor to other actors, who subsequently learn, imitate or emulate these policies and strategies (Weyland 2017). One actor setting a precedent may increase the likelihood of other actors following suit. For example, with democratic diffusion, protests in one country might affect protests taking place in another country. The democratization of countries in a specific region may affect the likelihood of other countries in that same region also democratizing.

Diffusion also stands in contrast to **authoritarian promotion** because diffusion is predominantly horizontal. It occurs without any direct collaboration or imposition (Elkins 2005). Diffusion is not about a hegemon promoting authoritarian policies and does not entail coercion. Autocratic diffusion is a process that takes place without much agency.

There are numerous differences between autocratic and democratic diffusion that are worth noting. Early phases of democratic diffusion may create swelling optimism about the prospects for regime change and powerful international pressure for reform. This does not happen with autocratic diffusion since there is no international pressure to autocratize. Instead, autocratic diffusion might be more aptly characterized as a resistance to democratic diffusion (Gunitsky 2014).

Responding to democratic diffusion may be a case of **authoritarian learning**. Authoritarian elites learn how to counter pro-democracy diffusion and adapt, making their regimes more resilient. Russia and China learned what to do after witnessing revolutions in other authoritarian regimes. Both states responded to the **color revolutions** by controlling information available about the protests (Koesel & Bunce 2013). They framed the protests negatively and, by doing so, made it impossible for their own citizens to coordinate and carry out their own uprisings. Both governments targeted key constituencies, such as youth, opposition groups, and civil society organizations. While the youth were co-opted through the creation of patriotic pro-government youth movements, civil society groups and opposition movements were externally repressed (Koesel & Bunce 2013)

SEE ALSO Contagion, domino theory, cascade, authoritarian emulation, **authoritarian learning**, authoritarian modeling, neighborhood effects, autocratic reverse waves, all these topics are related and associated with authoritarian diffusion.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Diffusion has been used to explain policy change and why policies are adopted in the social sciences, and how knowledge spreads across state borders (Simmons & Elkins 2005; Zito & Schout 2009). The study of authoritarian diffusion in particular has gained momentum after scholars were alarmed by democratic backsliding and debated the existence of an autocratic wave (see Box 6.3).

ORIGIN The majority of the literature has not addressed authoritarian diffusion directly, drawing instead from studies of democratic diffusion, which has been used to explain the different waves of democracy and the spread of democratic values (Huntington 1991; O'Loughlin et al. 1998). Thus, the field of autocratic diffusion is relatively new. Nevertheless, autocratic contagion has long been an important concept in foreign policy and international development. Under the Eisenhower administration, the US warned of a domino effect of communist countries causing other non-communist countries in their region to fall to communism as well. Though this did not specifically focus on authoritarian regimes, the idea behind the domino theory could be applied to autocratic diffusion. The domino theory proved to be only partially correct, but due to waves of autocracy and democratic slumps, there has been renewed emphasis on autocratic diffusion.

In the field of international economic development, dependency theory can also make a contribution to the autocratic diffusion literature. One aspect of dependency theory argued that the structure of the global economic system could explain why repression diffused in countries in the periphery and semi-periphery. As dependency theorists saw it, the structure of the global economic system drove elites in the periphery to repress and exploit their populations in order to maintain their alliance with other elites in core countries (Cardoso & Faletto 1979; Wallerstein 1974).

LITERATURE The authoritarian diffusion literature seeks to explain the paths along which authoritarian ideas and methods spread. Studies of authoritarian diffusion have mostly followed the broader diffusion literature by looking at the strategies and policies that authoritarian regimes have adopted, and how this might increase the probability that they might be followed (Ambrosio 2010). Some authors are concerned with the process of autocratic diffusion rather than with its outcome, but here we look at both.

A large body of literature has studied democratic diffusion – or the idea that certain principles and practices spread in an uncoordinated fashion (Elkins & Simmons 2005). Sometimes this takes place through emulation (Simmons et al. 2006), at other times it takes place through the idea of contagion (Whitehead 1996). Democratic rules are spread through neutral and non-coercive channels. These ideas have attracted the attention of scholars of international relations and comparativists, who have provided explanations for how international factors may influence domestic outcomes.

Theories of democratic diffusion have looked at the importance of clusters in space and time (Kopstein & Reilly 2000; Brinks & Coppedge 2006; Gleditsch & Ward 2006). For these studies, geographic proximity is an important factor. Authoritarian diffusion and cooperation by authoritarian regimes are stronger at a regional level. Håvard Strand and his colleagues (2012) wrote that the neighborhood in which a country resides and the global context act forcefully as a pull on a country's political system. Brinks and Coppedge (2006) write that countries tend to resemble other countries in their neighborhood over time. According to Bunce and Wolchik (2006), the more similar countries are (in language, tradition, religion, identity, values and norms), the more likely it is that innovation will travel.

One of the first studies of authoritarian diffusion looked at how countries in close proximity to Russia became increasingly authoritarian (Gel'man & Lankina 2008). Nicole Jackson argues that Central Asian consumption of Russian news and culture helps to explain why these countries are authoritarian. Wilson and Popescu (2009) echo that Russian **soft power** has been an effective countervailing force against the EU's democracy support programs in the European Neighborhood Policy. Tomila Lankina (2016) and her colleagues look at how Russian trade with post-Soviet states may condition patterns of authoritarian diffusion. Johan Langerkvist (2009) notes that China's relationships with countries in Africa has helped to diffuse authoritarianism.

Theories of policy diffusion look at the importance of actors in spreading policy solutions to one another through a learning process. In addition to authoritarian states, international organizations are also important in autocratic diffusion. The *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (SCO) can act as a defense against democracy and helps to transmit authoritarian values and strategies in China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (Ambrosio 2008).

Diffusion has been traditionally characterized as a process in which past events increase the likelihood of future events (Oliver & Myers 2003; Strang 1991). However, scholars have noted that diffusion is not a linear process, and past events do not always make future events more likely to happen (Gunitsky 2013). Additionally, some scholars are skeptical of the power of autocratic diffusion theory – instead claiming that the primary cause of autocracy is internal rather than a result of cross-border diffusion (Burnell 2010; Brownlee 2020)

CLASSIFICATIONS Different types of diffusion have been noted. Some diffusion takes place vertically – that is, it moves from a more powerful actor to a less powerful actor. Diffusion could also be horizontal, where the original actor is not necessarily a regional hegemon. Other scholars differentiate between a type of diffusion that is contagious, spreading without any intentional behavior by either actor (this is sometimes referred to as external diffusion), and diffusion that is a form of emulation, where one actor seeks to emulate and learn from the behavior of another actor (this is sometimes referred to as internal diffusion or learning and modeling). As it concerns the former, global hegemonic transitions can unintentionally influence waves of diffusion (Gunitsky 2019). Seva Gunitsky (2014) writes that a period of hegemonic shocks creates incentives and opportunities for waves of domestic transformations.

MEASUREMENT Scholars who work to measure diffusion seek to identify convergent outcomes, measure relations between countries and identify the mechanisms involved in policy and strategy transfer. Through diplomacy, trade, and cultural ties, it is possible for a country to transmit political practices and norms even without any intention to do so; however, it is difficult to ascertain if a practice in one country was adopted in another country due to contagious effects or independently. Diffusion can be measured by looking at points of policy convergence and instances where policies, practices and beliefs have converged in time and space. This may demonstrate some sort of correlation, but proving a causal relationship is more challenging.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The biggest issue with the diffusion literature is that diffusion is difficult to measure and often used to explain events that cannot be explained. Measuring diffusion accurately may require testing a counterfactual. Would the adoption of a practice/policy have occurred absent the earlier policy innovation? Would a country autocratize if the initial actor did not exist? It is also difficult to ascertain if an actor is undergoing **autocratization** because of the strategies, actions or policies of another actor or for other internal reasons. It is difficult to find hard evidence about a regime's decision-making processes as this would require using archival information and elite interviews, which are difficult to acquire (Ambrosio & Tolstrup 2019).

While there have been plenty of theoretical studies that investigated diffusion, there is a dearth of empirical studies that have tested diffusion. Some studies have looked at cross-national variation (Lip-



set 1959; Powell 1982; Brunk et al. 1987; Stepan & Skach 1993; Berg-Schlosser & De Meur 1994), while other studies have analyzed changes in one country over time (Linz & Stepan 1996; O'Donnell et al. 1986). A study by Kurt Weyland (2016) examined the private diaries and letters of rulers and their elite support group regarding the deliberations that shaped the strategies adopted by states to fight against popular revolutions in Europe in 1848.

EXAMPLES There are numerous examples of autocratic diffusion, but these examples often overlap with authoritarian cooperation, modeling and learning, and it is difficult to isolate diffusion taking place on its own, or to determine that authoritarianism was contagious. One of the most notable periods of autocratic diffusion was the inter-war period, between World War I and World War II. During this wave, many once democratic regimes in Europe reverted to dictatorship, among them Italy, Spain and Germany. It is not entirely clear why and how fascist-style regimes appeared to form in quick succession in Europe; however, within a very short period of time, fascist ideals became a huge threat to Europe and beyond. In contrast to the post-World War II period, where authoritarianism was somewhat imposed from above by the Soviet Union across Eastern and Central Europe, the spread of **fascism** may be a better example of authoritarian diffusion.

If we fast-forward to the twenty-first century, we have entered another period of autocratic diffusion. There are a greater number of autocracies in the world today than there have been for some time. In fact, thirty years after the Cold War ended, democracy is at roughly the same level as it was in 1989 (Varieties of Democracy 2022). Again, it is difficult to measure the extent to which the current democratic slump can be blamed on autocratic diffusion, but giving some credence to this literature, waves of autocracy (see Box 6.3) seem to cluster in both time and space.

In regional terms, there was a wave of autocratic diffusion in Latin America that started with the rise of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez in the early 2000s. Left-wing autocratic populism seemed to diffuse across the region. There was a rise of leadership that aimed to circumvent institutions, challenge pre-existing civil liberties and eliminate **term limits**. Central Asia appears to be another region affected by autocratic diffusion. Autocratic diffusion may help to explain why Central Asia, sandwiched between Russia and China, has remained so staunchly authoritarian (Allison 2008; Collins 2009). The autocratic diffusion literature has also looked at Russia and China. Most studies of autocratic diffusion have scrutinized the role of both countries as regional hegemons, and as the two most powerful authoritarian regimes today, either through the lens of authoritarian gravity centers (Box 6.2) or as **black knights**.

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Authoritarian Learning

It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
– The Hemphills, *Hemphills Hits,* 1989.

Wood already touched by fire is not hard to set alight.
– African proverb

Authoritarian learning is a process by which authoritarian regimes learn from the survival strategies of other dictatorships based upon the prior successes and failures of other governments.

DEFINITION Authoritarian learning consists of the way regimes adopt survival strategies based upon the prior successes and failures of other authoritarian governments (Hall & Ambrosio 2017). Stephen G. Hall (2023a: 5-7) points out important characteristics when it comes to defining authoritarian learning. Regime learning needs to incorporate both individual and collective learning. Learning combines the effect A has on B with the analysis of the actions of others. This sequence of processes allows learning to be gauged; empirically, one needs to witness a change of beliefs, skills, or procedures based on such an observation and interpretation of experience. While this itself is the result of learning, regime learning is actually a process of engagement, leading to the development of such beliefs, skills, ideas, and discernment (Hall 2023a: 5).

When a powerful authoritarian actor *offers* lessons learned or best practices to another like-minded regime, we see this as **authoritarian collaboration**. Another difference between authoritarian learning and authoritarian collaboration is that, with the former, policy can be transferred without the actors being in contact with one another. With authoritarian learning, regimes model, emulate and/or take note of past policies and strategies with the objective of maintaining authoritarian rule. For example, Russian laws restricting NGOs inspired laws in Belarus, China, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe (Koesel & Bunce 2013). Additionally, since the **color revolutions**, authoritarian regimes have learned from past mistakes. They have demonstrated how to limit NGO access to foreign funding and the best strategies for the security institutions to deal with unrest (Carothers & Brechenmacher 2014). After the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, Belarus studied the protests, learning from past mistakes in order to prevent similar events from ensuing at home (Korosteleva 2012).

In the case of authoritarian learning, authoritarian practices may be adopted without the first adopter actively promoting these policies. The role of the first adopter is to unintentionally inspire emulation (Elkins & Simmons 2005). The actor who adopts policies based on the previous actions of another actor is



the main actor with agency. The main actor learning could be a less powerful authoritarian/autocratizing regime or it could be a hegemon. For example, the more powerful state of Russia learned from Georgia and Ukraine in their revolutions. Russia learned from the missteps of those regimes and actively undermined pro-democracy NGOs, especially those with links abroad. They established their own pro-regime organizations to manage civil society. Russia noted that youth organizations were key to these revolutionary movements. The more powerful Gulf states watched closely the events of the **Arab Spring** to not make the same mistakes. Authoritarian learning may also consist of countries following an authoritarian regime that has high levels of prestige and soft power, and thus serves as a model for others to follow (Ambrosio 2010). Putin's growing power in Russia and the world may inspire other leaders to try to copy his tactics. Though it is impossible to know exactly what inspires leaders to make the choices they do, in the case of Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán, we know that his public statements reveal a strong admiration (Buzogány 2017).

This contrasts with **authoritarian promotion**, where the main actor with agency is always the more powerful authoritarian state. This also contrasts with authoritarian collaboration where all actors involved have some agency. Additionally, with 'authoritarian modeling,' the main actor being emulated is usually a powerful hegemon, but the main actors with agency are all of the other states that are emulating the hegemon's behavior and policies.

Authoritarian learning can also be distinguished from **authoritarian diffusion**. Authoritarian learning focuses on the act of adopting policies, while authoritarian diffusion looks at how policies and knowledge spread across state borders through a network of actors. Diffusion consists of the idea that the adoption of a practice alters the probability that other states will adopt the same practice (Strang 1991). Diffusion is about waves of policy changes across a region, beginning in one place and spreading to other countries (Weyland 2009).

There is some disagreement over whether or not diffusion is intentional and over what the level of agency is. Again, with authoritarian learning, agency lies with the learning actor. Diffusion is supposed to be contagious, and there is less of a focus on agency, as a big event could lead to waves. Nevertheless, Bunce and Wolchik (2011) describe diffusion as the transmission of tasks by activists, indicating some agency. Hale (2019) argues that diffusion is the *active* transfer of techniques across borders and the cross-border coordination of activists. In spite of these arguments, diffusion tends to be explained more in terms of structural factors such as geographic proximity, trade and interdependence, and cultural and political similarities. As a case in point, while Russia learns from others, it is a key source of authoritarian diffusion as a regional hegemon, particularly in Central Asia, where Russian news and popular culture are heavily consumed (Jackson 2014). **Soft power** is a notable means by which authoritarian values are diffused (Popescu & Wilson 2009); however, **soft power** does not really play a role in authoritarian learning, as the power of the state from which others are learning does not really play a significant role.

S.G. Hall (2023a: 11) finds that authoritarian learning involves the integration of policy transfer, diffusion, linkage and leverage (see **linkage & leverage theory**), and lesson-drawing. Elites with authoritarian inclinations frequently collaborate to exchange best practices for maintaining power. Contrary to perceptions common in the existing literature, authoritarian learning is not very hierarchical. This contrasts with the concept of authoritarian gravity centers (cf. Box 6.2), which suggests that learning primarily flows from dominant authoritarian regimes to lesser ones (i.e. authoritarian modeling)

SEE ALSO Authoritarian learning is distinct from **authoritarian promotion** and **authoritarian collaboration**, but all three are actor-involved processes. When contrasted with a more systemic viewpoint, such learning is often associated with **authoritarian diffusion**, policy diffusion and policy transfer.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Authoritarian learning is a concept that is important to explaining authoritarian **longevity, stability & resilience**. Authoritarian learning has been used to explain the significance of international factors and events in impacting the policies and strategies of authoritarian regimes (Heydemann & Leenders 2011).

ORIGIN & REGIONAL VARIATION As a concept in political science, 'authoritarian learning' was introduced into the English-language mainstream around 2005. While it is difficult to pinpoint the exact source, an important early contribution was an interview with Larry Diamond titled *Authoritarian Learning: Lessons from the Colored Revolutions* (Diamond et al. 2006). With the **color revolutions** and the **Arab Spring**, the concept has attracted growing interest, alongside frameworks of diffusion and collaboration, foremost in the Middle East and North Africa and the post-Soviet region. Beyond these world regions, the concept remains under-explored – see 'methodological issues' below.

The **color revolutions** and **Arab Spring** brought forth the concept of authoritarian learning and hence most case studies and comparative works are found in MENA and Eurasia. The latter, especially, due to the shared Soviet legacy (see **totalitarian legacies** and **authoritarian legacies**), has offered greater opportunities for rulers to adapt and transplant ideas from neighbors. Besides the **soft power** of the 'Singapore model' there are almost no case studies for the Indo-Pacific, Latin America or Sub-Saharan Africa.

MENA Most works are comparative and focus on the lessons from the **Arab Spring**: Heydemann & Leenders 2011; 2014; Bank & Edel 2015; Leenders 2016.

Eurasia Regarding the **color revolutions**, see Diamond et al. 2006; Gilbert 2020; Ohanyan & Kopalyan 2022. For comprehensive comparative works for the whole post-Soviet region, see Hall 2020; 2023a;

Lemon & Antonov 2020. For lessons from the **Arab Spring** in Central Asia, see Dorr 2018; for individual cases, see Golosov 2017 (Russia's electoral system); Ambrosio 2017; Popova 2013 (Ukraine); Frear 2018; Hall 2023b (Belarus); Terzyan 2018 (Armenia); Polese et al. 2017 (Turkmenistan).

Indo-Pacific On China, consult Jia 2022 (on cadre training); Lang 2018 (legislative changes to China's civil society policy); and Ortmann and Thompson 2014; 2020 (for China's obsession with the 'Singapore model'). A rare case on Myanmar's electoral system can be found in Dukalskis and Raymond 2018.

Latin America Roman Olar (2019) investigates the case of 'Operation Condor' to study the transnational dimension of state repression and authoritarian interdependence in Latin America.

Note that in sociology and the educational sciences, a different concept of authoritarian learning exists, pertaining to the impact of 'teaching styles,' based on the original typology of 'parenting styles' (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and, added later, indulgent) developed by Diana Baumrind (1966) in the 1960s.

LITERATURE The term 'learning' is often broadly used to denote any policy change connected to a previous policy change. 'Learning' is a change of procedures, actions, strategies or skills based on observing and interpreting past events (Bunce & Wolchik 2011; von Soest 2015). Some scholars have also referred to this process as adaptive capacity (Heydemann 2007; Schlumberger 2007; Smit & Wandel 2006). For more on the literature, see the 'classifications' below. Bank & Weyland (2019) compile the most important articles from *Democratization* and state that there is no proof or an organized international effort to advance autocracy; rather, they find that autocratic learning and collaboration is mostly defensive and reactionary.

Hall (2023a: 144-145) stresses the importance of elite connections within regimes – *intra-elite links*: regularly working together, exchanging ideas, engaging in dialogue, and learning from others' failures and successes. This denotes regime institutions (security councils, presidential administrations, etc.) as a crucial object of study to assess how such relationships are forged. In additions, he stresses the international linkages between elites (*inter-elite links* as a form of social linkage; see **linkage & leverage theory**) – and thus the importance of external networks and regional organizations (**authoritarian regionalism**).

CLASSIFICATIONS Where classifications are concerned, we rely on the work of Stephen G. Hall and Thomas Ambrosio (2017). In their overview of authoritarian learning, they conceptualized several different concepts worth noting here – policy transfer (a) and isomorphism (b).

Policy transfer (a) is a type of authoritarian learning. It is the process by which knowledge, ideas and institutions in one political system are used to develop policies and arrangements in another political system (Dolowitz & Marsh 2000). Policy transfer is sometimes referred to as 'policy learning,' which examines how policies are transmitted from one state to another through a process in which individuals in the recipient state actively seek out policy options from other states (Brady & Curtin 2012; Lemon & Antonov 2020; Zito & Schout 2009). The actors involved include civil servants, political parties, pressure groups, policy experts, elected officials and supra-national institutions, and policy transfer is facilitated by cultural ties, comparable ideologies or similar prior policies.

In the case of isomorphism (b), policies are followed as a result of constraints, and not necessarily the desire of the actor. With isomorphism there is a tendency on the part of countries to follow similar policies at least superficially – largely due to international organizations developed in the Global North, which have legitimized certain types of policies (Hedin 2016).

Another interesting distinction of types of learning is that between rational learning (i) and bounded learning (ii). Covadonga Meseguer (2005; 2006), building upon Fabrizio Gilardi (2003), nuances between two learning mechanisms – both aimed at problem-solving policy in governments. Rational learning (i) implies a maximum of analytical capabilities and a minimum of discriminatory abilities – that is, actors consider *all* policy experience, irrespective of its origins, and rationally update their beliefs about policies in light of experience. In contrast, with bounded learning (ii), although governments likewise engage in information-gathering activity, they do not scan all available experience, instead using analytical shortcuts and cognitive heuristics to process information, and therefore only consider a relevant peer group.

This distinction acknowledges governments' limited potential for learning, the costs of information gathering, the socio-cultural outlook bias of elites in search of models, and the importance of geographical proximity for adopting available and relevant models (Van den Bosch 2020: 91). Bounded learning relates to the (urgent) need for problem solving and regime survival, related to institutions and administrative practices, while rational learning would be more long-term: goal-oriented, related to policy, norms and practices, and aimed at becoming more competitive. For example, the emulation of liberal trade practices in Latin America, based on East Asian cases (Meseguer 2005: 30, 32).

MEASUREMENT Authoritarian learning is measured by tracing the cross-national copying of legislation, policy changes and changes to rules and institutions. It's possible to assume that learning has taken place if there is evidence that one state has learned from another state. If there is no proof from documents or interviews about the inspiration of policies, the next best bet is to see if the policy or action implemented is sufficiently unique that it would be unlikely that the second state pursued it independently.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES It is difficult to study authoritarian learning. While scholars can witness



changes in skills (e.g., how tactics change) and procedures (e.g., legislative changes and institutional structures), ascertaining a change in beliefs in regimes is very hard to establish (Hall 2023: 6).

Also, such studies require identifying the sources of policy change. There are many possible intervening variables and explanations that make it difficult to pinpoint cause and effect (Zito & Schout 2009). For this reason, it is difficult to prove that authoritarian learning has taken place – that a prior event shaped a future outcome – rather than just a correlation between one set of policies followed by another similar set of policies. Not all change actually involves learning, and testing it directly is not that straightforward.

This is especially true of non-democratic settings, given their general lack of transparency. The information necessary to trace learning processes is far more available in democracies; authoritarian systems are closed, with deliberations and decision-making taking place out of public view (Hall & Ambrosio 2017).

Another issue affecting the study of authoritarian learning is that convergence in policy adoption is not sufficient proof that learning has occurred; both sides could have arrived at the same policy independently, a concept called 'spurious diffusion,' not be confused with **authoritarian diffusion**. With authoritarian learning, it must be shown that, prior to adoption, the adopter knew of the policy innovation, evaluated its merits and adopted it based on this evaluation.

EXAMPLES Detailed case studies have explained how authoritarian learning took place in the **Arab Spring**. Authoritarian incumbents took note of how the uprisings unfolded in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and used these observations to develop strategies to maximize their survival when they faced popular unrest (Heydemann & Leenders 2011). After the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, Belarussian security services studied the protests in order to prepare lessons for how to prevent a similar event in Belarus (Korosteleva 2012). After the **color revolutions**, the Central Asian states readily emulated Russia's example by restricting the activities of NGOs, especially Western ones or those which had accepted Western financial assistance, promoted democracy and engaged in election monitoring (Cooley 2012). Central Asian governments also model policies regarding civil society based on the activities of Russia and China. Additionally, due to COVID-19, there have been more examples of authoritarian learning, as states learned from China's surveillance technology and became more active in tracking and monitoring their citizens based on China's example.

IMPACT ON POLICY Like **authoritarian collaboration**, authoritarian learning presents dilemmas and challenges for democracies and organizations that engage in **democracy promotion** and support. Essentially, authoritarian regimes are doing a better job of learning from past mistakes and adapting, as today information travels much more quickly than it did in the past. This makes it difficult to intervene. Concurrently, 'authoritarian modeling' also presents difficulties. In the past, democracies served as a model for regimes around the world, as democratic **soft power** was much more substantial. Today, democracies are struggling to present models that other regimes aim to emulate. Democracies thus have to work to contest the narratives that the best lessons to be learned come from authoritarian regimes.

NEW FRONTIERS Due to ongoing methodological challenges, this recent dictatorship studies subfield is still very much evolving. Davis (2020) and Goldring & Greitens (2020) attempt to distinguish learning patterns from other types of diffusion and differentiate among regime types, while nuancing the role of proximity.

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Authoritarian Promotion

If there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm.
– African proverb

Authoritarian promotion is when a powerful authoritarian actor actively stimulates the spread of authoritarianism.

DEFINITION Authoritarian promotion is when a powerful authoritarian state actively and intentionally contributes to the spread of authoritarianism through various forms of persuasion, economic incentives, electoral interference and/or political and military pressures. In cases involving the use of political violence to oust the current leadership in another state, the phenomenon is labeled forcible **regime promotion**.

Authoritarian promotion is a form of vertical policy transfer – or coercion by a hegemonic power or powerful international organizations.

With authoritarian promotion, the results and adoption of decisions are not completely autono-



mous. The primary actor in authoritarian promotion is the more powerful authoritarian regime, not the target country. In extreme cases, these vertical forms of promotion are cases of coercion. While **authoritarian diffusion** is about contagion and convergence, and **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning** are about consent, authoritarian promotion is about control and manipulation.

Authoritarian promotion is not the mirror image of **democracy promotion** and support. Democracy support aims at supporting countries to become more democratic. Authoritarian promotion is more focused on blunting the effectiveness of democracy support and creating global conditions that help achieve this objective (Ambrosio 2010). The goals are less ideological and more concerned with safe-guarding economic and geo-strategic interests (Bader et al. 2010; Carothers 2009; Tansey 2015; Whitehead 2015). Their main objective is their own survival and creating conditions that prevent the spread of democracy (Ambrosio 2010). This is achieved by restricting access to democratic ideas and developing negative narratives about Western democracy (Vanderhill 2017). A powerful authoritarian regime usually tries to promote autocracy in response to pressures to democratize. Autocratic regimes also pre-empt liberalization in other authoritarian regimes that might threaten their own stability.

Russia might be the exception to this, however. Russia has attempted to interfere in democratic elections, including the 2016 US presidential election and France's 2017 presidential election, and Brexit. Russia is concerned with relative gains and how powerful it is *vis-à-vis* the US and other Western actors such as the European Union. As such, Russia has become more assertive in its efforts to undermine democracy.

Authoritarian promotion takes many different forms. One type of authoritarian promotion is the promotion of authoritarian norms – such as security, traditional values and nationalism – that directly challenge democratic norms. The discourse around Western democracy is increasingly negative, repeatedly pointing out the failures of the West, the European Union, the US invasion of Iraq and the Eurozone crisis. In addition to authoritarian regimes, regional organizations are also very active in advancing non-democratic regional norms, among them the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (SCO), the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (ASEAN), and the *Gulf Cooperation Council* (GCC). The SCO has offered generous loans, while the GCC has supported military intervention if needed (Libman & Obydenkova 2018a). When promotion takes place through regional organizations, this is sometimes referred to as vertical diffusion.

One of the tools at the disposal of authoritarian regimes to spread authoritarian norms is the use of state-owned media and social media to control narratives about their own regimes and about anyone perceived to be an opponent or threat to the regimes. Authoritarian regimes fund major international television networks, such as Iran's *Press TV,* China's CCTV, Russia's RT, and Venezuela's *Telesur,* to challenge Western interpretations of major world events. In these cases, they may not have a specific target state, but they disseminate norms that are conducive to authoritarianism and which portray authoritarian regimes in a positive light.

Authoritarian regimes can also promote their influence through cultural organizations. In the case of Russia, influential organizations that promote Russian influence include the *Russkiy Mir* (Русский мир) foundation and *Rossotrudnichestvo* (Россотрудничество), created in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Both aim to spread Russian language and culture, support compatriots in the former republics and provide international development assistance (Ziegler 2016).

Another way of supporting authoritarianism is to undermine elections. Russia allegedly facilitated voter fraud in Ukraine in 2004 and the violent repression of protesters in 2014. Putin has also undermined democracy in Ukraine and other neighboring countries by manipulating political opinion, relying on negative campaigning and sponsoring fake candidates. Election monitoring by the *Commonwealth of Independent States* (CIS) sought to protect electoral authoritarian regimes by undermining any electoral monitoring taking place by the *Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe* (OSCE) (Cooley 2015; Merloe 2015). These sponsored 'alternative' election-observation missions have sowed confusion and helped to cover up electoral abuse.

SEE ALSO Authoritarian promotion is often associated with **authoritarian learning**, **authoritarian collaboration** and support. These are all general processes that are intended to make countries more autocratic and thwart democracy promotion efforts. Structural changes towards **autocratization** in the international system are captured under the umbrella concept of **authoritarian diffusion**. A concept related to authoritarian promotion is the idea of **black knights**. 'Black knight' is the name given to a country that engages in authoritarian promotion. Thus, black knights are countries that use economic, military, and diplomatic assistance to support authoritarian regimes (Levitsky & Way 2010). Russia is seen as the classic case of a black knight, using its resources to protect and aid other authoritarian regimes (Lebanidze 2014).

Some studies have focused on authoritarian gravity centers (Box 6.2) like Russia and China, which promote authoritarianism but also lead to the diffusion of authoritarian norms and policies and authoritarian modeling, or learning. They act as transmission belts for the active promotion of authoritarianism. Authoritarian promotion is also connected to the terms 'authoritarian international,' 'authoritarian advance,' 'democracy pre-emption' and 'authoritarian backlash' (Ambrosio 2016).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Authoritarian promotion illustrates the importance of external factors in supporting authoritarian rule and norms around the world. It also indicates that powerful authoritarian regimes are not only concerned with their own stability but with the stability of their neighborhoods.

In extreme cases like Russia, authoritarian regimes intervene outside of their neighborhoods and take action to undermine democracies as well, as seen in the recent 2016 US presidential election.

ORIGIN The term 'democracy promotion' has been around in policy circles for some time now (notable efforts include the Marshall Plan after World War II, and the work done by proponents of **modernization theory**), but 'authoritarian promotion' is a relatively new term. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, China aimed to promote authoritarian stability by supporting like-minded Communist states, but this was rooted more in ideological linkages rather than the desire to promote authoritarianism in general.

It is hard to pinpoint when the term 'authoritarian promotion' became widely used. The late Belarussian scholar Vitali Silitski coined the term 'authoritarian international.' This referred to a loose alliance and coordination among diverse autocracies to combat threats from democracies (Silitski 2007). This term may have closer connections to authoritarian coordination and cooperation, but there are similarities with authoritarian promotion as well. Silitsky explains that both Russia and Belarus have spent decades trying to pre-empt democracy, which could be construed as autocracy promotion. Authoritarian promotion has also sometimes been referred to as 'authoritarian advance,' noting the growing power of China and Russia to increase their spheres of influence.

LITERATURE The literature on authoritarian promotion focuses on investigating a few questions – such as how authoritarian promotion takes place, whether or not it is actually effective and poses a threat to democracies around the world, and what authoritarian regimes are trying to achieve when they intervene in other countries' affairs.

Because of concerns about the democratic slump facing the world today, the first two questions have been explored extensively. Some scholars have argued that authoritarian promotion is a major threat to democracy around the world, and derives in part from the efforts of autocracies to promote autocracy (mostly within, but not limited to, their own neighborhoods). For example, Russia has facilitated rollbacks of civil liberties and pluralism in the former Soviet Union.

However, Lucan Way (2016) and Jason Brownlee (2017) claim that the influence of autocracy promotion is limited. They both argue that it is nearly impossible to prove and that powerful authoritarian regimes like Russia and China are forcing states to become more authoritarian than they would be. It is hard to identify the places where authoritarian promotion actually worked. Andre Bank and Kurt Weyland (2019) argue that where authoritarianism has taken hold, it was driven by domestic impulses and not foreign conspiracies. Way (2016) adds that Russia's foreign policy is actually counter-productive as regards the goal of encouraging authoritarianism. Russian support of Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia in 2003, Leonid Kuchma in Ukraine in 2004, and Viktor Yanukovych in Ukraine in 2014 was not enough to prevent their collapse. Additionally, outright authoritarian promotion can lead to a huge backlash. When Russia campaigned for Yanukovych on Ukrainian television, voter fraud and obvious Russian interference led to massive protests in Western Ukraine and eventually the Orange Revolution (see **color revolutions**). When Russia tried to block Ukraine from signing an association agreement with the European Union, this led to huge demonstrations and the ousting of Yanukovych, who had been elected in 2010 (Way 2016). Christine Hackenesch (2015) concurs that any effort by China to promote authoritarianism in Africa through substantial volumes of aid, loans and direct investment has not been successful in counteracting Western **democracy promotion** efforts.

Nevertheless, not all authors see the impact of authoritarian promotion as negligible. For example, in the case of Russia's promotion of authoritarianism in Ukraine, Russian interference did bolster popular support for Yanukovych in the 2004 election (Sushko & Prystayko 2006; Wilson 2005). Russia has also been guilty of legitimizing emergent regimes, such as supporting breakaway regions in the former Soviet Union. According to Jakob Tolstrup, Russia's support and involvement in Crimea bolstered opposition forces against the pro-democratic Ukrainian government that came to power after Yanukovych was removed from power. Russian troops on the ground and tight coordination between Russian and pro-separatist Crimean lawmakers derailed the pro-democratic and Western agenda in Kyiv.

Scholars also argue that authoritarian promotion has little to do with the intrinsic value of promoting authoritarian values around the world. Julia Bader and her colleagues (2010) claim that authoritarian regimes are more interested in supporting friendly neighbors, regardless of what regime type they have. China is more interested in preserving regional stability than propping up dictators (Bader 2015). Thus, the focus in Russia and China is more defensive than actively engaged in promoting regime change.

Rachel Vanderhill (2013) and Nathan & Scobell (2012) concur that China is not trying to promote authoritarianism around the globe but is instead focused on gaining access to natural energy resources and promoting its own economic development, growth and political stability. Way (2015) argues that Putin's interests in undermining pro-Western leaders such as Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia and Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine in the 2000s were less about their moves to democratize and more about how these leaders might challenge Russian geo-political power (Way 2015). It is less an ideological matter and more one of self-interest; authoritarian regimes are mostly indifferent to democracy promotion unless it affects their economic and geo-political interests. Policies which have the effect of supporting autocracy may in fact be the result of other reasons, and authoritarian survival may simply be a by-product (Hall & Ambrosio 2017). According to these authors, Russia's support for authoritarianism is also more selective since



Russia does not bother to support all authoritarian regimes around the world. Bader and her colleagues (2010) argue that authoritarian regimes have a preference for encouraging like-minded governments in close proximity.

But is this still the case for Russia? Russia's recent initiation of war against Ukraine seems linked to larger goals of empire. Russia may be the outlier here, as its recent actions in Ukraine have called into question just how far its ambitions go.

CLASSIFICATIONS Authoritarian promotion often gets conflated with other concepts such as authoritarian learning, diffusion and coordination/cooperation. While these concepts are all related, we see some distinctions. As we have already highlighted, different actors with different objectives are involved in authoritarian promotion. In some cases, authoritarian promotion is spearheaded by a regime, while in other cases it is done through a regional organization. Some authoritarian promotion aims to block democratic diffusion while in other cases authoritarian promotion is itself the goal. Ultimately, we see authoritarian promotion as intentional and coercive, rather than passive and unintentional. Nevertheless, some scholars see authoritarian promotion as a type of authoritarian diffusion, rather than seeing them as two distinct concepts (Gel'man & Lankina 2007; Roberts & Ziemer 2018). For these scholars, authoritarian transfers can be both active and passive and diffusion can also be coercive. In contrast, we see Putin's advancement of authoritarian ideals and practices as promotion, while the linkages and leverage that Russia enjoys in the region constitute examples of diffusion (see **linkage & leverage**). Others, like Von Billerbeck and Tansey (2019) distinguish between explicit (intentional) and unintended promotion of autocracy, using the example of peace-keeping missions in the DRC.

In our entry on **autocratic diffusion**, we introduced the term 'isomorphism,' but that term is more closely related to authoritarian promotion. Isomorphism is a process that forces one unit to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (Hall & Ambrosio 2017). Policy transfer and learning focus on the choices of the actor which change their behavior, and implies the actor's greater degree of freedom in making changes. In contrast, isomorphism explains how institutions are forced to emulate specific behaviors because of internal and/or external constraints. In some cases, the process of emulation occurs because a particular policy or institution is needed, but not necessarily desired (Thatcher & Sweet 2002). In other cases, emulation takes place by force applied by a powerful state or organization that compels other states to copy certain policies, practices or strategies (Farquharson 2013). When this happens, it is known as coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). We see collective isomorphism and authoritarian promotion as one and the same.

MEASUREMENT authoritarian promotion is measured by looking at instances of policy congruence or convergence in key areas such as constitutional law, electoral rules, laws on NGOs, and other electoral legislation. The more difficult task, however, is to determine the intent of the more powerful state so as to ascertain whether or not it is a case of diffusion or intentional promotion.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Scholars have argued that the field of autocracy promotion is fraught with conceptual issues, and offers very tentative conclusions (Burnell 2010; Tansey 2015; Tolstrup 2015). Very little is known about the impact of autocracy promotion and how it might differ from any other type of assistance.

Along these lines, the biggest methodological issue is how to define the concept. Oisín Tansey (2015) has argued that we need a stricter conceptualization of autocracy promotion, one that is limited to cases where the external actor clearly intends to promote authoritarian rule in part due to an ideological commitment to authoritarianism. Thus, we need to distinguish between unintended and intended autocratic influences. Any authoritarianism that is an unintended consequence would be labeled **authoritarian diffusion**. However, if definitions of autocracy promotion are limited to cases where there is an ideological commitment to autocracy, this might exclude every instance of promotion,, since much of the literature on this topic sees autocracy promotion as more pragmatic than ideological. The other question has to do with the blurry line between resisting democracy promotion efforts and advancing autocracy. Is resisting democracy the same as advancing autocracy? It is also unclear if autocracy promotion only occurs in cases where an impact has been made. These are methodological issues that make measuring autocracy promotion a challenge.

EXAMPLES The most notable examples of authoritarian promotion involve Russia and its neighbors. In the early 1990s Russia worked to convince the pro-Russian parliamentary opposition in Belarus to accept Alexander Lukashenko's closure of parliament to introduce a more personalized style of rule. This support has helped maintain Lukashenko in power for several decades, and at this point Russia and Belarus are coordinating and cooperating, as in Moscow's support for Lukashenko during the 2021 protests.

Russia has flexed its power and influence most with its neighbor Ukraine. One of the notable (albeit unsuccessful) cases of authoritarian promotion involved Russia's involvement in the 2004 Ukrainian election. Russia may have spent as much as $600 million to support Viktor Yanukovych's 2004 campaign (Åslund 2009).

Before the run-off election in Ukraine between Yanukovych and Yushchenko, Putin met to advise Yanukovych about using smarter rigging by inflating the turnout in regions where he already had high levels of support, rather than falsifying the votes. Russia also repeatedly attacked the opposition through smear campaigns. Yushchenko was slandered on television while Yanukovych was praised (Åslund 2009). Russian prosecutors reopened a case of embezzlement against Yulia Tymoshenko, a popular

Box 6.2 Authoritarian Gravity Centers: Black Holes of Democratic Hope

Black holes ain't as black as they are painted. They are not the eternal prisons they were once thought.
– Stephen Hawking

Authoritarian gravity centers (AGCs) are a conceptual framework used to understand the influence exerted by powerful authoritarian regimes on neighboring countries. This concept, developed by Marianne Kneuer and Thomas Demmelhuber, is particularly useful in explaining the regional clustering of autocracies and the diffusion of authoritarian practices across different geopolitical contexts.

The theoretical underpinning of AGCs is rooted in the idea that certain authoritarian regimes act as centers of attraction or contagion for nearby countries. These regimes can actively promote authoritarianism (push factors) or serve as passive models that others may emulate (pull factors). The concept draws from theories of International Relations (IR) and comparative politics, particularly those exploring the diffusion of political norms and practices. AGCs are seen as influential due to their geopolitical proximity and their capacity to project power and ideas across borders.

Both intentional and unintentional influences originate from the AGC and provoke reactions at the domestic level of target states, leading to interaction and reciprocity. The framework suggests that while *control* is the most coercive form of influence, *hard leverage* occupies a middle ground, and *subtle leverage* employs the least coercive measures. Diffusion processes are facilitated by structural similarities and networks that enhance communication and idea exchange.

The application of AGCs is evident in various regions where authoritarian regimes have exerted significant influence. For instance, countries like Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia have been identified as AGCs due to their ability to shape political developments in neighboring states. These regimes use a combination of economic incentives, political pressure, and cultural influence to promote authoritarian norms and practices. Empirical studies have shown that these centers can affect regime types in nearby countries, either by supporting existing autocratic governments or by undermining democratic institutions through various means, such as media manipulation, economic dependency, and diplomatic pressure (cf. **black knights**).

While the concept of AGCs provides valuable insights into the dynamics of **authoritarian diffusion**, **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning,** it also has limitations. One major limitation is that it does not differentiate between regime types nor distinguishes between various types of gravity centers. A second issue is the difficulty in empirically measuring the influence of AGCs and untangling it from other factors that might contribute to autocratic tendencies in a region. Additionally, the frame is time-bound and does not overcome the 'democracy vs. non-democracy' dichotomy.

How to cite:

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opposition leader, and sent a request to Interpol for her arrest. Putin also held several high-profile meetings with Yanukovych praising his political skills (Petrov & Ryabov 2006). Putin then praised Yanukovych on Ukrainian national television and took part in a 90-minute question-and-answer session with Ukrainian voters (Åslund 2009).

IMPACT ON POLICY In the past, democracies and international like-minded organizations focused on **democracy promotion** and support, without considering the additional obstacle of autocracy promotion. Support was offered on how to build legislative and judicial institutions, how to hold elections, and how to support civil society. Democracy support efforts now have to consider the more aggressive actions of authoritarian regimes and their efforts to respond more effectively to democracy promotion.

REGIONAL VARIATION Most works have focused on Russia and China as authoritarian gravity centers (Box 6.2). Russia, Cuba, Saudi Arabia and Iran have also often been labeled **black knights**. The phenomenon has been less studied in other world regions, especially Africa and South and Southeast Asia. For broader comparative studies, see Vanderhill 2013; Kneuer & Demmelhuber 2020; as well as Fossati (2022) and others case studies in the *Revista Euro*



latinoamericana de Análisis Social y Político and its 2022 and 2023 editions (which also contain articles in French and Italian).

Eurasia For Russia and its near abroad, see Way 2015; Babayan 2015; Lewis 2016; Obydenka & Libman 2015; Libman & Obydenka 2018b; Ginsburg 2020; Kolstø 2021. On Belarus, see Yakouchyk 2016; Sejersen 2019; and for the unintended effects of democracy support, see Pikulik & Bedford 2019. For Central Asia, see Jackson 2014; Zuegker 2016; Sharshenova & Crawford 2017; for a comparison of Russia and China, see Melnykovska et al. 2012; Bader & Kästner 2016; Chou 2017.

Latin America Venezuela and Cuba are the most famous cases because ideology also played a role. For Venezuela and Chávez' export of Bolivarianism, see Kneuer 2022; for Maduro's regime as a recipient of autocratic support, see Gratius 2022. For a comparison of the two cases, see Menegol 2022.

MENA For a case study of Saudi Arabia, see Zumbrägel 2020; Zumbrägel & Demmelhuber 2020; and (in Italian) Morelli 2022. For Erdoğan's Turkey, see Canzut 2023. For the unintended effect of democracy support in Morocco, see Khakee 2017. Michelutto (2023) offers a welcome new case, studying Egypt's efforts at autocracy promotion in Libya and Tunisia.

Indo-Pacific For China's *One Belt One Road* project, see Bader 2015; Chou & Bryant 2015; Bryant & Chou 2016; Mandelbaum & Weiffen 2023; for its impact on Hong Kong, see Fong 2021; and on Myanmar and Thailand, see Tonetto 2022. Strating (2020) studies **black knight** behavior by Australia.

Sub Saharan Africa Billerbeck and Tansey (2019) look at peace-building missions in the DRC and how they have enabled autocracy. Autocracy promotion in this world region remains very much understudied.

NEW FRONTIERS Political science researchers are working to better understand the processes of **autocratization** and how various forms of international and domestic resistance can respond. Van den Bosch (2020) applies a framework of regime clusters to distinguish between the contexts and the drivers of autocracy promotion. K. Yakouchyk (2019) offers a fine review of the current debates within this subfield.

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Colonial States

The worst thing that colonialism did was to cloud our view of our past.
– Barack Obama

Gereza si kuta
(A prison can exist without walls)
– Swahili proverb

Colonialism is a highly heterogeneous process covering almost five centuries and including all continents. Modern colonies can be defined as territories in which (i) political sovereignty has been seized by a foreign political power and (ii) the indigenous population is treated by the conquering state as fundamentally inferior (Steinmetz 2008: 591). These two criteria can be summarized as the sovereignty criterion and the rule of colonial difference criterion, which meant stressing differences between colonial subjects and preserving the alien-ness of the ruling group (Chatterjee 1993: 10).

Colonial administrations were able to gain relative autonomy from the metropolitan state and district governors. In particular, colonies were able to gain further autonomy from colonial governors (Steinmetz 2008: 592). According to Comaroff (1998: 341), in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Africa, the colonial state was often an ephemeral and ineffective entity, regardless of the presence of governmental agencies.

DEFINITION There is no widely accepted definition of the colonial state. Some authors consider them only as appendages of metropolitan states, while others argue that colonial states may not even be considered states (Steinmetz 2007: 27). Crawford Young (1997: 43-45) identifies three attributes of state-ness that colonial states lack: (a) sovereignty; (b) the idea of the nation; and (c) being an actor in the international scene. Steinmetz (2007: 28) claims that colonial regimes were generally state-like, their defining feature being the transfer of sovereignty from indigenous inhabitants to foreigners. The typical colonial state was staffed by a small group of colonial officers and had an undemocratic form of rule similar to **despotism** (Steinmetz 2007: 31). Steinmetz (2008: 596) also identifies similarities between the colonial state and those nondemocratic states or empires with political regime types like **absolutism** or **totalitarianism**. The essence of colonialism is the practice of segregation: institutional, territorial, and social (Chelati Dirar 2007). Achille Mbembe stresses the role of violence and terror in these processes, noting that in colonial states *"absolute lawlessness stems from the racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native"* (Mbembe 2003: 24).

Jackson and Rosberg (1982: 15) consider the definition of the administrative aspect of a colonial state and suggest that the colonial state in Africa was based on bureaucratic rule (see **bureaucratic authoritarianism**). Colonial governments were led by administrative officers, appointed by a European authority. According to Steinmetz (2007), the colonial officers were interested in learning the languages of their subjects, their cultural traditions and traits, and this leads to the claim that colonial states were 'ethnographic states' (Ivarsson & Rud 2017), meaning that they were compelled to prioritize native policy, emphasizing the importance of asserting ethnographic expertise (Steinmetz 2007: 52–53).

Another conceptualization of colonial states is suggested by Comaroff (1998: 338), who states that *"colonial states, like states everywhere, depend(ed) at once (i) on instrumental, institutional, tangible forms of coercion, (ii) on means of violence either immanent or manifest, physical or symbolic, (iii) on diffuse, invisible modes of surveillance and discipline, and, in some measure, (iv) on the positive production of consent."*

As regards economic factors, according to Lonsdale and Berman (1979: 489), the colonial state may be seen as a variant of the capitalist state. The economies of colonial states were connected by forced labor. In Spanish America, economic activities were driven by the use of Native Americans' labor (Sokoloff & Engerman 2000). Enslaved people from Africa were imported to serve on American sugar and cotton plantations in the colonies of all the European powers (Sokoloff & Engerman 2000). Between 1400-1900 the Atlantic Ocean hosted the largest slave trade route across continents, the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In addition, there were another three routes: the trans-Saharan, the Red Sea, and Indian Ocean slave trade routes, which temporarily preceded the trans-Atlantic trade (Nunn 2008). Slavery and forced labor were used to increase economic development in other European colonies, such as Italian Somalia (McPherson-Smith 2021). The slave trade disintegrated the African kingdoms in Western and Central Africa, leading to successful European penetration (Nunn 2008).

All these proposed conceptualizations of colonial states build on the definition of the colony, which, according to Osterhammel (2005: 10) and adjusted by Olsson (2009: 536), refers to an enduring political entity established outside of Europe by 'Western' nations (European countries excluding Russia, but encompassing Western offshoots such as the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries, achieved through invasion, conquest, and/or settlement colonization. The rulers of a colony preserve a continuous reliance on a geographically distant mother country or imperial center, which asserts exclusive ownership rights over the colony or significantly influences its political landscape in various ways.

SEE ALSO Colonial states incorporated the **ideology** of **racism** in almost all spheres of their politi-

cal organization, hence the scholarly comparisons to some aspects of **totalitarianism**. Because of the absence of legal protection for their 'subjects,' these regimes and their centralized rule shared some characteristics with **absolutism**, **despotism**, **tyranny** – three concepts that were applicable to 'Western' **monarchies** and to some degree also to the republics they evolved into. Their high levels of **repression** and systemic violence, combined with low accountability to (democratic) audiences in the metropolis, suggest some parallels with **patrimonialism** and **sultanism & neo-sultanism**. For the impact of colonial states on the postcolonial development of states, their economic performance, and on a variety of social factors, see the entries on **colonial legacies** and **imperial legacies** in this volume. For the influence of anti-colonial liberation movements, consult **revolutionary legacies**. Box 4.9 provides a comparison of post-colonial interpretations of Socialism, like African Socialism and Arab Socialism; for more detail on 'Baʿathism' – see also Box 4.5.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Colonial states had a great impact on both the colonized and on the colonizing societies. Crawford Young (1997) calls the colonial system and European colonizers in Congo *Bula Matari* ('Breaker of Rocks' in Kikongo), signifying that the colonial state encompassed revolutionary changes in African societies (see **colonial legacies**). Colonial states profoundly influenced former colonies by distorting economic development, entrenching inequalities, imposing new governance structures and altering demography (the slave trade, forced displacements). They fostered social segmentation, cultural assimilation, and environmental degradation. These impacts disrupted traditional practices, introduced new species and diseases, and created lasting economic and political challenges, shaping the post-independence trajectories of these societies. To understand the impact of colonial states on the colonized and on the colonizing societies, it is necessary to focus on the relations between colonial states and civil society (Lemarchand 1992).

The study of colonial states has also wider implications for the analysis of weak statehood and explains the emergence and development of non-democratic regimes. Relations between state capacity and the **repression** of citizens (e.g., Roberti (2019) addresses the case studies of Senegal and Belgian Congo) *"explain the heterogeneous levels of state capacity in non-settler colonies and have policy implications for present autocratic regimes"* (Roberti 2019: 247). Since colonialism has an impact on state institutions, it is necessary to investigate the potential impact of colonial states' character on state-building in post-colonial states (Lange 2003). Understanding the dynamics of and within colonial states is also important because colonial states are characterized by the coercive nature of their governments, later leading to the emergence of underdeveloped, weak, and even failed postcolonial states (Ivarsson & Rud 2017) (see **state fragility & failure**).

Van den Bosch (2023: 108) argues that a colonial regime, much like a colonial state, is not considered a fully functioning political entity. As mentioned above, colonial states differ from sovereign states in lacking three key aspects: (a) sovereignty, (b) a unified national identity, and (c) independent agency in foreign affairs. Colonial states emerged first when European kingdoms were themselves evolving into modern states, resulting in extensive institutional and legal variation over time (Young 1997: 43). Before the establishment of the United Nations, various forms of statehood, such as protectorates, fiefdoms, vassal states, colonies, and satellite states, were more common. However, the absence of sovereignty, representation, and foreign policy agency posed significant challenges for these colonial entities during and after their transition to independence (see **colonial legacies**).

Their transition to independent states was marked by strained civil-military relations and distrust of former collaborators who had been part of the colonial administration. Colonial bureaucracies were primarily designed for population control and resource extraction rather than service delivery. Infrastructure was similarly biased towards facilitating such extraction and political control, leading to disparities between wealthy urban centers and impoverished rural areas. This bias was particularly pronounced in regions like the South Asian archipelagos due to their late colonization (Van den Bosch 2023: 108).

Colonial regimes are distinct from other **political regimes** in that the ultimate power-holders are foreigners who are part of an international network, often overseeing multiple colonies. (This, for instance, precludes the possibility of a **coup d'état** by local elites, since the ultimate locus of power lies not in the capital, but in the colonial metropolis.) Despite their autocratic nature, these regimes had a surprising level of formalization, clearly defining the vertical power relations between colonizers and the colonized, even though the latter were largely excluded from decision-making processes. The horizontal power relations with local elites varied significantly, and the simple dichotomy of 'direct' versus 'indirect' rule does not fully capture this complexity. Over time, local institutions that collaborated or were co-opted by the colonizers evolved, sometimes gaining legitimacy among the colonized (Van den Bosch 2023: 108).

The moral decline of the colonial system eventually led to greater autonomy for subaltern organizations, some of which became significant political entities during the transition to independence. However, even when local elites were included in the colonial regime's **selectorate**, they were junior partners with limited influence over decision-making and no control over key military or foreign policy functions. The colonizers employed divide-and-rule tactics to prevent these elites from gaining too much power, ensuring their loyalty through constant monitoring and manipulation of factional rivalries.

Subaltern elites, much like elites in **personalist regimes**, were kept divided and unable to challenge the colonial power effectively. Their subjugation to colonial law and their inferior legal status kept them distant from central power. At times, the high level of



legal-bureaucratic formalization, entrenching **racism** as a political **ideology**, was omnipresent for the colonized, thus resembling **totalitarianism** in those territories that were directly ruled by an extensive **bureaucracy**. Despite these similarities, their unique characteristics (see a,b,c, under 'key significance' above) make it difficult to equate colonial governing networks with independent political regimes.

ORIGIN The conceptualization of the colonial state emerged from the state-centric approach (Ivarsson & Rud 2017) illustrated e.g., by Evans et al. (1985), A. Giddens (2002) and his concept of the nation-state, or Bourdieu (2014). Steinmetz (2007: 27) claims that the uniqueness of the very existence of the colonial form of the state has been denied by theorists and historians, and suggests instead that the concept of colonial state be a part of the theoretical discussions of organized forms of political domination.

LITERATURE There is a large literature on the subject of the colonial state. One of the most influential books on the conceptualization and characteristics of colonial states is *African Colonial States in a Comparative Perspective* by Crawford Young (1997), which focuses solely on African colonies. The impact of colonial states on the creation of postcolonial patrimonial autocracies in Africa is provided by e.g., Young (2004). The edited volume *Rethinking the Colonial State* (Ivarsson & Rud 2017) provides diverse analyses of various aspects of the colonial state in colonies in different parts of the world, including territories generally neglected in the analysis of colonial states, like Samoa and the Danish West Indies.

CLASSIFICATIONS There are several possible classifications of colonial states according to either the characteristics of colonial rule or the particular colonial power. Olsson (2009) enumerates different types of colonialism: (a) 'full colonies,' which were possessions and considered parts of colonial powers; (b) 'protectorates,' which were more loosely tied to colonial powers. The exact type of colonial administration was chosen according to certain select features, including the era of colonial encounter. As Olsson (2009) claims, the selection of colonial policy may have been influenced not only by factors including the national identity of the colonizer, geography, disease, and population density, but also by the timing of the colonial enterprise and the level of resistance the colonizers faced.

Direct and indirect rule – Colonial states may be classified according to the type of rule characterizing their administration. The basic classification would thus be of colonies administered by 'direct' or 'indirect' rule (Müller-Crepon 2020; Ivarsson and Rud 2017). Migdal (1994: 9) equates the 'integrated domination for centralized governance' of colonies with direct rule, and 'dispersed domination for administration with powerful local chiefs' with indirect rule.

The British were noted for their use of indirect rule, but this form of administration was used also by the Belgians, Portuguese, and French (Bayart 2009). The British colonial empire (Lange et al. 2006) combined both direct and indirect forms of rule: in Nigeria and Uganda, they relied on local chiefs; Jamaica and Singapore lacked chiefs completely (Lange 2004); and the USA and Australia were administered directly as settlement colonies (Olsson 2009). For the difference between land management and schooling systems, and the general inequalities between the US and Canada, on one side, and the rest of America during colonialism, consult Sokoloff & Engerman (2000).

The case studies of four British colonies – Nigeria, the Gold Coast (now Ghana), Nyasaland (now Malawi), and Kenya (Bolt & Gardner 2020) – present how Native Authorities were incorporated into colonial administrations. The process of creating Native Authorities as well as the power granted to them differed across British colonies. In most cases, Native Authorities had the right to collect particular taxes and establish Native Courts. Bolt and Gardner (2020) also discuss the role of chiefs in British colonies administered by indirect rule.

Numerous academic works comparing British indirect and French direct colonial rule focus on education (Bolt & Bezemer 2009) or on their economic consequences (Iyer 2010). There are also regionally-oriented comparative studies of West Africa (Whittlesey 1937). Cameroon is an interesting case. British indirect rule in Cameroon led to the empowerment of communities and their self-reliance with an important role for elites, in contrast to French Cameroon, which applied an assimilation policy (Fonchingong & Fonjong 2002). Lee (2012) contrasts the French policy of assimilation and promotion of Western education in Cameroon with native traditions in (indirectly ruled) British Cameroon. He finds that the French system was in fact 'quasi-direct' which means that the French used German-era chiefs whom they hired for concrete services in the colony's administration (Lee 2012: 11). Lee compares, *inter alia*, the civil and common law in both colonies, religion, education, and labor policy. The colonial law in the British colony of Burma was studied by Saha (2012), who found that the law was applied in colonies individually and influenced by corruption.

These differences between direct and indirect rule also applied to the divergent effects of civil law and common law in conflict prevention and providing access to conflict resolution in Africa, as shown by Joireman (2001). For instance, the French colonial administration applied *(code de) indigénat,* an arbitrary set of oppressive measures, which empowered colonial officers with the right to punish colonial subjects on the spot with up to two weeks in prison (Joireman 2001: 579). The British system, in contrast, included indigenous forms of justice with the judiciary involvement of traditional leaders in conflict resolutions.

As for the analysis of British indirect rule, according to Mamdani (2018), indirect rule created 'the bifurcated state,' which contained the duality of urban, colonially-imposed power, and rural, customary, indigenous power. However, as Lee (2017) claims and proves in the case of India, colonial administrations favored pre-colonial elites only when they were

financially and militarily secure. Lee discusses the relations between the colonial state and local elites. The colonial administration had to take into account apprehension about potential uprisings and military challenges, the need to generate income, and the impracticality and cost associated with completely replacing indigenous landholding elites (Lee 2017: 183).

Settler and extractive colonies – Another distinction is between settlement colonies and extractive colonies (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Lange 2004), where differences in colonial rule were induced by variations in local geographic endowments as well as climate and disease burdens (Acemoglu et al. 2001). Advances in medicine (in particular malaria treatments based on quinine) enabled British colonialists from the nineteenth century onward to establish colonial settlements in tropical climates and sped up the 'scramble for Africa' (Seth 2018; Curtin 1989). (This finding, however, is disputed by Bolt & Bezemer (2009), who find no relationship between settler mortality and institutions in their analysis of a sample of African colonies.) In settler colonies, institutions protecting the private property and a portion of the liberties of the population were established. On the other hand, in extractive colonies, small groups of European elites monopolized economic and political power. After independence, former extractive colonies typically produced autocratic regimes.

Similarly, Lonsdale and Berman (1979) distinguish between colonies of peasant export production and colonies of white settlement. Ola Olsson (2009: 535) claims that the colonial era should be divided into an early 'mercantilist' wave and a later 'imperialist' wave, with different characteristics. The distinction between colonial policies is influenced by differences in legal systems and ideologies: the difference between common law (British tradition) and civil law (French tradition). Established economic activities are also an important factor, as illustrated by the case of Somalia, divided between British and Italian colonial systems. McPherson-Smith (2021) focuses on institutions, approaches to education, religion, land tenure and labor, and identifies differences in climate and physical geography features that determined economic activities in Somalia – pastoralism in British Somaliland, and agriculture in Italian Somalia.

Type of colonial power – Academic works on colonial states often explore the administrative differences among various colonial powers. For instance, Blanton et al. (2001) compare French and British colonial systems, while Lange et al. (2006) examine Spanish and British colonies. Grier (1999) discusses the distinctions among British, French, and Spanish colonial systems. Firmin-Sellers (2000) focuses on British and French colonial systems in West Africa, particularly Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, and their impact on land policies, class formation, and the role of chiefs.

Some scholars emphasize the political aspects of colonial administrations and their effects on the treatment of colonized populations. Blanton et al. (2001), using statistical analysis from the *Minorities at Risk* dataset, find that Francophone states were more autocratic than Anglophone states and that the treatment of ethnic groups was worse in French colonies than in British colonies.

Economic aspects are also analyzed, with Spanish colonies favoring mercantilist policies focused on resource extraction. Spanish and Portuguese colonial ambitions were driven by the desire to extract precious metals in the Americas and control the spice trade between Europe and Asia (Olsson 2009), as well as large-scale agriculture (Sokoloff & Engerman 2000). Grafe and Irigoin (2012) discuss the stakeholder model in Spanish colonial rule in America, in which individual colonies operated as independent territorial units managing their own revenues and expenditures.

MEASUREMENT Colonial systems have been measured and compared in various ways. Lange (2004) identifies several factors that influenced the character of the colonial administration, regardless of its type of rule (direct or indirect): (i) the presence or absence of European settlers; (ii) the economic potential of the colony; (iii) the disease environment of the colonies; (iv) the presence of the local population. There are also quantitative studies of the impact of various factors on the character and quality of colonial institutions. For instance, Acemoglu et al. (2002) find that indigenous population density affected the quality of colonial state institutions.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES One of the biggest methodological issues is the discussion about whether colonial states can even be considered states (Steinmetz 2008: 591). According to Young (1997), for example, colonies cannot be seen as states (or as having states) at all, because they lacked that status in international law. Sometimes there can be a bias in defining colonialism exclusively from a Western perspective. For example, the one provided by Olsson (2009: 536) is problematic since it omits non-Western colonies, such as Japanese possessions in Korea and China, or Russian colonialism.

There are some identifiable differences between Japanese and European colonialism. Unlike European states, Japan colonized proximate territories (Cumings 1984; Kohli 1994), and therefore invested in infrastructure in its colonies. Its preferred military form of administration meant there was a land army resident directly in the colony. Japan also located heavy industry in its colonies, and its colonial policy was much more influenced by internal developments and reforms during the Meiji period (Kohli 1994).

IMPACT ON POLICY The international system was forged through imperialism and colonialism; thus, international interactions between now independent states are shaped by lingering dependencies, cultural ties, alliances and anti-colonial struggles, which, for this book's purposes, translate into patterns of **authoritarian collaboration**, **authoritarian learning** and **authoritarian regionalism**, among others.

In individual territories, **colonial legacies** left undemocratic institutional imprints on their **polit-**



ical regimes. Their colonial history can have a considerable impact on **foreign policy**. It helps current postcolonial states or secessionist territories (**de facto states**) to legitimize their claim to independent existence. For example, Somaliland legitimizes its claims to independence by the fact that it has a distinct colonial past compared to the former Italian colony of Somalia (Hoch & Rudincová 2015; Bradbury et al. 2003; McPherson-Smith 2021). Similarly, there has been discussion about the **external legitimacy** of the Eritrean state given the fact that Eritrea was an Italian colony (Chelati Dirar 2007).

NEW FRONTIERS Currently, the scholarship on the colonial state does not only focus on political and economic issues, but stresses the role of different actors in the shaping of colonial societies: teachers, African translators, tax collectors and missionaries (Sharkey 2013; Gilmour 2007). Building on Foucault's concepts of biopower, biopolitics, and governmentality (Foucault & Senellart: 2008) and postcolonial theories (Said 1979), the analysis of colonial states embraces the practices and behavior of various actors, since colonial states were understood as a reflection of European ideas about modernity (Ivarsson & Rud: 2017). In addition to focusing on non-state-centric approaches to studying the developments and characteristics of colonial states, Ivarsson & Rud (2017: 16) also suggest highlighting the diversity of colonial administrations and various colonial state formations. To accomplish this, it is important to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach that enables the mapping of the social context of the colony and knowledge production on and in colonial states (Chelati Dirar 2007).

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Color Revolutions

The color revolution virus affects only weak countries.
Belarus does not have any breeding ground for this
– Alexander Lukashenko, dictator of Belarus

Some of the post-communist countries of Central Europe (e.g., Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary), but also of the former Soviet Union (the Baltic States), democratized during the first decade after the fall of the communist regimes faster and became part of Western political, economic and military structures between 1999-2004. It was reflected in their accession to the EU and NATO. In some others (e.g., Serbia, Ukraine, Georgia) democratization was slower, and a political establishment that came to power, was perceived by parts of civil society as corrupt and having only the *façade* of Western liberal democracy. In these countries, since the late 1990s and especially at the beginning of the new millennium, non-violent public protests began to emerge with the aim of overthrowing unpopular governments and replacing them with political representatives with more democratic credentials. Although only two of these efforts to establish democracy from below had color in their very names (the orange revolution in Ukraine and the rose revolution in Georgia), all of these protests and movements shared a number of common features. This has led many area studies experts, local politicians, journalists and academics to view them as a single phenomenon, mostly referred to as colour/color or flower revolutions.

SEE ALSO This series of **protests & uprisings** created a wave of turmoil in the early 2000s in Eurasia and was followed by the **Arab Spring** in 2011 in MENA, raising even more expectations that a new democratic wave was underway (cf. Box 6.3), and even temporarily challenging the myth of Arab exceptionalism (Box 6.1). By affected autocrats, these protest waves were framed as Western **regime promotion** and destabilization campaigns. Despite their group labels, the actors and dynamics in individual protests differed greatly, as did their outcomes.

DEFINITION & EXAMPLES The terms 'color revolution' or 'flower revolution' are used to describe a number of non-violent protests that succeeded in overthrowing authoritarian regimes at the turn of the 1990s and in the first decade of the twenty-first century – for examples, see Box 6.4. In each of this protest movements, leaders adopted colored flags to rally under (Ó Beacháin & Polese 2009: 810).

While some authors (e.g., Way 2008; Bunce & Wolchik 2006) refer to color revolutions as **transitions** from non-democratic regimes (**personalist rule**) that grew out of the power vacuum following the collapse of the communist bloc, a broader concept understands color revolutions as all of the popu-



larly instigated collapses of authoritarian regimes or their attempts not only in the post-communist space, but also in the Middle East (**Arab Spring**) and Southeast Asia (e.g., Carothers 2011). While the Arab Spring and color revolutions are both instances of mass **protests & uprisings** seeking political change, that have relied on civil disobedience, and social media to mobilize large segments of the population, they have some distinct characteristics and driving forces. The term color revolution typically refers to a series of non-violent, peaceful uprisings, the Arab Spring uprisings on the other hand were a mix of both peaceful and violent protests, depending on the country and its specific circumstances. In some countries, such as Libya and Syria, civil wars have arisen as a direct outcome of these events. Another important difference between the color revolutions and the Arab Spring was their motives. The color revolutions were very closely linked to elections and the desire of disaffected citizens to replace corrupt and, in their eyes, undemocratic politicians with a more democratic opposition in free and fair elections. In the motives behind the Arab Spring, economic reasons were often one of the driving forces, and elections have not been at the epicenter of the protesters' attention. These differences are pointed out by van Antwerp & Brown, who referred to the events in Tunisia and Egypt as to an example of non-electoral transitions (van Antwerp & Brown 2018: 199). Generally speaking, coups in the Arab macro-region are an example of revolts against ruling autocratic regimes, but they differ from the color revolutions in the post-Soviet space in terms of motives and character, and thus are not classified by many authors as an example of color revolutions.

Some scholars trace color revolutions back to the 1990s, to the events in Slovakia (Ó Beacháin & Polese 2009: 810) or even to the earlier events in Romania and Bulgaria (Bunce & Wolchik 2006: 284), however most authors consider the events in Serbia in 2000 (the bulldozer revolution), Georgia in 2003 (the rose revolution), Ukraine in 2004 (the orange revolution) and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (the tulip revolution) to be classic examples of color revolutions (Tucker 2007: 536).

Though differing in content, all these color revolutions had in common a proposed socio-political transformation intended to introduce democracy from below. As David Lane (2009) convincingly demonstrated they shared a common strategy: *"Mass protests occurred within the constitutional framework to widen forms of public participation in the regimes. They were legitimated as a movement for 'greater democracy.' They were all targeted on removing the incumbent political leaderships. Electoral procedures, allegedly fraudulent, were a regular focus for the insurgents. The public gatherings were constituted from a mass base of young people, particularly students"* (Lane 2009: 114). In comparison with traditional political demonstrations, a novel feature was the modern way of convening demonstrations via cell phones, the internet and social networks with a significant supporting role of domestic and foreign media. Compared to the revolutions of 1989-1991, the color revolutions also differ in that people who disagree with the regime were no longer dissidents, but were in fact opposition politicians supported by the emerging civil society. Demonstrations were usually accompanied by mass cultural events, which helped mobilize, create solidarity, and entertain mass audiences. The promotion and organization of these popular manifestations required considerable resources. Musicians, entertainers and organizers received payment and subsistence during the events (Lane 2009: 114). The aforementioned revolutions thus received moral and financial support from external sources, especially Western organizations and foundations or governments supporting democratic processes and the development of democratic institutions (e.g., George Soros Open Society Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy, International Republican Institute, Albert Einstein Institute, etc.). This has led to the frequent perception of color revolutions by incumbent governments in Eastern Europe to be an externally sponsored form of regime change and the part of a Western strategy to spread its influence in the region.

ORIGIN Dubbed the 'color' or 'flower' revolutions, in reference to the symbols that were often used by opposition movements, have a long history. They have been used in mainstream media since the early 2000s, however it should be noted that the protest movements in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine were greatly inspired and instructed by Gene Sharp's (1993) manual for non-violent action entitled *From Dictatorship to Democracy*. Gene Sharp thus essentially became an ideologue of non-violent movements not only in the context of the color revolutions, because he has compiled a list of approximately two hundred possible specific methods by which political resistance can be carried out.

LITERATURE There is a noticeable difference in the academic literature on color revolutions produced in the West and in the Russian Federation and other authoritarian regimes. The majority of Western scholarship on the subject was published during the first ten years following the revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. From a Western perspective, popular uprisings against authoritarian and/or corrupt leaderships are seen as an expression of support for democratic forms of governance and a triumph for the will of people. On the other hand, Russian approach to color revolutions is framed in the opinion, that they are connected to the implementation of a **coup**, part of a Western strategy of maintaining power through the creation and manipulation of conditions of chaos around the world in order to weaken strategic competitors (German 2020: 549-551; Solovei 2015; Petrov 2020).

Among the most important Western publications analyzing the causes and conditions under which the color revolutions took place in the post-communist area are above already mentioned texts written by Bunce & Wolchik (2006), Tucker (2007), Way (2008), Ó Beacháin & Polese (2010) and Lane (2009). Other widely cited works devoted to analyzing not only the causes but also the consequences of the color revo-

lutions undoubtedly include Hale (2006), D'anieri (2006), Beissinger (2007) and Mitchell (2012). Equally important, however, were case studies that either analyzed only one specific case: Serbia (Birch 2002); Ukraine (McFaul 2007; Kuzio 2013); Georgia (Cheterian 2008; Whetley 2017); Kyrgyzstan (Marat 2006; Lewis 2008), and comparative studies that tried to look for similarities and differences between two or more cases of color revolutions (Tudoroiu 2007; Ó Beacháin 2013). These publications have had a significant impact on the way we think about the possibilities of democratization, strategies for its implementation but also the limits of civil society.

Another important area of research was Russia's response to the color revolutions and the ways in which it adapted to changes in the 'near abroad' (Ambrosio 2007; Wilson 2013; Finkel & Brudny 2014; German 2020). Nor can we forget analyses and perspectives on the color revolutions from Russian sources (Марков 2005; Денчев & Павлова 2016; Филимонов et al. 2016).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE & IMPACT ON POLICY The color revolutions have had a strong impact on subsequent developments in countries where regime change has occurred as a result (e.g., Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan), but their effects can also be seen in countries where mass anti-government protests failed, the existing regime suppressed them and remained in power (e.g., Azerbaijan or Belarus) and also in countries with authoritarian regimes that felt threatened by the color revolutions and whose security apparatus began to prepare for mass protests and created proactive measures against them (Russia, China).

Most Western reactions to the color revolutions, whether from politicians, academics or journalists, saw their aftermath in a positive light, as a victory of liberal values, where illiberal leaders were replaced by their liberal counterparts (Bunce & Wolchik 2006: 284). The legitimacy of these mostly non-violent ousters was based on the broader framework of global social transformations within the Third Wave of democratization identified by Samuel Huntington (1993). Critics argue that what looked like democratization from below with broad support from disaffected citizens was essentially a **coup** in disguise, where opposition elites unable to mobilize effectively against incumbent governments, organize revolutionary events to galvanize support and legitimate a transfer of power (Lane 2009: 116).

Unsurprisingly, most of the critical voices came from countries with authoritarian regimes, which themselves feared the possibility of a color revolution, with Russia in first place. Russian politician, N.A. Narochnitskaya argues that the so-called voice of the people is in reality an illegitimate use of modern media technology (TV, radio and the press) to create public opinion to force political change. NGOs with powerful foreign sponsors, become political bodies working through networks and the media – rather than being rooted in civil society and acting on behalf of citizens. These NGOs directly or indirectly financed by foreign governments, become involved in insurgent activity, defining democracy in terms of their own conceptions and magnifying election frauds to promote and legitimate a coup d'état to their political advantage (Нарочницкая 2008: 11-22).

Other authors as Denchev and Pavlova (Денчев & Павлова 2016) or Bel'skiy and Klimenko (Бельский & Клименко 2014) consider color revolutions as a manifestation of the struggle for dominance in the post-Soviet area that has been taking place between Russia and the United States with the clear western aim to isolate Russia from its neighbors. As German (2020) convincingly shows in her article, the perceived threat posed to Russia from colored revolutions has become a central theme in Russian security discourse. Reaction to the events in the 'near abroad' have during the past twenty years become a *Leitmotif* in Russian strategic thinking formed by the Russian military and political elites (German 2020: 541). This clearly shows that the whole study of color revolutions has gone far beyond discussions in academic circles, but has a very tangible reflection in the political sphere, in international relations and in the security agenda of individual countries.

OTHER LANGUAGES The key writings on the color revolutions written in English or Russian (translated as: Цветная революция) have already been discussed above (see: 'literature'). However, given their importance not only for academic circles but also for *Realpolitik*, it is quite obvious that important works on the topic of color revolutions can be found in other languages such as Turkish, Polish, Armenian, Georgian, Chinese and Arabic. In German the concept is translated as *Farbrevolutionen*, in Dutch as *kleurenrevoluties*, in French *révolutions de couleur*, in Spanish *revoluciones de colores*.

NEW FRONTIERS Although at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century it might have seemed that scholarly interest in the topic of color revolutions has been waning in the West, events in Armenia, Belarus and Russia in the late second and early third decades of this century, as well as growing unrest in a number of other regions, have reopened a number of questions related to the possibilities of democratization and the instruments of repression in states that are not liberal democracies. A new study focusing on changes in Russian civic activism is presented by Sundstrom, Henry and Sperling (2022). The article written by Tertytchnaya (2023) provides one of the first causal tests of the mass opinion effects of preventive repression. It draws on evidence from detailed data on unauthorized and authorized protests from Russia and concludes that when authorities engage in preventive repression, such as when they deny protest authorizations, protesters' ability to generate support is compromised. Another area that is definitely worth following is the area of **patronalism**. It was introduced in 2014 by Henry Hale, who used the concept of patronal politics to gauge the dynamics behind color revolutions in the Eurasian space. This was followed up by Kosienkowski (2019), who looked at patron-client relations between Russia and Transnistria, and Kolstø (2021), who examined whether Russia functions as a **black knight** and exports its autocratic political



system to **de facto states** in the post-Soviet space. Far from being limited to Russia's relations with de facto states, patron-client relations have been shown, for example, by Newnham (2020), who embedded Russia's relations with Belarus within this concept. After the start of the war in Ukraine, Russia's position in the post-Soviet space has changed significantly, and many authors (e.g., Götz 2022; Busygina & Krivokhizh 2023) have begun to look more closely at what this change will mean for the level of democracy in the region. However, the main question of the moment is the impact of the perceived fear of possible public protests in authoritarian states that are strongly opposed to the West and take the possibility of mass protests as a very serious threat to their stability and geopolitical position. Therefore, it is clear that the topic of color revolutions and, more broadly, the whole area of regime change and information warfare will continue to be more than topical.

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De Facto States

To live in an unrecognized state is to have a 'life in quotation marks'
– Rebecca Bryant & Mete Hatay

De facto states are entities capable of performing some of the administrative, legislative, executive and judicial duties of a sovereign state, and hold military power over their territories, but they struggle for independence, and lack international recognition. At best, they are recognized by only a few other states. During the past twenty years, several competing terms have appeared in the scholarly literature – including 'unrecognized states,' 'quasi states,' 'contested states,' or 'pseudo states.' However, 'de facto state' remains the most commonly used term. For a discussion of the different terms and conceptualizations, see e.g., Broers et al. (2015).

DEFINITION Kolstø (2006) identifies a de facto state as a territory: (a) where state institutions control the entire territory to which they lay claim (or at least the majority of the territory) and administer that territory; (b) which is attempting to gain international recognition of its independence, but which has failed to gain such recognition (or has only gained limited recognition); (c) which has existed for more than two years (Kolstø 2006: 725-726). Most authors dealing with issues of separatism and state legitimacy (e.g., Pegg 1998; Berg & Toomla 2009; Caspersen 2012) share this view and consider de facto states as territorial units that apply their sovereignty and exercise governance over a defined territory, but whose statehood lacks broad international recognition.

Some authors (e.g., Hoch 2020; Kosienkowski 2023) raise the question of whether seeking international recognition of independence is a prerequisite for de facto statehood. According to them, de facto states could also seek to join another country or to maintain the *status quo*. Their aims can also change over time, and under certain circumstances may also overlap with each other. Generally speaking, however, there is a fairly widespread consensus surrounding the basic elements of how to define a de facto state. As Scott Pegg (2008) notes, disagreements arise only around the edges of the definition, and do not dispute its basic elements.

ORIGIN Although de facto states (at the time referred to as quasi-states) were mentioned as early as the 1980s by e.g., Jackson (1987), the beginnings of systematic research on the phenomenon of de facto states began more in earnest in the second half of the 1990s. Scott Pegg's 1998 monograph *International Society and the De Facto State* is a landmark work in this regard. It was not only the first to develop theoretical criteria for defining de facto states, but also included case studies of individual de facto states.

LITERATURE In 2001 Charles King labeled de facto states as "informational black holes" (King 2001: 550). While little may have been written about the concept in the past, the last twenty years of social science research on de facto states has documented many aspects of their internal political, social, and economic dynamics and also their external relations with the outside world (see Broers 2013; Pegg 2017; Comai 2018; Hoch 2019).

EXAMPLES There is a relatively widespread scholarly consensus among experts that the following cases constitute de facto states: Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh (ceased to exist on 1 January 2024), Transnistria, Northern Cyprus and Somaliland (e.g., Pegg 1998; Kolstø 2006; Caspersen 2012). Other cases are more open to debate. For example, Caspersen and Stansfield (2011) demonstrate that 21 de facto states have emerged on the global political map since the end of World War II, while Florea (2014) has identified 34 such entities for the same period. Although it is possible to encounter texts which classify entities such as Taiwan, Kosovo, Palestine, Western Sahara or Iraqi Kurdistan as de facto states, these examples are more generally considered borderline cases.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE & IMPACT ON POLICY De facto states face many challenges. First, their non-recognition by other states has a negative impact on their development. They struggle to attract foreign investment; face difficulties obtaining loans from international financial institutions; have limited export opportunities; have problematic borders with the parent state; and face obstacles related to the non-issue of visas. Thus, people in de facto states are separated from the rest of the world by a significant wall of isolation, which is also largely reflected in the lower economic level of development in every de facto state compared with its parent state. The existence of a de facto state does not only result in negative impacts on economic and social development in the separatist region, but also harms the economy of the parent state. Due to a lack of control over the separatist regions, parent states lose their ability to collect taxes in de facto states and the possibility of benefiting from the sale of raw materials, products and services that – illegally or locally, through traffickers – reach the markets of neighboring countries. This is how parent states lose millions of dollars every year.

Despite their small size and a low number of associated inhabitants, de facto states have a significant impact on international security. As a result of the conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Northern Cyprus and Somaliland an estimated 60-70 thousand have died, and these conflicts have generated almost two million refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. Thus, de facto states pose a problem not only in the economic and political sphere, but also in the sphere of social development and international security.

Since around 2006, official state representatives in de facto states started emphasizing the importance of democracy promotion in their political units. This surge took place shortly before Kosovo's unilateral



declaration of independence and its subsequent recognition by most of the Western world. Elites in de facto states usually compare their entities to Kosovo, believing that democracy and respect for human rights could legitimate claims to independence and international recognition. These public proclamations came to be known as the 'democratization for recognition' strategy. Since then, a number of studies have begun to address the topics of democracy in de facto states, and the relationship between democratization and the possibility of international recognition. Protsyk (2009) focused on democratization in Transnistria, Azam (2014) on Somaliland, Kolstø & Blakkisrud (2012) on Nagorno-Karabakh, and Kopeček et. al. (2016) and Ó Beacháin (2019) on Abkhazia. If we generalize from these debates, the main questions concern whether these public statements should be understood as a political tool and thus merely political declarations, or if such intent can proceed further to real and measurable shifts towards a more democratic and free society. Furthermore, what factors triggered such a shift (in policy) and what are the specific conditions of this process for de facto states?

A decade later, it became clear that political sentiments and declarations in favor of democratization should not be taken at face value. Whether de facto states have been democratized at all can be determined by means of the **Freedom House** dataset *(Freedom in the World)*. Classic datasets, such as *Polity IV, Index of Democracy,* or *Nations in Transit*, only contain data on internationally recognized states. Only *Freedom House* has gradually included territories which are not internationally recognized as independent states in its evaluations. Northern Cyprus has been evaluated by *Freedom House* since 1982, Nagorno-Karabakh since 1994, soon followed by Transnistria and Abkhazia. Somaliland was added to the index in 2007 and the last de facto state, South Ossetia, in 2008. After a careful examination of the dataset for each de facto state, it can hardly be asserted that de facto states have experienced steady democratization. For Transnistria and South Ossetia, the score for the entire monitored period remained almost identical (*Not Free*); Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Somaliland recorded slight up and down fluctuations, but are still rated as *Partly Free*; and the index identifies Northern Cyprus as a *Free* country for the last more than 20 years (albeit with visible democratic backsliding in recent years). If we compare these results for de facto states with those of their parent states, unrecognized entities generally fare worse. Georgia is also rated as *Partly Free*, but its democracy rate is higher in comparison to Abkhazia, not to mention South Ossetia. The Republic of Cyprus also scores better than Northern Cyprus and Moldova better than Transnistria. The only exceptions are Nagorno-Karabakh, which is much freer than Azerbaijan, and Somaliland, which scores higher than Somalia. From the above list it can be seen that de facto states are far from being oases of democracy. However, it cannot be argued that international non-recognition automatically implies strong authoritarian rule in de facto states.

OTHER LANGUAGES The most prominent academic publications on de facto states appear in English, yet there are naturally publications on de facto states in other languages as well: In French: Dembińska 2021; in Russian: Колосов et al. 2021; in German: Relitz 2015. Since de facto states are closely linked to conflicts, many publications are naturally of domestic origin and written in local languages (Armenian, Georgian, Azeri, Moldovan, Greek and Turkish).

NEW FRONTIERS Despite growing interest in the topics connected with de facto statehood, some aspects of this issue still remain relatively under-researched and suggest interesting prospects for future research. One of them has been offered by Comai (2018). He argues that scholars focusing on the issue of de facto statehood are locked into a way of thinking oriented to the contested status of these entities and compare them mostly with other unrecognized states or conflict regions. A similar need for more comparative work, including not only de facto states but also other adjacent phenomena, has been raised by Pegg (2017). Another direction may also be a historical approach that would focus on similarities and differences with entities that existed in the past. However, the very nature of a topic focused on a variable social reality, which changes dynamically depending on many internal and external phenomena, constantly raises the need for new knowledge.

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Democracy Promotion

Dictatorships are one-way streets. Democracy boasts two-way traffic.
– Albert Moravia, Italian novelist and journalist

In general, democracy promotion is a mechanism designed to promote the establishment and strengthening of democracy in a non-democratic polity. It *"involves helping to build institutions and foster a democratic culture"* (Smith 2014: 122) by incorporating democratic principles into administrative rules and practices. Democratic promotion and support can come from domestic sources such as citizens and civil society organizations, or from external sources such as third states and international organizations (van der Brug et al. 2021; Gisselquist et al. 2021). However, democracy promotion should not be understood merely *"as the mechanical transfer of some political design principles"* but rather *"as a cooperative process 'cultivating' or even 'nurturing' locally pre-existing democratic potentialities"* (Whitehead 2012: 21).

DEFINITION Democracy promotion can be defined as a foreign policy tool covering diplomatic, economic and political carrots and sticks that foster democratic change, and also as international cooperation and assistance that aim to encourage democratic development (Burnell 2007a; Carothers 2020). These include election observation and monitoring, technical assistance, financial aid, material support for a broad range of local civic and political actors (McFaul 2004).

The terms 'democracy promotion' and '**democracy support & assistance**' are often used interchangeably, but they represent distinct approaches to international democracy assistance. Democracy promotion involves active efforts by countries or organizations to establish democratic systems of governance in other nations through activities like advocating for free elections and supporting civil society. It can be seen as more interventionist and politically driven, aligning with foreign policy objectives. On the other hand, democracy support focuses on long-term development and strengthening democratic institutions within a country. It emphasizes creating conditions conducive to democracy, such as capacity-building and socio-economic development, without direct political intervention. Democracy assistance is usually more narrowly interpreted as 'democracy aid' and its implementation is more project-based and pragmatic, covering different spheres: *"Civil society projects support the media and various overseas NGOs. Governance projects support more transparent and accountable government institutions. Political-processes projects aid elections, legislatures, and political parties. Rule-of-law projects strengthen constitutions, human rights, and legal institutions"* (Bush 2015: 7).

SEE ALSO Other terms are also used by scholars and international organizations to designate democracy promotion, such as 'support for democracy-building', 'good governance' or 'democracy aid' (Burnell 2013: 266). Although these differ as regards the range of tools and instruments used, and who they address, they can be subsumed under democracy promotion. In terms of discourse, democracy promotion is considered a foreign policy tool, a more forceful one (on par with **regime promotion**), challenging the sovereignty of the states targeted and essentially labeling them as 'lacking in democracy.' **Democracy support & assistance** are the more politically correct labels. The former implies that the political system in a target requires 'fixing,' the latter subscribes to a more equal, voluntary partnership. However, depending on the context, all three types can favor interests over values, provide undeserved democratic legitimacy to authoritarian allies, and, in the worst case, enable and entrench undemocratic elites. These terms are also often linked, though not equated,



to the process of **democratization** – which can be a purely domestic process.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE As a foreign policy tool, democracy promotion can be used in different contexts: either in closed authoritarian regimes (with no democratic elements), semi-authoritarian states (**hybrid regimes**) that allow some political freedoms but no alternation of power-holders, or in newly democratizing countries that are generally open and receptive to democratic change (but have unstable political systems and usually low state capacity – see **state fragility & failure**). Scholars and practitioners alike agree that democracy promotion is inherently difficult to achieve from the outside and that such attempts may sometimes even undermine democracy itself (Burnell 2013; Smith 2014).

ORIGIN Although contemporary democracy promotion appeared with the third wave of democracy (Huntington 1991), it started in the mid-1970s with the involvement of certain European states and organizations in the democratization processes of Southern Europe. By the 1980s it had spread to Latin America and parts of Asia. But it was not until the 1990s that democracy promotion truly gained global significance (Carothers 2008: 123-125). The global spread of democracy, the end of the Cold War and the attachment of democracy promotion to the development agenda were among the key drivers of this change (Gisselquist et al. 2021).

Disentangled from Cold War politics, democracy promotion allowed the development of an orthodoxy relating to democracy, good governance, development and peace (Smith 2014: 145). It became something of a norm, rather than a mere instrument of foreign policy, making regimes' legitimacy conditional on compliance with a set of international democratic rules (Clark 2007). Moreover, the Vienna Declaration of 1993 promoted democracy as a universal principle and changed the perception of the concept of non-intervention, allowing states and international organizations to intervene to promote democracy (Martin-Chenut 2007: 37-39). However, by the start of the 2000s this global democratic trend and democracy promotion itself became more controversial and slowed down significantly.

LITERATURE Scholars agree that democracy is an essentially contested concept (Kurki 2010), meaning that there are different interpretations of what democracy and democracy promotion mean and no one version should be considered the right one (Burnell 2013: 277). In parallel, two different approaches to democracy promotion can be identified in the literature. A minimalist approach focuses on support for regular, free elections and is mostly reflected in the democracy promotion model of the United States (Carothers 2020). A broader approach to democracy promotion also addresses political and socio-economic developments in non-democracies, using political and diplomatic instruments (e.g., summits and dialogues), and trade, cooperation and development agreements (Giselquist et al. 2021). This approach is exemplified by the European Union's democracy promotion efforts and is well-documented in Youngs' (2010a) edited book *The European Union and Democracy Promotion*. For a more detailed study of what causes democratic changes see J. Teorell's (2010) *Determinants of Democratization: Explaining Regime Change in the World, 1972–2006*. This book focuses on economic factors, peaceful uprisings and intra-regime splits to explain democratization, but also covers non-domestic factors that affect such processes – in particular, international trade, neighbor diffusion and pressure from regional international organizations.

In addition, the edited volume by Hobson and M. Kurki (2012) *The Conceptual Politics of Democracy Promotion* underscores the importance of local context in democratization efforts, stressing that successful democracy promotion must take into account the specific political, cultural, and historical conditions of target countries to avoid ineffective or counterproductive approaches. It also scrutinizes the role of external actors – such as states, international organizations, and NGOs – in democracy promotion, cautioning that while their involvement can be beneficial, it must be carefully balanced to prevent undermining local ownership of the process. Furthermore, the book introduces the concept of 'conceptual politics' into democracy promotion, underscoring that the endeavor is inherently political and involves contentious debates over the interpretation and implementation of democratic principles.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES One of the main problems regarding how to analyze democracy promotion derives from the absence of any agreed definition of **democracy** and of which democratic values should be promoted and considered universal (Clark 2007). Democracy promotion generally assumes Western liberal notions of democracy, including *"political (party) pluralism, competitive elections and a raft of political rights and civil liberties secured by the rule of law"* (Burnell 2013: 276). However, these are not universally accepted as democracy remains an 'essentially contested' concept (Gallie 1956). For this reason, it has not been codified in international agreements, i.e. there is no individual or collective right to democracy nor an absolute duty of states to be democratic (Arts 2000), which further limits the possibilities of legitimizing and spreading democracy promotion from the outside.

Other methodological challenges involve the conceptual and measurement difficulties associated with defining democracy aid, and the absence of a unified system to evaluate democracy promotion efforts. When tracking regime transformations, using **classifications & typologies**, binary **dichotomous categories** oversimplify complex political realities. **Continuous measures** provide a range of 'democracy levels' but may suffer from subjective coding and aggregation issues and lack conceptual benchmarks. **Trichotomous categories** are too focused on the nature of elections, few of them embracing a maximalist definition of democracy.

Attributing the success or failure of democracy promotion efforts to specific interventions is difficult due to the interplay of numerous internal and exter-

nal influences. The long-term effects of democracy assistance programs may not be fully apparent for years, making it challenging to evaluate their impact comprehensively. Additionally, evaluations often focus on specific projects in particular countries rather than providing systematic, thematic evaluations that cut across multiple activities. This fragmented approach to evaluation limits the ability to draw broader conclusions about the effectiveness of democracy promotion efforts. This additional lack of consensus impedes the creation and acceptance of a unified theory of democracy promotion and the ability to measure its effectiveness accurately (Leininger 2019; Burnell 2007b).

Furthermore, the impact of aid modalities and the domestic political environment within recipient states add another layer of complexity to the study of democracy promotion. Different types of aid – such as democracy aid versus developmental aid – have varied impacts on democratization, but the evidence on the effectiveness of specific aid modalities is limited. The effectiveness of aid is also conditioned by the domestic political environment, which can facilitate or hinder democratization efforts (see **linkage & leverage**; **gatekeeping**). Additionally, interaction with authoritarian aid (**black knights**) and the polarization it creates in recipient countries further complicates the assessment of democracy promotion efforts.

EXAMPLES According to Carothers (2020: 115) and Smith (2014: 123), the 2001 attacks and the US-led interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan have had negative consequences for democracy promotion. By linking the lack of democracy with international **terrorism**, democracy promotion was instrumentalized and understood as imposing political reforms through regime change and unauthorized military intervention in select autocratic regimes. This kind of assertive or even coercive democratization (**regime promotion**) not only conflicts with the liberal respect for the self-determination of nations, but also casts doubt on the legitimacy of using military force and other coercive means (such as economic **sanctions**, travel bans, arms embargoes, etc.) to promote democracy. As a result, (electoral) autocratic regimes (such as Belarus, China, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nepal, Russia, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, etc.), were able to gain popular support for resisting any form of democracy promotion from the outside, or by external actors, in the name of protecting sovereignty and opposing foreign interference (Carothers 2020).

IMPACT ON POLICY Democracy promoters (mostly Western countries) have tolerated autocratic regimes in some parts of the world (such as Central Asia, the Middle East and some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa) for geopolitical reasons. Such selectivity has damaged the legitimacy of democracy promoters. As the practice of democracy promotion often confirms that 'interests trump values,' i.e. the prioritization of stability, economic and security interests over (democratic) political processes (Carothers 2008). For example, given the crucial role of Pakistan in the war on terror, democratization and the inherent policy-making logics of (democracy) support for increased governance capacity were not considered as mutually supportive (Youngs 2010b: 13) by democracy promoters (mostly the US). Despite Pakistan being a military dictatorship, the result was increased aid and a closer relationship with the US. Similarly, the EU's democracy promotion in its eastern neighborhood was taken hostage by the 'Russia first policy,' which favored non-confrontation and undisrupted (energy) trade relations with Russia despite its non-democratic *status quo* (Dandashly & Noutcheva 2020: 111). At the same time, in its southern neighborhood, the EU avoided supporting fundamental democratic reforms, and had to face its discredit among the new democratic leaders and civil society in the post-Arab Spring period (Khakee 2019).

Democracy promotion has also suffered because of questionable practices by democracy promoters. There is a challenge to democracy within Western societies, most visible in the rise of illiberal and anti-democratic populism, the decay of traditional political parties and more contentious and divisive politics regarding certain core liberal democratic principles (Carothers 2016), such as the rule of law, media freedom and reproductive rights. Democracies themselves can also be **black knights** and often infringe on democratic norms in their external behavior by supplying weapons to non-democratic regimes (Russia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc.) or by violating the rights or engaging in the poor treatment of prisoners and detainees as was the case in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo, further weakening the legitimacy of democracy promotion (Carothers 2006).

NEW FRONTIERS The dominance of the Western model of democracy promotion is being challenged by both major non-Western (rising) democracies such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, and South Africa and by non-democratic global powers such as China, Russia and Turkey (Carothers 2016). If in the early 2000s non-Western democracies served as a compelling example that democracy can succeed outside of the Western hemisphere, even undertaking their own efforts in democracy support, in recent years they too have witnessed democratic backsliding and stagnation, characterized by a rise in authoritarian or illiberal tendencies (Carothers 2020: 16). Increasingly China and Russia, but also other autocratic regimes such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, try to influence political developments in other countries (Aydin-Düzgit 2020), either by limiting or reversing democratic progress or by presenting *"a governance model that offers an alternative to Western liberal democracy"* (Aydin-Düzgit 2020: 117).

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Box 6.3 Waves of Democracy & Autocracy

Each wave becomes top-heavy with big expectations that it will change everything and be the one solution we've been waiting for. These expectations eventually exceed what the wave can support, and it comes crashing down.
– Josh Lerner (2024: 10)

Most scholars agree that democracies tend to cluster in time and space, something that Samuel Huntington referred to as 'waves of democracy.' Though there has been less research on this topic until fifteen years ago, the same can be said of autocracies. In particular, more recent research has highlighted waves of autocratization, or periods when autocracies have spread, especially in certain regions. Autocratic values have spread, autocracies have learned from one another, and more and more countries have become autocratic (for more on this, see entries on **authoritarian diffusion** and **authoritarian learning**). After many decades of democratic advancement, we are currently experiencing the third wave of autocratization, which started in the early 2010s, and the pendulum has not yet swung back in the other direction.

The concept of 'waves' in political science metaphorically describes the clustering of regime changes, particularly **democratization** and **autocratization**, over time and space. It emphasizes the episodic and nonlinear nature of these shifts, highlighting how changes in one country often influence others through processes of diffusion. These processes can occur *vertically*, driven by global power shifts like wars or the collapse of empires, or *horizontally*, spreading through regional networks and shared grievances. Democratization waves often involve spontaneous uprisings or revolutions, which are fast-moving but prone to failure due to poor organization. In contrast, autocratization waves are typically more deliberate and organized, often led by established actors like militaries, resulting in slower but more durable outcomes.

Despite its influence, the wave metaphor has significant limitations. Critics argue that it oversimplifies complex phenomena and lacks explanatory depth. It focuses on patterns without fully accounting for the underlying causes or variations in regime transitions. Measurement challenges also arise, as broad metrics like percentages of democracies fail to distinguish between different types of **transitions** or varying levels of democracy across countries (**dichotomous categories** vs. **continuous measures**). Additionally, interruptions such as foreign occupations differ from genuine regime changes but are often conflated within wave analyses.

The metaphor's emphasis on clustering may also obscure deeper domestic and international drivers of regime change, such as economic conditions, institutional structures, and geopolitical dynamics. Moreover, identifying reverse waves, such as autocratization since the mid-1990s, remains contentious due to disagreements over their significance and coherence.

While the wave metaphor captures important pat-

terns in regime change and remains influential, its analytical limitations necessitate more precise definitions, refined measures, and deeper exploration of causal mechanisms to understand the dynamics of democratization and autocratization fully.

FIRST DEMOCRATIC WAVE The first wave was a multifaceted phenomenon driven by a combination of international shocks, modernization processes, hegemonic transformations, and the diffusion of ideas. While scholars differ on its precise timing, with estimates ranging from 1820 to 1926, this period marked the emergence of **democracy** as a viable political model in various parts of the world. Huntington (1991) identifies this wave as spanning from 1828 to 1926, while others, such as Seva Gunitsky (2018) and Renske Doorenspleet (2000), propose alternative timelines that highlight distinct subwaves, including the First Constitutional Wave (1820-1821), the Romantic Nationalist Wave (1830), and the Spring of Nations (1848).

The causes of the first wave are complex and debated. Some scholars argue that international shocks, such as World War I, weakened existing regimes and created new states more inclined toward democratic governance. However, this explanation is tempered by the observation that many new democracies were fragile and prone to backsliding into authoritarianism. **Modernization theory** provides another lens, suggesting that industrialization, urbanization, and rising literacy rates during the nineteenth century fostered conditions conducive to democracy. Additionally, shifts in global power dynamics – such as those triggered by the Latin American wars of independence – highlight the role of hegemonic transformations in creating opportunities for regime change. Horizontal diffusion also played a critical role; for instance, the revolutionary fervor of the 1848 Spring of Nations spread rapidly across Europe, inspired by events like the overthrow of the French king, Louis Philippe.

The effects of this wave were significant but uneven. It led to a notable expansion in the number of democracies worldwide, though many were short-lived and succumbed to authoritarian reversals in the 1920s and 1930s. The failures of uncoordinated uprisings like those in 1848 underscored the need for organized political movements, paving the way for mass-based parties and labor unions. This wave also shaped future democratization efforts by influencing theoretical frameworks and strategies for regime change.

SECOND DEMOCRATIC WAVE This wave occurred primarily between 1944 and 1957, emerging in the aftermath of WWII. This period saw a significant expansion in the number of democracies worldwide, driven by a combination of geopolitical shifts, decolonization, and the influence of victorious democratic powers. However, like the first wave, it was followed by a reverse wave in the late 1950s and 1960s, underscoring the fragility of many of the newly established democracies.

One of the primary causes of the second wave was the Allied victory in WWII. Democratic powers such as the US and Great Britain played a critical role in reshaping the global political order, imposing democratic systems on defeated Axis powers. Germany, Italy, and Japan were notable examples where democracy was imposed under Allied supervision to rebuild these nations and prevent the resurgence of **authoritarianism**. Additionally, the ideological appeal of democracy gained momentum as it became associated with victory and reconstruction.

Decolonization also contributed significantly to the second wave. The decline of European colonial empires after WWII led to the emergence of numerous newly independent states in Africa and Asia. While these states adopted various forms of governance, many initially embraced democracy as part of their post-independence political frameworks. The weakening of colonial powers, coupled with international support for self-determination, created opportunities for democratic experiments in these regions.

The Cold War provided an important but less explicitly discussed context for this wave. The ideological rivalry between the democratic West and the communist Soviet bloc likely influenced democratization efforts, with Western powers promoting democracy as part of their global strategy. However, this period also highlighted vulnerabilities; many nascent democracies lacked institutional stability and succumbed to military coups or authoritarian reversals during the subsequent reverse wave.

The second wave thus expanded democracy globally but revealed persistent challenges in consolidating democratic regimes amid internal weaknesses and external pressures (as anti-communism trumped democratic deepening).

THIRD DEMOCRATIC WAVE Spanning from the mid-1970s to the 1990s, this wave marked a transformative period in global political history, characterized by an unprecedented surge in democratic transitions. Its causes were multifaceted, reflecting a combination of systemic shocks, negotiated processes, diffusion of ideas, and international pressures. The collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War were pivotal in this wave, particularly in Eastern Europe (but not to be dismissed in Sub Saharan Africa as well). The disintegration of Soviet power undermined communist regimes and empowered pro-democracy movements across the region. This aligns with broader theories that systemic shocks, such as the end of major geopolitical conflicts, create openings for democratization.

Unlike earlier waves, the third wave was notable for its reliance on pacted transitions (**elite pacts & pactology**). In regions like Latin America, democratization often occurred through negotiation and compromise rather than mass uprisings. Organized political actors, such as parties and interest groups, played a central role in these transitions, favoring structured bargaining over risky revolutions. Spain's transition to democracy became a model for other nations in Latin America, demonstrating how negotiated processes could achieve stable outcomes. Additionally, the spread of democratic ideas and successful precedents from other countries encouraged emulation and adaptation, further fueling the wave.

International pressure was another defining feature. Western democracies actively promoted democracy through diplomatic efforts and support for civil society organizations. While these efforts were not always immediately effective, they contributed to a global environment more conducive to democratization.

The third wave resulted in an unprecedented expansion of democracy worldwide but also revealed new



challenges. Many countries transitioned to **hybrid regimes** that seemed to combine democratic and authoritarian elements. Furthermore, the success of this wave paradoxically set the stage for a gradual erosion of democracy in subsequent years. Rather than outright coups, this 'third wave of autocratization' concerned the electoral dimension with the manipulation of laws and institutions to undermine democratic norms under a legal *façade*.

The third wave initially fueled optimism about liberal democracy's triumph, epitomized by Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis (cf. Box 5.3 on transitology). However, the rise of autocratization has since challenged this narrative, prompting scholars to reassess the durability of democratic gains. The unique characteristics of the third wave – such as hybrid regimes and **autocratization** – have also led some to question whether the wave metaphor adequately captures the complexities of regime change. Some argue that post-communist transitions represent a distinct 'fourth wave' due to their unique historical context.

FOURTH DEMOCRATIC WAVE? The existence of a fourth wave of democratization remains a contested topic among scholars. Michael McFaul (2002) argues for a distinct fourth wave, focusing on the post-communist transitions following the collapse of the USSR. He contends that these transitions differ fundamentally from those of the third wave in their causes and outcomes. Unlike the negotiated transitions characteristic of the third wave, post-communist transitions often involved non-cooperative dynamics, revolutionary upheavals, or imposed reforms from above. For instance, revolutionary transitions in the former communist bloc frequently produced stable democracies, contrary to third-wave expectations that such methods were less conducive to democratic consolidation. Additionally, challenges like border disputes and nationalist conflicts further distinguished post-communist transitions from earlier patterns. This divergence led critics such as Svend-Erik Skaaning (2020) to question the utility of the wave metaphor itself, arguing that it oversimplifies democratization processes and imposes arbitrary periodizations. (Tomini 2021)

FIRST AUTOCRATIC WAVE Looking at data from 1900 onwards, the **Varieties of Democracy** Dataset has noted that the first wave of autocratization started in 1926 with the rise of Benito Mussolini in Italy (Lührmann & Lindberg 2019). Fascism and democratic decline followed in countries such as Germany, Greece, Spain, Argentina, Brazil and Japan, and this autocratic wave continued until 1946.

This interwar period was marked by the rise of **totalitarianism** in Europe and beyond. This wave coincided with the aftermath of WWI, a period of profound global instability (a systemic shock) that created fertile ground for authoritarianism. The fragility of newly established democratic institutions, combined with economic crises such as the Great Depression and widespread social discontent, eroded public trust in democracy, paving the way for autocratic leaders to seize power.

This period saw the emergence of ideologically-driven totalitarian regimes, including **Fascism** in Italy under Benito Mussolini, **Nazism** in Germany under Adolf Hitler, and Stalinism in the Soviet Union. These regimes were characterized by an extreme centralization of power, suppression of dissent, and the imposition of state-controlled **ideologies**. Leaders exploited nationalist and xenophobic sentiments, promising to restore national pride and stability while justifying their repressive policies. The Great Depression further exacerbated these dynamics, as economic hardship left populations vulnerable to the promises of strongman rulers.

Totalitarian regimes during this period sought to mobilize entire societies through **propaganda**, **personality cults**, and coercive control over all aspects of life. While some transitions to autocracy were deliberate power grabs, others emerged from wartime circumstances or **foreign invasions**.

The impact of this wave was profound, leading to catastrophic consequences such as WWII and the Holocaust (cf. Box 1.19 on genocide). It also set a precedent for modern autocracies by demonstrating how crises could be exploited to consolidate power. This wave remains a critical period for understanding the vulnerabilities of democratic systems and the conditions that enable authoritarianism to thrive.

SECOND AUTOCRATIC WAVE The second wave of autocratization started in 1961 after a suite of military coups destroyed the new democracies that were formed in the aftermath of WWII. While military dictatorships took over much of Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, El Salvador, Uruguay, Guatemala and Honduras), Africa saw a rise in **personalist rule**, such as Milton Obote and Idi Amin in Uganda and Joseph Mobutu in Zaire (Box 1.7). Military dictatorships also took over in Myanmar, Greece and Pakistan, while personalist rulers seized power in the Philippines and Indonesia.

The second wave of autocracy, occurring roughly between 1960 and 1977, was shaped by the geopolitical dynamics of the Cold War and the challenges faced by newly independent states during decolonization. Unlike the first wave, which saw outright collapses of democracies, this wave primarily involved the erosion of democratic institutions within already fragile regimes, particularly in newly established electoral autocracies. Military **coups** were the dominant mode of transition, reflecting the central role of organized and powerful military establishments in seizing control during periods of political instability.

The Cold War context played a pivotal role in this wave. The ideological struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union created an environment where authoritarianism was often seen as a safeguard against communist revolutions (cf. Box 1.2 on elected dictatorship & protection pacts). For example, the Cuban Revolution heightened fears of leftist insurgencies, particularly in Latin America, prompting elites to support military takeovers to maintain order and protect their interests (cf. *Foquismo* in Box 5.9). Simultaneously, many newly decolonized states in Africa and Asia struggled with weak institutions, economic crises, and internal conflicts, making them particularly vulnerable to autocratization.

The effects of this wave were profound. It led to the proliferation of **military regimes**, especially in Latin America and parts of Africa. These regimes were often characterized by repression, curtailed civil liberties, and concentrated executive power. Even in countries that

did not experience outright coups, democratic norms were eroded through gradual centralization of authority. The **authoritarian legacies** of this period – weak institutions and a culture of impunity – continued to hinder democratic consolidation long after transitions to democracy occurred.

The second wave's reliance on overt military interventions contrasts with later waves, where more subtle methods of undermining democracy became prominent. It underscores how global ideological struggles and domestic vulnerabilities combined to shape patterns of autocratization during this era. The second wave of autocratization would end in 1977 after various dictatorships started to collapse, signaling the beginning of the third wave of democratization.

THIRD AUTOCRATIC WAVE The third wave of autocratization, beginning around 1994, represents a significant shift in the methods and dynamics of democratic decline. Emerging in the post-Cold War era, this wave diverges from earlier waves by operating more subtly and targeting democratic institutions from within rather than dismantling them outright. Unlike the second wave, shaped by Cold War rivalries and overt military coups, the third wave unfolded in a global environment initially marked by optimism for democracy following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

One defining characteristic of this wave is the gradual erosion of democratic norms. Autocratic actors often come to power through legitimate means, such as **elections**, but then incrementally weaken democratic institutions under a legal *façade* (cf. **authoritarian constitutionalism**). This process includes undermining judicial independence, restricting civil society, and manipulating electoral processes. Scholars like Lührmann and Lindberg (2019) emphasize that this 'democratic erosion' stands in stark contrast to the abrupt coups or revolutions of earlier waves.

Another hallmark is the exploitation of societal vulnerabilities. Polarization and **disinformation** have become critical tools for autocratic leaders. By deepening divisions within society and spreading false narratives, they erode trust in democratic institutions and create an environment conducive to authoritarian consolidation. Additionally, elites have learned from past democratization movements, such as the **color revolutions** and the **Arab Spring**, adapting strategies to counter pro-democracy efforts while emulating successful authoritarian models (cf. **authoritarian learning**).

The effects of this wave are global in scope, impacting countries across Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Indo-Pacific. While many affected states retain some democratic attributes, the quality of democracy has declined significantly. This wave has sparked debate among scholars about its significance and whether it constitutes a distinct 'wave' or reflects broader trends in global politics. Ultimately, the third wave of autocratization underscores the evolving tactics of authoritarianism in the twenty-first century and its persistent challenge to democratic resilience.

Today, there are certain 'authoritarian gravity centers' (Box 6.2) that are actively undermining democratic development and cooperation, which has prolonged this third wave of autocratization. Most scholarly attention has focused on Russia and China, but states like Iran, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela have also had a negative impact in their neighborhoods and beyond. Russia is undoubtedly the most active authoritarian actor (**black knight**) in the push to undermine democracy around the world. Its efforts to do so have been substantial and have had a significant impact on human life.

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Democracy Support & Assistance

While the terms democracy 'promotion' (A), democracy 'support' (B) and 'assistance' (C) are frequently interchanged, they actually denote separate approaches to international democracy assistance. This encyclopedia bundles all concepts under **democracy promotion**, but their differences can be considered as follows: 'Promotion' (A) entails proactive endeavors by countries or organizations to institute democratic governance systems in other nations, often through actions like promoting free elections and bolstering civil society. This approach tends to be more interventionist and politically motivated, serving the interests of foreign policy objectives.

Conversely, 'democracy support' (B) is a broader approach with the same end-goal, and prioritizes the sustained development and reinforcement of democratic institutions within a nation. It places emphasis on fostering an environment conducive to democracy, including various forms of aid, capacity-building, electoral and other institutional support, without direct involvement in political affairs: e.g., political dialogue, foreign aid, election observation, and development cooperation projects.

Finally, 'democracy assistance' (C) is even more narrow than 'support,' encompassing only those democracy support issues to be addressed in countries with existing (nascent) democratic systems, but which are either in crisis or otherwise vulnerable or fragile. 'Assistance' is framed as more pragmatic and specifically refers to financial flows and projects intended to support democratic development or reinforce democratic processes, evaluating effectiveness based on impact on democratic institutions, civil society, and human rights

Both democracy support and assistance can be criticized for potentially legitimizing authoritarian rule if not implemented carefully, and the discourse of the latter in particular, might imply that a selected beneficiary state has already achieved some level of democracy, even if it is actually authoritarian. Sarah Bush (2015) finds that those programs that are designed to foster competition and encourage the free exchange of political information, are less likely to be regime-compatible because they directly challenge the incumbent regime's dominance over political power and information. Other programs are designed in ways that do not threaten incumbents, either they are too broad, do not foster competition, or do not challenge the regime's hold on power.

Democracy support and assistance are characterized by their respect for sovereignty and focus on non-interventionist methods, aiming to foster the development of democratic institutions within nations on a voluntary basis. The agents are not exclusively states or international organizations but can be other donors as well (like NGOs and private organizations). By prioritizing long-term development and empowering citizens through education, economic advancement, and civil society support, democracy support is meant to lead to sustainable democratic governance. Additionally, its emphasis on gradual progress reduces the risk of backlash and empowers local populations to build their own democratic frameworks. However, its slower pace and potential for elite capture pose challenges, as it may not yield immediate results and the process in question could be co-opted by local elites, hindering genuine democratic development.

In contrast, democracy promotion takes a more direct and proactive approach, leveraging political and diplomatic measures to support democratic actors or oppose authoritarian regimes: e.g., social pressure; economic sticks and carrots (cf. **international sanctions**); conditionality; diplomacy; and even military intervention. This interventionist strategy can be effective in crisis situations and may lead to quicker democratic reforms. However, it also carries the risk of resentment from populations in target countries as it is often perceived as imposed external interference, triggering (neo-)colonial or imperialist frames. Additionally, democracy promotion (especially regime **ouster**) can sometimes conflict with other foreign policy priorities and may result in (grave) unintended consequences (like destabilization or civil war) if not sensitive to local conditions.

Ultimately, the choice between democracy support and democracy promotion depends on the specific context, goals, and conditions within both the assisting and target countries. Each approach offers distinct advantages and drawbacks, requiring careful consideration to determine the most suitable strategy for promoting democracy effectively. While both support and promotion fall under regime change or **regime promotion,** democracy promotion is not a mirror image of **authoritarian promotion**: the former is a positive, ideologically-driven, proactive activity, the latter is usually a reactive, protective strategy, ultimately self-serving the autocracy promoter (cf. **black knights**) and not necessarily supported by a coherent ideology.

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External Legitimacy & Authoritarian Regimes

I have to be seen to be believed.
– Queen Elizabeth II

Legitimacy has long been regarded as an exclusively intra-state or domestic matter and addressed as 'internal' or 'domestic' legitimacy. In this sense, legitimacy has been defined in relation to (state) authority and to those who are governed, and understood as "the right to rule a country" (Odendahl 2015) or as *"beliefs within a given constituency or other relevant audience that a political institution's exercise of authority is appropriate"* (Talberg & Zürn 2019: 585) (see also **rulership**). This means that the exercise of public authority by a government (i.e. the power to make binding decisions) is justified only as long as the governed (the people) recognize and accept it (Caspersen 2014; Langvatn 2016). Although there still is no consensus about the criteria for gaining legitimacy, most scholars agree that these criteria stem from domestic law. They include, amongst others, a set of pre-agreed procedures for the exercise of public authority that are perceived as appropriate or fair, decisions that are consistent with the values and the will of the people, and the right of the people to choose those exercising public authority (Spencer 1970; Odendahl 2015).

Recently, however, some scholars have begun to investigate the development of the international dimension of legitimacy (Odendahl 2015; Talberg & Zürn 2019). They point to an emerging international relations practice in which the (internal) legitimacy of (mostly authoritarian) states is questioned externally, i.e. by other states or international organizations. Odendahl (2015) argues that *"states increasingly accept that their governments have to meet normative expectations of the international community if they strive to be regarded legitimate."* Therefore, external legitimacy (also international legitimacy) posits that a state's legitimacy is acknowledged by other states as equals in the international community (Bull 1977: 82) and that the criteria for legitimacy can be found in international law (mostly treaties establishing regional organizations). The external legitimacy of states is evaluated according to the degree of international involvement or the support they receive from different actors (states, international organizations and companies) in the international community (Caspersen 2014).

The concept of external legitimacy is closely linked with the concepts of 'sovereignty' and 'international recognition' (von Soest & Grauvogel 2015; Caspersen 2014). States were long recognized as legitimate if they met the minimal criteria for statehood as defined by the 1933 *Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of State*, particularly the capacity to meet their international commitments and obligations (Biersteker 2010: 162), with no particular provision regarding their regime type. In this context non-democratic states were not only recognized as legitimate but also often protected by the institution of sovereignty. After the end of the Cold War, however, attempts were made to build additional normative constraints into legitimacy. Not only did the criterion of effective and democratic government become a prerequisite for state recognition (Biersteker 2010: 163), it also provided new opportunities for external interventions to influence developments in (already internationally recognized) third countries. For instance, in 1991, the European Community issued a declaration stating that recognition of Central and Eastern European states was conditional upon their respect of the rule of law, democracy and human rights, as well as upon guarantees for the rights of ethnic minorities. The European Community also maintained these criteria as a fundamental part of their (later EU) accession negotiations with newly independent states (Shaw 1997: 301).

At the same time, however, some other states, mostly non- or semi-democratic ones like China, Russia and Malaysia, are reluctant to make legitimacy conditional on the acceptance of democratic government as a universal regime form (Biersteker 2013: 164). This applies to both the practice of state recognition and the practice of using the loss of legitimacy to call on a government to resign or to request intervention. Authoritarian regimes view external legitimacy as a tool to exercise power exploited mostly by Western democratic states in order to promote their interests or else in the broader context of imposing a specific (liberal-democratic) form of world governance (Talberg & Zürn 2019: 584).

This confirms that external legitimacy is a slippery concept. On the one hand, the criteria that determine whether a government is internationally legitimate or not are unclear; on the other hand, the international community's practice is inconsistent and selective (Clark 2007: 22-23; Odendahl 2015). In some cases, only grave violations of humanitarian law and the human rights of a state's own population are regarded as leading to the loss of legitimacy, which then justifies external intervention (see also the 'Mogadishu line' in Box 3.12). This happened in Libya in 2011, where the regime's use of military force against its own population served as an indicator that the regime had lost legitimacy, leading to international military intervention. In other similar cases, such as the one of Syria, the international community failed to agree to act. Although most states had rejected the legitimacy of the Syrian government for almost identical reasons as in the case of Libya, external intervention was vetoed by China and Russia in the United Nations Security Council (Odendahl 2015). Similarly, other violations of territorial integrity and of the prohibition of the use of force are not considered to cause the loss of legitimacy, as the examples of the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the aggression in Ukraine since 2022 most vividly confirm.

Nevertheless, for authoritarian regimes, external legitimacy is also a valuable source of domestic legitimacy (Grauvogel & von Soest 2014). The absence of



external legitimacy can potentially isolate a state on the international stage or jeopardize its existence. A state therefore needs cooperation with other actors within the international system to subsist and prosper (Suchman 1995; Caspersen 2014). There is of course a limit to external actors' freedom to withdraw all forms of external legitimation (or even recognition), partly because authoritarian regimes draw their external legitimacy from the presence of other non-democratic regimes in the world (see **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian regionalism**) or benefit from the West's tolerance of some 'friendly' autocracies, such as China (Brunell 2006: 555).

They can also profit from objections against destabilizing authoritarian regimes on the part of domestic actors in democratic states due to their significant trade, security or geostrategic interests. Moreover, attempts to withdraw external legitimacy can have the contrary effect and strengthen non-democratic regimes instead of destabilizing them. Authoritarian leaders can use these attempts to their advantage by feeding domestic hostility to Western interventions by portraying them as imperialistic (for example, the US in Cuba and North Korea, or Israel in Iran) or by enhancing elite cohesion in their fight for (external) legitimation (Grauvogel & von Soest 2014). As shown by Burnell (2006: 556), international actors have greater means to undermine the legitimacy of oil-importing and aid-dependent autocracies because their economic performance can be better affected through sanctions and by enforcing relevant liberal-democratic conditionalities. Similar conclusions are drawn by Clark (2007: 16) regarding the degree of coerciveness of autocratic regimes. Coercive autocratic regimes are less stable than non-coercive ones and as a result coercive autocratic regimes seem to be less legitimate and more susceptible to external influences. However, as Lambert (2011) has shown for Qatar, authoritarian regimes can also initiate (partial) democratic transformations as part of their own legitimation strategies, seeking more external legitimacy among Western democratic countries to guarantee their countries' security and independence.

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Flower Revolutions

The terms 'flower revolutions' and 'color revolutions' are often used interchangeably to describe a series of political movements that aimed to overthrow authoritarian regimes, particularly in post-Soviet states. There is little evidence of a universal logic dictating why some are denoted by colors and others by flowers. However, color revolutions seem to be confined to the Eurasian space, and the flowers selected embrace a broader symbolism when they refer to a national plant. Whichever label is used, these so-called 'revolutions' were mostly mass uprisings and (peaceful) protests, and seldom transformative revolutions that altered political systems, as shown in Box 6.4. Not all were driven by democratic forces, and the actors involved as well as the motivations behind these events varied greatly.

In this Encyclopedia, we distinguish between **color revolutions** and the **Arab Spring**, each set of uprisings having its own respective contestation repertoires (see 'regimes & repertoires' in Box 5.8). An in-depth conceptual comparison between **revolution** and **uprisings & protests** can be found in this book's section on **origins, transitions & breakdown**.

Box 6.4 Flowers, Cloth & Spices – The Editors' Pick of Colorful Uprisings

A revolution is not a bed of roses. A revolution is a struggle between the future and the past.
– Fidel Castro (1926-2016)

The **color revolutions** and **Arab Spring** have significantly shifted the field of comparative authoritarianism. Scholars discovered new theoretical avenues for **authoritarian collaboration** or **authoritarian learning** and renewed attention was given to autocratic **longevity, stability & resilience**.

Even with many of the initial democratic gains undone or countered, these revolutionary waves have left a lasting impression in the Former Soviet Union and MENA, as did similar uprisings in other countries. Below, find a (non-exhaustive) list of uprisings alluding to colors, flowers, etc. and their short context with key sources for their further analysis. This list is a reminder of how different these uprisings were and that grouping them under common labels tends to obscure instead of increase our understanding of their dynamics.

Carnation Revolution (***Portugal***, 1974) The Carnation Revolution, which took place on 25 April 1974, was a nearly bloodless military coup that overthrew the *Estado Novo* regime, ending 48 years of authoritarian rule in Portugal. The revolution was initiated by the Armed Forces Movement (*Movimento das Forças Armadas*, MFA), composed of military officers disillusioned with the regime's colonial wars in Africa and its oppressive domestic policies. The revolution is named after the carnations *(Dianthus caryophyllus)* placed in the muzzles of soldiers' rifles by civilians, symbolizing the peaceful nature of the uprising. It led to the establishment of a democratic government, the decolonization of Portuguese territories, and significant social and economic reforms. It was the first 'flower' revolution and the start of the 'third wave' (Box 6.3) of **democratization**. (Osuna 2014; Fernandes 2024)

Velvet Revolutions There have been two. The most famous one was in Czechoslovakia (1989, in Czech: *Sametová revoluce*; in Slovak: *Nežná revolúcia* or 'Gentle Revolution'). This non-violent transition of power marked the end of 41 years of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. The revolution was characterized by mass protests and the use of the symbol of keys, which protesters jingled to signify the unlocking of freedom. It led to the election of Václav Havel as president and the eventual peaceful split of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. (Wheaton 2018; Zittoun 2018).

The second one took place in Armenia (2018, in Armenian: Թավշյա հեղափոխություն – *T'avshya heghap'vokhut'yun*) was a series of anti-government protests led by opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan. The movement began in response to Serzh Sargsyan's attempt to extend his rule by transitioning from president to prime minister after a decade in power. The protests, characterized by their peaceful nature and widespread participation, culminated in Sargsyan's resignation and Pashinyan's eventual election as prime minister, marking a significant shift towards democratic governance in Armenia. (Iskandaryan 2018; Abrahamian & Shagoyan 2018; Lanskoy & Suthers 2019)

Bulldozer Revolution (***Serbia***, 2000) This uprising led to the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević after he refused to acknowledge his defeat in the presidential elections. Massive protests and civil disobedience culminated in his resignation. It marked the beginning of a series of similar movements in the post-Soviet space. 'Bulldozer' refers to the heavy machinery used by some of the protesters. Officially, this 'revolution' is called Петооктобарска революција in Serbian (*Petooktobarska revolucija* – the '5 October revolution'). (Thompson & Kuntz 2004; Khodunov 2022a)

Rose Revolution (***Georgia***, 2003) Triggered by allegations of electoral fraud, protesters carrying roses as symbols of non-violence forced President Eduard Shevardnadze to resign. The movement led to the election of Mikheil Saakashvili, who promised democratic reforms and closer ties with the West but turned autocratic himself. The protest was significant for its peaceful nature and symbolic use of roses. (Fairbanks 2004; Jones 2006; Khodunov 2022b)

Orange Revolution (***Ukraine***, 2004-2005) Following a disputed presidential election, massive protests erupted, with participants wearing orange to symbolize their movement. The Supreme Court of Ukraine annulled the election results, leading to a re-run that opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko won. This revolution was crucial in promoting democratic processes and reducing Russian influence in Ukraine. It is considered the first color revolution in the post-Soviet space. (McFaul 2007; Katchanovski 2008; Kubicek 2009; Kuzio 2010)

Cedar Revolution (***Lebanon***, 2005) Following the **assassination** of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri by a truck bomb, large-scale protests demanded the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. The movement was named after the cedar tree, a national symbol of Lebanon. It successfully led to the end of Syria's 29-year military presence in the country, but otherwise did not signify a critical break from the previous Lebanese political system. Many treat it as a negative case where Western **democracy promotion** backfired and ultimately reinforced the grasp of sectarian leaders on the political system. (Knio 2005; 2008; Shields 2008; Kurtulus 2009; Clark & Zahar 2015).

Tulip Revolution (***Kyrgyzstan***, 2005) Sparked by parliamentary election fraud, widespread protests led to the ousting of President Askar Akayev. The movement was named after the tulip, although different regions used various symbols. It resulted in significant political changes and highlighted the power of grassroots mobilization in Western narratives, ignoring the dynamics of **patronalism**. (Todoroiu 2007; Heathershaw 2007; Cummings 2010) The 2010 revolution against Kurmanbek Bakiyev, in contrast, was an elite-driven **ouster** against



a 'lame duck' (Box 3.14) without a democratic agenda and did result in significant ethnic violence in the Osh and Jalalabad provinces.

Blue Revolution (***Kuwait***, 2003-2005) This movement was characterized by protests demanding women's suffrage in Kuwait. Allegedly, the blue color symbolized the movement, and it led to the granting of full political rights to Kuwaiti women in 2005. It was significant for advancing gender equality in the region. This is self-styled color revolution branding by civil society suffrage activists, but this struggle has almost nothing in common with the uprisings of its namesakes and is not treated as a color revolution by scholars.

Purple Revolution (***Iraq***, 2005) Coined by US President George W. Bush, this term referred to the democratic elections imposed on Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Voters dipped their fingers in purple ink to prevent multiple voting, symbolizing their participation in the democratic process. This 'democratic revolution' was foremost a **propaganda** hoax for an imposed political system and to mask a deep, structural crisis that soon after reached boiling point. (Parker 2006).

Denim Revolution (***Belarus***, 2006) This movement aimed to challenge the authoritarian rule of President Alexander Lukashenko, who had engineered a referendum in October 2004 to run for additional terms in office. Protesters used denim as a symbol of their resistance, representing the common people. It was the first of the color revolutions that did not lead to regime change, and its suppression dimmed hopes for future contestation.

Therefore, the enormous 2020-2021 Belarussian protests came as a surprise to Western observers. The first protest wave was sparked by electoral fraud in the 2020 presidential election, where Lukashenko claimed a landslide victory for his sixth term, and the second wave followed his regime's excessive repression. The protests, the largest in Belarussian history, saw hundreds of thousands of people demanding free and fair elections, the resignation of Lukashenko, and the release of political prisoners. Despite facing brutal crackdowns, the flight of presidential challenger, S.H. Tsikhanouskaya, to Lithuania, mass arrests and reports of torture, the movement highlighted the deep-seated desire for democratic reforms and significantly challenged Lukashenko's long-standing authoritarian rule – his regime only survived because popular protests did not lead to elite defection – in any case, they reinforced Lukashenko's reliance on Vladimir Putin and Russia's backing to stay in power. (Silitski 2006, Marples 2008; Stykow 2023)

Saffron Revolution (***Myanmar***, 2007) Named after the saffron-colored robes of the Buddhist monks who led the protests, this movement was against the military **junta** their economic mismanagement and human rights abuses. The protests were violently suppressed, but they drew international attention to the plight of the Burmese people and the oppressive nature of the regime. The lack of linkages (cf. **linkage & leverage theory**) with the isolationist states diluted the limited pressure from the international community on the regime and resulted in the former's inability to influence political change. (Seth 2008; Chowdhury 2008; Shen & Chan 2010)

Twitter Revolution (***Moldova***, 2009) The 2009 civil unrest in Moldova following the parliamentary elections, which the opposition claimed were rigged by the ruling *Communist Party* (CP). The protests were fueled by widespread dissatisfaction with the government's corruption, economic stagnation, and perceived manipulation of the electoral process. The movement was notable for its use of social media to organize and mobilize protesters, but Hale (2013) shows that social media played a secondary role at best. Instead, the turmoil is best understood as the perfect storm of a **succession** crisis, combined with sharp economic decline (as a result of the 2008 financial crisis) and demands for change. (Regarding succession: Vladimir Voronin, the leader of the CP, his 2005 reelection marked his final presidential term. He aimed to maintain political dominance post-presidency, raising concerns about his successor's potential power and Voronin's ability to control the system from another position.) The 'revolution' resulted in a realignment of the opposition parties, gaining the majority and pushing the CP and Voronin into the opposition, but this elite reshuffle hardly brought forth the much-anticipated democratic transformation. (Mungiu-Pippidi & Munteanu 2009; Hale 2013)

Green Movement (***Iran***, 2009) Following the disputed presidential election, millions of Iranians took to the streets wearing green to symbolize their demand for political reform and the annulment of the election results. The movement was significant for its scale and the use of social media to organize protests, although the government ultimately suppressed it at the severe cost of its **legitimacy**. Nonetheless, the **theocracy** was able to avert an **Arab Spring**. (Dabashi 2017; Alimagham 2020; Filin 2022)

Jasmine Revolution (***Tunisia***, 2010-2011) This revolution began with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, leading to widespread protests against corruption, unemployment, and political repression. It resulted in the ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and sparked the broader **Arab Spring**. The movement was named after Tunisia's national flower, symbolizing purity and resistance. Over the next ten years, the transition managed to move from authoritarianism to an unconsolidated democracy. (Chomiak 2011; El-Khawas 2012; Kuznetsov 2022)

Euromaidan (***Ukraine***, 2013-2014) Initially triggered by the government's decision to suspend the signing of an association agreement with the European Union, the protests grew into a civil revolution against the corrupt regime's authoritarian and repressive reactions to the demonstrators. The movement led to the (protracted, violent) ouster of President Viktor Yanukovych, who fled to Russia in 2014, catalyzing a more aggressive Russian foreign policy, leading to the illegal annexation of the Crimea and the Donbas conflict, and, eventually, the 2022 invasion. (Marples & Mills 2014; Shveda & Park 2016; Kuzio 2018; Oliinyk & Kuzio 2021)

Umbrella Movement (***Hong Kong***, 2014) This pro-democracy movement was named after the umbrellas used by protesters to shield themselves from police tear gas. The movement demanded genuine universal suffrage and greater political autonomy from China. Although it did not achieve its immediate goals, it significantly raised

awareness of Hong Kong's political issues and inspired future protests. The movement has exacerbated social divisions, fragmented the city and reduced compromise. These dynamics will likely lead to more complex and confrontational state-society relations post-*Occupy Central*. (Chan 2014; Yuen 2015; Ortmann 2015)

While not associated with any color, flower or object, the failed 2003 Azerbaijan protests against the contested elections legitimizing the **succession** of Ilham Aliyev taking over from his father, Heydar, is seldom acknowledged because there had been no successful example yet in the Former Soviet Union. Also, the 2005 Andijan 'protest' in Uzbekistan was an early front-runner of the color revolutions but brutally repressed by the Islam Karimov regime (with estimates of up to 1500 protesters killed). The same goes for the 2008 riot in Ulaanbaatar, three days after the contested elections, which resulted in a four-day state of emergency, Mongolia's first. (Baev 2011)

The 2014 fall of Blaise Compaoré in Burkina Faso was seen as the start of an 'African Spring.' However, this label is criticized for oversimplifying Africa's diverse regions and completely ignoring the continent-wide, post-Cold War democratization wave in the 1990s. Africa's unique regional dynamics and its diverse democratization trends make it inappropriate to generalize the continent's political landscape under a single term. (Van den Bosch 2016; Antwi-Boateng 2015).

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Foreign Aid To & From Autocracies

A country that relies on aid? Death is better than that. It stops you from achieving your potential, just as colonialism did.
– Imran Khan (2011)

Foreign aid plays a complex and multifaceted role in the study and behavior of authoritarian regimes. This relationship can be viewed through several lenses, presented below. Recent scholarly work has moved towards a middle ground, between aid optimists and aid pessimists, arguing that aid can be beneficial under certain conditions (Svensson 1999; Burnside & Dollar 2000; Kosack 2003; Bearce & Tirone 2010). The key task is to identify the conditions under which aid is either helpful or harmful so that donors can target aid effectively (Kono et al. 2015).

Aid is not solely about humanitarian assistance; it is also a tool for gaining influence and exercising **soft power**. Donor countries may provide aid to authoritarian regimes to strengthen their international standing and influence, creating a sympathetic cohort within the recipient country that can be leveraged in the future. This strategic use of aid can sometimes lead to a paradox, where democratic donors support non-democratic regimes to achieve broader geopolitical goals. If such aid directly strengthens target autocrats and impedes democratization, the senders are considered **black knights**.

The logic behind decisions regarding aid distribution has been analyzed extensively. It is evident that bilateral donors are biased towards trade partners, former colonies, and strategic allies (Alesina & Dollar 2000), whereas multilateral donors are more inclined to assist countries with a strong track record of growth and political stability (Schraeder et al. 1998). Several scholars indicate that donors also prefer politically significant recipients (e.g., rotating members of the UN Security Council) (Kuziemko & Werker 2006; Lai & Morey 2006). Conversely, some scholars argue that aid distribution is more altruistic, or at least more competent, with disaster relief being the primary form of aid to poorly governed countries, while development aid is directed towards better-governed nations (Bermeo 2006). Additionally, there is evidence from the 1990s showing that bilateral donors reduce aid in response to antidemocratic actions in recipient countries (Hyde & Boulding 2008; Wright 2009).

There is an ongoing debate about whether foreign aid can foster **democratization** in authoritarian regimes and is an effective tool for **democracy promotion** (Bader & Faust 2014). Some studies suggest that conditional aid, which is tied to democratic reforms, can incentivize authoritarian regimes to adopt more democratic practices. However, the effectiveness of such conditionality is contingent on the credibility and enforcement of the conditions attached to the aid. According to Dunning (2004), the positive impact of aid on democracy in Africa is observed only after 1986, as it was only then that the threat of Western donors withdrawing aid became credible.

Foreign aid can have unintended consequences on governance and accountability within authoritarian regimes (Koch 2024). The regime type of the target state also matters (Wright 2008; Yuichi Kono & Montinola 2009), although most studies adhere to **selectorate theory** to distinguish between political regimes. It is argued that aid can weaken domestic accountability, sustain authoritarian regimes, increase political instability (Davidson et al. 2022; Nunn & Qian 2011). Using the case of Syria, Martinez and Eng (2016) analyze how and why ostensibly neutral emergency food aid unintentionally assisted

the al-Assad regime by facilitating its control over food, which it used to buttress support and foster compliance. Collier and Hoeffler (2007) investigate its effect on arms races. De Renzio (2007) describes the accountability dilemmas from the point of view of the sender. Hoshiro (2023) brings to the fore unintended consequences stemming from foreign aid rivalry (even unintended aid coordination).

Aid issued by autocratic regimes remains understudied, but can contribute to **autocratization** in target states; however, this can be an unintended effect as not all autocratic donors engage in **authoritarian promotion** (Tseng & Krog 2017). Heurlin (2020) illustrates Soviet aid through the case studies of Vietnam and Ghana, along with a statistical analysis of Soviet economic and military aid to developing countries from 1955 to 1991. Soviet aid, linked to industrial equipment purchases, bolstered state power in communist target regimes by enhancing fiscal capacity and fostering population dependency, thereby solidifying authoritarian rule. In non-communist regimes, however, the lack of alignment with planning institutions and overall institutional weakness resulted in inflation and fiscal crises due to Soviet aid.

Unconditional aid can keep leaders in power (Blodgett Bermeo 2011) and has been likened to the **resource curse** (Khan & Ahmed 2007), similar to other sources of unearned foreign income (**rents**), like remittances (Ahmed 2012). Djankov et al. (2008) state that a windfall of resources to recipient countries may result in similar **rent-seeking** behavior (Svensson 2000). They go further and posit that aid is a bigger curse than oil (Morrison 2009). More on this topic can be found in this Encyclopedia's section on **performance** and the entry on **economic development**.

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Foreign Invasion & Autocratic Regimes

Every nation has the right to demand proper treatment and no country should violate the territory of any other country.
– Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

Foreign invasion is a broad term for a series of actions with diverse agendas. Since this interaction takes place between at least two (recognized) political actors, its study is mostly covered by International Relations (IR), Conflict Studies and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). From the vantage point of authoritarian studies, this phenomenon has been addressed by trying to peer into the black box of domestic politics in order to recognize agendas of forced regime change, and to map global patterns.

DEFINITION Foreign invasion depicts a military offensive in which combatants belonging to one political entity enter the territory owned by another political entity by force. Foreign invasions have different objectives, spanning from (a) conquering; (b) liberating; (c) re-establishing control or authority over a territory/entity; (d) forcing the partition of a country; (e) altering the established government or gaining concessions from this government (**regime promotion)** (Escribá-Folch & Wright 2015; Sullivan & Karreth 2015; Asadzade & Izadi 2022).

SEE ALSO Deriving from the conceptualizations made by J.N. Rosenau (1964) and H. Morgenthau (1967), the concept of foreign invasion is primarily examined within FPA or studies of civil conflict(s). However, due to the fact that foreign invasion is increasingly studied within broader third-party intervention frameworks, the concept is also applied in the study of geopolitics, political systems (i.e. domestic politics), minority studies (i.e. kin-state) and political psychology (i.e. leadership and **leader personality**). In its extreme version, foreign invasion can accord with the concept of forcible **regime promotion** (**authoritarian promotion** or **democracy promotion**) and the wider study of **conflict & authoritarian regimes**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Even though sovereignty and the non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other states are fundamental principles of international law, and therefore of the international community as such, external states frequently intervene militarily (Wolak 2014: 1). According to the *International Military Intervention Dataset*, approximately 650 military interventions were undertaken during the Cold War. Between 1990 and 2005, close to 350 foreign (military) interventions took place (Pickering & Kisangani 2009), which means that foreign intervention rates *increased* during the post-Cold War period (Wolak 2014: 1). As a consequence, foreign (military) interventions continue to be one of the most concerning contemporary issues of the international community, and are hence subject to animated scholarly debates (discussed in the literature and classifications sections).

The book *Leaders and International Conflict* by Giacomo Chiozza and H.E. Goemans (2011) explores the reasons why and the circumstances under which political leaders decide to initiate international crises and wars. The authors argue that the fate of leaders (**exit options**) and the manner in which leadership changes take place significantly influence these decisions. Specifically, leaders who anticipate their regular removal from office, for example through elections, have little to gain and much to lose from initiating conflicts. In contrast, leaders who face the threat of forcible removal, through **coups** or **revolutions**, have little to lose and much to gain from engaging in conflicts

Building on cases from Central America between 1840 and 1918 – foremost *caudillos* (a type of **personalist rule** – see also Box 1.10) – Chiozza and Goemans (2011) open the black box of the foreign policy executive and show why such regimes initiate international conflict for domestic reasons. First, they can neutralize domestic rivals by sending potential coup plotters or rebels to the front lines, thereby reducing the immediate threat to their power. Second, initiating a conflict can create a 'rally-around-the-flag' effect, uniting the population behind the leader against a common external enemy, which temporarily boosts the leader's domestic support and legitimacy, making it harder for rivals to mobilize against them. Third, the chaos and focus on an external enemy can disrupt the plans of domestic opposition groups, allowing the leader to take measures during the conflict that would be unacceptable in peacetime, such as cracking down on dissent or implementing emergency measures that consolidate their power. Finally, victory in an international conflict can bring additional resources and enhance the leader's legitimacy, strengthening their position domestically by demonstrating competence and success, which can deter potential coup plotters.

These findings are theorized into two scenarios. The first mechanism, 'fighting for survival,' allows leaders to reduce the risk of forcible removal regardless of the conflict's outcome. For instance, leaders can send potential coup plotters to active war zones or disrupt planned invasions by rebels, thereby neutralizing immediate threats to their power. The second mechanism, 'gambling for survival,' hinges on the outcome of the international conflict. Victory against an international opponent can enhance a leader's legitimacy and resources, which in turn strengthens their position against domestic enemies and reduces the risk of forcible removal (Chiozza & Goemans 2011: 196).

Their earlier work similarly tries to overcome the 'unfortunate balkanization' between comparative politics and IR by theorizing the relation between international and internal conflict (Chiozza & Goemans 2004; Chiozza et al. 2004). The entry on **conflict**

& authoritarian regimes covers proneness to conflict and distinguishes among regime types.

ORIGIN Foreign (military) interventions as an empirical phenomenon in Western literature date all the way back to the Peloponnesian Wars, when Athens and Sparta intervened in the internal conflicts of other city states (Jentleson & Levite 1992; Young 1968). But when talking about the conceptual contours of foreign invasions, the bulk of the literature appears in the early 1960s, as a direct consequence of the Vietnam War. Grounded in the latter, scholars attempted to understand the relationship between foreign intervention and the dynamics of civil conflict(s). One of the earliest and most influential edited volumes on foreign intervention was published in 1964 by J.N. Rosenau, including essays by authors such as G. Modelski (1964: 14-44) and M.A. Kaplan (1964: 92-121), for example, which showed how invasions – during periods of extreme polarization between domestic disputants – result in appeals for external assistance, and also how bipolar international systems create more incentives for states to intervene than balance-of-power systems.

LITERATURE Rosenau's (1964) *International Aspects of Civil Strife* is considered as *the* seminal work on foreign invasion, and this scholarly treatise on foreign invasion is both conceptually and empirically rich. If one tries to sum up the identified factors deemed most relevant when analyzing the reasons behind foreign intervention, four categories stand out: (A) geopolitical (see Kocs 1995; Jackson 2007; Gent 2010; Peksen & Olson Lounsbery 2012; Kavanagh et al. 2017); (B) domestic (Ostrom & Job 1986; Lagon 1992; Findley & Teo 2006; Trenin 2016; Massie & Zyla 2018); (C) ideational (Dunne 2009; Evans et al. 2013; Way 2015; Ziegler 2016); (D) enablers (Most & Starr 1989; Rost & Greig 2011; Allison 2013). All are presented in the next section.

CLASSIFICATIONS Here, we scrutinize all of the four above-mentioned categories with the factors explaining the likelihood of resorting to foreign invasion. The first (A) is the geopolitical level, where scholars identify the following factors: (a) external threat to sovereignty (Jackson 2007); (b) regional balance of power (Gent 2010); (c) alliance or partnership with host (Yoon 1997); (d) national status (Feste 1992). The second level (B) is the domestic one, where the factors explaining foreign invasion are: (i) domestic politics and legitimacy (DeRouen & Peake 2002); (ii) kinship patterns (Koch & Sullivan 2010); (iii) economic interest (Fordham 2008). The third one (C) is the so-called ideational dimension, where leadership and personality (Meernik 1994) and **ideology** (Way 2015) are the operationalized factors. Finally, the fourth category (D) are enablers, where scholars identify (military) capabilities (Allison 2013) as explanatory factors.

The main issue with foreign invasion is that it is usually studied within separate streams of research (e.g., geopolitics and the other mentioned categories), which offer limited interpretations of the reasons behind foreign invasion. The question of foreign invasion is too complex to be interpreted solely through the lenses of geopolitical or just domestic factors. Bridging IR and comparative politics is often necessary to obtain a more nuanced, complete image.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Researching foreign invasions by dictatorships involves navigating significant methodological challenges. These include difficulties in data collection due to regime secrecy and propaganda, biases in available information, and the complex interplay of motivations and external pressures. Addressing these challenges requires a critical and multifaceted approach to ensure a comprehensive and accurate analysis. Nonetheless, the inner sanctum of an authoritarian foreign policy executive in power remains hard, if not almost impossible, to penetrate (Barros 2016).

The main issue when studying foreign invasions is the tension between positivist, post-positivist and interpretive approaches. This can be particularly observed in all of the four levels (A-D – see above under 'classifications'), where, for example, military capabilities are measured by the number of soldiers, tanks, aircrafts and arms (an evidence-based reality that can be mathematically interpreted), while the ideational dimension is subjected to more qualitative research (individual attitudes and traits, constructivist narratives, etc.).

EXAMPLES With so many to choose from, two controversial examples can be selected. The first is the US intervention in the Dominican Republic of 28 April 1965. US President Johnson made the unilateral decision to invade the island state, driven by erroneous information and (personal) concerns over the possibility of the emergence of 'another Cuba' and the effect that it would have on the ongoing US war effort in Vietnam. As a result, US military forces were deployed to the Dominican Republic under the false pretense of 'protecting American lives.' Eventually the true reason for this invasion was uncovered, namely the overall fear of communism (Gomez 1997). This intervention could thus be interpreted in line with findings from Chioza and Goemans (2011), since the US intervention occurred because of the (ideology-wise) imbalance of power in the region, which could potentially lead to regime change in other countries (as was the case in Central America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). In terms of the above-outlined classification, one could talk about the geopolitical level and its relation to the regional balance of power.

An example of an invasion of a 'hybrid nature' would be Syria's intervention in Lebanon. On 31 May 1976, the Syrian regime invaded Lebanon, one year after the breakout of the Lebanese civil war, when the Syrian military began supporting Maronite militias against the *Palestinian Liberation Organization* and leftist militias. The Syrian occupation of Lebanon ended in 2005 (Rabinovich 1979; Dawisha 1980; Deeb 1980). In this respect, the above-outlined hybridity stems from the fact that it is both an external- and domestic-driven attempt to achieve both regime ouster and **regime promotion**. In this respect,



the strategic calculations of the Syrian leadership hovered somewhere between, on the one hand, the idea of Arab unity in general, nurtured by ideas of the 'historical indivisibility' of Syria and Lebanon in particular, and the question of the strategic implications of a divided Lebanon for Syrian-Israeli relations, on the other (Lawson 1984). In terms of the above-outlined classification, one could identify a hybrid of the geopolitical level (regional balance of power and external threat to sovereignty) and the domestic level (national status, kinship policy and domestic legitimacy).

IMPACT ON POLICY One of the most common reactions to foreign interventions would be **sanctions** at the level of international politics. The latter are understood as preventive measures that can be either targeted at specific area(s), such as diplomatic sanctions, or more narrowly, such as arms embargoes, the freezing of assets and economic sanctions. Furthermore, mention must also be made of the United Nations peace and security paradigm, which offers intervention *vis-à-vis* conflict management mechanisms (e.g., mediation, arbitration, facilitation and conciliation).

NEW FRONTIERS One of the contemporary theoretical frameworks applied in studies of foreign invasions is the so-called 'Ontological Security Theory,' which focuses on how security is not only 'security as survival,' but also 'security as being;' the latter referring to being 'free from danger, fear and anxiety.' This theoretical apparatus is increasingly employed in contemporary cases, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine (e.g., Chrzanowski 2021; Dawsson & Ross Smith 2022). Furthermore, another potential frontier regarding dictatorships and foreign invasions would be the field of **disinformation** and **propaganda** in the Western Balkans, where authors such Jovanović (2022), Herman (2023) and Demeshchuk (2023) show how Putin's **personalist rule** looks even more appealing in certain parts of the region (society-wise).

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Foreign Policy & Autocratic Regimes

North Korea has taught a great lesson to all the countries in the world, especially the rogue countries of dictatorships (...) if you don't want to be invaded by America, get some nuclear weapons.
– Michael Moore

Foreign policy is an activity conducted by states outside their borders to achieve their national interest. This entry focuses on the study of foreign policy in autocratic states, which do not meet democratic standards in terms of *"legitimation of rule, access, structure, claim and way of rule and the monopoly of rule"* (Merkel 2010: 40-41, cited in Kneuer 2018: 97).

DEFINITION Hill (2016: 4) defines that foreign policy *"is the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually but not exclusively a state) in international relations."* Autocratic regimes differ from their democratic counterparts. Because their decision-making is less dispersed, they are often the target of coercive foreign policy tools (like **international sanctions** or human rights shaming); due to **authoritarian collaboration**, they have different patterns of making alliances and institutionalizing such collaboration at the international levels (see **authoritarian regionalism**).

SEE ALSO Foreign policy relates to policymaking and the behavior of states. Analyzed as a process of decision-making, it is closely related to public policy analysis (of domestic policies); however, if analyzed as to its content, the substance of its goals and instruments is much closer to international politics. In terms of the latter, the related concepts are foreign policy capabilities, state power, and instruments of foreign policy: diplomacy, military, economic statecraft, and culture. While this Encyclopedia covers various aspects of a regime's **performance** and its behavior in **International Relations**, foreign policy-specific themes are covered in **regime promotion** (in particular **authoritarian promotion** and the behavior of **black knights**), **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning**, and their institutionalized alliances, known as **authoritarian regionalism**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The study of foreign policy came to the fore after the behaviorist turn in American social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s (Carlsnaes 2006: 333). It forms part of the second major debate in the science of International Relations (IR), summarized as a divergence between 'behaviorist' (Foreign Policy Analysis – FPA) and 'systemic' analysis (IR), methodologically formulated by the problem of levels of analysis (Kubálková 2001b: 6). As defined by Singer (1961), the international system is the first level of analysis, which regards states as 'black boxes' or 'billiard balls' (Singer 1961: 81), whereas the state (in terms of being the origin of decisions) is the second level of analysis. Compared to IR, the main value added by FPA is its focus on the domestic policy process and why some decisions rather than others are taken in foreign policy. IR is more concerned with the consequences of these decisions for the international community as implemented via state behavior. Dictatorship is an element of so-called foreign policy inputs, deriving from a state's domestic environment. Neither FPA nor IR regularly deal with **political regimes**, as states are their main level of analysis. However, 'dictatorship' or 'autocracy,' as a type of rule, is classified under the 'government' domestic sub-level of analysis (Kinsella et al. 2013).

ORIGIN Not a lot of FPA has focused systematically on dictatorships as regime types. Only since the 1990s has FPA developed more theory-testing and been producing knowledge on autocratic foreign policy (Kneuer 2018). The initial inclusion of regime type into FPA was under the concept of 'closed' (as opposed to 'open') societies (Rosenau 1966); however, at the time, analysis showed that this domestic fac-



tor (next to political accountability and economic development) bore less influence than international factors (Rosenau & Hoggard 1974: 121-142, cited in Kneuer 2018: 101). While liberal theories have contributed to opening up the black box of states – e.g., liberalism, democratic peace theory, game theory, operational codes, national role conception, domestic structure approach, research on decision units – they have, in empirical terms, remained very democracy-biased or have focused on domestic politics and public opinion. Another reason for the underdevelopment of this area of study is either the choice of case studies (again, with a prevalence of Anglo-American and other Western cases) or the regional orientation of autocratic regime foreign policy studies (Kneuer 2018: 102). The influence and impact of the domestic political system on foreign policy remains one of the many questions in current FPA research programs (Hudson 2012: 31).

LITERATURE The literature has gravitated to two main topics regarding FPA in autocratic regimes. One collection of works focuses on the process of foreign policy formulation (A) and another looks at the level and nature of constraints on the foreign policy executive (B).

Foreign-policy making (A) In democratic regimes foreign policy formulation would be an open process, including market and civil society actors, such as business lobbies, chambers of commerce, research centers, think tanks and academia, and foreign lobbyists (states or companies). These domestic actors would work in a consultative capacity or with a political interest in parliamentary debates (specifically in parliamentary political systems), government and its ministries or the office of the State President (specifically in semi-presidential and presidential systems). The various forms of thus influencing foreign policy decisions are: direct influence on the executive branch in its formulation of initial FP choices (framing); influence on legislative procedure; influencing public opinion; direct actions (e.g., of NGOs on the ground), and corruption (Jentleson 2010: 53-55). In democratic regimes, these processes would be inclusive and regulated, whereas in dictatorships they would be closed (non-inclusive) to a small number of the political leadership (executive, political elite), e.g., the state president and their immediate advisers. In dictatorships, decision-makers' roles would be much more all-encompassing and not subject to legislative or independent judiciary checks-and-balances as in democracies. See also Box 6.5 on 'sycophants.'

Individuals in power might usurp state instruments to strengthen their image, for example to establish a **personality cult** via national and international **propaganda**, linking their person directly to the survival of the regime. These individuals, as state leaders, would be more active in and recognized through foreign policy implementation; however, this is not specific to dictatorships but also characteristic of presidential democratic systems. However, studies have shown that personalist and **military regimes** use military force overseas when domestic elite unrest increases. For example, Lisińska (2019) establishes that in the case of Argentine nationalist military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983, nationalism played a dominant role, which accounted for the need for the potential use of extraordinary measures (including the use of force), superseding pragmatic ways of implementing particular foreign policy goals.

Domestic constraints (B) A game-theoretical approach introduces two main constraints on leaders: the **winning coalition** and the **selectorate.** According to **selectorate theory**, the larger a leader's winning coalition, the more secure the leader's position is, and the more difficult it becomes for a regime to engage in war. Consequently, autocratic regimes, which typically have smaller inner circles, are more inclined to go to war. This is because they only need to provide private goods to a limited number of loyal backers (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita et at. 2003, cited in Kneuer 2018). See also Box 7.1 on 'audience costs' and Box 6.6 on 'veto players.'

In authoritarian regimes, domestic constraints on and supervisory mechanisms for foreign policymaking would not exist or perform well, since this domain is mainly in the hands of regime insiders, or, alternatively, can be vetoed by the public (mass uprising and elections) (Weeks & Crunkilton 2018). There are, however, differences among these regimes. In collegial authoritarian regimes, a leading political **ideology** produces stability and transparency, which, in turn, makes international cooperation easier and allow such regimes to *"replicate many of the advantages of democracies"* (Weeks & Crunkilton 2008: 422). **Military regimes** have more difficulty in gaining acceptance from the public and generating loyalty from the relevant regime supporters than **personalist regimes**. The latter – known for their low level of leadership constraints, pragmatic commitment to ideology and, notoriously, for their **patronage** networks – can manage society and elites (divide-and-rule) through personalist affective appeals and more coherent well-defined missions (Kneuer 2018) (see **legitimacy**). Non-democratic regimes stand out when it comes to **foreign invasion** and **conflict & authoritarian regimes**. This is formulated most prominently in the 'democratic peace theory' axiom, which states that democracies do not wage wars against each other. As for autocratic regimes, they are more peaceful towards one another than those in mixed dyads.

EXAMPLES & METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Most of the examples of studies of autocratic regimes' foreign policies are of the Bolshevik and Communist Soviet Union, Italian Fascism, German National Socialism and China. A recent focus on 'role models of self-assertive international behavior' includes states such as China, Russia, Venezuela and Iran along with 'regions that show autocratic resilience,' namely the Middle East, Southeastern Asia and Africa (Kneuer 2018).

Still, the rift between FPA and IR, on the one hand, and comparative politics, on the other, is significant and not really narrowing, as the former fiercely

guard their status as distinct fields. Progress has been slow, and it is mostly comparative authoritarianism that has made strides in accounting for international collaboration, learning, regionalism, and the importance of international networks for, e.g., **regime promotion** (Owen IV 2010; 2022) or **patronage** (Cooley & Heathershaw 2017).

State-centered bias From the IR perspective, few theoretical frames are primed to pry open the black box of the state or designed to look at regime types. Although there are some exceptions, like 'neoclassical realism' (NCR) (Ripsman et al. 2016), which integrate systemic pressures with domestic variables, such as the perceptions of decision-makers, state capacity, and internal political dynamics. Still, the frame is under-used for comparing the foreign policies of autocracies, and NCR has been criticized for not rising above the level of a mid-level theory and not respecting paradigmatic boundaries, as well as for its inability to offer a 'grand theory' (Meibauer et al. 2021).

Selection bias Comparative authoritarianism is making increasing inroads (see **regime promotion**) in the study of **authoritarian diffusion** in the international system, but theoretical frames on **authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning** are still being developed. IR studies are routinely Western-centric or biased towards great states and this hinders the field's ability to contribute to theories explaining autocratic behavior. For instance, even in applying NCR to the study of foreign policy, most works cover Western (democratic) states that are (more) transparent in their documentation regarding foreign policy formulation. There are very few case studies of non-democracies that are not great powers. (Some notable exceptions are Razani & Idris 2015; Juneau et al. 2019; Darwich 2022; Cerioli 2023 – which all cover MENA. Magcamit (2020) on the Philippines and McLean (2015) on Central Asia are other exceptions.)

Rationality bias FPA often assumes that state actors behave rationally, seeking to maximize their interests. However, in autocratic regimes, decision-making may be influenced by the unrestrained discretion of the leader in **personalist regimes**, (mis-) guided by a lack of credible information. Or it can be the result of **patronage** network trade-offs, and internal power struggles, which may not align with rational actor models and state affect performance (see **coup-proofing**). Chiozza and Goemans (2011), for instance, explain (some forms of) interstate conflict using domestic lenses.

Security bias In an anarchic world, states must look out for their own interests. Hence, their interactions are framed through distrust, competition, and conflict. Most IR and FPA theories give preference to the anarchic paradigm over domestic variables, e.g., when explaining the low levels of **authoritarian regionalism** or dyads of **conflict & authoritarian regimes**.

IMPACT ON POLICY Reiter and Stam (2002: 199) conclude that *"democratic governments calculate very carefully whether their foreign policy actions are consistent with public opinion. Democratic leaders avoid starting wars that they will lose or that will be bloody, they choose military strategies that help them win cheap and successful wars, they fight short wars, and they start wars only for popular causes. In short, consent matters."* As with any foreign policy decision, the use of appropriate instruments (diplomacy, economic measures, military, culture) to achieve a desired goal is more dispersed among decision-makers in democracies than in dictatorships. However, even though it sometimes appears that dictators very willingly use military power, research has shown that they use this power more for domestic purposes (to retain power) than for foreign policymaking.

Evidence shows that military regimes are more prone to conflict because they tend to emerge in more hostile international environments (Kim 2017, cited in Weeks and Crunkilton 2018: 419). In general, however, dictatorships do not engage in wars more easily than other regimes. Scholars have found that autocracies are more peaceful towards one another than are mixed dyads (democracy-autocracy) (Kneuer 2018: 105). Rather, it is the size of **winning coalition** that matters: large wining coalitions are less likely to get involved in war, but are more likely to participate in colonial and imperial wars and dedicate more resources to them (Bueno de Mesquita et al 2003). As for economic foreign policy tools, democracies trade more with democracies than autocracies, and democratic developing countries tend to be more open than dictatorships (Milner & Kubota 2005, cited in Weeks & Crunkilton 2018: 420). In terms of diplomacy, there is empirical evidence that dictatorships enter into international agreements less often and violate them more often than democracies do, yet this difference is almost entirely due to **personalist regimes** (Chyzh 2014, cited in Weeks & Crunkilton 2018: 422).

As regards their foreign policy behavior, it is less likely that autocratic regimes would develop a sense of mutual responsiveness and a similar collective identity than democracy proposing states. This means that they would cooperate with each other only out of narrowly defined self-interest, e.g., ALBA (*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América*) among Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Nicaragua, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and led by Venezuela, which offers cheap oil deals in exchange for their collaboration. Yet autocratic regimes may strive to construct a 'regional regime identity' as an authoritarian gravity center (see Box 6.2) when great or regional powers actively engage in **authoritarian promotion**, influencing hybrid regimes or defective democracies as **black knights** (Kneuer 2018: 110), e.g., Russia in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Caucasus.

NEW FRONTIERS It seems that, in the case of dictatorships, government interest (staying in power) and state interest (achieving the national interest in the international community) (Alons 2007: 215) are much



more aligned and even use the same instruments. Dictatorships are prone to misusing the state interest to pursue government interest. A well-researched example is 'regime-boosting regionalism,' which draws attention to *"the discursive strategies of political elites in weak states who seek to strengthen a regime's official status, official sovereignty, image, and legitimacy – for example, rhetorical/symbolic regionalism where implementation of agreed policies is not the primary purpose"* (Söderbaum 2013: 13). Recently, Debre (2021) has expanded this comparative research to different types of authoritarian regimes across regions (the cases of Zimbabwe, China and Bahrain) and revealed that membership in regional organizations provides additional material, informational and ideational resources to autocratic incumbents, which can be used to boost domestic survival strategies *vis-à-vis* internal and external challengers – thus linking these forms of international institutionalization to **authoritarian learning**.

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Box 6.5 Sycophancy: The Subtle Art of Bootlicking

SYCOPHANT, n. One who approaches Greatness on his belly so that he may not be commanded to turn and be kicked. He is sometimes an editor.
– Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911)

It is a question not of dishonesty but of prudence.
– Alphons Silbermann, *Grovelling and Other Vices: The Sociology of Sycophancy* (2000)

Sycophancy in authoritarian regimes is a phenomenon deeply intertwined with the loyalty-competence trade-off, a dynamic central to the functioning and survival of such systems. While scholars have extensively analyzed why rulers prioritize loyalty over competence – often citing the need for personal security and regime stability – the motivations and payoffs for elites who embrace sycophantic behavior remain less understood. Why do some elites choose to engage in sycophancy while others abstain? What are the precise advantages they derive, and how do these vary across different types of authoritarian regimes? These questions remain at the forefront of ongoing research.

For dictators, sycophancy comes with significant costs, particularly in terms of information gathering. Surrounded by 'yes men,' authoritarian leaders often lose access to reliable data, honest opinions, and justified warnings against flawed policies. However, for elites lower in the pecking order, sycophancy can serve as a survival strategy within the regime, even as it contributes to the emergence of **personality cults**.

The formation of personality cults follows a path-dependent logic. Initially driven by individual opportunism among elites ('immoral innovators'), these cults gain momentum as others emulate such behavior out of fear or ambition (Popan 2015). Over time, public displays of loyalty become mandatory rather than voluntary acts – failure to participate risks punishment or exclusion from power structures.

This is a two-way street: Such cults demand humiliating displays of loyalty through ritualistic performances, which not only intimidate but also divide elites. These performances erode trust among elite insiders as they witness their peers' willingness to grovel and spin lies to those in power. This mistrust undermines collaboration and complicates efforts to organize opposition against the dictator from within.

These divisive patterns raise the organizational costs of elite opposition and are closely linked to broader practices of denunciation (Box 3.11) within authoritarian systems. They also resonate with scholarship on surveillance and control mechanisms in such regimes. As a result, sycophancy has become a topic of renewed interest in the field of comparative authoritarianism, offering insights into how loyalty rituals shape elite behavior, regime stability, and the broader dynamics of power under autocracy. (The limited space for 'meritocracy' under dictatorship is researched as well, cf. Box 1.9.).

Sycophantic behavior among elites often stems from their precarious position within authoritarian systems. In such regimes, power asymmetries between rulers and subordinates create an environment where elites are constantly at risk of demotion, purges, or arbitrary punishment. For weaker elites – those with limited resources, poor networks, or fewer alternative career options – sycophancy becomes a rational strategy to signal loyalty and secure their position within the regime's hierarchy (Baturo et al. 2024). By publicly professing exaggerated devotion to the dictator through speeches or symbolic acts, these elites aim to reduce their vulnerability while increasing their chances of receiving rewards such as promotions or protection from purges.

The dynamics of sycophancy are particularly evident in **personalist regimes** where power is highly centralized around an individual leader. In such contexts, weaker elites have strong incentives to 'play the sycophant card,' as their dependence on the ruler for political survival is more pronounced than in other forms of authoritarianism (Baturo et al. 2024). In an example from Russia, subnational leaders operating in resource-poor regions often rely heavily on central government subsidies to maintain local support. This economic dependency compels them to engage in more ostentatious displays of loyalty compared to their counterparts in wealthier regions with greater autonomy.

However, not all elites engage in sycophantic behavior to the same extent. Stronger elites – those with independent sources of power or alternative career paths – are less likely to resort to obsequiousness. For them, excessive displays of loyalty can be politically costly, as they risk damaging their reputation as independent actors or foreclosing opportunities to join alternative coalitions should the dictator's grip on power weaken (Chung-Hon Shih 2008). Thus, while sycophancy is a common strategy among weaker elites, its prevalence varies depending on structural conditions such as resource distribution and individual elite characteristics.

From the perspective of authoritarian rulers, sycophancy presents both benefits and risks. On one hand, public displays of loyalty reinforce the image of the dictator as dominant and unchallengeable. They help create an atmosphere where dissent becomes costly for both elites and ordinary citizens (Huang 2015). By rewarding sycophants with promotions or other forms of recognition, dictators can incentivize similar behavior among other members of the ruling coalition, thereby consolidating their control over the regime.

On the other hand, sycophancy undermines effective governance by distorting information flows. When officials prioritize flattery over competence or truth-telling, rulers are deprived of accurate assessments needed for sound decision-making (Peceny & Butler 2004). This phenomenon has been observed in several historical cases where dictators surrounded by 'yes men' made disastrous policy decisions based on flawed intelli-



gence or overly optimistic reports. For instance, scholars have pointed to Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 as an example where sycophantic advisers likely overstated Russia's military capabilities while underestimating Ukrainian resistance (Gomza 2022).

Moreover, rewarding sycophants over competent officials exacerbates what scholars term the 'loyalty-competence trade-off' (Egorov & Sonin, 2011). While loyalists may be less likely to challenge the dictator's authority, they are often less capable of managing state functions effectively. Over time, this trade-off can erode institutional capacity and increase regime fragility.

While personality cults may bolster short-term regime stability by projecting an image of unity and strength, they come at significant long-term costs. They deepen mistrust among elites by encouraging denunciation and competition rather than collaboration (Baturo et al. 2024). Additionally, such social systems entrench a culture of insincerity (like the Soviet *tukhta* (тухта, sometimes *tufta*) system of cheating labor quotas in Soviet labor camps) that permeates all levels of society and governance (Welsh 2024; Popan 2015). This culture not only stifles dissent but also undermines genuine problem-solving and innovation within state institutions.

Despite growing interest in sycophancy as a subject of study within comparative authoritarianism, many questions remain unanswered. First, while existing research highlights variations in sycophantic behavior across individual elites and regime types, more work is needed to understand how these dynamics evolve during periods of political transition or crisis. Do weaker elites abandon sycophantic strategies when dictators are believed to lose power? How do stronger elites navigate shifts in regime stability?

Second, there is a limited understanding of how psychological factors influence both rulers' receptiveness to flattery and elites' willingness to engage in it. For instance, does prolonged exposure to sycophantic praise alter dictators' perceptions of reality? Similarly, what motivates some individuals within elite circles to resist engaging in obsequious behavior despite systemic pressures?

Finally, comparative studies across different historical and cultural contexts could provide valuable insights into why some regimes develop pervasive personality cults and widespread sycophancy while others do not. Interesting are also dictators' strategies to overcome this information deficit by developing compensating strategies (**co-optation** of **opposition** groups, advanced forms of surveillance, etc.).

Sycophancy is a multifaceted phenomenon that shapes both elite behavior and regime dynamics under authoritarianism. While it offers short-term benefits for both rulers and subordinates – reinforcing loyalty signals and securing political survival – it also introduces significant risks by distorting information flows and undermining institutional capacity.

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Box 6.6 Veto Players – Obstructing Change

One who has in his power to prevent a change from the status quo.
– George Tsebelis (2002)

Veto player theory draws from rational choice theory, which argues that rather than looking at the institutional structure, researchers should investigate the powerful players in a particular setting to understand outcomes. Veto players are *"individuals or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a policy decision"* (Tsebelis 1995: 295). In veto player theory, it is important to identify the number of veto players and their identity in any given system or who is involved in the political game.

Veto player theory, originally developed for democratic systems, can thus be collective or individual actors (whose agreement is necessary to alter the *status quo*). Moreover, they can be categorized as either *institutional* (established by constitutional or legal frameworks) or *partisan* (emerging from political dynamics, such as coalition partners). The addition of a veto player can affect the policy-making process in two key ways. First, it may reduce the size of the 'winset' of the *status quo* – the set of policy alternatives that can defeat the current state – depending on whether the new veto player is independent or absorbed by an existing one. Second, it may expand the *unanimity core* – the set of policies that cannot be defeated by unanimous consent among veto players – if the new actor introduces greater ideological diversity. (Tsebelis 2002)

Spreading veto players further apart ideologically reduces the winset's size and enlarges the unanimity core, leading to greater policy stability. A smaller winset and a larger unanimity core are essentially equivalent in their effect: they make policy changes more difficult and enhance stability. The 'agenda setter' – a veto player with the power to propose take-it-or-leave-it offers – enjoys significant strategic advantages. However, this advantage diminishes as policy stability increases or when the agenda setter's ideological position aligns more closely with other veto players, facilitating consensus. (Tsebelis 2002)

Veto players are sometimes constitutionally recognized, such as the *Supreme Court* in the United States (an institutional, collective veto player). However, they can be *de facto* decision-makers, such as the *siloviki* in Russia, at least before 2022. The *siloviki* are comprised of the elites that prop up Putin in power and work for the 'ministries of force' (literally) (Illarionov 2009). Currently – instrumentalizing the invasion of Ukraine to this purpose – Vladimir V. Putin has acquired higher levels of personalist power, and *siloviki* is no longer able to counter his policies (Waller 2024). The term *силовик (silovik)* refers to an agent of one of the security organizations. It is a collective noun for all troops and officers of such institutions. As veto players, only the top officials in charge of the various branches of the armed forces, law enforcement and intelligence services are considered.

In the world of authoritarian regimes, there is a wide range of veto players both in quantity and power. The more veto players that exist, the more the system has to take these views into account and find compromises. This can lead to the perception that the policy-making environment is contentious. As such, some authors argue that in authoritarian settings, regimes with more veto players will respond to this contentious environment by becoming more intolerant and repressive (Singh & Dunn 2013).

Other work on authoritarian regimes and veto players has applied this theory to different types of dictatorships to make predictions about the outcomes. Single-party regimes in which a party with a large group of political elites is in charge would have the most veto players, followed by **monarchies** with large ruling families, followed by military **juntas**, with personalist rule having the smallest number of veto players.

Because **single-party regimes** have so many veto players, this has numerous implications. The first is that policy output is slow, steady and stable. In the case of China, for example (or at least prior to the personalist rise of Xi Jinping), the large number of political elites involved in decision-making and a part of different factions meant that the decisions were not made overnight (Frantz 2003). Instead, decisions on policy required careful consideration and political elites debated and put forward their views (Frantz & Ezrow 2011). The number of veto players has other implications for conflict. In **personalist rule**, due to the lack of veto players, decisions are often made in isolation or with little consultation. As a result, personalist regimes are more likely to engage in risky conflict behavior (Peceny & Butler 2004), as when Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait. Saddam formally controlled all political hierarchies in the state, the *Ba'ath* Party and the military in Iraq. The ministers of defense exercised no independent authority. Saddam's cousin, Ali Hasan Al Majid (Chemical Ali), claimed that there was no instance when anyone brought bad news to Saddam or contradicted him (Hosner 2007) – see also 'sycophancy' in Box 6.5.

Veto player theory helps us understand better different outcomes in authoritarian regimes, underscoring how authoritarian regimes differ considerably. Like with 'audience costs' (Box 7.1) and **selectorate theory**, they are one of many ways to break open the black box of dictatorships.

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International Sanctions & Autocratic Regimes

Sanctions are a sign of irritation, they are not the instrument of serious policies
– Sergei V. Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia, 2014

Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through
– Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

Sanctions are a retributive, reactionary foreign policy instrument aimed at changing governments' behavior. They are more likely to be effective when applied by a large group of countries and when targeting regimes that are constrained by domestic institutions.

DEFINITION International sanctions are a specific method of external intervention based on coercive (restrictive) measures undertaken by one country, a coalition of countries or an international organization against another country (the government, any group or individuals within the country) with the aim of changing the targeted country's behavior or a specific policy (Escribà-Folch 2010; Keukelaire & Delreux 2014). This can be done by using different foreign policy tools or instruments, whether diplomatic, political, economic, financial or cultural (Smith 2014). Among the main motivations for the imposition of sanctions are violent conflicts, human rights violations, a lack of democratic principles, and threats to security or political violence (Ilieva et al. 2018; Smith 2014).

SEE ALSO Sanctions are, of course, a form of **foreign policy**. On their own, these are usually not sufficient for **democracy promotion**, but can serve as one of several factors aimed at **regime promotion**. Dictatorships also resort to them, but often in a retaliatory fashion, or for geopolitical reasons. Since they usually lack an effective alliance (see **authoritarian regionalism**) to execute sanctions effectively, there is only sporadic evidence that they are used for the specific goal of **authoritarian promotion** (although great autocratic powers like Russia or China – see Box 6.2 on 'authoritarian gravity centers' – do have such leverage on weaker neighbors).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE With regard to their application, sanctions can be either unilateral (imposed by one state) or multilateral (imposed by a coalition of countries or an international organization). They can be imposed in response to perceived violations of international rules (e.g., after a violent conflict has erupted, human rights violations, etc.) or pre-emptively (e.g., before the escalation of conflict, political violence or potential breaches of human rights) (Smith 2014). With regard to the target entity, sanctions are either 'comprehensive,' i.e. applied against a country and including a wide range of measures, or 'targeted' (also 'smart'), because they focus only on those responsible for the state's behavior and, as such, are intended to cause minimal hardship to the whole population (Drezner 2011: 96; Caetano et al. 2023). Comprehensive sanctions envisage an interruption of relations with the third country as a whole, including measures such as suspending or reducing diplomatic relations and cooperation, trade or arms embargoes, boycotting sports or cultural events, imposing flight bans, etc. One example of such comprehensive sanctions was the EU sanctions regime against Syria, which included an arms embargo, a ban on the import of oil from Syria, on aid and investment, and trade restrictions (Smith 2014: 167). Targeted measures, on the other hand, address specific individuals (often political leaders or elites), non-state entities (such as terrorist groups or companies) or products (such as diamonds, ivory or timber) and usually take the form of financial sanctions (freezing of funds) or travel bans against these specific entities (Keukelaire & Delreux 2014).

LITERATURE As a consequence of the increasing importance of multilateralism in international relations, sanctions have been extensively researched by scholars. Most studies have focused on the effectiveness of sanctions by states and international organizations. Among the most cited works are Hufbauer et al. (1985; 2009) on the effectiveness of international sanctions, covering more than a hundred case studies, and Biersteker et al. (2013) on UN targeted sanctions. Also noteworthy is the contribution by Martin and Simmons (2012) on the institutionalization of international sanctions as a prerequisite for their implementation and, more recently, on the examination of the design of sanctions (see Bapat et al. 2020; Meissner 2023).

Nossal (1999: 147) posited that democracies are most vulnerable to economic sanctions, due to their number of veto players (see Box 6.6), the existence of domestic opposition and prevailing practices that allow opposition to be expressed, channeled and perhaps directed against the ruling coalition. Escribà-Folch and Wright (2010) were among the first to distinguish how sanctions destabilize autocrats, differentiating between regime types (see also Box 7.1 on 'audience costs'). They find that **personalist rule** and **monarchies**, which rely heavily on aid and resource rents, are more vulnerable to sanctions, often leading to irregular changes like coups. In contrast, single-party and military regimes can maintain or even increase their tax revenues and reallocate expenditures to sustain their patronage networks, making sanctions against them largely ineffective. The latter regimes can also rely on their ability to employ repressive tactics and positive inducements to maintain support (Peksen 2019a). Major (2012) brings to attention the timing of sanctions, which are more effective when they overlap with domestic instability.

Cho (2019) looks at the impact of (US) economic sanctions on social welfare spending in authoritar-

ian countries and different patterns of budget cuts. Multi-party regimes tend to cut social spending (education and health) to a lesser degree (than their 'closed' counterparts), since they are wary of societal threats as a result of economic hardship. Oechslin (2014) finds that if autocratic targets react to sanctions by lowering the supply of public goods, they indirectly deprive potential challengers of resources (thus maximizing the nation's suffering rather than relieving it, while making the sanctions ineffective).

Looking at the other side, von Soest and Wahman (2015) find that Western senders are more likely to impose sanctions following dramatic events like coups, where international pressure is high, indicating a response to civil liberties violations rather than purely *Realpolitik* interests. Sanctions are more also likely after less dramatic events, such as controversial elections, especially if domestic costs are low. Sanctions are more common in unstable regimes with mobilized citizens and weak economies. However, senders balance democratic aims with national interests, considering economic and political costs. Stable repressive regimes with high GDP are somewhat less targeted, yet even less targeted are recipients of high FDI by Western donors.

CLASSIFICATION According to the foreign policy tools used to bring about policy or institutional changes in target countries, sanctions can be divided into the following types. *Diplomatic sanctions* usually mean the *"cessation of formal diplomatic contact"* or the non-recognition of a regime (Maller 2010: 62), but also the withdrawing or expelling of diplomatic or military personnel, the suspending of high-level contacts and the imposition of visa/travel bans on particular individuals from targeted countries (Smith 2014: 56). This type of sanctions is also referred to as *political sanctions* (Escribà-Folch & Wright 2010), and is often combined with other types of sanctions. *Economic sanctions* are the most commonly used instrument in international relations (Peksen 2019b; Ilieva et al. 2018; Escribà-Folch 2010). They specifically aim to intentionally cause economic damage to the targeted country, and include suspension or reduction of aid, an embargo or boycott on trade in specific goods, freezing foreign assets, an increase in tax, the suspension of trade agreements, etc. (Smith 2014: 53). Another type of sanctions is *military sanctions*. They are regarded as preventive measures to avoid the use of weapons by targeting the trade or transfer of military technology, equipment and weapons to the targeted country (Ilieva et al. 2018). The specific measures include arms embargoes, restrictions on technology transfer, dual-use technology and military training and cooperation. Lastly, *cultural sanctions* aim to exert pressure on a targeted country by imposing restrictions on cultural or sports exchanges and interactions. Examples include non-participation in cultural and sporting events (boycotting), suspending cultural, academic and educational exchanges, or restrictions on the distribution of film and media from the targeted country (Ilieva et al. 2018).

MEASUREMENT Although sanctions are one of the most widely used mechanisms to exert international pressure, their utility is constantly debated. As studies reveal, there is great disagreement as to the extent of their success rate (Hufbauer et al. 2009; Biersteker et al. 2013), the type of sanctions that are more effective (Kaempfer & Lowenberg 1999; Drezner 2011; Pala 2021) and the conditions under which sanctions are expected to work (Escribà-Folch 2010; Meissner 2023). Recent empirical studies of imposed international sanctions show that they are effective against democracies, but less likely to succeed against non-democracies (Marinov 2005; Caetano et al. 2023). However, according to Escribà-Folch and Wright (2010: 336), the effect of sanctions in non-democratic regimes is further conditioned by the type of authoritarian rule in the target country, with personalist rulers and autocratic monarchies being more susceptible to sanctions than **single-party** and **military regimes**.

METHODOLOGY There is still much work to be done on this important topic within the field of comparative authoritarianism. While variation within (the broad category of) authoritarian regimes is significant, we know that their level of institutionalization, their organizational nexus, as well as the context and timing of sanctions, matter (von Soest 2024). The mechanics of regime resilience remain under-explored (e.g., the effects of ideology, legitimacy, authoritarian legacies, etc.). This is also the case with the exact workings of pressure points, both within the regime, like 'audience costs' (Box 7.1) and 'veto players' (Box 6.6), and externally, in terms of their interconnectedness within the international system (see **linkage & leverage theory**), as well as of the capacity of regimes to modify their international contexts (**gatekeeping**).

Longitudinal bias Many studies rely on cross-sectional data, which can miss the long-term effects of sanctions. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand how sanctions impact authoritarian regimes over time, but such studies are less common due to the resource requirements and complexity involved. In addition, over time, recurring sanction regimes can facilitate the emergence of new international norms that are able to constrain or modify regime behavior.

Endogeneity bias The decision to impose sanctions is not random (von Soest & Wahman 2015); it is influenced by the behavior of the target regime and the strategic interests of the sanctioning countries. This makes it challenging to disentangle the effects of sanctions from other factors that might influence the stability and behavior of authoritarian regimes.

Benchmarking There are substantial difficulties in measuring both the independent variable (sanctions) and the dependent variable (regime stability or change). Sanctions vary widely in their scope, duration, and enforcement, making it hard to create a standardized measure. Similarly, regime stability can be influenced by numerous internal and external factors, complicating the attribution of changes



directly to sanctions. In addition, Van Bergeijk and Siddiquee (2017) analyze the effect of scholars' over-reliance on the *Database on International Economic Sanctions* of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, notwithstanding the latter's openly stating that it sometimes under-reports sanctions between powers of the second and third rank, sanctions without English documentation, and sanctions imposed in comparative secrecy.

Economic bias Much of the literature focuses predominantly on economic sanctions, often neglecting other forms of pressure such as diplomatic isolation, travel bans, and arms embargoes. This narrow focus can lead to an incomplete understanding of how different types of sanctions interact and how they affect authoritarian regimes, especially since sanctions are seldom used in isolation, and are accompanied by other forms of pressure (von Soest 2024: 310).

IMPACT ON POLICY Skepticism as to whether and how sanctions can be used to affect the stability of authoritarian regimes and lead to change in their behavior depends on the following conditions. Firstly, the legality and legitimacy of sanctions. Sanctions are considered legal if they are in response to violations of international law (Brzoska 2015). However, the compliance of sanctions with international law is often disputed because it clashes with the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention or because the use of restrictive measures is seen as disproportionate *vis-à-vis* the objectives (Ilieva et al. 2018). As such, the 'responsibility to protect' argument used to bypass the non-intervention principle is increasingly criticized by authoritarian regimes "as a tool of Western great power management" (Wilson & Yao 2019), contending that sanctions are not adopted with the aim of affecting change but in the context of the intervening actors' broader geostrategic considerations. In cases where there are mixed motives, it is unlikely that sanctions will be either effective or legitimate.

Authoritarian leaders, in particular, might question the legitimacy of international sanctions and use them to mobilize support against the sanctioning states by portraying them as 'external aggressors' (Pala 2021: 249). In turn, this 'rally-around-the-flag' effect can further strengthen the position and hold on power of authoritarian leaders (Schmitz & Sikkink 2010: 530). A certain group of authoritarian regimes – Belarus, Cuba, Eritrea, North Korea, and Zimbabwe – has persistently resisted the destabilizing effects of sanctions. In these nations, strong claims to legitimacy, combined with other factors, have significantly contributed to the failure of sanctions in undermining authoritarian rule. When regimes possess robust legitimation strategies, sanctions often end up reinforcing their stability. These regimes find it easier to incorporate sanctions into their narratives of legitimacy, especially when their ties to the sanctioning entities are weak (see **linkage & leverage theory**). This weak connection limits the sanctioning countries' ability to convey the true objectives of the sanctions. Consequently, distant sanctioning nations are often depicted as adversaries, and their sanctions framed as unjust imperialist violations of the targeted country's sovereignty (Grauvogel & von Soest 2014).

Secondly, international sanctions can lead to unintended consequences. Although sanctions imposed against a country target the government and its economic, financial and political elites, they can cause (more) harm to the wider population via the 'spill-over effect' (Ahn & Ludema 2020). Studies show that the response to sanctions by the target state tends to exacerbate negative side effects, such as decreasing the living conditions of the civilian population (Ilieva et al. 2018), and increasing co-optation (popular support) and repression on the part of the authoritarian regime (Escribà-Folch & Wright 2010: 344). As a consequence of increased international pressure and isolation, sanctions can foster illegal transactions, smuggling and cause trade losses for neighboring countries (Smith 2014; Caetano et al. 2023). Sanctions can also lead to an increase in technological and military development in the target country, as was the case with the international sanctions imposed on Russia after 2014 (Pala 2021: 251).

Thirdly, there can be *inconsistency in the application of sanctions.* When taking decisions on sanctions, sanctioning countries face a trade-off between imposing damage and high costs on the target country, and protecting their domestic (mostly business) interest groups from the costs arising from sanctions. As a result, sanctions are less likely against important trade partners (Weber 2019), particularly against oil-producing countries, because *"the demand for oil is highly inelastic in most sanction-sending countries, making them more reluctant to disrupt energy supplies"* (Escribà-Folch & Wright 2010: 355). Domestic groups in sanctioning countries often oppose sanctions altogether or lobby for their removal or downsizing, and this is known as the 'black knight-effect' (**black knights**) (Caetano et al. 2023: 3). Another inconsistency is linked to the implementation of imposed sanctions. Martin and Simmons (2012: 336) show that implementation requires a certain level of cooperation between states and a binding power if sanctions are to be effective. However, although multilateral sanctions are considered more effective and legitimate than unilateral ones (Pala 2021), they are not always mandatory and lack enforcement mechanisms, which limits the likelihood of destabilizing authoritarian regimes.

Lastly, there is the rising importance of *geopolitical considerations* in deciding against which target countries sanction should be imposed. Drezner (1999) shows that sanctions are usually designed in such a way that rival actors (Russia in the post-2022 context) are preferred to strategically important states (such as China or Saudi Arabia). States can block the use of negative restrictive measures if they harm their commercial and political interests or if a third country is too strategically important to be antagonized. The result is often the lowest common denominator, which decreases the costs for target countries or imposes no sanctions at all (Smith 2014: 119). According to Pala (2021), one of the most important systemic problems with imposing sanctions is the existence of

third countries that counter or do not support sanctions (**black knights**). This allows target countries to evade the damage caused by sanctions and makes sanctions ineffective (Caetano et al. 2023). The most prominent recent examples of this include China's fundamental support for North Korea, the Russian opposition to international sanctions against the Syrian regime, and India and China's importation of Russian energy products.

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Islamic States

Islam, the government and the people are like the tent, the pole, the ropes and the pegs. The tent is Islam; the pole is the government; the ropes and pegs are the people. None will do without the others.
– Ibn Qutaybah

Islamic states are foremost de-colonial projects aimed at saving the Muslim *Ummah* from Western domination, both rejecting Western modernity (especially secularism) and borrowing aspects from it (like the nation-state, territorial sovereignty and some collegial procedures like collective decision-making). Foremost, the concept serves a discursive purpose as a *"useful tool to rescue Muslims from the yoke of Western intellectual domination,"* but as a development model it has failed the communities they claim to represent (Khan 2004: 276).

DEFINITION The Islamic state is based on ruling the Islamic *Ummah* (أمة – the Muslim community). Allah is the highest authority in any Islamic state concept. Any leadership is proclaimed in the name of Allah (سُبْحانَهُ وَتَعالَىٰ – *subḥānahū wa-taʿālā* (SWT) – "Glorious and Exalted Is He") and his Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ – *ṣallā-llāhu ʿalayhī wa-ʾālihī wa-sallam* (ṢAAS / SAWW) – "Peace and Blessings be upon Him and his Progeny"). In the absence of such divine substance, a leader (*khalīfa'*– caliph – Prophet's deputy, or *amīr al-mu'minīn* – the Head of Believers) or collective leadership (experts, legal scholars – *fuqahā*) is responsible for the main task of the state: maintenance of the Islamic faith. Therefore, Islam and politics are inseparable in the classical sense; they create a unity that keeps the *Ummah* on the right path of Islam.

SEE ALSO Like other manifestations of **political Islam**, Islamic states (as modern phenomena) are the expression of a Utopian alternative path for Islamic communities in the post-colonial reality. Seldom are they studied as a **theocracy** or **ideocracy**, nor was their coherent worldview and (questionable) **legitimacy** (solicited from **traditional rule**) treated on a par with **totalitarianism** before 2014, despite the fact that several Islamic state projects came to power through **revolution**, espoused a mission of bringing liberation, socio-political transformation, and even sought to export their order beyond their borders (e.g., through *jihad* – see below). Since the advent of the Taliban, international terrorism and especially the *Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL), the concept of Islamic statehood has been associated with **terrorism**.

ORIGIN The theory of the Islamic state was developed in early Islam. Even the main pillars of Islam are connected with the collective actions creating the identity of the Islamic community (*Ummah*) led by the leader replacing the initial rule of the Prophet Muhammad (ṢAAS). After his death, the first four 'rightly guided' caliphs (*khulafā' al-rāshidūn*) set up the ruling system of the community. Following the first division of the Muslim community after the death of the fourth caliph, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the community developed several concepts of rulers defined as religious leaders.

The community (*Ummah*) split into the followers of ʿAlī and his descendants (later known as the *shīʿat ʿAlī* – Shiite Islam) and the followers of other leaders from the tribe that assumed power – the Ummayyads, initially residing in Damascus. They seized the title of *khalīfa'* and spread their rule over North Africa and other parts of the world as the (second) caliphate *(khilāfa')*. Their title was then captured by the Abbasids in Baghdad starting in 750 CE. Although they were, at least nominally, recognized by most Sunni Muslims, other caliphates were established, initially in Spain (the Cordoba caliphate), later in the tenth century in Fatimid Egypt, and regularly (but temporarily) in other places. The last caliph, a descendant of the Abbasids, was moved to the Ottoman court in Istanbul after the conquest of late Fatimid Egypt in 1517, and the Ottoman sultans usurped the titles *khalīfa'* and *khilāfa'* until the end of their rule. The Ottoman Empire extended into substantial parts of the Muslim world, becoming the most influential Islamic state in the sixteenth century.

Consequently, *caliphs* and sultans in Istanbul were, at least nominally, recognized throughout the Sunni world, even in the places outside the direct control of the Ottomans (Central Asia, South Asia, Africa, etc.). At the same time, several other caliphates were proclaimed in different parts of the Islamic world – the Indian peninsula, the Kanem-Bornu empire (1472-1893) and the Sokoto caliphate (1804-1903) in what is today Nigeria, Yogyakarta in Indonesia (1755-2015), etc. While a caliph did not formally lead the Mahdi state of Sudan (1881-1898), the latter possessed all the attributes of an Islamic state.

The *khalīfa'* title was abolished by the Turkish Republic in 1924 when the last caliph was dethroned, after the (earlier) abolition of the Ottoman sultanate. Thereafter, several efforts to restore the caliphate were proclaimed: the Saudi dynasty defeated their predecessors in the Hejaz in 1924-1925. Still, in the 1920s, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā in Egypt appealed for the restoration of the *khilāfa'* in his compendium *al-khilāfa' aw al-imāma al-ʿuzmā* ('The Caliphate and the Grand Imamate') (Haddad 1989; Willis 2010).

In modern history, several other attempts to enthrone Islamic leadership have taken place, at least on a local scale. The 1979 revolution in Iran is the most durable example, but other attempts should be noted: the head of the first Taliban movement was given the title *amīr al-mu'minīn* ('Head of the Believers'), the historical title used for important military commanders and rulers in Islam. The most significant contemporary proclamation of an Islamic state came into effect in 2014 in Iraq and Syria with branches of supporters throughout the Islamic world.

Islam has a universal character, in which every human being is born Muslim. As an Islamic state is determined to keep the faith of Allah (SWT) and the mission of Prophet Muhammad (ṢAAS), according to classical and partially modern Islamic concepts, it is predestined to spread the Islamic faith throughout the world. Such determination generated a dualistic political concept of the world of Islam that divides it into *dār al-islām* (the abode of Islam) and *dār al-harb* (the abode of war). *Dār al-islām* initially included the territories under Islamic **rulership,** with a majority Muslim population and the predominance of *Sharia* (Islamic law), while *dār al-harb* consists of the territories that should be converted using the concept of *jihad*. Later on, the third category of the concept – *dár al-ahd* (the abode of armistice/agreement) – was added for the mixed territories where both Muslims and non-Muslims could co-exist.

In this regard, *jihad* does not necessarily mean the violent spread of the Islamic faith (Crone 2004: 363-373). It consists of four principal tracks: (i) the *jihad* of the heart (*al-jihād bi'l-qalb*) means the fight inside every human for Islam, personal development in Islam, and against temptations. This sort of *jihad* is also called the Greater Jihad (*al-jihād al-akbar*) concept and is considered the most praiseworthy. The second level (ii) is the *jihad* of the tongue (*al-jihād bi'l-lisān*), which encourages spreading the truth of Islam using words, i.e. missionary activities, and also warning against matters considered immoral in Islam (*"the greatest sacred struggle is to speak the truth in front of a tyrannical ruler,"* Prophet Muhammad, ṢAAS. *Hadīth*, Musnad Aḥmad 18449). The third level (iii) is the concept of the *jihad* of the hand (*al-jihād bi'l-yad*), which mostly anticipates work for Islam, the community and charity. Finally (iv), the *jihad* of the sword (*al-jihād bi's-sajf*) requires violence to spread but also defend Islam – offensive (*jihād al-ṭalab*) versus defensive *jihad* (*jihād al-daf'*) (Crone 2004: 382-383). Moreover, *jihad* by the sword is traditionally deemed the most extreme and the last resort to spread Islam and, as such, should only be proclaimed by the caliph. This is why several radical Islamic movements proclaimed their leaders as *khalīfa'*.

IMPACT ON POLICY The idea of the Islamic state and its extensive and universal character was proclaimed in most modern and contemporary movements that promoted *jihad by the sword* and appeared in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such as Al-Qaeda (*al-Qāʿida*), the Islamic State, and other, often radical movements. Nevertheless, the spread of the Islamic faith in some cases proceeds by using more moderate means, as in the case of the pan-Islamist and fundamentalist *Hizb at-Tahrīr* ('Party of Liberation') movement. The necessity to promote the Islamic faith is also present in the proselyting activities supported by some Islamic states, particularly in the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, etc.). However, the latter's (*Hanbaliya*) vision of Islam often clashes with local Islamic traditions based on other (non-Hanbali) schools of Islamic Law (jurisprudence) – e.g., *Hanafi* Islam, particularly with its Sufi traditions. It also goes against some of the politics of several Muslim states, which declare constitutional secularity and presume the separation of the state and Islam.

Concepts of the Islamic state in modern and contemporary history also concern other universal concepts, such as human rights, democracy, and pluralism, and clash with notions of inclusiveness, minority rights protection and tolerance. In social and economic terms, the theoreticians of the 'Islamic state' also discuss social cohesion, sustainability or social inclusion, which should guarantee the equality of each member of the *Ummah* as well as non-Muslims living in a particular territory. These values and concepts have already been included in some Islamic states in the past. Therefore, their implementation mostly lies with the leadership's commitment to protect such rights.

LITERATURE Muḥammad Abd al-Muqtadir Khan (2004) classified Islamic state literature as divided into two discourses. In the first, debates about 'theories of the Islamic state' dominated the discourse at the peak of Islamic civilization, when the caliphate dominated, and Muslims were not conquered by any other cultural regions. Khan mentions the principal scholars who conceptualized the sense of the Islamic state. In this regard, al-Farābī (870-950) considered the state in philosophical terms, al-Ghazzālī (1058-1111) or Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) lingered on the theological view, while al-Māwardī (974-1058) reflected the legalistic approach to the state, and finally Ibn Khaldûn (1332-1406) analyzed a sociological approach. The second phase of Islamic state conceptualization came as the reaction to the colonization of the Islamic world and, in most cases, *"attempts at imaging the Utopian ideal of the Just and dominant Islamic state"* (Khan 2004: 266-267).

In the twentieth century, several other scientific and theological conceptualizations of the Islamic state appeared. The oldest was elaborated by Sayyīd Abū al-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī (Jackson 2010; Hartung 2014), who devised the Islamic state based on the absolute equality of every Muslim, a *khalīfa' sui generis*. To manage the community, each *khalīfa'* (member of the *Ummah*) should transfer his/her own sovereignty to an elected leader, who is obligated to rule based on the principles of *Sharia* (if not, his 'co-caliphs' could overthrow him in another election). Nevertheless, Mawdūdī foresaw only those who have moral integrity and are knowledgeable of Islam (like the *ulamā* or *fuqahā*) as having the right to become leader. Mawdūdī's radical 'Theo-democracy' was further developed, in very different ways, by two other conceptualizations of Islamic statehood written by (A) Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966) and (B) Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900-1989).

Sayyid Quṭb (A), in his key concept of Islamic Order (*an-nizām al-islāmī*), abandons the idea of Islamic Theo-democracy promoted by Mawdūdī, claiming that the choice of political system made no difference as long as it served the interests of Islam. He also claims that Allah (SWT) is the principal determinant of any life and every human is the deputy of Islam. However, he does not show how to organize either the state or society, or how to select the leader. He also returns to the dualistic concept



of the world using the term *jahiliyyah* (places where Allah does not hold the ultimate position) and *hakimiyyah* (the Sovereignty), symbolizing the real, meaning God's rule (Khatab 2006). The clashes between these two worlds are treated by him as inevitable, anticipating the future fight against anti-Islamic (in this case, Western) powers.

Khomeini (B) underlines in his key book *velāyāt-e faqīh* the role of Islamic experts (*fuqahā*) who, in the absence of *khalīfa'* have the right and necessary qualifications to rule the *Ummah* (Adib-Moghaddam 2014). Such a theory aligns with the Shiite complex system of the Islamic clergy and their historical role in Persia and Iran. In contrast to the previous concepts of Mawdūdī and Quṭb, Khomeini applied his postulates in practice after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, which brought to power the spiritual leadership that continues to rule Iran to this today. Khomeini's view of the Islamic state and the predominance of *fuqahā* in Islamic government provoked significant discussion among Shiite scholars in the 1960s-1970s, and particularly after Khomeini passed away in 1989. The question about the role of *fuqahā* in the daily rule of Islamic statehood formed the core of all discussions (Davari 2004: 121-160).

EXAMPLES Attempts to create the *khalīfat* or other forms of Islamic state as alternatives to the Ottoman caliph appeared throughout the history of the Islamic world.

The Mahdi uprising in Sudan in 1882-1898 was one of the first notable examples proclaiming an Islamic state in modern history (Searcy 2010). Although based on Islamic Law, it violated most of the eventual rules of an Islamic state, using the *jihad* of the sword and predominantly violent methods to rule over alternative visions of Islam and non-Muslims who were proclaimed infidels (*qāfir*) and mostly eliminated. Despite the final defeat of Mahdists in 1898, the ideas of Islamic rule in Sudan remained and re-emerged in several other Neo-Mahdist riots and uprisings in the country. Finally, the military coup in 1989 led by *National Islamic Front* under the leadership of Dr. Hasan al-Turabi was also inspired by its predecessors (Warburg 1995).

Apart from several other states that declared themselves officially Islamic states, like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Comoros, Sudan, etc. (Gallab 2008; 2014), the most significant governance based on the concept of an Islamic state in the post-Cold War period was launched in Afghanistan during the rule of the Taliban in 1994-2001 (an emirate) and the 'Islamic State' itself in Iraq and Syria. The Taliban leader Mulla Muhammad Umar was promoted as *amīr al-mu'minīn* and tried to establish Islamic rulership over the territory of Afghanistan. However, local Pashto rural traditions played a crucial role in the system in addition to the general 'Islamic state' theory.

A more universalistic concept of a worldwide Islamic state began in 2014 in Mosul (Iraq), rooted in the previous Al-Qaeda leaders such as 'Abū Muṣ'ab az-Zarqāwī (see e.g., MaCants 2015). The movement exploited the turmoil in Iraq after the US intervention and in Syria after the 2011 outbreak of violence, weakening the states in both countries. Initially known as the *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL – الدولة الإسلامية في العراق والشام – *al-dawlah al-islāmīyah fī al-`irāq wa al-shām*), the movement quickly gained worldwide popularity with a specific part of the Muslim population as the only genuine Islamic state (ignoring other movements, such as the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other radical groups). Note that ISIL is also known under its other name of the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* (ISIS) and by its Arabic acronym Daesh (داعش – *da'ish*).

'Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī was appointed as caliph in Mosul (a step condemned and not recognized by other Islamic communities) and he established Islamic rule over the controlled territory. The movement launched its radical interpretation of an Islamic state and distinguished itself even from its roots in the *Hanbaliya* school and its derivation in Wahhabi (Salafist) philosophy (Bunzel 2016) (see **political Islam**). Its emphasis on violence against all infidels (including Muslims themselves) attracted thousands of extremist immigrants from all over the Muslim world. The universal character of the movement was underlined by the establishment of its own provinces covering Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Khorasan (mainly in Afghanistan), India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and, finally, the Philippines. Despite its territorial elimination in 2019, the movement strongly inspired other radical movements that established their versions of the Islamic state (Boko Haram in Nigeria, Islamic State of Khorasan in Afghanistan, etc.)

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The perspective adopted when treating the phenomena of the Taliban or ISIL is most commonly that of **terrorist groups** (e.g., Weiss & Hassan 2016; Mohamedou 2017), focusing on how they challenge the international order (geopolitics), or they are treated as 'failed states' or 'quasi-states', from the point of view of state-centered theories, or international law (Novogrodsky 2018). Political treatises on Islamic states have so far barely linked their contemporary manifestations to existing frames and classifications of **political regimes**.

Regarding its political ideology, Poljarevic (2021) and Segrest (2016) provide an in-depth look at ISIL's violence-oriented *takfīrī*-based ideological mobilization. For its treatment as a revolutionary regime, consult Walt 2015; Kalyvas 2015; Altran 2015; Whiteside 2016; Mello 2018. For ISIL from a **totalitarianism** perspective, see Filipec 2020; Haslett 2021. For the Taliban, see Fazli 2022. The recent (second) Taliban-takeover in 2021 in Afghanistan is expected to complement ongoing studies on such types of **theocracy** and their behavior (Maley 2023).

For recruitment, **soft power** and online **propaganda,** consult Atwan 2015 and Lakomy 2017. A particular strand of the literature focuses on the totalitarian education (Buriel 2023) and **indoctrination** methods of ISIL, regarding children (Benotman & Malik 2016; Bouzar & Bénézech 2019), youth (McCue et al. 2017), their physical education program (Gadais et al. 2022) and curriculum and textbooks (Arvisais et al. 2022).

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Box 6.7 Ibn Khaldûn – The Muqaddimah

The past resembles the future more than one drop of water resembles another.
– Ibn Khaldûn

The jurist and historian Ibn Khaldûn (1332-1406) as he is known – his full name is Abū Zayd ʻAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khaldūn al-Ḥaḍramī – was a court diplomat and prime minister for several rulers in north Africa and Muslim Spain, often moving between different polities in turbulent times after the disintegration of the the Almohad Empire (ca. 1130-1269) that once controlled and unified all these territories.

In 1375, Ibn Khaldûn took a four-year sabbatical, seeking refuge in Frenda (now Algeria) in tribal territory at the stronghold of Awlād ʿArīf and commenced work on his *magnum opus*. Afterward, his travels took him to Egypt and Syria, where he ended up a hostage of Timur (Tamerlane) during the latter's siege on Damascus. He died in Cairo.

Ibn Khaldûn's *Muqaddimah* (مقدّمة – 'introduction' or 'prologue'), also titled *Prolegomena (Introductions),* is a seminal work that significantly contributes to our understanding of political regimes, theories of statecraft, dynasticism, and the life-cycles of regimes. It was designed as an 'introduction to' a universal history of the Arabs and Berbers (titled *Kitāb al-ʾihbar – The Book of Observations*) but has been lauded as a unique, standalone marvel, far surpassing contemporary thinkers.

His *Muqaddimah* is a diverse, general sociology spanning history, politics, urban life, economics, and knowledge and has been considered a philosophy of history. It stands out for his critical analysis of sources (historiography) and his ability to capture and theorize social change, identifying critical junctures and larger patterns.

In his treatise of (Islamic) states, Ibn Khaldûn aimed at identifying the natural laws of state survival and thus was more empirical, historical and descriptive in contrast to his normative and prescriptive predecessors such as al-Farabi (870-950), al-Mawardi (974-1058) and Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328). (Khan 2004) He emphasized a rational and empirical approach to understanding historical events, which was revolutionary for his time. He critiques other historians for their lack of critical analysis and for accepting historical accounts without scrutiny.

An experienced statesman, Ibn Khaldûn was apt in identifying oncoming social changes and considered all history to be a repeating rise and fall of polities and civilizations. His insights on statecraft concern **dynasties** and how they can uphold unity within the ruling group and thus their grip on their empire. He was one of the first to qualify identity as a cohesive construct, long before the advent of **clan politics** or **ethnic politics**.

Ibn Khaldûn introduces the concept of *ʻasabiyyah* (عصبيّة – *ʻaṣabiyya*), or social cohesion, as a fundamental force in the rise and fall of **political regimes**. He argues that strong social cohesion and solidarity within a group, often found in tribes or kinship groups, is essential for the establishment of a ruling dynasty. (Rashed 2017) This cohesion can be strengthened through **propaganda** of a religious **ideology** (cf. **traditional rule**), which helps unify the group and propel it to power. However, as a dynasty becomes established and prosperous, *ʿasabiyyah* tends to weaken, leading to the regime's eventual decline and replacement by a new group with stronger social cohesion.

He posits a cyclical theory of history where dynasties rise, flourish, and eventually decline due to internal decay and loss of *ʿasabiyyah*. He saw this process as constant with repeating historical cycles based on the interaction between settled civilization and nomadic culture (Horák 2021: 586). He outlines a predictable pattern: a new dynasty emerges with strong social cohesion and military prowess, consolidates power, and enjoys a period of prosperity. Over time, the ruling class becomes complacent, luxury and corruption set in, and social cohesion diminishes, making the dynasty vulnerable to external challenges and internal strife, leading to its downfall and replacement by a new, more cohesive group.

The *Muqaddimah* discusses the qualities of effective leadership and governance. He argues that successful rulers must maintain social cohesion and manage resources wisely. He also explores the concept of the 'social contract,' suggesting that the **legitimacy** of political authority depends on the consent and support of the governed. This idea resonates with later political theories, including those of John Locke and other Enlightenment thinkers.

In addition, he analyzes the economic and social factors that influence the rise and fall of dynasties, highlighting how economic prosperity can lead to social changes that weaken social cohesion. As societies become wealthier, individuals may prioritize personal interests over communal welfare, eroding *ʿasabiyyah* and contributing to dynastic decline.

He also examines the impact of urbanization – a critical factor in the life-cycle of regimes – noting that as societies transition from rural, tribal stages to urban, sedentary ones, they lose the martial and cohesive qualities essential for maintaining power.

Excessive **bureaucracy**, he found, including high taxes and extensive legislation, leads to societal decline by stifling the development of specialized labor and various services. He believed that bureaucrats lack the understanding and motivation inherent in business people, which hampers commercial activities and economic growth. This bureaucratic overreach constrains innovation and the efficient functioning of the economy, ultimately weakening the society's overall prosperity and stability.

Ibn Khaldûn's work is interdisciplinary, incorporating insights from sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science. The Western need to pigeonhole Ibn Khaldûn in familiar terms led scholars of the past to compare him to Machiavelli, Durkheim, Montesquieu, G. Tarde, Darwin, Hegel, Marx, V. Pareto, T. Buckle and F.J. Turner. (Simon 1999: 13) He is also considered a fore-

runner in economics. Mufti (2009) explores his views on warfare and *Realpolitik*.

Regarding Ibn Khaldûn's intellectual legacy from a decolonizing perspective, Sehlikoglu (2024) criticizes the selective genealogy of Western scholarship (for anthropology), which often overlooks the contributions of classical Arab scholarship from 400 BCE to the 1500s. Despite his groundbreaking theories, Ibn Khaldûn faced criticism and misunderstanding from his contemporaries, limiting his immediate impact. The social sciences were undeveloped in his time, and Eurocentric biases favored European scholars. His work gained recognition only after European scholars revisited it in the nineteenth century, and early translations focused more on the historical narratives than his theoretical insights, further delaying his recognition.

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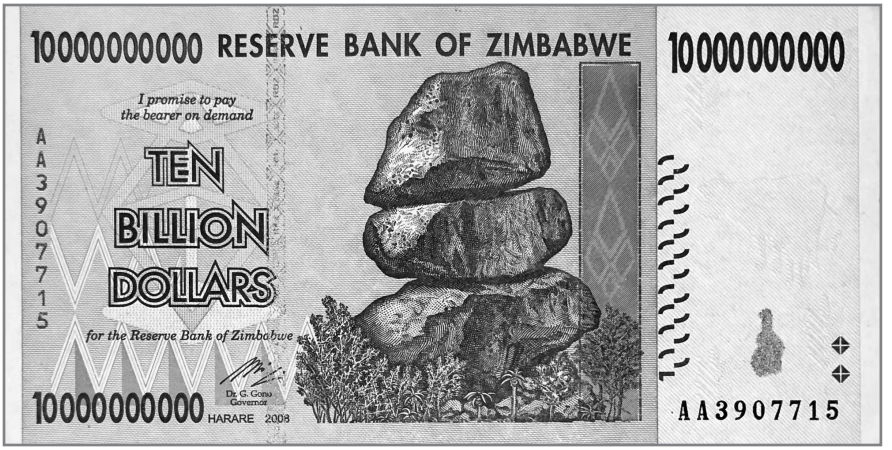
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SECTION 7
PERFORMANCE



10,000,000,000 Dollars, Zimbabwe (2008), a symbol and symptom of the extreme hyperinflation.



Academic Freedom in Authoritarian Regimes

Speech is a straw from the roof. Once you pull it out, you cannot return it.
– Mossi proverb

We are living in an era of **autocratization**, with many human rights being infringed upon. In particular, academic freedom, which is key to intellectual inquiry, research and progress, faces significant challenges in authoritarian regimes around the world and, in some cases, in democracies that are dependent on students and funding from autocratizing regimes. Academic freedom constitutes the pursuit of knowledge without controls, alongside the ability to think, write, and speak critically and honestly about all subjects, no matter how controversial.

In most authoritarian regimes, academics face some sort of state **censorship** and ideological control. These are a combination of structural, channeling forms of **repression**, often combined with some exemplary persecutions of known scholars (targeted, coercive repression) to intimidate the academic community. Due to the nature of academia and its inherent hierarchy, dictatorships can establish a national culture of collective self-censorship through a combination of direct and indirect pressures that lead scholars to avoid certain topics or viewpoints. Such pressures are: fear of repercussions, institutional pressure, **propaganda** and ideological control (foremost in **ideocracies**), an **education** and career marked by **indoctrination**, social and professional norms (peer pressure and fear of academic ostracism), lack of access to objective and quality sources (as a result of media censorship and **disinformation**).

The state can regulate the curricula and determine what topics can be researched and where research can be published. For example, few Russian scholars publish in international publications – and these publications are overwhelmingly restricted to the natural sciences (Dubrovskiy & Beecher 2019). Those who fail to comply with the state's objectives may face punitive measures or various forms of intimidation and roadblocks to researching freely. After the Soviet Union collapsed, so did funding for universities, meaning that some academics and institutions welcomed back some state control if it meant adequate funding (Dubrovskiy & Beecher 2019). One study, drawing from over 500 Chinese scholars, found that nine percent have been invited to meetings with their authorities, and 26 percent have been denied access to important research (Greitens & Truex 2020).

Typically, the most controversial subject is any criticism of the central government. While critiques of local governments might be tolerated, attacks on the competence and success of an incumbent central government are discouraged and even banned. Academics may face harassment, intimidation and imprisonment for researching and discussing topics that are deemed to be too politically sensitive by the regime. In the backdrop of surveillance and suspicion, many in the academic community will engage in self-censorship, not wanting to risk persecution. In Hong Kong, after the National Security Law was passed, universities faced tremendous repression – trying to cleanse universities of anything that was deemed hostile to the new order. Students were disciplined, and faculty were monitored (Baehr 2022). Hungarian academics faced a witch-hunt as anyone accused of indoctrinating students with a liberal agenda faced repercussions (Tóth 2019).

Turkey has had a long history of censoring academics, such as after Atatürk implemented reforms in 1933 – leading to the dismissal of almost 100 academics from Istanbul University – Turkish academics have been advised not to study Turkish politics or to avoid criticizing the government. After a military **coup** in 1960, 147 academics were excluded from Turkish universities (Doğan & Selenica 2022). Academic freedom has been infringed upon more seriously since 2014 when the government started to privatize many universities and secondary schools. Since this period, the government, under the *Justice and Development Party* (AKP), has become more involved in censoring and controlling academics. The Turkish government can also easily intervene in determining the curricula, and the heads of departments are forced to warn their colleagues not to discuss sensitive topics in class (Taştan et al. 2020). In the Soviet Union almost all disciplines were closely monitored, including the natural sciences, since they were associated with military production.

In addition to close monitoring, the state may also encourage the dissemination of narratives that serve the objectives of the state. The state can demand greater levels of ideological conformity, using universities as tools for spreading pro-regime **propaganda** or official narratives that are sanctioned by the regime. In some cases, the state tries to promote its agenda through universities in other countries. Russia infiltrates universities by opening up branches of Russian universities in 'Slavic universities,' which have the objective of exerting their influence through education (Dubrovskiy & Beecher 2019).

In some cases, the state exercises control over university appointments, promotions and funding, which undermines university autonomy. In Hungary's higher education, the government has taken over the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, destroyed its independence and reorganized it to place it under direct oversight by the government (Halmai 2019). Universities also faced pressure to align their curricula with state propaganda (Laczó 2020).

Censorship also limits international exchanges and genuine cross-cultural dialogue. In the case of Turkey, outwardly, the government encourages academics to gain experience abroad, but once they attempt to do so, their motives are questioned. Any criticism of the government is considered to be a criticism of Turkey (Doğan & Selenica 2022). Beijing

also has deterred large numbers of academics from researching China. Though China rarely denies visiting academic visas, they tend to delay them until the very end. If granted the visa, academics in China then face constant surveillance, forcing academics to guess what the rules are and exercise caution (Tifert 2020). A Japanese historian was arrested in China after being accused of collecting inappropriate historical materials, which supposedly were purchased at a bookstore (Tifert 2020). There are still very low numbers of international students from Western democracies studying in Russia, a number that has plummeted since the invasion of Ukraine. Ironically, the number of international students from authoritarian regimes like Kazakhstan, China, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Egypt, and Belarus has increased (ICEF Monitor 2023).

In extreme cases, many academics may feel forced to flee their home countries rather than face limited career opportunities and risks to their own security. This brain drain then deprives these countries of valuable research and free transfer of important findings, leading to intellectual stagnation. Iran has seen a huge increase in elite migration – or a brain drain, with over 56,000 students and academics fleeing in 2018 (Vakili & Mobini 2023).

As with any move toward **repression**, there is often a thrust to resist and provide spaces for free expression. Educators and students in authoritarian regimes continue to resist censorship and defend academic freedom, usually through secret networks and various forms of digital activism and grassroots movements (Reichman 2019). Resistance to academic censorship is particularly important for a host of reasons. Academic censorship deters the free exchange of ideas, which is crucial for innovation and creativity, making it nearly impossible to address the complex challenges facing society. In addition, it affects a state's ability to manage crises effectively, cf. **disease management** and **disaster management**.

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Arms Trafficking

From my cold, dead hands!
(A defiant statement against gun control in the US, while lifting a rifle)
– Charlton Heston, actor and then-president of the *National Rifle Association* (NRA)

The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded.
– Ban Ki-moon, former UN Secretary-General

Arms trafficking, or gunrunning, refers to the *"sale and/or distribution of military matériel in violation of national and international law or binding international conventions and agreements"* (Feinstein & Holden 2014: 446). One approach to understanding this phenomenon treats it as a transnational crime subject to prosecution. Criminological literature, such as the work of Mackenzie (2020), examines arms trafficking through organized crime and mafia structures, focusing on procedural and technical aspects of enforcement and regulation.

A second approach views arms trafficking as a political and social phenomenon involving a wide range of actors and with a potentially profound impact on global security and stability. This perspective examines how illicit arms trafficking fuels violence, conflicts, and crime worldwide, undermining societal safety and state authority. The availability of illicit arms intensifies conflicts, increases homicide rates, and empowers insurgent and terrorist groups, posing serious risks to both national and international stability.

The issue is not just confined to autocracy: *"The five states profiting most from the trade are the five permanent members of the Security Council, those that once were appointed to, in accordance with the UN-Charter, maintain peace and security."* (Henrikson 2007)



DEFINITION Arms trafficking refers to the illicit trade and unauthorized distribution of weapons and military equipment, often across national borders. It plays a significant role in destabilizing regions, fueling conflicts, empowering non-state actors such as insurgent groups or terrorist organizations, and undermining state sovereignty (Langlois et al. 2022). Arms trafficking is a global security issue influenced by weak governance, **systemic corruption**, geopolitical interests, and the proliferation of conflicts. It also raises challenges in international relations and law enforcement as states and organizations work to combat its impact on regional stability and global peace. Arms trafficking is complex and involves a host of actors ranging from the individual rogue seller and buyer to intermediaries, transnational networks, states, and corporate organizations, sometimes with the complicity of third, fourth, and even fifth parties that facilitate the movement of arms (Rothe & Rose 2011: 2; Rothe & Collins 2011).

SEE ALSO The arms trade is one of the most **corruption**-prone trades linking the developed and developing worlds and thus goes beyond **authoritarian collaboration,** and the illegal circumvention of embargoes and **sanctions**, as defense industries in **democracies** are key players in this global trade pervaded by large transnational networks of **systemic corruption** linking actors at international, national and sub-national levels.

CLASSIFICATION If we speak about arms trafficking, we mostly use the term with the connection of 'small arms and light weapons' (SALW). We work with this term in accordance with the UN report from the *Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms* (UN 1997), which refers to them as: (i) *small arms:* revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns; (ii) *light weapons:* heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable anti-tank missile and rocket launchers, portable anti-aircraft missile launchers, and mortars of less than 100 mm caliber; (iii) *ammunition and explosives:* cartridges (rounds) for small arms; shells and missiles for light weapons; mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action antiaircraft and anti-tank systems; anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades; land mines; explosives (Greene & Marsh 2012: 5).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The issue of arms smuggling must be seen in the broader context of global connectivity. For instance, Grip (2015) argued that the origins and effects of Africa's internal conflicts are deeply rooted in colonialism, the subsequent processes of decolonization and state formation, as well as the resulting challenges of nation-building. Before the colonial era, societies primarily relied on their own arms production and relatively limited imports. However, colonialism introduced new, more advanced weaponry, which European powers used to subjugate and dominate these regions. According to Grant (2015: 71), arms trafficking began in the sixteenth century, and the current situation reflects an acceleration and quantitative expansion of much older patterns.

The modern African state was shaped by colonial powers, who carved it out of diverse ethnic and regional groups, creating inherent conflicts due to severe imbalances in power relations and the unequal distribution of national wealth and development opportunities (Cohen 1995: 11, cited in Achankeng 2013: 13). Achankeng (2013: 15) argues, *"the concern of the colonial masters at independence and beyond, for the most part, was to hand power to a group of cronies whose mission was always not to 'govern their people well' but to protect the interest of the metropole."*

Moreover, the phenomenon of arms trafficking until now has been strongly modeled by the Cold War, when arms supplies became an effective tool for competition between newly emerging states and for suppressing internal opposition. Millions of light arms – lightweight, highly portable, and devastatingly effective in the hands of even young or poorly trained users – were shipped to Africa during the Cold War to equip anti-colonial fighters, newly independent states and superpower proxy forces alike. Arms trafficking is thus very much an indirect result of previous waves of ideological **regime promotion**.

The recent decades are notable for two main reasons. First, there has been an ongoing proliferation of arms through illegal channels originating from state arsenals. This trend includes the distribution of weapons from post-Soviet states in the 1990s, as well as from failed or failing states such as Somalia, Libya, Yemen, and Sudan. Second, there is an evident shortfall in policies controlling the use, storage, and eventual decommissioning of weapons by end-users. This is particularly apparent in regions where arms deliveries to the Middle East and Latin America have fueled instability due to inadequate oversight and end-user accountability.

LITERATURE Although there is an ongoing debate about arms trafficking as a global phenomenon, surprisingly, there is little specific academic debate and research into illicit arms trafficking (see Marsh 2018; Marsh & Pinson 2021). The majority of publications and discussions take place outside the academic journals and are mostly published as reports or policy papers (*Small Arms Survey,* UN and its agencies, *Interpol, Transparency International, Amnesty International, Conflict Armament Research,* SIPRI). However, they primarily focus on describing rather specific illicit flows and regional case studies (see Strazzani & Zampagni 2018; Marsh 2017; Schroeder & Lamb 2006; Esparza et al. 2021) without explicit engagement in building theories or stimulating broader academic debates. Therefore, the absolute majority of the existing research comprises case studies and data collection efforts that are fragmented geographically, temporally, and methodologically. In the whole body of literature on illicit arms trafficking, there is consensus on the negative and harming/destroying impact of them on societies and regimes; however, the mechanisms behind this impact are not yet satisfactorily theorized.

The international arms trade is widely recognized as one of the most corruption-prone sectors of global

commerce, with **corruption** being almost ubiquitous in certain areas, such as major weapons systems. This is due to several factors, including the high financial stakes involved, the technical complexity of deals, and the secrecy surrounding national security matters. These conditions create ample opportunities for bribes to be concealed within complex financial transactions and offset agreements, making detection and prosecution particularly difficult.

Corruption in the arms trade is not confined to authoritarian regimes or developing countries; it is equally prevalent in developed democracies. In fact, many of the world's largest arms producers – such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom – are also some of the most frequent exporters to authoritarian regimes and developing nations. The political importance of maintaining a robust defense industry often shields companies from meaningful legal consequences for corrupt practices. Exporter governments are often reluctant to prosecute their national defense champions, even when investigations uncover wrongdoing. As a result, even when companies are penalized for corruption, they tend to receive relatively light treatment (Perlo-Freeman 2018; 2020; Henrikson 2007).

Systemic corruption in the arms trade goes beyond individual or corporate greed. On the seller's side, it is often an element of industrial defense policy. Countries seek to maintain advanced technological capabilities in the face of limited domestic demand and intense international competition. Corruption helps secure contracts in a crowded market where many nations are vying for a small number of major deals. On the buyer's side, particularly in less developed countries, arms trade corruption serves as a means of securing political finance for senior politicians involved in decision-making. The proceeds from corrupt deals often fund political parties, election campaigns, and **patronage** networks, embedding corruption deeply within political systems (Perlo-Freeman 2018; 2020; Henrikson 2007).

MEASUREMENT The arms (legal and illegal) market globally is astronomical, with the purely illegal market accounting for only a fraction of the production and trade in arms. Therefore, it is difficult to measure it and provide valid data. According to the SIPRI, the estimate of the financial value of the global arms trade for, 2020 was at least 112 billion USD, but the true figure is likely to be higher (SIPRI 2024a). According to the SIPRI database, military expenditures of states in 2023 amounted to 2,443.37 billion USD, and the total annual export of arms in 2023 was 29.104 billion USD (SIPRI 2024b), and total exports of arms between 2014-2023 reached 284,718 billion USD. In the period 2004-2013, it was 253,295 billion USD in total (SIPRI 2024c).

If we are to measure the number of illicit arms, we need to first come to the classification of the arms trade. According to Marsh and Pinson (2021: 216), there are four categories of markets according to the legality of the transactions: *authorized trade,* fully in compliance with national and international laws and regulations; *semi-legal trade* in which different aspects of a transfer may be authorized or unauthorized; *state-sanctioned illicit trade* involves direct complicity of government officials who have political approval for their actions; and *wholly illicit trade when* all aspects of an arms transfer are unlawful.

Arms trafficking can be categorized by scale: large-scale and lower-scale activities. *Large-scale* trafficking involves organized networks transporting shipments of hundreds of tons of arms across borders, often bypassing multiple national law enforcement agencies. This type of trafficking typically supplies arms to groups engaged in armed conflicts, including both state and non-state actors, as well as to destinations under embargo (UNODC 2015).

On the contrary, according to *UN Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC 2015), an important source of illicit trafficking in firearms occurs on a *small scale* and involves unsophisticated methods (called 'ant-trafficking'), such as a few handguns being smuggled across a border, often by car or in buses, with a low number of actors involved. Its purpose is to discreetly move small quantities of weapons across borders, often through 'straw purchases,' targeting localized demands and organized trade while evading detection by law enforcement (Lemus 2024). A straw purchase is a transaction in which one person (the straw purchaser) buys a product, such as a firearm, on behalf of another individual who is either unable (e.g., has a criminal record) or unwilling to make the purchase.

The problem of illegal trade in arms and ammunition is particularly confronted with a fundamental lack of data and statistics or with largely inaccurate data (see Esparza et al. 2021). Several organizations, led by the UNODC or *United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs* (UNODA), are involved in providing data on the legal and illegal arms trade, including organizations such as the *Small Arms Survey,* which maps regional and sub-regional dynamics of the trade and small arms.

Marsh and McDougal (2021) describe two metrics by which this illicit trade could be measured – the first is an assessment of the quantity of weapons seized by security forces, and the second is an assessment of quantity based on the change in price in the 'market' (Marsh & McDougal 2021: 382). In general, the market price of illegal guns is quite flexible, with a much higher price compared to legal or government purchases of guns (Marsh 2023: 219).

Measuring the level of **corruption** in the arms trade **i**s obviously a daunting task, exacerbated by several well-established practices in the legal safeguarding **informality** in their implementation. In particular, the following practices open the door to **systemic corruption**:

Secrecy – Justified by national security concerns, it is difficult to scrutinize contracts or detect corrupt activities. This lack of transparency allows bribes or illicit payments to be concealed within complex financial arrangements, reducing oversight from both governments and civil society.

Defense procurement is particularly vulnerable to corruption at every stage – from tendering to contract execution: non-competitive bidding processes, falsified post-award documentation, and bribery of



officials responsible for testing equipment are common issues that permeate the trade.

The role of *offsets* – compensatory trade agreements, where arms exporters agree to invest or provide economic benefits to the buyer country (e.g., co-production, technology transfer, investment in local industries, or training programs) – further complicates anti-corruption efforts. Offsets provide a layer of distance between the exporting company and the corrupt benefits received by officials in recipient countries. This makes it even harder to detect and prosecute corruption compared to direct bribes (Perlo-Freeman 2018; 2020).

The role of *commissions* or *de facto* 'legal bribes' – here, Roeber (2005: 8) gives a gloves-off definition: *"'Commissions' is the preferred euphemism for 'bribes.' Companies pay commissions (innocently) to middlemen who pay bribes (wickedly) to the men of influence. It is a handy formulation because it allows companies to bribe while claiming ignorance of what the middleman was doing."*

METHODOLOGY The characteristics of the illicit arms trade are specific compared to other illicit activities at this level. Marsh and Pinson (2021) describe a key difference in arms trafficking in comparison to other illicit goods trade. According to them, *"arms trafficking usually involves comparatively little money and few individuals or groups are involved as purchasers or traffickers. Nevertheless, arms trafficking can have a profound political and societal impact when groups involved in political violence or organized crime obtain weapons."* (Marsh & Pinson 2021: 213).

Regional conflicts, local demand, and the effectiveness of governance significantly influence the trafficking process (SaferWorld 2012). As noted by Esparza et al. (2021), arms trafficking is not only a product of supply and demand dynamics but also deeply entwined with regional and local socioeconomic conditions and conflicts. It would also be misleading to think about the effects of trafficking arms only with regard to the developing countries with internal conflicts where the supply chain with illicit arms is providing weapons to both sides of the conflict. There is a whole body of literature focusing on the impact of illicit guns on stable states and societies (e.g., US and EU countries).

Greene and Marsh (2012) present two implicit theories aimed at conceptualizing how illegal weapons impact the agency of weak or failing states, often linked to issues of **state fragility & failure**. The first theory aligns with the argument from Boutwell and Klare (1999) that the global abundance of SALW fosters conflict in weak, divided societies (see also Krause 2017). This perspective suggests that the availability of weapons, facilitated by trafficking, is a primary driver of conflict and violent unrest. Similarly, Marsh and Pinson (2021: 215-216) observe that arms enable opportunities for violence, whether acted upon or not, and that arms trafficking typically serves as an unseen but necessary condition for armed conflict and organized crime.

This thesis has faced substantial criticism, particularly for underestimating other drivers of violence and for overlooking the persistent complexities involved in acquiring illegal weapons (Bourne 2007; Marsh 2007). While this approach argues that the availability of both legal and illegal arms, along with the logistics of arms supply, play a significant role in fueling conflicts (Marsh 2020; Bourne 2007; Hartung 2001; Sule et al. 2020), these factors must be understood within specific regional, political, and societal contexts (Bourne 2013).

Authoritarian regimes often use arms trafficking to maintain power by strengthening security forces and suppressing opposition. By supplying illicit arms to the military, police, and paramilitary groups, they ensure these forces are well-equipped to quash dissent and protests. This strategy allows regimes like those in Syria or Yemen (Houthis) to bypass international arms embargoes and continue acquiring weapons through black markets. The MENA region has been prominent for arms trafficking since the beginning of the Cold War. Isolated by sanctions, they prioritize regime survival over legal norms, fostering an environment where arms trafficking thrives. This not only stabilizes the regime internally and increases violence against civilians (Jadoon & Early 2024) but also destabilizes regional and global security frameworks.

Some authoritarian regimes actively engage in arms trafficking not just to acquire weapons but also as a source of revenue and for extending and cementing their influence. Of special concern are collapsed states where (ousted) regimes have lost control over their stocks of arms (SALW or even heavy weapons). Such states can become proliferation hubs for illicit arms, and not only for their immediate neighbors since such weapons are being trafficked globally. Post-Qaddafi's Libya, boasting enormous stockpiles acquired with oil profits, has often been labeled as a 'TESCO for terrorists' (Strazzari & Tholens 2014)

One can also witness many cases of **authoritarian collaboration** regarding arms trafficking to bypass international **sanctions**, support allied groups, and consolidate their power through shared resources and logistics. (Thachuk & Saunders 2014) For instance, countries like Iran, Syria, and, historically, Libya have set up extensive distribution networks, leveraging existing **corruption** and smuggling infrastructures. This enables them to supply weapons to their military and paramilitary units, as well as allied groups in conflict zones such as the Yemen Civil War or the Syrian conflict. Similarly, we see collaboration among the plethora of actors in Sahel countries, notably Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, especially the cooperation among state-backed militias and criminal organizations linked to governmental officials (see: Mercado 2022; UNODC 2020; Marsh 2017).

Similarly, one can observe a series of collaborations at the *semi-legal trade* or *state-sanctioned illicit trade* levels, which are conducted among Russia, North Korea and Iran (see Dolzikova & Salisbury 2022) where these countries under sanctions and arms embargoes have established mutually beneficial partnerships. The special case was the involvement of the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company, in the purchases of weapons from North

Korea. The Wagner Group also played a significant role in semi-legal trading arms from Russia to Mali, and (after the Russian invasion of Ukraine) once Russia came under (additional) international **sanctions**, there were attempts to traffic arms from Mali back to Russia (Africa Defence Forum 2023).

Arms trafficking is driven by transnational criminal networks involving a wide range of actors, from corrupt military officers and high-ranking politicians to local gangs and **warlords**. These networks, tolerated by some regimes, also engage private companies and local communities seeking income. However, in many countries we may label as fragile states, state apparatuses cannot monitor and control stockpiles of small arms and ammunition that have been sold, rented out, or otherwise transferred directly by soldiers, police, and other security sector personnel from their arsenals and from government stockpiles to criminal groups and other non-state armed groups (Danssaert & Wood 2017; Wood & Danssaert 2021).

The state-organized and state-tolerated nature of arms trafficking is described by Feinstein & Holden (2014). They identified many cases when a variety of agents in the state apparatuses are directly or vicariously involved in arms trafficking. According to *Europol*, arms trafficking is often a secondary source of income for these groups, who leverage contacts and routes from other criminal activities to smuggle weapons. There are pieces of evidence from Eastern Europe or Latin America. The post-Soviet era saw the emergence of large stockpiles of military-grade weapons, which organized crime groups have trafficked into Western Europe and the Middle East (Marsh 2015). In Latin America, drug cartels, especially in Mexico and Colombia, are heavily involved in arms trafficking. The US-Mexico border is a notable hotspot for the flow of firearms trafficked from the United States into Mexico (Lemus 2024; McDougal et al. 2015).

IMPACT ON POLICY Arms trafficking has become a prominent topic in international forums, engaging not only academia but also global and regional policymakers. Efforts to monitor, regulate, and eliminate the illicit arms market have led to the establishment of treaties and organizations dedicated to addressing this issue.

The *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT), adopted by the United Nations in 2013, aims to set the highest standards for regulating the international trade of conventional arms while working to prevent and eliminate illegal trade and diversion. Currently, the ATT has been fully ratified by 115 nations, including China, EU member states, Canada, and Brazil, while another 27 countries, such as the United States, Ukraine, and Turkey, have signed but not ratified the treaty. The treaty has also inspired regional initiatives, like those in ECOWAS, that align with ATT principles.

In addition, the *United Nations Programme of Action* (UNPoA) addresses the illegal trade of SALW, detailing preventive and combative measures. Complementing this, the *International Tracing Instrument* (ITI) provides a framework for marking, record-keeping, and tracing illicit small arms, which aligns with the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The EU contributes through its stringent gun regulations and coordinated law enforcement, which have curbed arms trafficking across member states, though challenges persist, particularly along the Balkan route (Killicoat 2007).

Although there are continuous efforts to monitor and control arms trafficking, there are still huge obstacles that complicate the reach of positive outcomes and solutions. In that light, Simone Wisotzki (2021) identifies three key (i-iii) problematic factors preventing the adoption of more effective steps against illicit SALW proliferation. She identifies these problematic aspects:

The *lack of a unified global consensus* (i) on how to regulate arms trade and trafficking. Normative gaps arise from differences in national priorities and interpretations of international agreements. Countries often have conflicting views on the role of arms in national security, **human rights**, and sovereignty. We should also not underestimate objective factors like differences in national laws and the capacity of states to enforce regulations that result in uneven implementation.

Weak monitoring and enforcement mechanisms (ii) – many regions, particularly in the Global South, suffer from weak institutional capacity to monitor and enforce arms control regulations. It goes hand in hand with the increasing sophistication of arms manufacturing and trafficking methods, which complicates efforts to track and control illicit flows.

Illicit financial networks and corruption (iii) – arms trafficking is closely linked to other forms of transnational crime, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering. Traffickers often exploit complex financial networks, corruption within governments, and conflict zones to move arms across borders undetected.

NGOs and many like-minded states demonstrated that the lack of control and the vast illicit proliferation of SALW have led to a protracted humanitarian crisis affecting states and populations alike. While the UNPoA's standards and rules are broad, significant unregulated loopholes remain, such as ammunition, civilian possession, and non-state actors. Verification provisions are also weak, and states are less and less willing to fulfill their basic reporting obligations. Global solutions, such as the UNPoA, suffer from serious problems, such as the discrepancy between the documents of conferences and practical implementation measures (Wisotzki & Kuhn 2021).

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Authoritarian Regionalism

Vires in Numeris
(Strength in numbers)
– Latin saying

Authoritarian or autocratic regionalism is broadly defined as a situation *"where illiberal or similarly restrictive governments undertake a process of economic integration amongst each other"* (Dragneva & Hartwell 2022: 95) or as regional organizations *"established by non-democratic states or at least centered on a non-democratic state"* (Libman & Obydenkova 2019: 2).

DEFINITION The notion of authoritarian regionalism is closely related to the literature on sociology in circulation or the diffusion of norms and practices on international and regional scales (cf. **authoritarian learning** and **authoritarian diffusion**), including through interstate organizations (cf. **authoritarian collaboration**). Given that a social system, including a political system, does not exist in hermetic space, it thus cannot totally neglect its environment and, as a result, reacts to its messages and generates "responses to the needs and supports coming from the environment" (Luhmann 1991). Several diffusion mechanisms can be distinguished, for example, adaptation to altered conditions where *"the policy decisions of one government alter the conditions under which other governments base their decisions" and diffusion via learning which "concerns the exchange of information (…), including [that on] the benefits and drawbacks of adoption"* (Elkins & Simmons 2005: 39).

In this connection, A. Cooley describes the 'new authoritarian regionalism,' as opposed to the one developed in the wake of the Cold War and believed to assist democratic consolidation, as the *"agreements and treaties that some regional organizations have been forging" that imply "creating legal frameworks that could serve to institutionalize authoritarian and anticonstitutional practices."* (Cooley 2015: 56) Alternatively, some political scientists refer to the 'illiberal regionalism' defined as *"regional interactions in which a focus on the role of shared ideas, norms, and beliefs provides a framework for some limited regional cooperation within a common discourse that is sharply at odds with the liberal norms that underpin most Western theories of regionalism"* (Lewis 2018: 119). Indeed, if the institutional dimension of authoritarian regionalism is generally recognized as inherent to it, this phenomenon can also be viewed as a process and not just an outcome, where *"ideas, practices and structures spread from one social system to another,"* thus being 'transmitted,' 'dispersed' or 'disseminated' (Ambrosio 2010: 378).

SEE ALSO Depending on the focus on norms and values or the level of institutionalized cooperation, the literature on authoritarian regionalism overlaps with **authoritarian diffusion** and **authoritarian learning** on one side or with more formalized **authoritarian collaboration**, respectively.

ORIGINS The first attempts in this sense were made mostly to explore the diffusion of democratic norms and practices (e.g., O'Loughlin et al. 1998; Pevehouse 2002) based on a contagion effect. It was conditioned by the so-called third wave of democratization, which swooped over Latin America (Huntington 1991) and, later on, by the development of the European integration project. However, in the face of what is described as a 'democratic recession' (Diamond 2015) or 'democratic backsliding' (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018), a set of literature on **authoritarian diffusion** appeared – see also: **autocratization**.

KEY LITERATURE Studies on authoritarian regionalism offer new insight into the interconnection between states' cooperation (**authoritarian collaboration**), especially in its institutionalized form and their political regimes, thus linking International Relations (IR) research and political theory which had been 'divorced' on the grounds that *"what 'is' in the world and what 'ought to be' are very different and must be kept separate"* (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998: 916).

The specialized IR literature on regionalism transformed significantly to capture and explain the behavior of authoritarian states – moving away from the formal benchmarks of 'institutional integration' (derived from successful trajectories of democratic regional integration) to informal explanations and redefining 'functionality' according to autocratic logic instead of taking 'efficiency' at (Western-centric) face value.

In addition, question the rationale of non-democratic international organizations by apprehending differently their efficiency. In this light, authoritarian regionalism can represent a form of 'shadow regionalism' (Söderbaum 2012: 60) or 'virtual regionalism' characterized by a lack of substance and only occasional or partial implementation of their agreements (Allison 2008: 185), it in fact serves different purposes. Thus, some political scientists suggest that authoritarian regionalism has a specific nature that makes it different from democratic regionalism. Though some parallels can be drawn between democratic and authoritarian regionalism, they do not mirror each other, as authoritarian regionalism "has delivered mixed results when compared with its democratic counterparts" (Russo & Stoddard 2018: 20). For example, Libman and Obydenkova (2019) point out the existence of "possible mechanisms of political impact" which can "potentially be used as tools for promoting or, at the very least, stabilizing authoritarian government," such as **election** monitoring activities, legitimization through participation, socialization of political elites, as well as the redistribution of resources from one authoritarian state to another. Alternatively, Russo and Stoddard (2018) demonstrate that authoritarian regionalism



can serve as a regime-boosting mechanism by fulfilling four functions, namely (i) the emulation of legitimate (or perceived as such) international practices, (ii) the creation of legitimizing *façade* mechanisms, (iii) the delegitimization of Western norms and the proliferation of alternative values, (iv) as well as material support. Allison (2008) emphasizes the 'protective integration function' based on his analysis of various regional structures in Central Asia.

EXAMPLES Authoritarian regionalism framework has been widely used to analyze regional cooperation in the broad Eurasian region where such organizations as the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (SCO), the *Eurasian Economic Union* (EAEU) or the *Organization of Turkic States* (OTS) have emerged in the past twenty years. For example, Costa Buranelli (2020: 1008) writes that *"the Central Asian leaders, by looking at each other's experiences, prolonged their rule via constitutional referenda, have bestowed on themselves honorific titles to entrench their absolute power, have increased pressure on domestic society when conflict occurred in a neighboring country, and have seen in Russia a legitimate source of some repressive domestic laws."* Similarly, Collins (2009) establishes a connection between **patrimonialism** and regionalism and explains how *"security regionalism, some regional organisations progress [in Central Asia] because they bolster patrimonial regimes, with negative consequences for democracy"* (Collins 2009: 249).

MEASUREMENT Most research conducted on authoritarian regionalism is based on qualitative methods, and the researchers frequently raise the question of its measurability. In this perspective, the study by Libman & Obydenkova (2019) is based on both qualitative and quantitative analysis, the latter referring to a large dataset of all regional organizations worldwide, though the authors recognize the limitations of interpreting their results as causal evidence (Libman & Obydenkova 2019: 63). Goldring and Greitens (2020: 320) also mention *"the absence of rigorous measurement and testing of those mechanisms, combined with the frequent use of geography to operationalize diffusion arguments."*

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES In spite of the apparent attractiveness in the context of the recent expansion of non-democratic regional organizations, this theoretical framework encounters some fundamental problems. If it seems to be successful in describing how authoritarian regionalism works and which mechanisms it uses, causality remains its major weak point. Some research works point out difficulties in measuring the impact of authoritarian regional organizations on their members' political regimes and conclude that there is no automatic cause-effect relationship between them. Thus, Ambrosio (2010: 378, citing Brinks & Coppedge 2006) defends that it is *"often quite difficult to determine exactly when and how this process [authoritarian diffusion] has taken place or to distinguish 'true diffusion from illusions of diffusion created by global trends, correlated disturbances, or the regional clustering of domestic factors.'"* In addition, Goldring and Greitens (2020: 320) put into question the relevance of geographic proximity variable and demonstrate that "both authoritarian breakdown and democratization diffuse along networks defined by similarity in regime type."

S. Hall (2020) observes that *"there has been limited investigation as to whether authoritarian regimes diffuse ideas between each other, or if authoritarian values are an alternative value system to democracy."* He proposes an alternative term to describe the cooperation and political intercommunication between authoritarian states, **authoritarian learning**, the concept that he explores in his recent work, *The Authoritarian International* (2023). Similarly, Costa Buranelli (2020; 2021), applying the IR framework of the English School, refers to 'illiberal solidarity.' The existence of multiple similar terms, referring either to non-democratic and/or authoritarian or to illiberal states' cooperation, reflects the understudied nature of authoritarian regionalism and invites further research on the subject.

REGIONAL VARIATION Various area studies resort to an authoritarian regionalism lens to analyze the proliferation of autocratic practices in their respective regions. These studies continue to question the Western functionalist approach toward regional interstate cooperation and especially toward regional organizations. Among its pioneers, research on Africa shed light on the gap between the purpose of interstate organizations, such as the *Economic Community of West African States* (ECOWAS) or the *South African Development Community*, and their results (Bach 1995: 1028). Later on, this idea was developed further with a focus on how *"regionalist dynamics [in West Africa] have been used to support authoritarian states and create space for hybrid systems of undemocratic rule."* (Stoddard 2017: 2). Also, Fisher and Anderson (2015) explore the interconnection between authoritarianism and the securitization of development in Africa and show how Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda and Chad have to some extent learned from one another by finding leverage in their relations with donors and by successfully imposing their priorities onto the security policies of their Western allies.

Similarly, Laruelle and Peyrouse (2017: 5, 37) look into the link between regional organizations and regime security and defend that *"the success of regional organisations cannot thus be measured solely by the success of integration processes, but sometimes, in a more limited way, by that of dialogue building"* and, in particular, *"as instruments that enable them to consolidate their regime security and promote their national interests."* Due to the emergence of numerous regional organizations led by non-democratic states in that space, Eurasia has been in the spotlight of numerous research works to explore local authoritarian regimes' resilience boosted by authoritarian learning (Ambrosio & Hall 2017), but also to expose the limits of such authoritarian cooperation in this region (Roberts 2017).

A similar critical approach toward evaluating regional cooperation regarding their efficiency has also been practiced by political scientists studying Latin America, drawing attention to the fundamental difference between the supranational model of

European integration and Latin America, where regional cooperation becomes a 'sovereignty-boosting exercise' (Malamud 2022: 237).

In the same vein, attention was drawn to the Middle East and North Africa region in the wake of the **Arab Spring** which provoked 'an authoritarian retrenchment' across the *Gulf Cooperation Council* (GCC) states (Kamrava 2012: 97). In particular, political scientists explored how *"the respective authoritarian regimes all learned in order to adequately react to the challenge of 'late riser' oppositional protests as part of the Arab uprisings"* (Bank & Edel 2015: 22). In this regard, different variables of authoritarian support have been explored, such as 'perceptions of similarity' according to which local regimes decided whether to support other authoritarian regimes and evaluated their implications beyond the domestic political arena (Odinius & Kuntz 2015).

Finally, some comparative studies have contributed to clarify the authoritarian regionalism theoretic approach. Namely, Acharya (2011: 96) put forward the notion of norm subsidiarity, which *"concerns the process whereby local actors develop new rules, offer new understandings of global rules or reaffirm global rules in the regional context"* and offered examples from Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa to highlight such practices. Recently, in addition to the above-mentioned research by Libman & Obydenkova (2019), Debre (2021: 395; 2022) explored the *Southern African Development Community* (SADC), the GCC and the SCO to show how *"regional organization membership can help authoritarian regimes to strengthen domestic survival politics and thereby increase the chances of incumbent survival."*

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Conflict & Authoritarian Regimes

Dictatorships start wars because they need external enemies to exert internal control over their own people
– Richard Perle

The relationship between authoritarian regimes and conflict is complex, encompassing dynamics such as intra-party and intra-elite power struggles, authoritarian succession conflicts, inter-ethnic tensions between central powers and minorities, military confrontations with neighboring countries, and coups.

DEFINITION The relationship between authoritarian regimes and conflict highlights fundamental behavioral patterns in international relations, which have long been central to both academic and political discourse, particularly in the pursuit of universal peace. To what extent is a political regime prone to conflict, whether through engaging in war or managing opposition through armed violence?

SEE ALSO The entry overlaps with the (lack of) constraints on executive power across various regime types, as shown in **foreign policy** and **foreign invasion**. Variations in non-democratic regimes – such as levels of institutionalization and personalization – shape their leaders' **exit options** and threat perceptions, influencing behaviors like **repression** and **coup-proofing** to ensure survival. Hegemonic or ideological motivations for violent **regime promotion** are less frequently theorized.

LITERATURE The conflict proneness of authoritarian states in dyadic relations with other states has been a major source of debate, especially in the light of the *democratic peace* argument (Ishiyama et al. 2008), referring to a theory that democracies are less likely to go to war with each other when compared to other states. Subsequent research has focused on *autocratic* or *dictatorial peace,* suggesting that some internal institutional checks may be able to moderate authoritarian regimes' actions, thus reducing the probability they go to war (Geddes 1999; Peceny & Beer 2002). J. Ishiyama et al. (2008) have drawn on monadic analysis – measuring conflict proneness in terms of who uses violence first – and their findings support that very argument.

Understanding the dynamics of conflicts within authoritarian regimes requires a nuanced examination of internal and external factors shaping their behavior. Internally, the nature of authoritarian rule significantly influences the propensity for civil unrest and rebellion. Externally, while democracies are less prone to initiate wars, non-democracies, particularly **personalist regimes**, exhibit higher belligerence, often using conflicts to distract from internal issues or to maintain power. This part accounts for different regime types and sorts insights from the main literature into four sections: preconditions (A), internal conflicts (B), external conflicts (C), and the effects of conflicts on these different regime types (D).

Preconditions for conflicts (A) Among the factors that influence a dictatorship's propensity to initiate military disputes, variated correlations arise from different forms of authoritarianism. While much emphasis has been put on the degree of **personalization** of the regime in the decision-making process and the presence of a single- or multi-party regime, other approaches focus on the role of authoritarian institutions in ensuring internal constancy, controlling internal opposition and rivals, and overall challenges to authority. When it comes to international conflict, the behavior pattern of authoritarianism also varies widely depending on the regime category. In that context, a primary axis may nonetheless be set to approach this issue, namely the endogenous and exogenous dimensions of the conflict.

Internal conflicts (B) *"In non-democracies, as leaders may not rule with popular consent, domestic disputes may be settled through the use or threat of force, expecting that the opponents will do likewise"* (Macmillan 2003: 237). If, in democratic regimes, dissatisfaction is conducted through the political system, rebellion is rather unlikely; however, under a strict authoritarian regime with the means to repress and deter opposition, the politics of dictators and autocrats are indeed characterized by key instruments to maintain power, such as the use of violence and terror to suppress opposition, or the threat to use terror and war, including civil war (Larres 2022: xxii).

It is thus in semi-authoritarian regimes that higher levels of internal conflict may be found (Hegre et al. 2001). Following this line of reasoning, it is in **totalitarian regimes**, where state terror (Box 3.13) is most prevalent, that the chances of internal rebellion or civil war are most tenuous. One famous example of maximum crackdown is J. Stalin's rule in the Soviet Union, during whose reign millions died either of famine (Box 7.4), political execution, or labor camps, and 160,000 Red Army soldiers were executed by Soviet authorities during World War II for desertion

and the like, which is a figure that overcomes those of Nazi Germany (15,000) and even puzzled Hitler who called him "sick in the brain" (Kuromiya 2022: 7).

Under authoritarian rule, internal conflict may arise in the form of a civil war launched by the **opposition**, often by rebel groups sponsored by foreign parties (Brancati 2014: 317; Regan 2002); as a consequence of mass uprisings, coups, rebellion and revolutions; and/or in the context of regime transition. In **military regimes**, especially, mutinies and collective insubordination can lead to civil war as well (Albrecht & Ohl 2016: 40). Besides **repression** and trampling of **human rights**, the reasons for such grievances are manifold and can result from authoritarian economic **development** (**systemic corruption** and **resource curse**), environmental degradation (**environmentalism**), fraudulent **elections**, etc.

B. Lai and D. Slater (2006) suggest looking more deeply into how institutions in these regimes are deployed to enhance social control. They namely find that **military regimes** are the least effective in mobilizing authoritarian institutions, hence initiating military disputes more easily to manage domestic challenges to their power. Data between 1973 and 2004 confirm that military and multi-party regimes present higher risks of armed conflict as their institutional set-ups appear less resilient to armed challenges to their authority (Fjelde 2010). In this line, military regimes are deemed to be less resistant to internal conflict and even regime change, often experiencing difficulties in controlling popular protests. This may be explained by the weak roots these regimes have in society, as well as their preference for negotiated solutions over total conflict (Geddes 1999; Hadenius & Teorell 2006: 3; Lee 2009). Military regimes are also more likely than single-party autocracies to become involved in civil wars (Fjelde 2010). In any case, the military plays a central role either in the unfolding of the conflict, its response to it, or in its outcome.

The role of the military in leading to internal conflict following mass uprisings is well illustrated by the **Arab Spring** in countries like Syria, Yemen and Libya, where popular unrest was met with strong military responses. H. Albrecht and D. Ohl (2016) point to the centrality of the military's response during domestic unrest as being a determinant of the outcome. Here, influencing factors include, for instance, the military's loyalty or resistance to the regime, ethnic stacking, internal cohesion, its reaction to pressure from the people, the military's identification to conflict dynamics on the ground, and their relationship with demonstrators (Albrecht & Ohl 2016: 42). In the context of the 'Arab' Spring, however, homogeneous militaries in Tunisia and Egypt turned against their respective incumbents, because they perceived the tenure of their incumbents as being on the verge of collapse (cf. lame ducks in Box 3.14) in the face of the mass uprisings, and their loyalties to the regime could only extend so far (Albrecht 2012: 262). This helped to avoid conflict in these cases, which otherwise plagued Syria, Yemen and Libya. On the contrary, Bashar al-Assad's regime has managed to stay in office until 2024 despite the Syrian Civil War unfolding since 2011 and controlled most of the country through brutality against rebels and civilians – massacres, torture, destruction of infrastructure, chemical weapons – resulting in over half a million deaths and 11 million refugees, because the backing by the Syrian Army and the help of Hezbollah, Iran, and Russia (Ma'oz 2022: 250-260).

The authoritarian management of internal armed conflicts has also been a subject of concern in peace and conflict studies. Lewis et al. (2018) denounce how certain military victories, such as in Russia, Sri Lanka, China and Turkey, have been confused with illiberal practices of peace. To the authors, in fact, it reveals a form of wartime and post-conflict order in which violence is central and depends on authoritarian policy responses such as state propaganda, spatial politics and political economy.

External conflicts (C) The dominant thesis regarding the propensity to initiate international conflict is actually relative to democracies. In fact, the *theory of democratic peace* stipulates that democracies rarely and hardly ever initiate war against each other, especially when compared with pairs of non-democracies or mixed dyads (dyadic approach). Also, from a monadic perspective, democracies are less war-prone than any other type of regime (Doyle 1983; Mello 2017). However, this more than established premise has come to be treated with some nuance, in a shift to the view that liberal states are also more peace-prone in relations with non-liberal states than generally thought, highlighting the lack of exploration and comprehension of the liberal/non-liberal relationship (Macmillan 2003: 241). The consensus remains that non-democracies initiate more violent crises than democracies (Rioux 1998; Rousseau et al. 1996; Schultz 2001).

These same factors contributing to the variation of authoritarian regimes' belligerence involve, for example, how **foreign policy** decisions are made, the presence of domestic accountability mechanisms, the types of authoritarian regimes involved in a dispute, the importance of military officers in the authoritarian regime; the role of specific political institutions and their respective strength; or the individual features of leaders.

Though it may seem counterintuitive, there are some mechanisms of accountability in dictatorships. This depends, to some extent, on the concept of a 'domestic audience,' which may comprise an elite group the leader relies on to stay in power (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 149). In authoritarian regimes, audience costs (cf. Box 7.1) are an important variable for understanding conflict patterns. According to J. Fearon's theory (1994), audience costs arise from domestic audiences' concern with the leadership's success in foreign policy. They are, for example, the costs leaders pay when they issue threats publicly, depending on their credibility and the consequences generated by those threats. In authoritarian regimes, typically, those costs are lower because authoritarian leaders are not held accountable by their citizens for their provocative statements, poor choices or incoherence. On the contrary, threats made in such



contexts are not usually backed down. Disputes initiated by dictatorships tend to be reciprocated, and conflict ends up escalating (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 147-148). Here, accountability may also be considered when deciding to get involved in war. According to J. Weeks (2012), in civilian regimes endowed with some form of domestic audience, such as a powerful elite, leaders may be held accountable for their foreign policy decisions, which makes them no more belligerent than democracies overall. On the contrary, in regimes with a predominantly military audience, the reliance on the use of force tends to prevail as a necessary and appropriate means to respond to disputes (Weeks 2012: 327).

Domestic institutions' roles are also to be considered in constraining the decisions to initiate international military disputes. Domestic audiences, namely, though they might be smaller than in democracies, often exist in autocracies as well and have the power to punish or reward the leader's foreign policy decision. The relative power of domestic audiences is what defines the leaders' actions as being more or less free of constraints. Generally, the more personalist the regime, the less powerful the domestic audience because the leader alone controls the state's instruments and selects loyal uncritical regime insiders who will impeach the organization of any constraining domestic audience (cf. North Korea under the Kims, Libya under Qaddafi). Conversely, non-personalist or party-based autocracies may have powerful audiences able to punish their leaders in the face of incompetence, as their loyalty is much more defined by ideological values rather than individual incumbencies (Weeks 2012: 329-330).

From the perspective of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), looking into decision-making processes is key to understanding how authoritarian regimes may engage in conflict. Poliheuristic theory by B. Kinne (2005), for instance, suggests that leaders have to manage different layers of complex information and use shortcuts in doing so because the amount of reliable information-gathering available to them makes it overwhelmingly difficult to make critical decisions. As a consequence, leaders will tend to prioritize their political concerns by producing positive outcomes domestically, as other more problematic repercussions, such as economic or diplomatic issues, will tend to come thereafter (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 150). This may be illustrated by personalist dictator Saddam Hussein's decision to stay in Kuwait in 1991, even after US president George H.W. Bush's ultimatum to retreat (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 151-152), eventually leading to the Gulf War (1990-1991).

As in other regimes, the rational calculus of costs and benefits also applies in authoritarian regimes, even if these depend on subjective perceptions of success and failure. Typically, while the costs of fighting are deliberated in material and moral terms, especially by audiences, the costs of defeat may represent the ultimate mistake of losing military and economic resources and projecting an image of military weakness. As for the benefits, these are weighed in terms of the value of what is to be won (e.g., territory, economic gains, removal of threat) compared to the acceptability of maintaining the *status quo* (Weeks 2012: 328-329). Accordingly, preferences vary according to the composition of the audience (civil or military) relative to the type of regime. While the preferences of the dictator prevail in **personalist regimes** where the domestic audience is not effective, the preferences of audiences matter particularly in the case of non-personalist autocracies such as those exposed above (Weeks 2012: 330).

Overall, authoritarian regimes are deemed more likely to go to war when faced with internal turmoil (Wilkenfeld 1968). Here, *diversionary behavior* – which consists of one state initiating war as a way of distracting attention from domestic problems – presents some contradicting results depending on the regime type considered. **Personalist regimes,** for instance, are found to be more likely to initiate an international conflict when they anticipate a **coup** or **revolution** that might remove them forcibly from power, making the initiation of war a productive momentum to suppress internal opposition (Chiozza & Goemans 2011). But to C. Gelpi (1997), for instance, autocratic leaders are less willing to engage in diversionary foreign policies when faced with domestic instability because their repressive power acts as a guarantee that it is not necessary. To B. Leeds and D. Davis (1997), diversionary leaders can nonetheless incite their opponents to change their behavior in such a way as to limit their ability to initiate conflict. R. Miller's study (1999) specifies this correlation by considering the level of hostility of both the initiator and the target, whether the initiator or target is a revisionist, hence bullying, state, and the relative power of the dispute participants, to find that autocratic leaders display more diversionary behavior and are less affected by strategic interaction opportunities than democratic counterparts, especially in the case of joining an ongoing dispute.

As mentioned above, the work by Peceny and his colleagues (2002; 2003; 2004) find that certain dyads are more peaceful than others; for instance, personalist regimes rarely fight one another, and the same can be said for military regimes. While single-party regimes are more likely to fight one another than the other categories, they are still less likely to fight one another than mixed dyads.

Weeks (2012) finds significant differences in conflict propensity between strongmen (i.e., personalist rule) and regimes led by military institutions. Weeks argues that the former start more wars than other autocracies or democracies because they face little domestic accountability. Weeks' (2012) analysis shows that military strongmen are more likely to initiate war than juntas or civilian personalist rulers, who are, in turn, more belligerent than dominant-party regimes and democracies. Evidence also suggests that military strongmen engage in more belligerent international behavior than other dictators. Lai and Slater (2006) find that military-led autocracies are more likely to initiate conflict than party-based autocracies. They argue that the military's uncertain hold on power leads it to initiate diversionary wars to shore up domestic support (Geddes et al. 2014: 157).

Moreover, single-party regimes are notably less prone to initiate militarized disputes against personalist dictatorships compared to other types of regime pairs. Conversely, personalist regimes are slightly more inclined to initiate such disputes against single-party regimes than other regime dyads. Their findings suggest that interactions among specific authoritarian regime types can be just as impactful as the dynamics between democracies and non-democracies (Peceny & Beer 2003).

Although no personalist dictatorships have engaged in war with each other since 1945, they are more likely to be involved in military disputes with democracies, either because strong democracies tend to target weak personalist regimes and are less likely to back down or because personalist dictatorships are more likely to challenge democracies (Peceny & Beer 2002). **Personalist dictatorships** appear to be the most conflict-prone (Weeks 2012), although variables such as the leaders' old **age** in personalist regimes may lessen the risk of conflict initiation (Horowitz et al. 2005). Otherwise, one reason for a personalist regime's conflict-proneness has to do with how maintaining absolute power in the face of few domestic consequences makes military force a cost-effective policy option (Ezrow & Frantz 2011: 140-145; Peceny & Beer. 2002; Reiter & Stam 2003; Weeks 2012). Another is related to the dimension of the coalition supporting the personalist regime. According to **selectorate theory**, the smaller the coalition supporting the leader in office, the more the leader's decision to go into conflict remains unchallenged (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). As regimes with larger winning coalitions tend to face more powerful domestic audiences, they also tend to be more reluctant to engage in military conflict and to fight more intensively when attacked than leaders with small winning coalitions. In this sense, single-party regimes, which have larger winning coalitions than personalist or military regimes, could be more reluctant to initiate disputes (Peceny & Butler 2004: 566-567) but are less likely to back down once a threat has been made (Frantz and Ezrow 2011).

Shared norms also seem to play a role in the patterns of participation in conflicts. In single-party regimes, where norms are rather homogeneous, conflict is less likely to take place. There may be institutional decisional constraints at play or practical considerations that single-party regimes are more effective in battle. However, an area that should be further explored is that single-party regimes may also be more likely to have shared norms and similar ideological objectives of their respective parties. In contrast, personalist regimes, which do not focus on a particular **ideology,** are less subject to normative constraints, which may explain why they seem to become embroiled in so many conflicts (Peceny & Beer 2002; 2003).

With regard to how alliances are managed in war and their respective impact on the success of war, we can consider that non-democracies tend to act more in isolation, which minimizes their chances of being victorious. According to the 'bar fight theory' (Box 7.2), democracies generally win the wars they fight because they benefit from larger and more powerful coalitions, enabling them with more material capabilities contributing to the war effort, diffusing the costs of war among coalition members – which is an important expectation from electorate, as democracies are more casualty-averse and sensitive to the costs of war – and potentially bringing more legitimacy to the cause (Gartzke 2001; Graham et al. 2017; Koch & Gartner 2005). In other words, the larger the coalition democracies tend to fight alongside, the more likely and impactful the victory. This argument clearly suggests there is strength in numbers and rejoins Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (1999) stance that when in dispute with a democracy, for instance, an autocracy will not fight as hard as a democracy. Regardless of alliances and coalitions, D. Reiter and A. Stam (2002) have shown that democracies win almost all wars they initiate and two-thirds of wars in which they are aggressed. So, does this mean that autocracies generally lack the stamina and willpower to win wars? The tendency of autocracies to opt for smaller coalitions stems from their reliance on private goods spending in their foreign policies that are channeled in their search for private benefits and related unwillingness to share the spoils of an eventual victory. Accordingly, a minimum number of partners is considered by autocracies to ensure victory. One example of this disparity is Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Kuwait alone in 1990, when the opposing US-led coalition was composed of 32 countries (Graham et al. 2017: 614, 618).

Effects of conflicts on regime types (D) Regarding the effects and outcome of conflict on the tenure of leaders, G. Chiozza and H.E. Goemans (2004) provide important and detailed clarifications. Autocratic leaders are more negatively affected by defeat in both crises and wars than positively affected by a victory or a draw in a war. Although their tenure is less affected when they acted as initiators in war – either out of competence or because of beating domestic adversaries – the conclusion is that they are "always worse off after a war than after a crisis" and do face the higher hazard of losing office after the war than after a crisis (Chiozza & Goemans 2004: 612-613). From yet another perspective, defeat *against an autocrat* is tied to lesser chances of remaining in office (Chiozza & Goemans 2004: 616).

Additionally, when losing wars, dictators may face retribution, but if the loss is moderate, it is less likely they lose office, for they still hold enough repressive power to prevent attempts to remove them (Macmillan 2003: 236). When losing wars *against a democracy,* a significant majority of autocrats have lost power either at the hands of their people or upon imposition of the democratic victor; examples here include Benito Mussolini, Slobodan Milosevic or General Huerta, among others (Macmillan 2003: 240).

Other approaches in the literature focus on the importance of the *post-conflict dimension of authoritarianism*. Here, the terms of the relationship may be inverted by questioning, for instance, how exposure to armed conflict affects individual support for authoritarian values in post-conflict societies. K. Dyrstad (2013) used survey data from ethnically



divided Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Croatia, where democracy has proven to be difficult to consolidate, to find that the exposure to war-related violence has led to an increase of authoritarian values years after the end of the war, mainly because of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Dyrstad 2013: 1235). Dyrstad also finds that, among the three countries, authoritarian values are particularly predominant in Kosovo, where conflict occurred most recently, where violence has continued after the war, and hence, where people continue to prioritize order and security rather than personal liberties. To Dyrstad, longer authoritarian regimes have deeper negative impacts on the political culture and individual values of post-authoritarian societies, leading to weaker civil societies where value orientation remains quite authoritarian (cf. Barnes 2001).

Still, in the context of that inverted approach to the relationship between violence and authoritarianism, other research on Israel and the US has connected the exposure to **terrorism** and other national threats to an increase in anti-democratic opinions and political extremism (Doty et al. 1991; Halperin et al. 2009; Perrin 2005).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The methodological problems that arise when correlating authoritarianism and conflict actually merge the problems that typically affect each field separately and end up making it especially difficult to streamline any conclusion. The study of conflict patterns per se already encounters difficulties because it typically entails multiple and multidisciplinary causal factors and approaches such as grassroots causes, the agency-structure debate, history, geopolitics, political economy, political psychology, sociology, and anthropology, among others. When adding to this the particularities of regime types, it can be challenging to extract clear causal trends. Any conclusion appears multi-layered, as any regime classifications and nuancing may lead to multiple ramifications into the causes, dynamics and effects of conflict.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE & IMPACT ON POLICY As authoritarian regimes are generally more isolated and can run more unpredictable foreign policies, questions related to their aggressiveness and conflict-prone behavior are of interest to the international community and democratic countries for reasons related to international security, stability, order and the eventual need for interventionism. Between imminent risks and perceptions, what level of international threat do these regimes pose? In the not-too-distant past, we have witnessed international conflicts led by Western coalitions, often led by the US, against authoritarian regimes such as Slobodan Milosevic's in Serbia, Saddam Hussein's in Iraq, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Qaddafi's in Libya. In some of these cases, humanitarian arguments prevailed in defense of peoples oppressed by dictators, thus legitimizing and justifying to the international community the need and 'responsibility to protect' them (R2P). At the time of writing, ongoing tensions and conflicts that implicate at least one authoritarian party (cf. between China and Taiwan or the Russian invasion of Ukraine) have not only involved games of alliances and balancing that impact global geopolitics, as they also present potential to take on worrying proportions, for their outcomes have serious implications for the world order.

NEW FRONTIERS Recent literature by K. Jayasuriya (2023) has now focused on the current geo-capitalist conflict between the US and China, coined as an 'inter-imperial conflict,' to argue that there are political effects that emerge from such patterns of rivalry that enable the rise of right-wing forces and new forms of authoritarian rule. Such a phenomenon, to Jayasuriya, could reassert the national state in ways that could foster coercive authoritarian statism or even post-fascism.

How to cite:

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Box 7.1 Audience Costs

The audience is the best judge of anything. They cannot be lied to. Truth brings them closer, a lie pushes them away.
– Barbra Streisand

Are authoritarian regimes more likely to back down after making a threat? Audience costs theory refers to the costs that regimes face from a domestic audience when making decisions, particularly about going to war. Audience cost theory assumes that a domestic political audience can coordinate and punish a leader when they make bad decisions and that backing down from a threat is a punishable offense.

Drawing from the work of James Fearon (1994), audience costs theory argued that because democratic leaders could suffer domestic consequences for making threats and backing down, this gives democracies more credibility when they are making threats to go to war. As autocracies do not generate the same type of audience costs, they may be more likely to back down after making threats. The logic goes that dictators have more control over their tenure (and are not worried about being voted out of office) and can, therefore, take on greater risks of making threats that they back down from. Early work on this tended only to make the distinction between dictatorships and democracies.

However, some scholars have pointed out that authoritarian regimes may vary in their ability to generate audience costs (Weeks 2008). The domestic audience may also not constitute the public in authoritarian regimes. Rather it is influential groups and elites that prop up the regime that constitutes the real audience. Based on the work from Barbara Geddes' (2003) classification of dictatorships, this audience is much bigger in **single-party regimes** and much smaller under **personalist rule**.

There is also a variance in the interest and willingness of domestic audiences to punish their leaders. Political audiences may not care or may even reward leaders who escalate crises and stand up to a bully but then back down (Fearon 1994). Kertzer and Brutger (2015) propose that there are actually two distinct logics at play: audiences may also punish leaders for making aggressive threats in the first place, which they term a 'belligerence cost.' They suggest that prior studies may have overstated the importance of inconsistency in audience cost theory. Governments may also be able to clearly justify inaction as the most prudent way forward to de-escalate a crisis, as survey experiments demonstrated in the case of China (Weiss & Dafoe 2019).



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Box 7.2 The Bar Fight Theory – Why Do Democracies Tend to Win Wars?

An egg seller should not start a fight in the market.
– African proverb

Data show that regime type matters for winning wars: democracies win almost all the wars they start and about two-thirds of the wars in which they are the targets of aggression (Reiter & Stam 2002). Some studies highlight competent and accountable leadership (Bueno de Mesquita & Siverson 1995), democracies' ability to muster resources (aimed at reducing casualties), along with their selectiveness, meaning they tend to engage in wars they can win, if they have the choice (Reiter & Stam 1998; 2002; Valentino et al. 2010). In autocracies, in contrast, the effects of **coup-proofing** take a toll on military performance (Böhmelt & Pilster 2015).

Reiter and Stam (1998) find that the armies of democratic states tend to fight with *"marginally better logistics, substantially better initiative, and superior leadership,"* but an important nuance is that all three of these advantages *"dwindle as wars lengthen,"* highlighting that the importance of individual initiative, nourished in democratic culture, also applies to battlefields.

Graham et al. (2017: 614) pose a different take on this phenomenon and find *"that democracies prevail due to quantity (not quality), by fighting alongside a larger number of countries in most of their contests."* Just like in a bar fight, 'numbers matter' and having more comrades in a fight must often prove to be an advantage, one that is likely to be valuable regardless of regime type. Their conclusion thus pertains to the ideological outlook of regimes, namely that the *"biggest martial asset of democracies may well be that they are better at making friends, not that they are better at vanquishing their enemies"* (Graham et al. 2017: 614).

A study corroborating some of these findings is Zielinski et al. (2023), which applies the selectorate theory to different regimes' war capacity and war aims, using three examples for the world wars. They find that democratic states, with capital-heavy forces and objectives that favor international collective goods, tend to shirk and free-ride on their partners' efforts in fighting. In contrast, non-democracies rely on labor-heavy forces and emphasize private goods war aims. The latter are therefore hesitant to form coalitions in the first place and are likely to push for operations that benefit them more than the collective. As a result, mixed-regime battlefield coalitions create conflicting pressures that undermine cohesion and coordination.

Another take is the perception of the enemy and states' expectations of what they are getting into. The higher the uncertainty about the opponent's regime type, the less likely will disputes lead to conflict initiation and escalation; conflict-dyads with greater uncertainty are less likely to experience conflict onset (Bas & Orsun 2021).

Most of these studies apply **selectorate theory** to distinguish between democracies and non-democracies, but further regime differentiation is needed to expose the behavioral nuances among autocratic regime types (e.g., Weeks 2012) – cf. **conflict & authoritarian regimes** and Box 7.1 on 'audience costs.'

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Cyber-Warfare & Authoritarianism

We live in a world where all wars will begin as cyber wars (...)
It's the combination of hacking and massive, well-coordinated disinformation campaigns.
– Jared Cohen, Advisor to Hillary Clinton

From the point of view of international law and international relations, war is an institution, just like the state is. The development of information and communication technology (ICT) is constantly changing the functioning style of institutions as they are revised by new generations of people using digital technologies in their professional and private lives. The ways of managing hierarchical institutions are changing, and they function more slowly and less efficiently than network institutions. The digital revolution also brings about contestation of the monopoly of state power, and on a global scale, it undermines the hierarchical structure of superpowers. Cyberwar entails attacks on critical infrastructure, including the military, in order to cause organizational chaos and organizational failure of the state. Cyberwar is treated as an activity undertaken mainly to support "fighting in the physical domain," although there are forecasts (see 'new frontiers' – below) that treat cyberwar as the dominant type of war in the future.

DEFINITION & CLASSIFICATIONS With the evolution of technological progress and changes in the use of cyber-attacks, the definitions of cyber-warfare remain vague and broad. This allows for the possibility of new dimensions of combat activity in cyberspace to emerge. Cyberwar is an asymmetric conflict taking place in the technological space of the so-called 'cyberspace,' where geographical distance does not matter. The fight takes into account a set of physical infrastructure (fiber optics, satellites, servers), information (the content of the message associated with a cyber-attack) and IT (codes, security) elements created and modified by humans. The asymmetric nature of the conflict means that both non-state actors and states incapable of conventional attack can cause disruptions in the systems of highly developed countries that are difficult to detect. Clarke and Knake (2011) defined cyberwar as actions by a nation-state to penetrate another nation's computers or networks in order to cause damage or disruption. For comparison, Lidel and Piasecka (2011) wrote about cybernetic warfare involving non-state actors (cf. **terrorism**).

With over 30 years of studies on cyber-attacks targeting states or launched by states on other international actors, several basic distinctions have emerged related to activities with the characteristics of cyber war. According to Arquilla & Ronfeld (1993), we can distinguish between a 'netwar' (a war taking place on the Internet using information and connections of a network nature) and a 'cyberwar,' which uses currently available means of IT attack.

Among researchers and military experts, the term 'information warfare' was used, which originally referred to the typology of forms of hacker attacks (Ciborowski 1995; Denning 1998) aimed at political and state security goals. The concept was based on the belief that new digital tools would be used as an attack tool and that they should become a component of the security infrastructure.

The concept of information warfare can comprise online attacks carried out by states or non-state entities, the purpose of which is to have a psychological impact on society by changing perceptions, introducing disorientation, reducing trust in public authorities and increasing intra-state conflicts. In this case, the weapon of information is distributed through technical digital tools. In information warfare, the important components are the speed of message transfer, the ability to directly reach an uninformed, trusting recipient, low cost and risk of executing an attack.

Information warfare refers to the concept of Aquilla & Ronfeld (1993), where the concept of 'netwar' refers to social perception, and its components are political **propaganda**, classic diplomacy and new types of diplomacy, information campaigns drawing attention to a specific problem (e.g., refugee crisis, climate crisis), psychological campaigns, political and cultural subversion. Netwar essentially means a war on information distributed via the Internet. Key groups of people capable of receiving deformed information and succumbing to it (parties, minorities, professional groups, general voters, intellectual elites, power elites) are indicated as the target of the attack. In the middle of the last decade, the concept of netwar has evolved and has referred to the information war accompanying Russian aggression against Ukraine in Donbas and Crimea and the exposed Russian influence on the electoral process and outcome during the US presidential elections of 2016 (Donald J. Trump vs. Hillary Clinton). During this time, the concept of netwar was expanded to include social media's propaganda influence. Social media as a space for potential subversive activities of 'troll farms' – institutionalized groups AKA 'keyboard armies' hired to provoke, manipulate and disinform online audiences – has become a new arena for the implementation of netwar.

'Information age war' is also used (Sienkiewicz & Świeboda 2009) to mean all forms of hostile technical and information influence that, via digital technologies (including the Internet), are intended to bring expected damage to the stability of the attacked international entity (state and non-state). In line with the classification of conventional wars, the following terms can be found in the literature: 'total' and 'limited' cyberwar, as well as *'ad hoc'* and 'long-term' cyberwar (Rattray 2009).

SEE ALSO Linked to **digital authoritarianism**, this topic relates to **conflict** and **foreign policy** in dictatorships, although cyber-terrorism can be an element of state-sponsored **terrorism**.

ORIGIN ICT developed as a tool during the Cold War rivalry. The ARPANET (*Advanced Research Projects Agency Network*) and its continuations had their origins in the military sector. They were used to facilitate, accelerate and encrypt communication between sectors and units of the American army. The concept of cyberwar also has Anglo-Saxon and American roots. D. Denning and *RAND Cooperation* experts are considered to be the first authors to consider the issue of cyberwar. (Denning 1998; Arquilla & Ronfeld 1993). The development of the concept evolved from the assumption that (in libertarian cyberspace) cyber-attacks can be a tool of political pressure on undemocratic governments that violate human rights (e.g., the case of international hacktivists' support for the Indigenous uprising in the state of Chiapas in Mexico in 1998). Later, examples of the use of cyber-attacks during the Second Russian-Chechen War (1999-2009) were observed as technological retaliation against Russia. It was then that the first interpretations from the Russian military command appeared that cyber-attacks would be treated as actions equivalent to a conventional attack (Bógdał-Brzezińska & Gawrycki 2003). Western analysts proposed introducing such an interpretation into the security strategy only after the successful Russian cyber-attack on Estonia in 2007 (Rattray 2009). Currently, the term cyber-attacks is used equally to cyber-warfare (Whyte & Mazanec 2019).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The concept of cyberwar(fare) has broadened the field of analysis of state security and international security. It strengthened the importance of the technological factor in the discourse within the Realist approach to International Relations. A dualism emerged regarding the relationship between digital **power** (cyber-power) and cyber-resilience and cyber-sovereignty capabilities (Russia, China). All this contributed to the development of the theory of international relations by introducing the concept of cyber-sovereignty, international order in cyberspace, and cyber-power into the literature. Cyber-warfare has changed the perception of technological progress on security policy, patterns and classifications of conflicts, and verification of interactions between participants in international relations. (Whyte & Mazanec 2019). This will further influence the blurring of the boundaries between the traditional realistic, liberal-institutional and constructivist approaches in international relations.

For authoritarian regimes specifically, digital transformation has altered their capabilities of monitoring, controlling and indoctrinating their own populations while at the same time offering new tools to cause havoc abroad, either as a new dimension to political conflict – increasingly normalized (Cavelty & Egloff 2019) – or as a new sphere for diversion, like influencing elections campaigns abroad, promoting illiberal beliefs and eroding trust in open societies (Barma et al. 2020). Democratic backsliding has been accelerated by authoritarian control of cyberspace and digital freedoms (cf. **autocratization**). In contrast, the anticipated fallout of cyber-terrorism has not (yet) occurred since such groups still lack the wherewithal or the human capital needed to mount cyber-terror operations on a meaningful level (Arquilla 2021).

LITERATURE The literature on cyberwars is very extensive and diverse. It is easier to point to pioneering works than to isolate them. The first publications with a recognized contribution to the development of the concept of cyberwar were written by American scholars. These include D.E. Denning's *Information Warfare and Security* (1998) or the famous report by J. Arquilla and D. Ronfeldt (1993) *Cyberwar is coming!*

In other languages, notable pioneering works in Polish are L. Ciborowski's unique work *Walka informacyjna* (1999); A. Bógdał-Brzezińska and M.F. Gawrycki (2003); Lakomy (2015); and in German: Thomas Beer's (2005) popular work *Cyberwar – Bedrohung für die Informationsgesellschaft.*

After Russia's cyber-offensives against Estonia and Georgia, the number of publications on cyberwar increased, and further works appeared that organized the issues of digital warfare. A collective work known as the *Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare* (Schmitt 2013; 2017) has become an important publication. A classic work questioning the potentially destructive impact of cyberwar was Thomas Rid's book *Cyber War Will Not Take Place* (2012). The French perspective is well presented in the work entitled *Cyberwar and Information Warfare,* edited by Daniel Ventre (2012). A comprehensive introduction is the book by P.W. Singer & A. Friedman, *Cybersecurity and Cyberwar: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2014). For more recent works, consult Greenberg 2019; Perlroth 2021.

Most (political) studies have approached the issue from a military and strategic perspective, treating states as black boxes, but specifically for the study of authoritarian regimes, the phenomenon remains understudied: C. Babb's (2022) dissertation is the first attempt to empirically test if authoritarian strategies in cyberspace align with the legitimation strategies expected of particular autocratic regime types.

REGIONAL VARIATION For authoritarian cases, the most notorious culprits have received the most attention. For a recent work comparing Russia and China, consult Van Wie Davis 2021. On Russia specifically, see: Foxal 2016; Connell & Vogler 2017; Blank 2017; Maréchal 2017; Jamieson 2020; on China: Krekel et al. 2009; Hjortdal 2011; Hagestad II 2012; Caplan 2013; Fritz 2017; on Iran: Caplan 2013; Martins 2018; Easttom & Butler 2021; against Iran: Farwell & Rhozinski 2011; Shakarian 2011; on North Korea: Kshetri 2014; Chung et al. 2016; Whyte 2016, Ji-Young et al. 2019.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The phenomenon of cyber war is treated as unquantifiable; in addition, such attacks are elements of larger stealth or covert operations. There are known data on suspected attacks on specific countries, but due to the undetectability of the perpetrators of the attacks, these data are circumstantial and hypothetical. For the above reasons, it is difficult to estimate the value of losses incurred as a result of cyber-attacks. They are iden-



tified with high probability but not with complete certainty. It would be fair to admit that it is impossible to fully distinguish between the deliberate use of technical cyber-aggression tools and human error in software or its use.

MEASUREMENT The phenomenon of disinformation is also researched through case studies rather than measurement (Wojnowski 2019). However, there are statistics and auxiliary rankings that update the susceptibility and sensitivity of countries and regions to cyber-attacks. Among them, it is worth mentioning the *Global Cybersecurity Index* (GCI) prepared by a subsidiary of the United Nations – the *International Telecommunication Union*. Others are the *Significant Cyber Incident*s tracker administered by the *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (CSIS), the *Cyber Operations Tracker* from the *Council on Foreign Relations*, and the *Dyadic Cyber Incident and Dispute Dataset* (DCID) by Maness et al. (2023).

EXAMPLES By the 1990s, states were reflecting on security threats arising from cyberspace. The relationship between the growing saturation of digital technologies in the economies (especially critical infrastructure) of highly developed countries and their increasing susceptibility to cyber-attacks was emphasized. The dominant role in the escalation of cyber-threats was assigned to the so-called 'hacktivists' and 'cyber-terrorists,' emphasizing their non-state status and anti-state attitude. Examples of the first effective cyber-terrorist activities include Serbian hacker attacks on NATO servers during the Kosovo War (1997), attacks on Mexican government websites and servers as a form of support for indigenous insurgents in the state of Chiapas (in 1998), and cyber-attacks on the Russian banking system by groups supporting the Chechen insurgents (in 2001).

In the next decade, there were many instances of countries using combat tools in cyberspace. In the years 2000-2003, a cyber-media war broke out between the US and the non-state actors based in the Middle East. Hezbollah's cyber-attack on large American websites and the disappearance of Yahoo!, Amazon, CNN and eBay websites resulted in an American cyber-attack on Al-Jazeera. Digital attacks attributed to the US (and Israel) also include the use of software called 'Stuxnet' in 2010, which blocked production systems mainly in Asian countries (Iran, Indonesia, China, and India).

In 2007, there were cyber-attacks on Estonian government websites, which, due to the dynamic development of its computer technologies during the USSR (Estonia was the most digitized country in the region), was made that much easier. Russian-speaking hacker groups claimed responsibility for both these series of attacks and the attacks on the government websites of Georgia and Lithuania in 2008, although it was partly in retaliation for the Georgian digital attack on the websites of the South Ossetian administration.

In 2009, there was an attack on Internet providers in Kyrgyzstan; a series of attacks blocking critical infrastructure and state administration websites were also carried out against Ukraine during the war with Russia in 2014. Chinese cyber-attacks have evolved along with the rapid technological development of the PRC. Since 2006, actions have been carried out aimed at international institutions (including the United Nations and ASEAN), governments (including Germany, New Zealand, Denmark, Japan and India), and a year later, an attack on the American departments of commerce, defense and state, and attempts were made to take over digital security of its energy infrastructure.

In 2016-2017, attacks using encryption software called *'Petya/NotPetya'* were reported, which affected companies in Ukraine but also companies from Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom. In turn, the spectacular attack using the 'WannaCry' software in 2017 is attributed to North Korea. Hacker groups associated with North Korea dominate financial extortion schemes that enrich the regime's unstable budget.

Iranian hackers are mainly credited with provocative retaliatory actions directed against the governments of the US, Israel, and China. Cyber-intelligence activities are also used against its own ethnic and religious minorities, as well as violating the principles of industrial property protection. Russian cyber-aggression against Ukraine in 2022 is evidence of its underestimation of Ukraine's cyber resistance against hostile attacks and a lack of skillful coordination of conventional actions.

IMPACT ON POLICY The concept of cyberwar was created in response to the new phenomenon of using the Internet and computer systems to weaken the defense potential and the broadly understood sphere of security of states and non-state entities. As a result of constant improvements in technology, cyberwar brought rapid changes in the security policy of states and their allied groups. It also influenced society's awareness of new technological threats.

Cyberwar(fare) also found its place as an element of the concept of asymmetric conflicts and hybrid wars. In the latter case, it is worth mentioning the Russian concept of a 'new type of war' associated with the name of V. Gerasimov from 2013 (the so-called Gerasimov doctrine). The experience of cyber-attacks used in the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 has challenged the concept of total war with elements of cyber war. The authoritarian Russian regime was surprisingly poorly prepared to launch simultaneous long-term conventional attacks synchronized with cyber-attacks.

The growing scale of cyber-attacks has brought groundbreaking declarations for international security by superpowers and key international organizations, pointing to cyberspace as an area of military operations. In the face of cyber-attacks, a state may exercise the right to retaliate according to the principles of *jus ad bellum*, and the provisions of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter on the right to self-defense do not exclude its application to non-state entities. There is a similar interpretation of NATO's Article 5. The right to self-defense in cyberspace has been reserved, for example, by Russia, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand and Israel. This practice concerns countries that are both the most vulnerable to

threats, and often themselves accused of cyber-aggression.

Russia has been particularly worried about cyber-warfare for some time now. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, warnings came from the Russian ministries of security regarding cyber-attacks as grounds for retaliation with the use of conventional weapons. Although the first (2000) and second (2016) information security doctrines of the Russian Federation integrate the problems of information transfer security with digital security, Russia has not yet adopted documents on the status of a cyber-security strategy or doctrine, but it does influence the policy of Western countries in this field. After Russian attacks on critical infrastructure in Estonia (2007), the foundations of the alliance's cyber-security policy were adopted at the NATO summit in Prague in 2008, and in 2016, during the summit in Warsaw, cyberspace was indicated as a new sphere of allied operations. The US, as a key member of NATO, introduced a unit called USCYBERCOM into the structure of the Department of Defense in 2009, i.e., the *Combat Command for Cyberspace Operations*, which was transformed into an independent offensive structure in 2017. With the rapid adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into cyber-weapon arsenals, some countries such as Canada and Finland developed national AI strategies in 2017, closely followed by Japan, France, Germany and the UK in 2018. Other countries such as Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Poland and Spain have recently launched national AI strategies.

NEW FRONTIERS New war scenarios are emerging in the debate on the future of the robotization of war. The concept of 'swarm war' develops the network-centric war (net-space war) popularized in the 1990s and applies it to conducting operational activities involving miniaturized drones, robot soldiers and highly automated command systems (Shaw 2017). The challenges facing the study of cyberwar emanate from the speed of ICT changes and the emergence of new solutions such as intelligent weapons, swarm strategy, etc. AI is pointed out as a key tool establishing a new level of challenges and threats to the cyber-security of countries and the enormous possibilities of cyberwar (Sayler 2020; Allen & Chen 2017). New interpretations of combat tactics appear. The potential ineffectiveness of military command with a hierarchical structure and the need to increase the level of autonomy of units operating on the battlefield are pointed out. Competition in the use of intelligent weapons based on AI also brings benefits such as reduced human losses, increased reaction speed to threats, and increased effectiveness through the miniaturization of combat technologies as a result of advancements in cyber-warfare, a new understanding of the traditional concept of proxy wars is emerging. Proxy war, in the new sense of the word, means that people are being replaced by technology and traditional combat space is being replaced by cyberspace (or perhaps outer space).

American experts have alerted that China is currently experimenting with new dimensions of psychological warfare using ICT, which is close to the problems of information warfare but also has new features of cognitive warfare (Beauchamp-Mustafaga 2023).

New research is also focusing on the possibilities of disinformation on an unprecedented scale. This disinformation targets not only societies of hostile countries, but, thanks to the progress of AI applications, the power of elites and military command. This topic offers new research opportunities at the intersection of cognitive psychology, political science and security studies.

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Disaster Management in Authoritarian Regimes

Sometimes it takes a natural disaster to reveal a social disaster.
– Jim Wallis

Autocratic regimes are notorious for having a higher casualty rate during and in the aftermath of natural disasters. As the quote by Jim Wallis shows, this is no mere coincidence but can be explained by the workings and dysfunctionalities in authoritarian regimes, which lead to failures in prevention, preparation, and response; lack of infrastructure and resources; unwillingness to accept foreign relief aid; as well as erratic regulatory frames, information campaigns and deflecting news coverage.

DEFINITION Disaster management is the process of managing the impact of disasters for loss of life, injury and economic damage. This is accomplished by both the preparation that needs to take place before a natural hazard hits and the response to a natural hazard that collides with a population. By natural hazards, we are referring to earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons, wildfires, volcanoes and mudslides.

SEE ALSO Like **disease management** and **economic development,** this entry shows the impact of **systemic corruption** under dictatorship and its effects after natural disasters strike, especially under **personalist rule**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Authoritarian regimes do not perform well when it comes to preparing for and responding to natural hazards. This means that those who live under authoritarian rule are more likely to die or be adversely affected by a natural hazard compared to those who live in democracies.

LITERATURE The literature concurs that regime type does matter when it comes to preparing for disasters. Most hazards, with the exception of earthquakes, can be predicted, and there is much that the state can do to prepare in the event of any type of disaster. Preventing high casualties from natural hazards requires high levels of state capacity and a will to invest in the planning and preparations needed, and to respond with relief adequately.

A number of scholars have argued that **democracies** are far better than **autocracies** in preventing high casualties from disasters due mostly to a greater incentive to do so (Kahn 2005; Flores & Smith 2010; 2013). In a study of 4,300 natural hazards across 57 countries, it was found that countries that are more democratic and more economically equal face much lower death tolls from natural hazards comparatively speaking (Kahn 2005). A 2011 study finds that democracies are better prepared to deal with earthquakes and have lower mortality rates than autocracies (Keefer et al. 2011), while another study found that democratic governments are generally more responsive and are more likely to be prepared (Cohen & Werker 2008). Further research found that democracies were more likely to invest in sea-level stations that would offer protection from ocean disasters. Authoritarian regimes only do the same if the capital city is close to the coast and could expose members of his ruling coalition to a hazard (Flores 2018).

There may also be a positive impact when countries democratize, as countries that previously were authoritarian are better able to prevent mass casualties after democratization. Earthquakes in Peru and Mexico have also been more devastating during autocratic rule than democratic rule (Flores & Smith 2010; 2013). Four decades ago, a 7.9-magnitude quake struck Peru, killing about 66,000 people. In 2001, an even stronger earthquake hit but killed fewer than 150 people. The difference was that in 2001, Peru was a democracy, whereas in 1970, it was not. An earthquake of 7.1 magnitude that hit Mexico City in 2017 led to 370 deaths instead of thousands.

Past research in this area has noted that political survival lies at the heart of disaster politics (Flores & Smith 2010; 2013). Autocracies lack institutionalized mechanisms in place to punish ineffective governments that do not respond well to natural disasters. In contrast, democracies are driven to provide relief and invest in prevention to help their chances of being re-elected (Bechtel & Hainmueller 2011; Chen 2013; Garrett & Sobel 2003; Reeves 2011; Sylves & Buzas 2007). Autocracies may have to face uprisings, revolutions or violent coups, but the odds are that the public may do nothing. Take the case of Cyclone Nargis, which hit Myanmar in 2008. The death toll was over 138,000, making it the sixth deadliest cyclone of all time. Not only did the repressive military regime do virtually nothing to help the communities worst affected it also blocked the arrival of international aid. Afterward, survivors were prevented from seeking assistance in larger towns and villages. Within a week of the disaster, the army started forcibly dispersing survivors from makeshift camps, schools and monasteries. No information on cyclone shelters in Myanmar was published, and there were delays in accessing people because the international community was not allowed to access the most affected areas. By letting people die in outlying areas, the government forestalled the possibility of protest. Ironically, the disastrous performance of the government in handling the crisis set off some initial steps toward the political liberalization of the regime.

The poorest classes in dictatorships are also the most vulnerable to loss of life when natural hazards strike. In contrast, all citizens living in democratic states can put pressure on their governments to ensure that they are safe, and governments, in turn, must adhere to these demands or risk being voted out of power. Citizens can, therefore demand that safety standards are enforced and precautionary measures are in place if they live in areas that are prone to natural disasters (Toya & Skidmore 2007).

Authoritarian regimes do not perform as well when it comes to reducing the impact of disasters on human suffering because they do not offer freedom of speech, press or participation. The free flow of information is critical to ensuring that people know that a disaster is coming and what to do about it. The press can also play an important role in communicating valuable information about how a disaster is unfolding and where people can go to safety. If the press is muzzled or forced to be non-transparent about the situation, this can cause further casualties. After a disaster takes place, if there are missteps by the government, a free press and a vibrant civil society can pressure the government to make important changes to be better prepared.

Studies have also demonstrated that the quality of institutions also matters in determining disaster risk (Anbarci et al. 2005; Escaleras et al. 2007; Kahn 2005; Raschky 2008). Autocracies are more prone to **corruption** (Nur-tegin & Czap 2012), which can exacerbate death counts by incentivizing officials not to enforce building codes, infrastructure standards, or zoning requirements (Kahn 2005: 25-26). In a study looking at 334 earthquakes in 42 countries, it was found that public sector corruption is associated with greater fatalities (Escaleras et al. 2007). Corruption can also serve as a barrier to effective disaster assistance because corrupt governments are less likely to efficiently and fairly distribute pay-outs. Authoritarian leaders may use disasters to pilfer national accounts or humanitarian aid packages or privilege trusted supporters with private funds. In Nicaragua, after the earthquake in 1972 that killed between 3,000 and 7,000 people, injured approximately 15,000, and displaced 300,000 people, the government engaged in kleptocratic behavior. Instead of helping the victims, dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle stole the foreign aid and tried to declare emergency powers.

Authoritarian regimes may also mismanage the aid that is given to them. Political leaders may use the relief checks to distribute only to their political supporters and family members. Firms that are loyal to the regime may benefit from lucrative reconstruction projects (Pelling 2003). A study in Pakistan demonstrated that relief aid was distributed only to supporters of the regime in power after the floods of 2001 (Mustafa 2003). Authoritarian regimes may also be more likely to reject international aid, particularly if it comes from democracies.

Disasters in politically sensitive areas such as the capital may threaten autocrats, but high-casualty events in remote areas may not. In 2008, an earthquake that hit Sichuan in China was taken seriously, with the government offering relief operations that



garnered the approval of the international community. In contrast, a 2010 earthquake that hit the remote province of Qinghai was mostly ignored by the government, with few repercussions for the government's inaction (Wei et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, within democracies, there can also be variations in the response to disasters. In the US, the president has unilateral control over the declaration of disasters. This allows the president to offer more support to states that are strategically important to his political party. Governments may spend less on politically weak or hostile regions, as has been shown in the US (Garret & Sobel 2003; Cohen & Werker 2008). A study looking at India showed that state governments were only responsive to people who lived in areas that had better access to information and electoral accountability (Besley & Burgess 2002). Thus, some authors argue that democratic institutions are not sufficient for securing protection from disasters if there is corruption, poor planning and administrative incompetence. Persson and Povitkina (2017) argue that democracies are only able to shield their citizens from casualties when the institutional quality is high. In democracies with weak institutional quality, more people could suffer than in democracies. Another study concurs that institutions are important – empirical work from 1984 to 2004 showed that countries with better institutions experience fewer human casualties and lower economic losses from disasters (Raschky 2008).

Some studies have also looked at the impact of disasters on a state's propensity to use repression. Hannah Arendt argued that violence often emerges when power is threatened, and disasters are the type of crisis that might make the state feel threatened. State capacity may decline after a massive disaster takes place, and severe disasters may impede the regime's ability to communicate and coordinate security (Le Billon & Waizenegger 2007). A regime's failure to properly respond to a disaster has the potential to lead to unrest. Furthermore, if aid flows to assist with the recovery process are not dispersed appropriately and used by the regime for their own personal enrichment, this can be another source of tension. After the earthquake in 1992 in Cairo led to 500 deaths, 10,000 injuries and 40,000 people were homeless, the government was slow and cumbersome in its response. As a result, Islamic organizations stepped in to provide support, but this was met with a harsh crackdown for months, with hundreds detained (Singerman 2002; Wood & Wright 2016). Other research has argued that when a regime fails to respond to disasters properly this could also raise the propensity for a **coup** (Carlin et al. 2014).

Others argue that the chances for dissent are low in authoritarian regimes post-disaster, and it is democracies that are more likely to be destabilized (Flores & Smith 2013). Citizens living under authoritarian rule are less likely to protest and voice their dissent as they assume that protests will be quickly repressed (Flores & Smith 2013). Autocracies can even prevent their citizens from mobilizing by closing down public sites or enforcing a curfew. Further research argues that it is both democracies and autocracies that may use repression after a disaster hits, but democracies are much less likely to do so when they receive foreign aid (Wood & Wright 2016).

EXAMPLES One of the most notable examples of authoritarian mismanagement when it comes to disaster is the 7.0 earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010, which killed 222,000 people. Haiti has suffered from decades of **personalist rule** and **corruption** and has teetered on **state failure**. Without strong institutions and civil society to ensure that safeguards for disaster mitigation are in place, the government failed to prepare for pending disasters. In comparison, the next month, an 8.0 earthquake that was 500 times stronger hit Chile but killed only 500 people. In the case of Chile, stricter building codes and quick reaction from the government to coordinate international and domestic relief efforts were critical. Haiti, in contrast, has no national building code, a disregard for permits, and few earthquake engineers to help advise. The government was accused of stealing **foreign aid** rather than dispensing it (Smith & Flores 2015). Further disaster hit Haiti because it is one of the most deforested countries in the world, making it more prone to mudslides after an earthquake, putting much of its population at risk. There are also, of course, huge differences in wealth between Haiti and Chile. However, there are other examples from states that have more similar levels of poverty. In South Asia, the earthquake in 2001 that hit democratic India killed 20,000 people. In contrast, the 2005 smaller earthquake that hit authoritarian Pakistan killed more than 80,000 people.

Other examples demonstrate the benefits of **democratization**. In 1906 and 1985, massive earthquakes hit San Francisco, CA and Mexico City, Mexico, respectively. Though their GDP per capita was similar, as was the size of the earthquake, the one in Mexico killed three times as many people, with 45,000 deaths. When other earthquakes hit Mexico in 2017 after it had allowed for turnover in power, the results of preparation led to different outcomes. One of the strongest earthquakes ever recorded hit Oaxaca at 8.2 on the Richter scale and led to 98 deaths. Another 7.1 earthquake hit Mexico City that same year and led to 370 deaths.

IMPACT ON POLICY The collision of a natural hazard and vulnerabilities leads to natural disasters. Governments, NGOs and international organizations have worked hard to emphasize what states need to do to be more prepared. As part of the major disaster relief frameworks and protocols, improving good governance, transparency, and the rule of law has been repeatedly highlighted as critical to making important inroads in mitigating disaster risk.

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Disease Management in Authoritarian Regimes

So all a man could win in the conflict between plague and life was knowledge and memories.
– Albert Camus

The study of disease management is a critical area of inquiry that sheds light on the broader implications of governance systems on public health outcomes. This field examines the capacity of authoritarian regimes to effectively manage and control disease outbreaks, treatment, and prevention and contrasts it with the performance of democracies. This entry delves into the so-called 'authoritarian advantage' and scrutinizes the empirical evidence to understand whether dictatorships indeed have an edge in managing health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, or if their approach to public health is detrimental.

DEFINITION Disease management refers to how well governments manage and control disease outbreaks, treatment and prevention. Though disease management might frequently refer to infectious diseases, this can also apply to non-communicable diseases. It is essentially looking at how competent the state is in ensuring that its population is healthy.

SEE ALSO In particular, this entry questions the so-called 'authoritarian advantage,' which is also covered under the entry on **economic development**. However, **disinformation** and (medical) **censorship** are much more pronounced under authoritarianism, and its effects can have grave consequences for disease management.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Authoritarian regimes have been vocal in touting their success at managing the COVID-19 pandemic compared to democracies. However, when looking at disease management overall, they perform much worse. Additionally, their overall advantage in managing the pandemic is mixed. The pandemic aside, the empirical evidence shows that authoritarian regimes often do not have the incentive to manage diseases properly, leading to



lower life expectancy and higher maternal, child and infant mortality rates.

MEASUREMENT There are numerous ways in which disease management is measured. This can be done by looking at life expectancy, child and infant mortality rates and maternal death rates. To look at more specific diseases and how they are managed, the specific disease prevalence and death rate can also be examined, along with how this may impact different age groups. Another proxy for healthcare and disease management is to look at the percentage of the population that has access to clean water and a flush toilet. Health can also be measured by looking at the number of years of disability-adjusted life years, which is important for understanding the impact of many diseases that do not have a high mortality rate.

LITERATURE The literature on authoritarian regimes has mostly concurred that they do not perform well when it comes to managing general health outcomes. Though there are regimes that have made important inroads in disease management, on average, authoritarian regimes do not perform well on the most important markers of a healthy population – life expectancy rates, infant and child mortality rates and maternal death rates (Baum & Lake 2003; Besley & Kudamatsu 2006; Bollyky et al. 2019; Cutler et al. 2006; Ghobarah et al. 2004; Hall & Jones 2007; Kaufman & Segura-Ubiergo 2000; Lake & Baum 2001; Lin et al. 2012; Muntaner et al. 2011; Vollmer & Ziegler 2009).

In particular, several studies have argued that authoritarian regimes perform comparatively worse when it comes to life expectancy (Baum & Lake 2003; Mackenbach 2013; Mackenbach et al. 2013). Using data from 2020, if we just look at the 25 most autocratic countries in the world, the average life expectancy rate is 71.7 years of age. This compares with the global average of 73.2 years of age. In stark contrast, the top 25 democratic countries in the world have an average life expectancy of 78.88 years of age.

Scholars have theorized that poor performance may be driven by dictators not wanting to invest in their citizens for fear that a healthy population may pose a bigger threat to their rule. However other theoretical factors may assist democracies in performing better in health outcomes. According to this literature, there is (i) a *representation effect*, (ii) a *participation effect*, (iii) an *accountability effect*, and (iv) a *selection effect* (Besley & Kudamatsu 2006). We explain in further detail how this works.

Representation effect (i) While democracies have to represent the public, authoritarian regimes only need to **co-opt** a select group of individuals that prop up their regimes (Ezrow & Frantz 2011) – cf. **selectorate theory** and Box 7.1 on audience costs. The public in a democracy may push for issues like better healthcare and regulations necessary to safeguard health and safety, while autocracies don't allow for much input from the public at large. Because authoritarian leaders only need to win over a much narrower support group, this may result in worse outcomes when it comes to health, as there is little pressure to advocate on behalf of the health needs of the entire population. As such, studies reveal that they are less likely to spend and invest in healthcare (Liang & Mirelman 2014). Democracies are linked to greater access to universal healthcare even when taking into account economic recessions (Templin et al. 2021).

Participation effect (ii) Related to the previous point, authoritarian regimes do not allow the public to participate in the decision-making process. In authoritarian regimes, this process is often opaque with little transparency of how decisions are being made and little societal input. In contrast, in democracies, there is greater input from citizens and knowledgeable networks that can drive sound policy (Wigley & Akkoyunlu-Wigley 2011). Citizens in a democracy can also advocate themselves for change if it affects their health (Sen 1999).

Accountability effect (iii) There is also less accountability in authoritarian regimes, and these tend to have higher levels of **corruption** (Kolstad & Wiig 2016; Rock 2009). Without checks on the power of the executive, the regime can engage in corrupt behavior, abusing power at the expense of public funds. In fact, studies have shown that, on average, dictatorships are less likely to provide public goods critical to maintaining public health standards, such as access to safe water, public sanitation and pollution (Deacon 2009). Thus, instead of investing in human capital, dictators are free to siphon off the state coffers to pay for their personal affairs.

Additionally, authoritarian regimes may not allow for the free flow of information and may block valuable information coming from activists and NGOs if they feel threatened by these actors. Authoritarian regimes may have an incentive to cover up the impact of a policy that is not working, and without whistle-blowers to uncover what is taking place, it is difficult to ensure public safety. It is also less likely that leaders who are negligent when it comes to health and safety will face consequences. In contrast, failure by democracies to pay attention to health issues and make tangible improvements may affect re-election chances (Nelson 2007). For example, in China in 2008, at least six infants died, and almost 52,000 infants and young children were hospitalized with renal problems after ingesting infant formula processed with melamine, an industrial chemical (Tang et al. 2015). Complaints made in 2005 about the milk being tainted with unauthorized substances were ignored (Lim 2008). Though the government eventually recalled the products and the manufacturers were punished, tainted milk powder was still illegally resold years later

Selection effect (iv) Finally, authoritarian regimes may be more likely to select incompetent and inexperienced leaders (Besley & Reynal-Querol 2011). Most dictatorships in history have emerged as the result of a military **coup**, where a (high-ranking) member of the military with little political experience seizes power and rules with an iron fist with little concern about outcomes. In other instances, authoritarian

leaders emerge because of hereditary conditions, which are highly variable in terms of outcomes. For military dictatorships, though the military may have some knowledge of security, military personnel are poorly equipped to make coherent policies when it comes to healthcare. They also may prioritize the bulk of their budgets on military spending rather than development spending. In Nigeria, after it came under military rule in 1983, immunization rates for children fell by 50%. After the military was ousted from power in 1973, there was a sharp increase in the rural population's access to safe water in Argentina in 1973 (Lake & Baum 2001).

Further to these mechanisms, authoritarian regimes are also associated with lower levels of access to clean water, which is critical to preventing infectious diseases and can negatively impact life expectancy (Lake & Baum 2001). For example, in Russia, there are serious problems with contaminated drinking water, and according to one study, possibly as much as 60 percent of drinking water reserves do not meet safety standards. In total, this means that safe drinking water is inaccessible to 11 million Russians (Ritter 2018). Some of this is due to Soviet-era dumping of toxic waste, which impacts Russia's water reserves, but it is also due to the fact that there is little regulation, health codes are often ignored, and little money was invested in water pollution control equipment (Peterson 2019). Democracies, in contrast, offer more citizens access to clean water because investing in these services is critical to support from the public (Besley & Kudamatsu 2006).

In spite of these conclusions, several studies have countered that there is an 'authoritarian advantage' when it comes to health outcomes (Shandra et al. 2004). The argument in favor of authoritarian regimes theorizes that autocracies do not have to deal with bureaucratic resistance, political gridlock or public resistance to an unpopular policy that may benefit public health. Authoritarian regimes may be better at mobilizing their population since they can resort to using force or threats of force, if necessary, which may enable them to successfully execute a simple public intervention (Golinowska & Sowa 2007). This might ensure that authoritarian regimes can deliver on immunization rates, which can lower infant and child mortality rates (Gauri & Khaleghian 2002; Nelson 2007). True, some authoritarian regimes have managed to ensure low under-five mortality rates, such as China at 7.9 deaths per 1,000 live births, Cuba at 5.1 deaths and Singapore with 2.5 deaths. But these are more the exception than the rule. Countries like Chad and the Central African Republic have 113.8 and 110.1 deaths, respectively. Of all of the countries that perform the worst on this indicator (looking at the bottom 25 percent), there is not one country that is a full democracy, and the same can be said for infant mortality rates.

The few studies that have examined the impact of authoritarian rule on the management of endemic diseases (almost exclusively looking at HIV/AIDS) have revealed a similar outcome. Authoritarian regimes do not manage endemic diseases well, as they are less likely to provide access to treatment to all members of society (Baum & Lake 2003; Besley & Kudamatsu 2006). Democracies, on the other hand, respond to HIV treatment as a public good, with democratic countries like Botswana and Costa Rica providing free treatment. Botswana has gone so far as to offer free treatment to non-citizens as well (Habib 2019).

Overall, authoritarian regimes perform worse when it comes to public health indicators, but as some of the aforementioned examples reveal, there is variation among dictatorships in terms of performance. For example, studies also show that just holding elections matters – as electoral autocracies or authoritarian regimes that hold multi-party elections perform better when it comes to disease outcomes (Miller 2015).

Adding to the debate on authoritarian regimes and health outcomes, some studies have demonstrated that the type of authoritarian regime matters – and that countries led by **single-party regimes** may have an advantage when it comes to lower infant mortality rates compared to military regimes and monarchies (McGuire 2013). Life expectancy in Hong Kong is the highest in the world at 85.29 years of age, edging out democratic Japan at 85.03. Life expectancy in Singapore (84.07) is higher than in Iceland (83.52). China has also greatly improved life expectancy levels to 77.47 years, up from 44 years in 1960. Cuba has also improved its life expectancy levels from 57.63 in 1950, 63.55 in 1960, to 78.98 today. Haiti, suffered through decades of personalist rule and still registers a life expectancy today (64.4) that is only slightly better than Cuba's was in 1960.

Much of the success could be attributed to the role of single-party regimes that are focused on achieving objectives that require a robust and healthy public. For example, in order to ensure that labor remained productive, communist countries worked to provide basic sanitation and universal health coverage for their citizens. In line with this argument, one study argued that autocracies have done well in countering infectious diseases that threaten people when they are at their most productive age while more likely to ignore health threats that affect older populations (Rosenberg & Shvetsova 2016). They may be also more likely to tackle diseases that affect urban populations. Thus, in contrast to the argument that autocrats have no interest in promoting human development, concern for productivity may have caused single-party regimes to invest in improving health outcomes (McGuire 2013).

Personalist rule may be the worst when it comes to disease management – as they have the shortest time horizons (see Box 5.5) due to an absence of institutionalized mechanisms for turnover in power. A dictator who constantly lives in fear of **ouster** by both the public and other elites is less likely to invest in healthcare spending to address long-term health problems or invest in human capital (Yan & Lin 2020; Dionne 2011). Personalist dictators may surround themselves and fill government offices with people who have no experience or expertise to handle public health challenges (Ezrow & Frantz 2011). Per-



sonalist regimes are free to make decisions at their whim, since there is no one surrounding the dictator who can either challenge the dictator or wants to. Without any challengers, the personalist leader is also free to siphon off funds that could go toward healthcare and disease prevention into their own pockets.

The personalist dictator also creates an environment that fosters false reporting and politically managing facts. If the truth is inconvenient, the regime will look the other way (Egorov & Sonin 2011; Frantz & Ezrow 2009). Personalist rule is also highly unpredictable (see Frantz & Ezrow 2009), repressive and vindictive, which has been cited as a push factor that has led to an exodus of trained health personnel (Chojnicki & Oden-Defoort 2010). In the case of Equatorial Guinea, by the time personalist dictator Francisco Macías Nguema was deposed (1968-1979), there was not a single university graduate remaining in the country (Decalo 2019). As a result of all of these factors, personalist regimes are erratic and tend to perform poorly on almost all health indicators (Frantz & Ezrow 2011). Though some resource-rich personalist dictatorships may invest somewhat in human capital, the results do not match their assets (Kendall-Taylor et al. 2019).

For example, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire) was run for many years by personalist dictators Joseph Mobutu (1965-1997, Box 1.7), followed by Laurent-Désiré Kabila (1997-2001), followed by Kabila's son Joseph (2001-2019). In spite of being a resource-rich country, after several decades of personalist rule, health financing became non-existent, with the country dependent on both out-of-pocket payments and humanitarian aid (McFerson 2009; WHO 2015). This led to fragmentation, waste and duplication of the health sector and a complete lack of management and regulation. Due to poor funding and planning, capacity remains incredibly uneven. In one district, for example, the capacity was developed to test for HIV/AIDS but not to deliver treatment. Another issue is that health funding is used for personal gain. Medical equipment and supplies were purchased by the central government, with the deliveries coinciding with the first round of presidential elections in 2008 to boost the popularity of the incumbent regime. The supplies were then given to parliamentarians, who were tasked with delivering them to their constituencies, but there was no oversight of this process. Some supplies never arrived while some equipment was delivered without qualified staff to operate it (WHO 2015).

In Venezuela, which had once been a middle-income country, years of personalist rule (first by Hugo Chávez starting with his turn to dictatorship in 2005 and followed by Nicolás Maduro, who cemented his position after Chávez died in 2013) plunged the country into chaos and poverty. Though initially, some progress in health outcomes took place under Chávez, corruption and the drop in oil prices led to the collapse of the health system and the resurgence of preventable diseases (Paniz-Mondolfi et al. 2019). After Maduro took over, things deteriorated further, and diseases like malaria were surging again. By 2019, Venezuela saw a 1200 percent increase in malaria cases since 2000, with nearly half a million cases per year, and accounted for three percent of the malaria deaths in South America (Gabaldón-Figueira et al. 2021). The last official report from the Ministry of Health was in 2016, and after releasing it Health Minister Antonieta Corporale was immediately fired. True, turnover was high for this position, with Venezuela having 17 different health ministers in 20 years, but Corporale was sacked because the report revealed that there had been a 65 and 30 percent increase in maternal and infant mortality rates, respectively (The Lancet 2018). The country refuses to release any other health or epidemiological data. The country has also experienced a massive exodus of biomedical scientists and qualified healthcare professionals (Garcia Zea 2020).

Politically managing the numbers and hiding disease outbreaks can happen in **single-party regimes** as well (as the case study of China will illustrate), but these regimes usually have more potential whistle-blowers who are willing to come forward. Single-party regimes are also more capable of handling health challenges because they tend to invest in health in order to achieve their programmatic outcomes of economic growth and economic expansion.

Personalist rule usually has very little incentive to address any infectious diseases adequately, but there are exceptions. Paul Kagame (a personalist leader) of Rwanda has invested in the overall healthcare of Rwandans and has won accolades from the international community for his commitment to infectious disease control (Iyer et al. 2018; Frantz et al. 2021). Yoweri Museveni (another personalist leader) of Uganda has also worked hard to target the AIDS crisis with some success (Allen & Heald 2004). But for every Museveni and Kagame, there are many others (like ex-presidents Idriss Déby of Chad, Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso and current president Paul Biya of Cameroon) who have allowed infectious diseases to run rampant with little investment or prevention measures in place to address them.

In addition to personalist rule driving poor health outcomes, resource-rich countries may also underperform – in spite of having the revenues available to tackle health challenges. One of the few studies looking at the relationship between regime type and malaria demonstrated that dictatorships that are rich in resources perform the worst in controlling and treating malaria compared to resource-rich democracies (Chang 2020) – cf. **resource curse**. Resource-rich countries tend to establish **patronage** politics where resource rents are delivered to supporters, but no public goods are offered (Robinson et al. 2006). Studies have also shown that resource-rich countries have higher infant and child mortality rates (Makhlouf et al. 2017) and lower life expectancy (Pendergast et al. 2011).

We can also see a general correlation between authoritarian regimes and disease management. Data available shows that countries with the highest *Disease Adjusted Life Years* (DALYs) (or the number of years that have been lost due to poor health, disability or early death) are authoritarian regimes in

Sub Saharan Africa. The only democracies that perform poorly on this measure are South Africa with 21,500 DALY rates out of 100,000, Botswana with 17,400 and India with 13,200. This compares with the Central African Republic, which records 53,800 (Our World in Data 2017), and though every country has improved, autocracies have improved the least.

For the most part, the authoritarian advantage literature lacks robust quantitative evidence. Regardless of the variation within dictatorships, other recent works have emphasized that democracies lead to more positive health outcomes than autocracies in general. A study that looked at 170 countries from 1900-2012 found that democratic rule, measured by looking at the quality of competitive elections, has consistently had positive outcomes on a population's health, even when taking good governance into account (Wang et al. 2019). Though there are exceptions, most authoritarian regimes are unable and/or unwilling to invest, innovate, and consult their public to create robust public healthcare systems that build human capital and ensure the strongest possible health outcomes.

Democracies were accused of reacting slowly to the COVID-19 pandemic, but earlier studies are already predicting that, overall, democracies will fare better because they place a higher value on human life and health (Karabulut et al. 2021). The biggest issue, however, for authoritarian regimes combating disease with pandemic potential is medical censorship. Authoritarian regimes are more likely to engage in medical censorship that can have devastating consequences for reporting the spark of a new virus. Case in point: the Syrian government forced doctors who sounded the alarm that polio had returned to disappear (Eichner & Brockmann 2013); the doctor who had alerted the world about MERS was forced into exile by the Saudi regime (Sparrow 2021); the Chinese government punished the surgeon who dared to speak out about SARS (Dowell 2006). This medical censorship is particularly dangerous because the medical community is so critical to identifying emerging threats.

In fact, the Chinese government's attempt to cover up SARS led to the revision of the *International Health Regulations* (IHR), which stipulated that all countries must report any novel virus that could be of international concern. After the SARS crisis, the Chinese government spent about $100 million on setting up the largest direct reporting network system in the world. The system was supposed to allow any doctor at any level to directly report signs of a disease outbreak to the central government in real-time, but this was never implemented in practice (Farrell 2020). Despite the self-adulation, the early handling of the crisis by the regime made the crisis considerably worse.

With COVID-19, Chinese authorities also concealed that there was a problem and actively repressed the timely flow of crucial public health information (Kuo 2020). Instead, the WHO learned about COVID-19 not through Beijing but through an open-source platform for doctors to quickly disseminate information that could be frowned upon by their governments. China was asked to verify the outbreak, but instead of responding within 24 hours, the government spent time going after those spreading rumors and taking measures against lawbreakers as an intimidation tactic. By 20 January 2020, Beijing finally admitted that there was human-to-human transmission taking place but continued to manage the data only to report a fraction of the real numbers (Sparrow 2021).

Because the transmission rate appeared to be low based on the data China released, the WHO decided not to immediately declare a *Public Health Emergency of International Concern* (PHEIC) and informed the public that the virus was spread through large droplets that landed on surfaces rather than through airborne microdroplets. As such, regular hand washing was advocated instead of masks. Many crucial pieces of information were not communicated by the Chinese government that could have been helpful to the WHO and governments to accurately provide a response and public health advice about the dangers of the disease.

The case of China illustrates the cracks in the 'authoritarian advantage' arguments. There also is not a clear authoritarian advantage when it comes to societal acceptance of restrictions on freedom that may hurt the collective. Some democratic societies were prepared to accept restrictions on freedom and personal data. In many democracies, privacy protections were relaxed to help alert people to be tested. Lax privacy rules in South Korea allowed the state to use credit cards, CCTV, and GPS tracking data of people who have the virus to publicize the results to trace contacts anonymously. Most countries resorted to using quarantines to stem the outbreak (Morgan & Wang 2020). Though there are more authoritarian societies that are accustomed to dealing with invasions of privacy than democracies, this is not always the case. It's also not clear that authoritarian regimes are more likely to quarantine their populations. Some of the toughest COVID rules and lockdowns were in democracies like New Zealand and Australia.

Furthermore, though authoritarian regimes have more repressive tools at their disposal, they are also more likely to deal with a crisis with a cover-up and a disinformation campaign, even if it undermines their ability to respond effectively (Shih 2020). Authoritarian regimes have incentives to cover up the severity of a crisis and to politically manage the data to make themselves appear more in control. In contrast, democracies benefit from a free flow of information and transparency and can make use of all sorts of reports to respond more appropriately to danger (Sen 1994).

In contrast, in authoritarian regimes like China, government employees are used to screen and censor online content and guide online discussions, prohibiting any comments that may spur mobilization and collective action (King et al. 2013). The Chinese government has a long history of secrecy after its disastrous responses to the Great Leap Forward (where an estimated 20-50 million people died of famine). Secrecy and maintaining order come before telling the truth. In the case of SARS in China, as late as 3



April 2003, the minister of health insisted that SARS was stifling criticism of the regime and was adamant that there was nothing to be worried about (Tai & Sun 2011). Fearing retribution, the mass media in China did not even publish the WHO global alert about SARS (Zhang 2003). Beijing also tried to restrict the WHO's inspection team from accessing SARS cases (Baekkeskov & Rubin 2017).

There have also been a handful of leaders in authoritarian regimes that initially downplayed the COVID-19 crisis. Belarussian president Alexander Lukashenko called the coronavirus a 'psychosis' that can be fixed with vodka and saunas. Lukashenko appeared on national television playing ice hockey and hugging other players (Williams & Tétrault-Farber 2021). President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov of Turkmenistan announced that it had no cases of coronavirus in spite of its proximity to hard hit Iran. Berdymukhamedov suppressed news about the virus and banned it from being publicly discussed (Kakissis 2020). Kim Jong-Un also initially declared that there were no cases in North Korea, though the government received funds from the WHO to combat the virus and diagnostic tests from the Russian government and was one of the first countries to shut its borders (Eberstadt 2020). Pierre Nkurunziza, former president of Burundi and an outspoken COVID-denier, is suspected to have died as a result of the virus on 8 June 2020; official reports still state a 'heart attack' as the cause of death.

Authoritarian regimes are also usually more concerned with appearing competent than actually being competent. Most modern authoritarian regimes are low on skill and competence, choosing to mostly blame others when they fail to deliver on any promises. Authoritarian regimes also threaten to punish journalists, bureaucrats, healthcare workers and other whistle-blowers who might expose information that is negative for the regime. By arresting whistle-blowers, this delays a public health response (Burkle 2020).

Another issue of authoritarian regimes is that many have very low levels of trust and interpersonal trust. The governments of China and Singapore are more the exception than the rule. Many authoritarian regimes also have high levels of **corruption,** which fosters low levels of legitimacy in the government. While these low levels of trust don't necessarily translate into regime overthrow – there are serious implications for how these regimes perform when a disease outbreak takes place. States that have performed the best in dealing with outbreaks have high levels of trust in the government and are willing to comply with orders without the government having to resort to using force. They trust that the information that the government is providing is accurate and that obeying these orders makes sense. These societies also have a high level of interpersonal trust, which makes them more likely to engage in community-minded behavior that benefits the greater good, like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

In Iran, trust in the government is low which complicated its response to the COVID-19 crisis. The public was concerned about misinformation, which made it difficult to ascertain what was true and what was false. In Guinea, in the case of Ebola, years of dictatorship, economic mismanagement and corruption have fostered high levels of distrust in the government. In 2009, protests ended with a massacre of more than 150 people, which further contributed to growing tensions (Field 2019). As a result of these low levels of trust, when the Ebola virus broke out in Guinea several years later, the community hid the sick, conducted funerals in secret and worked to elude any contact tracing.

EXAMPLES The Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced virtually no years of democracy. It has been run by one authoritarian regime after the other, most notably with the personalist dictator Jean-Bédel Bokassa leading the country from 1966 to 1979. Bokassa created a legacy of coups, instability and civilian massacres. Bokassa's reign was traumatic, and there were serious implications for the country's development. Bokassa stood trial accused of massacring innocent children and embezzling hundreds of millions in funds. Bokassa's former treasurer testified that Bokassa received $55,000 in funds in cash every week, using at least $170 million for personal use (Goldsmith 1987). This does not include the 20 million spent on his 1977 coronation ceremony (Wakabi 2006).

The health system barely functions due to a shortage of skilled health workers and a lack of medical supplies. Many people die of preventable diseases due to lack of access to vaccinations. While the number one cause of death is tuberculosis, for those under five, it is malaria. The dire state of the health system is not solely due to the fact that the country has faced almost a decade of conflict and instability. At the height of CAR's conflict, there were more deaths due to the lack of health services than from violence (Wohlers et al. 2015). A series of dictators have mismanaged the budget and embezzled funds. As a result, the level and availability of even basic care were non-existent (O'Toole 2019).

In Turkmenistan, one of the most repressive dictatorships, the healthcare system fell apart under the leadership of Saparmurat Niyazov. There is a general policy of secrecy and denial. In 2000, the Turkmen government stopped reporting some health indicators to the WHO. The government stopped offering information on the number of cases of HIV and tried to cover up a ban on the plague. It also issued an unofficial ban on diagnosing any infectious disease, and doctors were not permitted to mention the cause of death being a disease on death certificates.

Due to rising levels of corruption and mismanagement of funds, healthcare cuts took place in order to recover the loss of funds. Huge budget cuts caused the healthcare system to deteriorate further. In 2004, over 15,000 healthcare workers (including doctors, nurses, midwives, and medical assistants) were dismissed and replaced by unqualified military conscripts and user fees were introduced. Budget cuts also affected the procurement of essential drugs and medical supplies. After these cuts were made, some of the money saved was used to build a $12 million Ministry of Health and Medical Industry building in

the shape of a snake's head. Healthcare workers who remained on the payroll were only paid sporadically, leading to an increase in requests for bribes to perform their duties. Then, in 2005, Niyazov ordered all hospitals and public libraries to be closed outside of the capital. Pushback from the international community meant that this was not fully implemented, but many hospitals and libraries did face closures (Rechel & McKee 2007).

There is also a lack of health professionals who have access to proper information on healthcare. There are not enough training materials, and most of the medical knowledge is out of date. The country is isolated and dependent on texts in the Turkmen language. Healthcare professionals are not able to take part in international conferences (Rechel & McKee 2007). Life expectancy is supposedly 68 years of age now – though international organizations believe it may be considerably lower. (In comparison, Georgia, which has experienced more years of democratic governance, has a life expectancy of 73.) It is also very difficult to gain access to accurate data on the cause of death in Turkmenistan.

IMPACT ON POLICY The policy community has not necessarily tied political liberalization with health assistance and support. Rwanda and Uganda have both gained much positive attention for the positive roles that they have played in managing diseases in general in the case of Rwanda and regarding the AIDS crisis in the case of Uganda. Both Rwanda and Uganda are led by personalist dictators – Paul Kagame and Yoweri Museveni, respectively. Yet, both leaders have been the darlings of the **foreign aid** community by setting up healthcare plans that have had some initial success. In Rwanda's case, that success seems to have longevity. Rwanda offers universal healthcare through an inexpensive health insurance system, which covers 91 percent of the population (WHO 2019b). Since August 2021, it has established 1,179 health posts that provide basic health services to communities where healthcare had not been accessible in the past (WHO 2022). The Rwandan government has prioritized training and provision of local healthcare. This investment in healthcare has meant that 80 percent of those requiring malaria treatment are able to receive it, and childhood vaccination rates have increased to 95 percent (WHO 2019a). Rwanda continues to make improvements to what it offers its citizens in the areas of health, in spite of the fact that Rwanda is a dictatorship.

On the other hand, Uganda was also heralded as a big success story in the fight against HIV/AIDS. However, more carefully collected data indicated that the fight against HIV/AIDS has hit major challenges. Data from outside studies showed that HIV prevalence was actually increasing, and essentially, Uganda's success had been exaggerated due to questionable data (Parkhurst 2002). Though Museveni prioritized the fight against AIDS and, by doing so, gained tremendous financial support from foreign aid, the strategy did not address some of the root causes of the spread of infection. The other issue is that the Museveni government has little commitment to **human rights** and has a hardline approach toward homosexuality, which is outlawed and has fueled the spread of HIV.

Uganda's issues with fighting the disease have not impacted the amount of foreign aid that it has received, however. Generally, the policy community has aimed to not use authoritarianism as a reason for withholding important health related aid to states who are willing and cooperative partners.

NEW FRONTIERS The pandemic generated much interest in studying the intersection between infectious diseases and politics. There will be more studies that will evaluate how regime type influenced the response to the pandemic and the response to infectious diseases more generally.

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Economic Development in Authoritarian Regimes

Progress is impossible without change; and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.
– George Bernard Shaw

As defined by the UN, economic development is only one sphere of 'human development,' measured by education indicators like literacy and access to schooling and health indicators like life expectancy and infant and child mortality rates. Human development incorporates all aspects of individuals' wellbeing, ranging from health, economic status and political freedoms. Since 1987, the UN has also emphasized 'sustainable development,' or the process of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This view is sensitive to unequal growth and poverty alleviation among nations as well as to the planet's environment and ecology to support long-term growth.

DEFINITION Economic development consists of the process by which a country grows and modernizes its economy and improves the wellbeing of its citizens.

SEE ALSO While this entry narrows its scope to economic development under authoritarianism, other spheres of human development can be found under **disease management**, **disaster management** and **gender equality**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Whether or not authoritarian regimes are better at generating economic growth and development continues to be debated. Also known as the 'authoritarian advantage,' autocracies were supposedly better equipped to get the most out of their citizens and could rapidly industrialize and grow. Much of the debate was framed in terms of how to promote high rates of investment (Bhagwati 2002). New democracies were vulnerable to demands for immediate consumption, which would lead to a decline in savings and investment. However, studies have not fully supported this assumption. While some autocracies have been able to foster growth, many have not.

LITERATURE In the post-World War II period there was a host of studies that argued that authoritarian regimes are more capable than democracies to promote growth and development. Most notably, Samuel Huntington (1968) argued that authoritarian regimes – particularly **single-party regimes**, were best suited for generating economic growth. Several decades later, Robert Barro (1996) produced an influential quantitative study that similarly concluded that democracy does not promote growth.

Proponents of this view argued that democracies would acquiesce to populist demands for consumption and redistribution (Haggard & Kaufman 2018; Alesina & Rodrik 1994). An unpopular incumbent politician would pursue an unstable economic policy in order to win elections (Besley & Coate 1998). Politicians would deal with shorter 'time horizons' (see Box 5.5) by enacting policies that were detrimental to economic growth (Haggard & Kaufman 2018).

Autocracies, in contrast, are insulated from the demands of the public and are free to pursue unpopular policies that stimulate growth and lead to investment (Przeworski & Limongi 1995). They also are not pressured to redistribute income to their poorer citizens and are able to withstand pressure from labor unions (Alesina & Rodrik 1994; Persson & Tabellini 1994). Authoritarian regimes can suppress



labor and ensure that there are lower wages, which supposedly increases the return from capital and increases the incentive for private investment (Rodrik 1999). Autocracies also do not face policy paralysis. They are free from political gridlock that slows down the decision-making process in democratic regimes (March & Olsen 1984).

Some authors also noted the fast growth rates of South Korea, Taiwan, China, Singapore and Chile as evidence of the authoritarian advantage (see Box 7.3 on Asian Tigers). Nevertheless, in spite of these examples the empirical research on the advantage of authoritarian regimes when it comes to generating economic growth is still contested. Some scholars claim that there is no statistically significant effect (La Porta et al. 1999; Przeworski et al. 2000; Tsebelis 2002).

One reason why the authoritarian advantage may be overblown is that it is assumed that dictators are enlightened enough or externally receptive to expert advice to pursue sound policies. But most dictators lack the expertise and incentive to pursue the 'right' policies (Maravall 1994). Authoritarian regimes also do not have access to all information about how policies are working in practice because state-society relations are often not embedded. There was also a wide variance in terms of the policies that dictatorships pursued, with some implementing expert-led policies and others making gut decisions.

Thus, the type of autocracy matters. Not all countries are Singapore or China. Similar to what Huntington first argued, researchers noted that it was **single-party regimes** that were most likely to generate economic growth, while other forms of authoritarian rule often under-performed. **Personalist rule**, in particular, was the most erratic and would most likely perform poorly economically (Frantz & Ezrow 2011). Because there are no constraints on personalist dictators, they have the power to make arbitrary and badly informed decisions at their whim. This contrasts with single-party regimes, which rely upon the consultation, discussion and consensus of other elite party members, many of whom have a technocratic background to make decisions. Personalist dictators lack the guardrails to prevent kleptocratic behavior, and they are thus more likely to exploit state resources and revenues for their self-enrichment. These predatory policies have an overwhelmingly negative impact on economic growth and the most vulnerable populations.

There are many theoretical reasons why **democracies** would perform better than their authoritarian counterparts. Democratic processes with free and open political environments create conditions necessary to motivate citizens to work, save, and invest (Sirowy & Inkles 1990). Democratic institutions provide checks and balances to curtail the abuse of power (North 1990; Halperin et al. 2009). Institutions create stability, which helps growth because they reduce uncertainty (North 1990). Additionally, **patronage** networks in dictatorships stunt the independence and productivity of the private sector, reducing their growth potential. In their book *Why Nations Fail: The origins of power, prosperity and poverty*, J.A. Robinson and D. Acemoglu (2012) provide a comprehensive comparison between regime trajectories leading to vicious circles under exclusive institutions and virtuous circles under inclusive ones.

Democracies have the public interest at heart, and democratic publics will apply more pressure for governments to invest in human capital – such as healthcare and education, which has positive knock-on effects on economic growth (Tavares & Wacziarg 2001; Baum & Lake 2003; Barro & Sala-i-Martin 2004). Democracies are also more likely to pursue policies that benefit the general population and not just a small group of clients (Acemoglu & Robinson 2006; Bratton & van de Walle 1994).

Although authoritarian regimes are also fully capable of protecting property rights and upholding the rule of law, history shows that they are less inclined to do so. Rather than serve as sources of stability, many autocrats use institutions to hold on to power. Democracy's clear mechanisms for **succession** also foster continuity. Many authoritarian regimes face instability due to frequent coups or threats of conflict. There is no guarantee that an authoritarian regime ousted by a coup will see continuity from the previous regime to the next. When authoritarian regimes collapse, they are usually followed by an entirely different autocracy that may enact new policies.

Democracies allow for free and open debate which may help lead to new ideas and help maintain better transparency and accountability when policies are not working (Halperin et al. 2009). Several studies have found empirical support for the positive effect of democracy on technological change and productivity growth (Przeworski et al. 2000; North 2005; North et al. 2009). Democracies also foster conditions that are conducive to entrepreneurship and innovation (Sirowy & Inkles 1990). In contrast, hierarchical organizations may struggle to stimulate innovation.

Authoritarian regimes restrict civil liberties, and it is difficult to access accurate information. If political elites only tell an autocratic leader what they want to hear, there may be false reporting of output and no mechanism to be transparent about policy failures.

Growth in democracies is also less volatile both between countries and within countries over time (Rodrik 2000). Autocracies like China have experienced spectacular growth rates, but there are a far greater number of autocracies that have performed terribly, like Venezuela, Haiti, Guinea, North Korea and Chad. In fact, autocracies, far more than democracies, are likely to be associated with economic devastation and state collapse. For every Singapore, there is the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has seen its autocratic leadership steal and squander all of the country's resources. According to Morton Halperin and colleagues (2009), the probability of any country experiencing a 10 percent decline in annual per capita GDP from 1960 to 2005 was 3.4 percent, but for democracies, it was less than one percent.

Additionally, democracies grow more steadily in a given county over time (Rodrik 2008). An autocracy might temporarily experience growth but they will tend to revert to where they were initially, or even experience an even steeper decline. Democracies, in contrast, are more likely to experience a stable pattern of growth and decline.

While both regimes have the potential to implement pro-growth policies, democracies pursue a number of other benefits in terms of development that are important to citizens. As mentioned, democracies are more likely to invest in their citizens – in education, healthcare and infrastructure (Brown & Hunter 2004; Kaufman & Segura-Ubiergo 2001; Min 2008; Stasavage 2005). Democracies are more likely to focus on the welfare of their citizens and, not surprisingly, see their citizens live longer and healthier lives than citizens in autocracies (Przeworski et al. 2000; Halperin et al. 2009). Infant mortality rates, child mortality rates and maternal death rates are also better in democracies (Kudamatsu 2012; Navia & Zweifel 2003). Citizens in democracies are also paid better wages. Democracy also has a particularly important effect on women. Women living in autocracies earn much less than women in democracies, have more children, and are more likely to die in childbirth (Przeworski et al. 2000). Citizens in democracies also have higher calorie consumption rates than in autocracies (Blaydes & Kayser 2011).

Democracies have numerous advantages when it comes to development because their voters hold democratically elected leaders accountable. Thus, elected representatives have greater incentive to invest in areas that citizens support and if they fail to do so, will be voted out of office. Amartya Sen (1999) famously noted that there has never been a famine (cf. Box 7.4) in a democracy. Opposition parties, civil society and a free press ensure that steps are taken to avert a slow-moving disaster like a famine. Citizens may lack accurate information in autocracies and are unable to hold leaders to account even if they want to (Keefer 2004).

Nevertheless, some studies question the conclusion that democracies perform better on development indicators. Casey Mulligan et al. (2004) find that there are no major differences between autocracies and democracies in terms of education spending. Rory Truex (2017) claims that democracies are better at ensuring that their citizens have access to clean water, but that evidence is inconclusive that they are able to foster lower infant mortality rates and lengthen life expectancies.

There are also examples of autocracies that have built-in mechanisms for ensuring that public goods are implemented effectively. China lifted 400-500 million people out of poverty and worked effectively to control malaria significantly. Life expectancy has risen, and infant and child mortality rates have dropped. Field work by Lily Tsai (2007) has demonstrated that in China, solidarity groups ensure that public officials are held accountable by spreading information about how the community is functioning. Local elections also serve to keep local leaders on task and have led to increased public good investment in villages (Luo et al. 2007). Surprisingly, democracies do not perform better than autocracies when it comes to inequality. Although this may seem counter-intuitive, the evidence is mixed on the impact of regime type on equality. One explanation for this is that though democracies spend more on education and healthcare, these investments seem to benefit the middle and upper classes (Ross 2006; Nelson 2007).

MEASUREMENT Development is measured in numerous ways – studies can look at GDP growth rates, GDP per capita growth rates, income inequality as measured by the GINI index, poverty rates (such as the percentage of the population living below the poverty line, and the percentage of the population living under $2.25 a day). Other measures of development include looking at education variables such as literacy rates, the percentage of children enrolled in school, average number of years of schooling, life expectancy, child, infant and maternal mortality rates, number of hospital beds, doctors and medical personnel per capita and the percentage of the population with access to clean water and a flush toilet.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Past studies compared authoritarian regimes to democracies using ordinary least squares regressions which would compare economic growth rates across countries. More recent studies have used panel data techniques to measure economic growth rates within countries over time to see if **democratization** or **autocratization** made much of a difference. This helps to understand the impact of different regime types while controlling for factors such as geography, natural resources and colonization, for example. Studies that have looked within countries have found that democracy has a positive impact on growth rates (Rodrik & Wacziarg 2005; Papaioannou & Siourounis 2008; Persson & Tabellini 2007).

EXAMPLES From the 1960s until the 1990s much attention was on the phenomenal growth rates of the Asian Tigers (cf. Box 7.3). Countries such as Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, as well as Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia were able to transform their economies completely and spearhead impressive growth, growing three times as fast as countries in Latin America and five times as fast as countries in Africa (Jilberto & Mommen 2012). All of the countries pursued sound economic policies, built strong institutions and economies of scale and used an export-oriented strategy. They were also noted for being authoritarian at the time of their growth. The consensus was that a major reason for their success was that these regimes were free to pursue potentially unpopular policies and force the labor force to make sacrifices that would not have been possible in democratic regimes.

The most textbook case was Singapore, which was run by the *People's Action Party* (PAP) for decades and was able to pursue a long-term development strategy uninterrupted by other regimes changing course. As such, it developed rapidly into an industrialized modern economy that would become a major center



for high-tech industries and finance. Property rights were respected, credit was easily available, key industries were targeted, and wages were kept low in order to encourage high savings and investment. The country also expanded its health care system and educational system and invested more in its infrastructure. Singapore was also a standout for having well-developed and impartial bureaucratic and judicial institutions, and political institutions that offered some checks on the prime minister.

The institutions in other Asian states were not quite as developed, but many of these regimes had strong legal systems, protected property rights and provided strong incentives for firms to be efficient using both market and command approaches. Policies also encouraged the accumulation of capital and high savings rates. The states also heavily invested in research and development and human and physical capital. Support for firms was based on strong performance. Labor was repressed, and wages were kept low.

As a result, growth rates in Asian authoritarian regimes were higher on average than in other democratic regimes outside the region. Growth rates also fell in Indonesia when it transitioned to democracy and were lower in Thailand during the years that it was a full democracy. Nevertheless, the impact of democratization was not conclusive. Growth rates were faster in South Korea, the Philippines and Bangladesh during the years they were democratic. Additionally, one of the strongest economic performers in the region is Japan, which has been a democracy for decades. This entry, however, does not take into account that all of these regimes heavily benefited from vast amounts of Western foreign aid. In many ways, the growth rates in authoritarian regimes in Asia were an exception, not the rule. In fact, once researchers removed East Asia from the sample, authoritarian growth rates plummeted, while democracies remained steady. Low-income democracies are also less volatile than their authoritarian counterparts (Halperin et al. 2009).

IMPACT ON POLICY The authoritarian advantage idea generated attention on the impact of regime type on economic growth, leading some policymakers to pause the drive to push for elections as a panacea to underdevelopment. There was a rise in advocacy for 'sequentialism' – or supporting countries in establishing the rule of law first and foremost over other democratic institutions, particularly multi-party elections. This spawned a host of different studies to examine which types of democratic institutions were conducive to growth and the same for authoritarian regimes. Some autocracies do not have turnover in power but have other institutional checks that mimic democracy. Scholars continue to work to understand better what is the right institutional combination that works best to stimulate economic growth and development.

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Box 7.3 East Asian Tigers: Illiberal Growth?

Better to live one day as a tiger than a thousand years as a sheep.
– Tipu Sahib (ca. 1750-1799), Sultan of Mysore in India

The 'East Asian Tigers' – Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and China, are countries that, under strong political leadership (either democratic or authoritarian), have industrialized, transited and become competitive, prosperous (geo)economies. A subset – South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore – is known as the 'Asian little dragons' or 'four Asian tigers.' They first emerged as the newly-industrialized Asian countries in the 1970s and 1980s. In their political-economic systems, politics and business became inseparable in pursuing export-oriented industrialization, which emerged during a time of economic liberalism *without* political liberalism. (Tipton 2002: 348, 386) According to the 'governed market' theory, these countries achieved significant economic success due to active state intervention and substantial investments in neighboring developing countries. (Cheung 2000: 293) This model stands in contrast to both classical liberal capitalism and Marxist socialism.

The East Asian developmental model refers to the economic strategy and policies often characterized by combining export-led growth, high savings, strategic industrial policies, and strong government intervention in the economy to generate growth and welfare production. East Asian tigers are known for their rapid industrialization, which was based on continuous technological upgrading, financed predominantly through the banking system. This approach has proven to be effective in promoting economic growth and development. (Mikheeva 2019) Two core concepts defined this developmental model: state autonomy and state capacity, in particular, ruling over weak civil society, social classes and private capital, strengthening the role of government in the national political economy, consisting of a complex network of social relations among producers, traders and consumers. (Kim et al. 2013: 316)

Japan's developmental state, from 1925 to 1975, was characterized by interventionist policies that spanned both the imperial and post-war periods (Tonami 2018: 1211). This model served as an alternative to both command and mixed economies. Central to this system was the 'Iron Triangle,' a close collaboration between politicians, bureaucrats, and businesses that supported export-oriented industrialization, the formation of cartels and horizontal structures like *keiretsu* along the 'city banks.' (Keiretsu – 系列 refers to a grouping of interlocking businesses and shareholdings into loose conglomerates. These replaced the previous (vertical) imperialist zaibatsu (財閥 – financial cartel) system from pre-WWII Japan, which was dismantled under Allied occupation). Key institutions such as the *Ministry of International Trade and Industry* (MITI) and the *Bank of Japan* played essential roles in mediating between large business conglomerates and the state, driving Japan's post-war economic miracle. Japan's access to US markets allowed it to export goods and accumulate capital, which supported its capital market development. Skilled bureaucrats managed this transition, while post-war democratic governments led by the *Liberal Democratic Party* (LDP) regulated development both domestically and internationally through economic diplomacy. MITI also consciously promoted offshoring as part of its broader strategy (Gray 2011: 579). Chalmers Johnson famously described this model as the 'developmental state' (Johnson 1982; Tonami 2018: 1213), a term that has since become widely used in the literature on newly industrialized states.

The 'flying geese model' is a theory of economic



development that describes how industrialization and economic growth spread across East Asia in a hierarchical pattern, with Japan leading the way, followed by other countries in the region. Japanese economist Kaname Akamatsu first proposed this model in the 1930s during Japan's imperial period. It suggests that as Japan developed certain industries, it would later relocate outdated or less competitive sectors to neighboring countries, reducing economic and environmental costs at home. This relocation facilitated the transfer of industrial knowledge, foreign capital, and management practices to these countries, allowing them to develop their own industries.

The model envisions a V-shaped formation of countries, with Japan at the front as the 'leading goose,' followed by other nations like South Korea and Taiwan, and later China and Southeast Asian nations (foremost Singapore). As Japan moved up the value chain into more advanced industries, it passed on older technologies and industries to its neighbors, which could then replicate and build upon Japan's experience. This process helped to create a regional pattern of industrialization where countries progressively followed Japan's developmental trajectory.

Although the model has been criticized for its association with Japanese imperialism (Box 4.2) of the pre-WWII era, it was later used to explain Japan's post-war regional economic resurgence and its role in fostering economic growth in East Asia during the latter half of the twentieth century. The flying geese model illustrates how regional economic integration occurred through a sequential process of industrial upgrading and diffusion across East Asia. The PRC recycled a similar theoretical pattern in promoting the new *Belt and Road Initiative* in 2015.

Both Taiwan and South Korea drew inspiration from Japan's developmental model, but each country adapted the approach to suit its unique circumstances and goals. This model differed from the socialist centralized systems prevalent in other regions, as it involved authoritative or dictatorial regimes. After WWII, both Taiwan and South Korea – former colonies of the Empire of Japan – were governed by authoritarian regimes that shared a strong anti-communist stance. Under US protection during the Cold War, American grand strategy aimed to promote economic development among its East Asian allies, who were facing threats from the PRC and North Korea (DPRK). US aid agencies played a critical role in state-building efforts in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, offering support for economic planning (Lee 2020: 737). In this geopolitical arrangement, the US acted as a patron state, while Japan, Korea, and Taiwan (the 'JAKOTA' region) were client states for both economic and security purposes. This distinguishes these countries from the next generation of developmental states, such as China (Lee 2020: 742).

Unlike South Korea and Taiwan, Japan's state was consensus-based rather than a strong-state model. This allowed Japan to avoid pitfalls like political scandals or conflicts of interest between the state and businesses (cf. crony capitalism – Box 1.10). The Japanese economy thrived under a system of communitarian capitalism, where conglomerates evolved from informal cartels based on co-prosperity principles. Similar to Japan's business networks, the (South) Korean-type *chaebol* (재벌 – 'rich clan' – a family-owned *zaibatsu*) and Taiwanese conglomerates expanded into China via Hong Kong or into Southeast Asia via Singapore. The promotion of manufactured exports – a key theme in the World Bank's 'East Asian Miracle' (1993) – was later downplayed as exports were seen largely as a private sector response to macroeconomic stability and economic freedom (McNicoll 2014: 298). Both South Korea and Taiwan pursued an Anglo-American neoliberal model of capitalism, building on neo-mercantilist political economies (Gray 2011: 580), supported by access to US markets and military needs related to conflicts in Korea (1950-1953), crises over the Taiwan Strait (1954-1955, 1958), and the Vietnam War (1955-1975).

In South Korea, unlike the *Bank of Japan*, the *Korea Development Bank* had less autonomy from the government. Bureaucrats set export targets, and national ownership of banks helped coordinate industrial conglomerates in capital accumulation (Mikheeva 2019: 597). Under Park Chung Hee's dictatorial regime (1961-1979), South Korea transformed from a poverty-stricken country into a prosperous economy (Kang 2010). The *Economic Planning Board* created five-year Economic Development Plans (Kim et al. 2013: 235), with technological priorities shifting over time. In the 1970s, the focus was on heavy and chemical industries; in the 1980s, it shifted to shipbuilding, machinery, and steel sectors; and by the 1990s, loans were directed toward export-oriented manufacturing (Mikheeva 2019: 598).

In the Republic of China (ROC – Taiwan), the government played a central role in guiding economic development under the dictatorial leadership of Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) and the *Kuomintang* (國民黨 – *Guómíndǎng*) party. The *China Development Corporation*'s lending portfolio shifted from textiles and petrochemicals in the 1960s and 1970s to electronics, semiconductors, and information technology (IT) industries in the 1980s. By the 2000s, it expanded to include optoelectronics, alternative energy, healthcare, and consumer goods. This reorganization led to the creation of specialized industrial groups for each of these sectors (Mikheeva 2019: 601-602). Taiwan's industrialization was also shaped by US grand strategy within Sino-American relations. The election of the *Democratic Progressive Party* (DPP) in 2000 tested Taiwan's democratic **transition** due to the legacy of state **corporatism** and the close ties between the *Kuomintang* Party, the state, and business elites. Their ascent to power also tested Taiwan's relations with the PRC (Gray 2011: 585, 591).

Hong Kong was unique among East Asian tigers in achieving impressive economic results without significant industrialization (Cheung 2000: 295). It developed under the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy, which allowed for a degree of civil liberties while striving for international competitiveness and recognition. Hong Kong served as a gateway for opening markets in the PRC, starting with special economic zones in Chinese coastal provinces. From the 1980s onward, Taiwanese overseas investments flowed through Hong Kong, which acted as a funding conduit. *Kuomintang*'s development investments and private contacts with mainland China contributed to China's economic emergence. Cross-strait trade increased significantly with China's market reforms (capitalism with 'Chinese characteristics') and Taiwan's liberalization (Gray 2011: 592). However, unlike Taiwan, the expectation that capitalist development would lead to political democratization in

the PRC was proven false after the Tiananmen Square repression in 1989.

Although Singapore is not typically considered one of the East Asian tigers, it played a significant role as an 'Asian little tiger' in contributing to China's development – the largest tiger economy in Asia. Since its establishment in 1965, Singapore has achieved remarkable economic growth as a developmental state in Southeast Asia (Huff 1995). It has emerged as a regional hub along growth zones such as the Singapore-Johor-Riau 'Growth Triangle' ('SIJORI'). As a city-state strategically located between the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea, the Singapore model incorporated successful elements from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The government played a crucial role in its development strategy, which was influenced by a mix of Western and Eastern values (Han-Yin Chang 2003: 85). Unlike Hong Kong, which had access to a pool of entrepreneurs, Singapore had to import and purchase technology to fuel its growth.

The Singaporean government implemented economic policies that involved transnational and multinational corporations in its industrialization process, with the *Development Bank of Singapore* playing a key role (Mikheeva 2019: 603). Since 1965, the *People's Action Party* (PAP) has been the dominant political force in Singapore. Under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew (reign: 1959-2011), the PAP successfully managed challenges such as ethnic diversity, pressure groups, and media control. Singapore combined a free-market economic system with an authoritarian political system, balancing economic growth with political control. The transition from a poor to a wealthy city-state is linked to values such as elitism, conservative liberalism, communitarianism, and pragmatism (Han-Yin Chang 2003: 101). This success has made Singapore one of the most developed countries in the world, a notable source of **soft power**.

The PRC, one of the major Communist regimes globally, has made tremendous economic progress over the past four decades, lifting hundreds of millions out of poverty. China's development path shares characteristics with the developmental state model (Seung-Wook Baek 2005). In addition to corporate governance, key features include government support for state-owned enterprises (SOEs), import-substituting industrialization in heavy industries, high dependence on export markets, and a high domestic savings rate. Among East Asian countries, China's developmental model shares more similarities with Taiwan than with Japan or South Korea. Specifically, the public sector in China specializes in capital-intensive and import-substituting industrialization, while the non-public sector focuses on export-oriented industrialization (Seung-Wook Baek 2005: 494). China's development is thus based on a combination of public and non-public ownership and a heavy reliance on export markets (Seung-Wook Baek 2005: 496).

Shaped by neoliberal globalization, China emulated aspects of the developmental state model and became one of the world's major export-oriented economies. By 2010, China surpassed Japan to become the second-largest economy globally and is projected to surpass the United States by 2030, potentially. According to Nicola Meier's (2009) study on China's automobile industry, China's development model is an innovative blend of factors from developmental states and legacies of its past command economy. Under limited political pluralism and strong state regulation, China adopted market economy mechanisms while maintaining significant state involvement through SOEs in strategic sectors like heavy industry and manufacturing. These enterprises were instrumental in driving China's economic growth and export expansion through initiatives such as the *Belt and Road Initiative.*

The optimistic tone surrounding East Asia's developmental model began to fade after the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997. The *International Monetary Fund*'s bailout of South Korea that year and the subsequent neoliberal restructuring were seen by some as evidence that the era of the developmental state had ended and that East Asian tigers were transitioning towards neoliberalism (Gray 2011: 578).

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Box 7.4 Famine: The Third Horseman of the Apocalypse

Уничтожим кулака как класс!
(We shall eradicate the kulaks as a class!)
– Slogan of the Soviet 'dekulakization' campaign, 1929.

A hungry stomach has no ears
– Jean de la Fontaine

Famines – understood here as the widespread scarcity of food causing mass starvation and illness – might be a conscious or unconscious result under dictatorship. As authoritarian regimes often emerge from wars, revolutions or coups, their leadership feels obliged to fulfill their initial postulates and promises regardless of their sense and costs.

Until the twentieth century, most famines were caused by successive crop failures, often triggered by biospheric factors such as droughts, floods, climate change, or epidemics, or by anthropogenic factors such as wars. Elmann (2000; 2005) distinguishes between two principal categories of *Food Availability Declines* (FAD). The first, FAD1, refers to largely unavoidable causes, such as biospheric disruptions, while the second, FAD2, involves avoidable causes that can be mitigated through appropriate preventive or reactive measures.

Howe and Devereux (2004) categorized famines into two principal phases based on their intensity and magnitude, defining 'great famines' as those with 100,000 to one million victims. In terms of spatial impact, famines can be classified as global (planetary), state-level, or regional/local events.

Famines in authoritarian regimes can be classified based on several criteria. One distinction is between natural and human-caused famines. In the case of natural disasters, the regime's competence is tested by its response to the crisis. In contrast, human-caused famines can arise from a variety of factors. Authoritarian regimes often deflect responsibility for such crises, blaming internal enemies and external circumstances or falsely attributing the causes to natural events.

Famines can also be categorized by their temporal causes: short-term (acute) versus long-term (chronic) famines. Short-term famines are typically linked to sudden structural changes in the economy or social system,

Table 7.1 – Significant Famines in Modern Dictatorships

State/region	Period	Causes	Ideology and later Interpretation
USSR (Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, Turkestan)	1918-1922	(Civil) war, Bolshevik economic policy, blockade of food transport, drought	Implementation of Lenin's dogmatics
USSR	1932-1934	Collectivization	Implementation of Marxist-Leninist dogmatics under Stalin Ukraine (partially Kazakhstan) – conscious genocide
USSR	1941-1944	World War II, Leningrad blockade, occupation of Kharkiv and Kyiv	Heroization of victims and the city by the USSR
Poland	1939-1945	War, concentration camps, ghettos	Nazi ideology, elimination of Jews and other enemies of the state
Vietnam	1945-1946	War for independence	Anti-colonial struggle
USSR	1946-1947	Drought, ideology (crop export to support Soviet satellite countries)	International aid with ideological background
China	1958-1961	Collectivization, floods, extraction of food from regions to elite	Implementation of The *Great Leap Forward* ideological construct
Ethiopia	1972	Drought, poor governance	Fall of the empire and rise of the *Derg* dictatorship
Ethiopia	1984-1985	Drought, civil war, economic mismanagement, repression (forced migration and relocation, rise of military expenditures)	
Somalia	1991-1992	Civil war, drought	Genocide of Ishaak clan in Somaliland
North Korea	1995-2000	Floods and droughts, suspension of food imports (embargoes and disintegration of the USSR)	

Source: Author's own work.

such as revolutions, wars, or collectivization efforts. Long-term famines, on the other hand, reveal deeper structural issues within the regime that hinder its ability to produce and distribute sufficient food to its population. In many cases, these chronic issues stem from radical transformations in the economy and society initiated by the authoritarian regime.

The rise of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has significantly contributed to famines resulting from economic policies or wars. These famines – see Table 7.1 for selected examples – have severely undermined states' capacities to grow and distribute enough food for their populations. Three principal characteristics of dictatorships contribute to famine and FAD2: (a) implementation of a strong **ideology** with Utopian and radical objectives; (b) dogmatic state behavior as well as state capture of the administration and the economy by the regime; (c) the relentless pursuit of personal prestige and ambitions by the leader or leadership group.

Authoritarian regimes tend to centralize and concentrate resources, redistributing them primarily to the ruling elite or central urban areas, particularly capitals, in order to legitimize the regime both domestically and internationally (Sen 1981; Haggard & Noland 2007: 68). J. Wallace (2013) refers to this urban bias as the 'Faustian bargain.' Such predatory behavior often results in resource shortages for other regions, the dismantling of existing socio-economic systems, and the expropriation of resources from the lower levels of society. Moreover, as Liu et al. (2022: 2) demonstrated, food expropriation can disproportionately affect wealthier regions more than poorer ones. The role of regional leaders is also crucial in either mitigating or exacerbating starvation (Cai 2020; Kung & Chen 2011).

At the same time, as Davies and Wheatcroft (2006; 2016) showed in the case of the Soviet famine of 1932-1934, **personalist rule** can indirectly drive famine. Such regimes often establish ineffective and unaccountable systems that benefit only those in power. In some cases, **personalization** within regimes leads to mass **purges** or targeted attacks against ethnic or social groups. This is a common interpretation in discussions surrounding the *Holodomor* (голодомор – 'death by hunger') in Ukraine during the 1930s (Kasianov 2008). The USSR's approach toward Ukraine contrasts with debates over the *asharshilik* (ашаршылық – famine) during the collectivization and forced migrations in Kazakhstan (Kindler 2018; Cameron 2018). Notably, this debate is absent in contemporary Russia.

In contrast to more democratic regimes, where consultations or elections can hold leaders accountable, authoritarian regimes often suffer from a lack of accountability and responsibility toward their populations. This can lead to irrational decision-making processes that are not corrected internally, resulting in food shortages and famines (Zewde 2002: 263). **Censorship** further exacerbates these issues by limiting the spread of information about famines. While this may help prevent public discontent – something authoritarian regimes seek to avoid – it also restricts effective responses to starvation and hinders external aid, as acknowledging famine would be seen as an admission of failure.

As a result, many authoritarian regimes limit the influence of NGOs and international organizations like UN agencies to prevent their involvement in famine relief efforts. Such involvement could tarnish the regime's image or expose its underlying nature. This was evident during the North Korean famine of the 1990s when the regime tightly controlled humanitarian aid distribution, preventing foreign donors from reaching the worst-affected areas (Haggard & Noland 2007: 92-97).

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Education in Authoritarian Regimes

Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.
– Confucius

One of the critical components for any authoritarian regime is to gain a stronger grip on society – and the key to this process is winning over hearts and minds at a young age. Ensuring that the citizenry is committed not just to the nation but also to the regime is an important objective. In order to accomplish this, authoritarian regimes use **propaganda** and **indoctrination**, **censorship** and information control, emphasize obedience and respect for authority – utilizing authoritarian teaching methods, monitor educators and students (cf. **academic freedom**) and may prevent some groups from accessing higher education.

Most notably, authoritarian regimes rely on mass education campaigns in order to promote an **ideology** that justifies the regime and socializes segments of the population in ways that can prevent a future uprising (Paglayan 2017). The crucial importance of the Education Reform in indoctrination was illustrated by Romanian Communist Minister of Education, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej himself: *"The Ministry of Education is not a part time job of four hours. It is more important than the State Security Ministry because we had to destroy the enemy from the cultural domain"* (Vasile 2009).

As many authoritarian regimes use education to indoctrinate the masses, the first step is to change and update the curricula. In Italy under Benito Mussolini (1922-1943), all old textbooks were replaced with new ones in order to ensure the devotion of the next generation of Italians (Wood & DeLuca 2012). In Spain under Francisco Franco, the textbooks were updated to highlight the economic and social achievements of the Franco regime, while anti-democratic political messages and an emphasis on family and the Catholic faith were a constant (Aguilar 2009). In Chile, under Augusto Pinochet, the state made substantial changes to the curricula, indoctrinating students with the idea that collective ways of coping with demands were wrong (Preda 2012). History books also omitted certain events and revised and distorted the past (Pastrana 2007). The curriculum of Albanian schools was a strong force in disseminating the communist doctrine to students. Starting from 1946, the Minster of Education made the political and ideological principles of the *Albanian Communist Party* an integral part of the educational program (Staar 1982).

Authoritarian regimes not only indoctrinated students but also engaged in *teaching methods* that discouraged critical thinking. Pedagogy promotes respect for authority and an emphasis on rote memorization (Algan et al. 2013) – see also the **authoritarian personality**. From a young age, students in authoritarian regimes are taught to follow directions, and repeat what had been taught without ever questioning the content. Such methods are at odds with liberal views of education, which stresses the need to develop autonomous thinking individuals. In Turkey, the teaching methods do not promote critical thinking with no opposition to the regime permitted in the classroom. Instead, rote memorization of sayings was encouraged in order to instill the state's ideology and teach students to be subservient to authority. In Egypt, there was little opportunity to discuss, debate and ask questions. Developing critical thinking and a political consciousness was discouraged. Textbooks need to be faithfully memorized and never questioned. Students were taught to submit to authority and be passive and loyal to the regime (Mirshak 2020).

The teaching methods in the Soviet Union were also designed to create a certain type of citizen. Children entered school at seven, and activities were designed around creating a collective. As such, schools were organized as miniature versions of the Soviet State. Each classroom was a unit of the *Communist Youth Organization* (Коммунистический союз молодёжи, abbreviated as: 'Комсомол' – *'Komsomol'*), while the school was designed as a brigade. Independent thinking was not cultivated, and deviants were kept in line. Children were actually encouraged to denounce rule breakers, resulting in classroom trials. Children were also encouraged to behave like party members – with the state overtaking the role of the family in shaping minds and values (Matthews 2012).

In many authoritarian regimes, teachers were trained to comply with the strict objectives of the state. In Albania, teacher training was confined to focusing on rigid compliance with political indoctrination guidelines (Alhasani 2015). In Bulgaria, teachers were retrained and were responsible for daily political instruction along the lines laid down by the party secretary in each school (Glenn 1994).

In the same way that good-quality education is conducive to **democratization** (Sandborn & Thyne 2014), Authoritarian regimes see revamping the educational system as critical to their longevity. Though it was long viewed as something only accomplished and attempted by **totalitarian regimes** or **ideocracies**, regimes as varied as Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro, Hungary under Viktor Orbán and Russia under Vladimir Putin have all tried to exercise control through some forms of **indoctrination**. In the latter's case, Putin ensured that critical updates were made to history textbooks that praised Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Sauer 2022). Not to be outdone, in Brazil, the Minister of Education tried to eliminate the use of the term *gender* in any educational activity that was supported by the state (Green 2019), and Hungary updated textbooks to warn students about the perils of migration and the importance of homogeneity in Hungary (McKenzie 2019). Whatever the case, the educational system will remain an important conduit for authoritarian regimes to indoctrinate their young citizens.

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Environmentalism & Authoritarianism

(…) the fundamental law of nature being the preservation of mankind, no human sanction can be good, or valid against it.
– John Locke, *Two Treatises,* Chapter XI, par. 135

Even the best democracies agree that when a major war approaches, democracy must be put on hold for the time being. I have a feeling that climate change may be an issue as severe as a war.
– James Lovelock, noted scientist and environmentalist (2010)

An increasing number of citizens globally are skeptical about the ability of liberal market democracies to tackle climate change effectively. Instead, they are leaning toward radical solutions. Significant segments of the environmentalist literature capitalize on this sentiment, rejecting liberal democracy and market mechanisms and showing an openness to 'authoritarian environmentalism' or 'ecological Marxism' for addressing environmental challenges. The debate on the best regime type to deal with climate change and what trade-offs are acceptable is ongoing (Shahar 2015; Mittiga 2022; Zinda 2023; Albert 2023). Enninga (2023) offers 'ordoliberalism' as an alternative to liberal democracy and its consumerist markets to meet global environmental and ecological challenges.

DEFINITION This entry briefly introduces some issues and themes associated with environmentalism and comparative authoritarianism. Note that when defining environmentalism, the (dominant) Western conceptualization of 'the environment' is an intellectual **colonial legacy**, perceived as a separate sphere from humans. This paradigm has influenced contemporary environmentalism and how environmental problems are perceived and addressed. Koch (2024: 213) finds that: *"Geographers and other critical scholars have long challenged this divide – arguing that it is a social construction rather than an empirical fact. In fact, the rhetorical and material acts that socially construct 'nature' and 'the environment' as spheres, separate from humans, are political acts"* (Castree & Braun 2001, cited in Koch 2024).

SEE ALSO This topic is closely linked to **economic development**, **disaster management** and debates on the trade-offs of authoritarian environmentalism regarding **human rights**, accountability and effective, sustainable policies; topics that are echoed in authoritarian **disease management**.

ORIGIN The political dimensions of environmentalism in the West emerged in the late 1960s alongside 'green politics' movements in the 1970s. Historically, organized environmentalism can be traced back to nineteenth-century Europe and North America, where early environmental campaigners responded to issues such as resource management and colonial conservation projects. These efforts laid the groundwork for transnational environmental networks and the first international NGOs dedicated to environmental protection (Falkner 2021). Mark Beeson (2010) has been credited with inventing 'environmental authoritarianism' when observing authoritarian developments in East Asia, in particular China's developmental trajectory.



KEY SIGNIFICANCE A new generation of scholars explores the complex relationship between authoritarian regimes and environmental policies, challenging the predominant Western perspective that often equates effective environmental policy with liberalism and individualism (cf. Brain & Pál 2019: 2). While many authoritarian regimes have poor environmental records, a broader perspective is necessary to understand how these regimes politicize environmental issues. Environmental concerns often intersect with issues of regime **legitimacy** and **external legitimacy**. Still, their 'coercive environmentalism' continues to fascinate ardent climate activists and radicalized ecologists disillusioned with the failure of liberal states to bring forth significant positive change.

Authoritarian regimes engage very differently with environmentalism. Some ignore it and shy away from committing to international norms. Some vehemently attack it, like Bolsonaro's anti-environmental agenda in Brazil (Deutsch 2021). Others may use environmental policies to enhance their **legitimacy**. For instance, they might engage in positive climate change initiatives or host international environmental summits to gain favor with foreign donors. Domestically, authoritarian regimes may address environmental issues proactively to prevent them from becoming focal points for anti-regime protests. The management of natural resources is also a key area where political geography plays a role, as the distribution of resources (**resource curses**) and their associated benefits and harms vary significantly across different authoritarian regimes (and also *within* regimes at sub-national level, cf. Carlitz & Povitkina (2021)). Contestation 'repertoires' (Box 5.8) of environmental activism combined with different authoritarian information-gathering practices also structure environmental policy diversity across regimes (Plantan 2018).

EXAMPLES China's environmental policy has evolved significantly, reflecting its dual role as both the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases and a leader in renewable energy technology supply chains. Since 2012, China's leadership has been using a green 'China Dream' discourse that connects domestic environmental actions to the 'glorious revival' of the Chinese nation by aiming for global leadership on climate change. Agostinis and Urdinez (2024) find evidence that Beijing has been promoting authoritarian green policies within the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (SCO) to its members, evidence of authoritarian norm diffusion within **authoritarian regionalism**.

China has committed to ambitious climate goals, including curbing carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. These targets are part of a broader strategy to integrate environmental considerations into economic development, as seen in initiatives like the national carbon trading market and substantial investments in renewable energy. However, China's approach is a top-down governance model that has raised concerns about **human rights** and the sustainability of its environmental policies. Policy critics argue that this model can lead to social discontent and inefficiencies, highlighting the need for more inclusive, grassroots-driven environmental initiatives. **Human rights** observers find that almost half of the world's supply of polysilicon, a key component of solar panels, is produced in Xinjiang, a region where government abuses against the 13 million minority Uyghur Muslims have been condemned as 'crimes against humanity' by 51 UN members (many equating them with genocide – Box 1.19). Denying these accusations, China continues to work toward taking a pivotal role in global climate efforts (Beeson 2018; Li & Shapiro 2020; Wang 2022; Lo 2020).

LITERATURE For advanced introductions to this topic, consult Eaton & Kostka (2024) and Koch (2024). For comparative works with historical and contemporary cases, consult Brain & Pál 2019; Jörgens et al. 2023. Wilson (2020) compares environmental governance in the Soviet Union, Maoist China, and Nazi Germany.

Today, scholarship is tackling the topic from various angles, ranging from the process of environmental policy development (Chen & Aschenbrenner in Jörgens et al. 2023) to green norm diffusion (Bagozzi 2013; Agostinis & Urdinez 2024). Environmental pollution under authoritarianism is also a salient but understudied topic, ranging from water management (Chen 2019; Bruun & Rubin 2022), air pollution (Ahlers & Ahen 2018; Chou et al. 2022), deforestation (Kuusela & Amacher 2016) fishing regulations (Kantel 2020); waste management (Wu & Martus 2021; Masyutina et al. 2023), to the fallout of nuclear testing. Horz et al. (2023) find that pollution becomes a significant grievance when high levels of economic growth do not compensate citizens and can signal regime incompetence.

Regarding regime types, Von Stein (2022) and Fiorino (2022) explore how different regime 'types' affect environmental policies, substituting individual variables as proxies or **continuous measures** as dichotomous categories. Democracies often yield positive environmental outcomes due to electoral accountability, civil liberties, and political constraints. These mechanisms can incentivize eco-friendly policies if citizens prioritize such issues. However, autocracies can implement rapid and decisive actions, sometimes necessary for urgent environmental challenges, though they often lack public participation and accountability, which can lead to policies that do not reflect citizens' preferences or address local environmental concerns comprehensively (Bruun 2020). Also, a benign, ecological authoritarianism has never existed (Fiorino 2022).

Drawing on a theory centered around the provision of environmental public goods, Böhmelt (2015) differentiates between categorical regime types (using the GWF classification) and their respective divergence in providing public goods. He finds that the lobbying efforts of environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs) are least pronounced in autocracies that are more likely to provide environmental public goods on their own (i.e., single-party regimes).

NEW FRONTIERS Country studies abound, and much research has coalesced around two authoritarian great powers, Russia (including its historical predecessor, the USSR) and especially China, the 'archetype' of authoritarian environmentalism. Currently, there are almost no studies that systematically distinguish between authoritarian archetypes when comparing environmental policies or their performance, taking into account past **authoritarian legacies**. **Authoritarian collaboration** and **authoritarian learning** regarding green politics are also under-explored topics.

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Gender Equality & Authoritarian Regimes

Those in power have worked desperately hard over time to give the illusion of solidity to the gendered codes and hierarchies they invented.
– Angela Saini

Gender equality has long been a central issue in political, social, and economic discourse. While liberal democracies have made strides toward gender equality, authoritarian regimes often consolidate various forms of inequality, including gender-based disparities. However, the relationship between regime type and gender equality is complex. Some authoritarian regimes have actively promoted gender equality as a means to strengthen their rule, while others have reinforced traditional hierarchies. Even socialist regimes, which ideologically support gender equality, have shown uneven progress in this area. This multifaceted and non-linear development of gender equality across different political systems highlights the ongoing global struggle to achieve true parity between genders.

DEFINITION Gender equality refers to the normative ideal of different genders, predominantly (but problematically) defined in a binary way and encompassing the male and female gender, having and enjoying not only equal rights but also equal societal status (Kantola & Verloo 2018). It derives from the notion that gender inequality is not a product of unequal inherent intellectual and moral capabilities but of asymmetrical power relations between genders that have been historically established via ideologies, practices, institutions, and structures. These rationalize, legitimize, and perpetuate gender inequality and various forms of gender-based exploitation and exclusion for the material and psychological benefit of one gender (male) over the other (female). In the framework of the ideal of gender equality, different genders should play equal social roles and should equally participate in all central societal spheres (political, economic, social, cultural, legal, domestic/private, public, scientific, etc.) (Htun & Weldon 2010; Young 2000; Young & Allen 2012).

Concerning the foundational values and the functioning of their institutions in various societal spheres, nationally, internationally, and globally authoritarian (non/anti-democratic) regimes and gender equality are mostly not compatible. These regimes are built on and consolidate various inequalities, including gender inequality (Arendt 1951). In the majority of cases, historical and contemporary authoritarian regimes have a substantially worse record concerning gender equality compared to liberal representative democracies. Some variations of authoritarian regimes have explicitly stated and implemented policies that are not only an obstacle to reaching gender equality but are actively consolidating and strengthening inequality. But various contemporary authoritarian regimes have also implemented policies to advance gender equality in order to consolidate their regime (Bjarnegård & Donno 2023; Bush & Zetterberg 2023). On the other hand, some historical and contemporary authoritarian regimes, such as various variations of socialist regimes, were and are normatively based on gender equality and were historically concerning the rights, possibilities of women and their equality in various spheres at the forefront of the struggle for gender equality. But even in these countries, the progress regarding gender equality was not linear and was subjected to regressions (e.g., USSR under Stalin and China in later parts of Mao's reign) (Goldman 1989; Nazzari 1983).

But even concerning the situation in liberal democracies, the situation and developments regarding gender equality are not clear-cut. Substantial gender inequality and a mixed record regarding policies to achieve it can be observed in historical and contemporary liberal representative democracies. Hence, regardless of their formally different foundational values, modern politico-economic and social-political systems are generally characterized by various degrees of gender inequality despite global and national proclamations, agreements, strategies, and policies aimed at tackling gender inequality and despite the establishment of global and national public institutions specifically targeting this issue. Additionally, modern systems are characterized by a non-linear development of gender equality as the issue of continuously re-politicized and re-utilized in political struggles that can result in specific backsliding in the form of political movements and public policies that strive to abolish and/or curtail rights directly based on the ideal of gender equality and re-establish the 'natural' hierarchies between genders (Arruzza et al. 2019; Kantola & Verloo 2018; McWhorter 2009; Saini 2023).

SEE ALSO The concept of gender (in)equality is tightly connected with concepts (and phenomena) such as sexism, patriarchy, misogyny and right-wing politics and movements, often part of **ideologies** like **Fascism**, **Nazism**, **racism** and **ultra-nationalism**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Scholars, activists and policymakers utilize the concept to identify, analyze and address specific central societal hierarchies and asymmetries of power among groups that are organized through gender categories in various modern and historical political regimes. It was and is utilized to interrogate and criticize the notions of 'God-given' and 'natural' hierarchies and stratifications derived from 'inherent' asymmetries in capabilities among gendered groups and to interrogate the discrepancies between normative ideals of a political regime and the reality of its functioning and effects.

ORIGIN Contemporary research on historical gender (in)equality, its genesis, causes, development, crucial processes, institutions, and practices that established and/or transformed or radically changed

it in various human societies from various parts of the world demonstrates that there is no universality concerning gender relations, their fundamental characteristics and nature (Saini 2023). In various societies, gender differentiation did not play a central role in organizing and regulating social, political and economic relationships (Hodder 2004).

The research demonstrates that gender-unequal, patriarchal relations and structures are historically not inevitable and, although prevalent, cannot be understood as 'normal' or inevitable to the historical development of human societies. In particular, in non-European societies, the pre-colonial period was historically characterized by a stark variation in gender (in)equality that was tied to the choices made by these societies. Choices that were influenced but never simply (pre)determined by objective structural factors (e.g., development of agriculture) (Hays-Gilpin 2000). Modern European colonization and imperialism that subjugated most of the non-European world, the global expansion of capitalism and the nation-state form of political organization were the deciding factors in making gender unequal relations almost universal. These structural factors made these unequal gender relations appear inevitable and natural, while also establishing or/and strengthening gender hierarchies as fundamental instruments of power, societal organization and exploitation in the modern capitalist socio-political and politico-economic order(s) (Ghosh 2004; Saini 2023).

Neither the crucial Enlightenment thinkers on liberal and representative democracy nor the modern democratic societies up until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century believed in gender equality and either in thought or in practice excluded the female gender from full democratic citizenship and full participation in all spheres of society (McWhorter 2009; Yuval-Davis 1997). For those individuals categorized as women, modern democracies, at least up until they fought for and gained formal political, civic, and social rights, were a form of authoritarian regimes. Some researchers even argue that in the early modern period, gender hierarchies and discrimination of women in Western societies intensified (Federici 2004; Mies 2014).

The modern Western notion of gender equality originated in the thought of the early feminist Enlightenment thinkers such as Marie de Gournay (1565-1645), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793) and was from the late eighteenth and especially the nineteenth century taken up by various women's rights movements ranging from women worker's movements to bourgeois women's movements that addressed and fought for gender equality in various spheres of society (Patu 2017). It was as late as the late 1960s and 1970s that the first policies began to be formulated and introduced in Western **democracies** that strived to comprehensively address existing gender inequality in modern societies (Duchen 2003).

Concerning modern **authoritarianism,** there was a crucial division between the left socialist regimes and other forms of authoritarian regimes. While the former was ideologically subscribing to the notion of gender equality and initially implemented specific policies to achieve it (e.g., the right to divorce and reproductive rights) (Goldman 1989), the latter, in most cases, explicitly or implicitly subscribed to the notion of gender inequality and only later adopted the notion in the policies due to internal and international political pressure (Bjarnegård & Donno 2023).

LITERATURE Research on gender (in)equality in modern authoritarian regimes is diverse and has tackled various dimensions, and historical and geopolitical contexts. Researchers have focused on the historical development and transformation of gender (in)equality in various modern authoritarian regimes. In this context, they focused on the non-linear, dynamic, and ambivalent development of gender (in)equality in nominally socialist (left-wing) authoritarian regimes. Here, particular focus was directed to the zig-zag nature of the historical development of gender (in)equality in the Soviet Union as the first socialist country that adopted at the beginning of its existence the most progressive emancipatory policies for tackling gender inequality (e.g., broad reproductive rights), while later in the Stalinist era regressing and reintroducing more conservative policies (e.g., prohibition of abortion) and then in the post-Stalinist period partially reintroducing previous and implementing novel policies aimed at gender equality (Goldman 1989).

Similar research was done on China during the Maoist period, that was also characterized by uneven, ambivalent, and contradictory development of gender equality, despite the fact that women, in general, unprecedentedly improved their socio-political and political-economic position *vis-à-vis* men. Other historical socialist regimes were also analyzed concerning gender equality with mixed insights concerning the emancipatory nature of socialist regimes. While some regimes, such as the Castro regime in Cuba, were generally beneficial to the development of gender equality (Nazzari 1983), others, such as the Romanian socialist regime under N. Ceaușescu were detrimental and regressive concerning central aspects of gender equality (e.g., curtailment of reproductive rights) (Hord et al. 1991).

Historical **fascist** regimes in Italy, Germany, and Japan have also been the focus of research. Despite differences, these regimes shared some crucial similarities. They not only reaffirmed previous gender inequalities but also transformed them through the novel subjugation of women as healthy, fit, racially pure child factories, as submissive and hardworking, especially in the confines of their households. But these regimes also utilized women's labor in factories when needed during the entire war period of the regime's existence. However, these practices did not in any way change the subjugation of women under fascism nor improve their status (Gori 2016; Loroff 2011). Research concerning these regimes and gender inequality also extends to various populations that were by these regimes classified as abnormal, as racially, physically, and mentally inferior. The women in these populations were, in the name of 'racial purity' (cf. **racism**), subjected to even more



brutal practices ranging from forced sterilization, euthanasia, ghettoization, slavery, and extermination (Kuhl 2002; Loroff 2011; McWhorter 2009).

Along with historical contexts, research has focused on contemporary authoritarian regimes and the complex nature of the issue of gender (in)equality. It has focused on specific geopolitical contexts ranging from authoritarian regimes in Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, East and Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe and Latin America. The research focuses on specific case studies (e.g., Turkey, Russia, Mozambique) or a range of similar regimes (e.g., the Arab States) (Arat 2022; Bush & Gao 2017; Johnson 2016; Lorch & Bunk 2016).

Scholarship has focused on the identification and analysis of specific factors that affect the extent of gender (in)equality in these regimes, ranging from specific historical developments, religious beliefs, cultural patterns, politico-economic structures and transformations and various political, social, and economic crises. It demonstrated the non-linear, dynamic, and ambivalent nature of the development of gender equality in these regimes and their non-homogeneous treatment of specific women populations. Studies find that gender (in)equality in specific regimes differs for women belonging to a specific economic class and ethnicity, and in some cases, women in non-dominant groups experience a higher level of equality than those from the dominant groups (Bush & Zetterberg 2023; Choo 2020; Razavi & Jenichen 2010).

Other works have focused on various dimensions of gender (in)equality ranging from cultural attitudes in specific regimes concerning gender equality to gender equality concerning employment and education, healthcare to gender (in)equality in cyberspace and the (formal) political sphere (Bush & Zetterberg 2023; Guttenberg 2021). Concerning the political sphere, the research has focused on formal political representation and especially on the question and policy of quotas to increase women's participation and representation in political and other decision-making institutions. Here an interesting trend was observed as contemporary authoritarian regimes have instrumentalized the notion and politics of gender equality. They have increasingly implemented policies and reforms to strengthen women's rights (e.g., adoption of gender quotas and regulating hate speech) and are now at the forefront of gender equality initiatives. But their aim is not primarily to advance women's rights but to strengthen their rule and their position internationally (Bjarnegård & Donno 2023; Noh 2023).

Rwanda, under President Paul Kagame, purposely advanced women's rights to enhance **external legitimacy**: The country boasts the highest percentage of women in parliament globally, with over 60 percent of seats held by women. The regime uses this achievement to showcase its progressive policies. Domestically, it consolidates Kagame's power by appealing to a broad base and demonstrating effective governance. Internationally, it enhances Rwanda's image, attracting **foreign aid** and investment while deflecting criticism of its authoritarian practices.

Other research has focused on the complex and ambivalent relationship between neoliberal policies (privatization, social security cuts, liberalization) and gender (in)equality in authoritarian regimes, where there was a partial improvement concerning gender equality for affluent women and the worsening of the position and possibilities of marginalized women (Ludwig 2020).

An important set of contemporary research also focuses on the growing phenomenon of the backlash against gender equality and the policies, initiatives and movements that advance it in authoritarian regimes (Berry et al. 2021; Piscopo & Walsh 2020), a phenomenon that can also be observed and is growing in various Western liberal-democratic regimes (Kantola & Verloo 2018; Roggeband & Krizsán 2018).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES One of the central methodological issues of existing research is the issue of reductive and problematic understanding of gender and, consequently, gender (in)equality. Gender is mostly understood as a stand-in for biological sex, as a nonproblematic, historically static inherent characteristic and essence of a part of the population. It rests on a simple binarism, a simple and clear division between men and women and on homogenizing experiences and interests of all that are perceived as belonging to one of these two categories. Hence, the insights of critical gender studies and intersectional studies are not being properly incorporated into existing research (see Kantola & Verloo 2018). The research being done in the former fields analyses gender as a political, socioeconomic and cultural construct and understands the heterogeneous interests and experiences of individuals in modern societies that are always affected by multiple systems of asymmetrical power relations (e.g., wealth, race, ethnicity, religion, ability).

Another important methodological issue is the issue of the Western 'imperial gaze' in the sense that the Western research perpetuates the imperial discourse and practices of Othering of non-Western societies where their situation concerning gender (in)equality is compared with an idealized and not actual occasionally rather similar situation in Western liberal democracies (see Farris 2017). For instance, the issue of backsliding concerning gender equality is universal and pertinent to a diverse set of regimes ranging from authoritarian to consolidated Western liberal representative democracies.

NEW FRONTIERS Due to the dynamic, nonlinear, ambivalent contemporary development of gender (in)equality in authoritarian regimes the issue will remain a highly relevant field of research. The research could become more interdisciplinary, utilizing critical insights from other fields, such as 'critical gender studies' and 'intersectionality studies.' Considering the intensification of the polycrisis (ecological, geopolitical, economic, political, identity) that will further destabilize global socio-political regimes, including authoritarian regimes, the issue of gender (in)equality will also remain a highly relevant policy field and a site of struggle concern-

ing identity, hierarchies and the (re)distribution of wealth and power.

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Box 7.5 LGBTQ+ Rights in Authoritarian Regimes

Better to be a dictator than gay
(Belarus' Alexander Lukashenko's reply to Germany's first openly gay minister after being called 'Europe's last dictator,' 2012)

Authoritarian regimes are typically opposed to supporting LGBTQ+ acceptance or legal inclusion. As authoritarian regimes do not recognize individual rights, they are also unlikely to recognize same-sex rights, and in some cases, the LGBTQ+ community is a direct target. In contrast, most democratic countries have constitutions that pledge to protect the basic rights of all citizens. Additionally, once the topic of same-sex marriages became a matter of debate, many democratic countries went on to pass same-sex marriages, with Denmark being the first country to recognize same-sex unions in 1989. As of 2022, 88% of full democracies recognized same-sex marriages or civil unions, compared to only 2% of authoritarian regimes. In fact, there are no authoritarian regimes that offer broad protections for LGBTQ+ rights.

While democracies do not provide the silver bullet for same-sex inclusion, studies have shown that they are much more likely to support LGBT rights – and the LGBTQ+ community has a better chance of advocating on their behalf in democracies than in authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian regimes usually do not offer their citizens civil liberties such as freedom of speech and press, which are important to exposing people to diverse ideas and experiences and creating more opportunities to hear alternative viewpoints. Democracies also offer their citizens freedom of association, which affords LGBTQ+ civil society groups to organize and advocate for their rights (Encarnación 2014). Democracies are also more likely to uphold the rule of law, which advocacy groups can use to mount legal action through the judicial system in support of the LGBTQ+ community (Encarnación 2014). For this reason, once communist authoritarian regimes fell in Eastern Europe, and these countries were experiencing a period of legal and political transformation, some organizations in Eastern Europe were able to get anti-gay laws rescinded.

For some new democracies, however, homophobia is engrained in both society and the state. As such, many countries are culturally disposed to be suspicious and unsupportive of non-traditional relationships and identities. Attacks are common against the LGBTQ+ community, and laws that target this community sometimes win widespread support from the public. Thus, autocratizing countries often target the LGBTQ+ community, not because they pose any threat to the incumbent regime but because these types of laws help build legitimacy for the state.

Anti-gay laws against men are more explicit and enforced. Although enforcement is usually focused on male homosexuality due to gender norms, lesbians also face systemic discrimination, police harassment, and lack of legal protections, and are similarly pressured into social invisibility.

For many authoritarian regimes, going after the LGBTQ+ community is tied to the politics of authoritarian survival. Russia's homophobic policies became more stringent after Vladimir Putin was 'elected' president for the second time in 2012. After facing protests due to the elections being deemed fraudulent, Putin faced a crisis of legitimacy and worked to construct narratives that would appeal to the traditional inklings of much of the Russian public.

Putin then proceeded to pass a series of laws that targeted the LGBTQ+ community, such as banning the dissemination of 'propaganda' that promoted non-traditional sexual relationships in 2013, on the pretext that this could negatively influence minors (Wilkinson 2020). **Russia** also has a *gay propaganda law* that bans children and teens from accessing information about sexual and gender minorities (Polsdofer 2014). It also prevents LGBTQ+ activists from assisting young people. That same year (2013), the *Russian Duma* cracked down further on offering custody to LGBT parents, giving the government the authority to terminate the parental rights of individuals raising children with a same-sex partner (note – as early as 2002, officials in the *Russian Duma* tried to make sodomy illegal (Wilkinson 2014)). Even if one parent is suspected of engaging in homosexual behavior, this could also prevent that couple from raising a child. In essence, homosexuality was treated as a pathology and on the same grounds for termination of parental rights as alcohol abuse, drug addiction and child abuse (Wilkinson 2020).

In 2020, Russia explicitly banned same-sex marriage in the constitution, and the following year, several LGBT organizations were designated as foreign agents or accused of spying and undermining social order. By 2023, Russia amended its propaganda law, outlawing the portrayal of non-traditional sexual relations for any age (Holt 2024). As part of Russia's traditional and family value-laden **propaganda**, passing these types of laws distracts from Russia's military losses and represents a defense against Western values and a rejection of universal **human rights**. Just prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Putin remarked that LGBTQ+ rights have led to the degradation of society. Putin appealed to those who believed that families and children were in need of protection from immoral forces. Among other reasons, Putin also used this to construct a moral justification for invading Ukraine – that Russia was defending Ukraine from Western moral decay and European encroachment (Ayoub & Stoeckl 2024).

For many authoritarian states, the regimes construct their identity as rooted in certain national or religious traditions. Returning to the case of Russia, its anti-gay policies have coincided with the rise of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has accused the West of corrupting its children (Buyantueva 2017). After Putin's contested election in 2012, Putin strategically allied with the Church to improve his standing. It was the Orthodox Church in Russia that encouraged the violent dispersal of the gay pride parade in Moscow in 2011. The next year, Moscow City Council banned gay Pride parades for 100

years (Wilkinson 2014).

By 2012, 68% of Russians identified as religious (Buyantueva 2017: 470), and most Russian citizens approved of anti-gay policies. In 2015, a majority of Russians believed that homosexuals should be either eliminated or isolated from society (Levada-Center, 2015). Homosexuality is viewed as an illness or due to mental trauma. Furthermore, 91% of Russians said they did not know any homosexuals (Levada-Center, 2015).

Putin and other pro-Russian regimes have constructed a narrative where the biggest existential threats are coming from perverse Western values that will lead to the degradation of the family unit. Anti-gay rhetoric is often used as the rallying cry to mobilize traditionalists to the polls in favor of incumbent autocratic regimes. In Turkey, Recep Erdoğan also campaigned by accusing his opponent of being a supporter of LGBTQ+ rights. Homophobic populations help authoritarian regimes divide society into a base of traditional regime loyalists on the one hand and scapegoats, outsiders and morally corrupted opposition on the other (Ayoub & Stoeckl 2024).

In the case of Hungary, its leader, Viktor Orbán, attacked LGBTQ+ rights in order to build domestic support from its conservative citizens, calling the LGBTQ+ movement a destructive force in the country's moral crusade (Gera 2023). This was an easy target for Orbán as it deflected attention from his undemocratic power grabs and the country's economic woes. Attacking the LGBTQ+ community is an easy win for autocrats because it can be politically popular and poses little threat of pushback from this community, which is often already marginalized. Hungary ended legal gender recognition for transgender and intersex people. It has also amended the constitution to define marriage as a heterosexual union. The government also held a homophobic referendum that coincided with national election day in April. In 2021, Hungary passed a law banning the discussion of LGBTQ+ issues in schools and on children's television. These anti-gay laws have been influential, with Hungary's laws influencing Florida's *Don't Say Gay* laws (Williams Institute 2022).

LGBTQ+ rights are under attack anywhere where authoritarianism is on the rise. Tunisia notably democratized in 2012 only to backslide again towards authoritarianism in 2021. Though there was a surge in the number of civil society organizations following the **Arab Spring**, a Tunisian advocacy organization estimated that almost 3,000 individuals had been imprisoned in 2022 for violating Article 230 of the Penal code, which criminalizes homosexual activity and sees prison time of several years (Ayoub & Stoeckl 2024). The Tunisian police targeted LGBTQ+ activists and detained them without cause, searching their homes, torturing and assaulting them. Non-activists are also surveilled and arrested if the Tunisian authorities believe that they might be engaging in same-sex activities (Ayoub & Stoeckl 2024).

At the heart of these repressive political projects is the goal of abolishing human rights – and in particular, sexual freedoms and public expressions of identity and orientation. Right-wing populist authoritarians are using social media to spread **disinformation** about the LGBTQ+ community and how they are threatening children and causing a decay in family values (Ayoub & Stoeckl 2024). Anti-LGBTQ+ rights are part of an authoritarian right-wing strategy to instill fear in sexual and gender minorities (Crawford et al. 2016).

Some research has argued that any authoritarian regime that promotes exclusionary ideologies is more likely to frame sexual minorities as threats to the collective wellbeing and collective identities – and a threat to nationhood (Tschantret 2020). For example, in Cuba, the regime viewed homosexuality as subversive and a matter of national security. Gay men, in particular, were found them implicated by default in counter-revolutionary activities. In 1965, a national campaign against sexual minorities was conducted, with a special military unit established to identify gay men. Gays were placed in rehabilitation camps and traditional prisons, though deliberately placed in the worst wards with terrible living conditions (Tschantret 2020). Thus, revolutionary regimes that adhere to exclusionary ideologies are more likely to repress sexual minorities.

Colonialism has also mostly had a negative impact on gay rights, as colonial laws were often introduced to criminalize same-sex relations. In the Middle East and North Africa, French and British colonial powers implemented penal codes criminalizing homosexuality and sodomy. For example, the origin of Article 230 of the *Tunisian Penal Code* was based on colonial laws, as there was no mention of this in Tunisia's *Ottoman Penal Code* of 1861 (Anabtawi 2022). In Southeast Asia, Malaysia, Singapore and Myanmar inherited these types of laws and, as a legacy, continued to maintain them.

Ironically, years later, after many postcolonial authoritarian regimes in Africa inherited anti-gay laws and policies, their leaders embraced these laws while also proclaiming homosexuality to be a Western perversion (Kizito 2017). These laws have been justified on the grounds that homosexuality is an imposed Western behavior that needs to be stopped and LGBTQ+ people are a Western threat to public morality (Boryczka 2020). In Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe called gays 'immoral' and claimed that they should be forbidden from having any rights. Cultural attitudes have been generally supportive of these tough measures on the LGBTQ+ community. Not surprisingly, in the case of Zimbabwe, the LGBTQ+ community has been the victim of physical attacks, and one of the noted civil society groups, GALZ, was declared illegal, and its leader was arrested on charges of sodomy (Manyonganise 2016).

In Uganda, the parliament passed its strictest anti-homosexuality bill in 2023. This law penalizes homosexuality but includes a new penalty called 'aggravated homosexuality', which comes with the death penalty or any same-sex acts involving people with disabilities and/or using drugs or alcohol. The bill goes even further by requiring people to report suspected acts of homosexuality, even family members. Kenya has proposed a similar bill to punish individuals with life imprisonment for same-sex acts (Shaw 2023). Ghana is also considering similar legislation to impose harsher sentences on those who engage in same-sex acts, which could include conversion therapy, which **human rights** organizations characterize as torture (cf. Box 7.6). Where sexual minorities are perceived as a product of Western and liberal



threats to stability, regimes are more likely to persecute them (Comstock 2016)

Today, in some authoritarian countries, same-sex relationships are not directly banned, but the police are given free rein to target the LGBTQ+ community and crack down on those seen destroying social harmony. Singapore has noise violations as a pretext to raid businesses owned by gays. In Egypt, a floating gay nightclub called the *Queen Boat* was targeted in 2001, with 52 men charged with debauchery, and their names and workplace addresses were released (Anabtawi 2022). In Myanmar, the police arrest those who look suspicious after dark. In China, on the grounds of public order, local authorities often harass and target gay men (Chua 2022). While homosexuality is legal in Russia, there are no hate crime laws in place, resulting in one of the highest rates of murders of LGBT people in the world (Gay Travel Index 2018). Chechnya is one of the most dangerous places in the world for gay men. Gay men are tortured through electrocution, humiliated, and, in some cases, murdered (Kondakov 2019). Ramzan Kadyrov, head of the state of Chechen Republic (cf. regional governor), continues to insist that gays do not exist in Chechnya, but honor killings still take place (Loriga 2020). Though Tunisia agreed to the *UN Human Rights Council*'s recommendation to prohibit the use of forced anal exams, the police continue to use this type of torture (Saral 2019).

Given the tough landscape for LGBTQ+ activists, what recourse do these groups have in authoritarian regimes? LGBTQ+ activists in authoritarian regimes can try to challenge existing penal codes, such as repealing anti-sodomy laws and trying to leverage international pressure to extract policy concessions. They can try to use strategic litigation to challenge specific cases rather than seek wholesale legislative reforms. They can also just focus on raising awareness and networking with other allies. In the case of Rwanda, activists were able to successfully oppose Article 2017, which would criminalize same-sex activities by developing a non-confrontational strategy to work within the political system. There is a very narrow area of what types of activism authoritarian systems will accept (Paszat 2022). LGBTQ+ movements are better off avoiding large-scale confrontations due to their precarious status and engaging in pragmatic forms of resistance (Chua 2022). They can also rely on meeting at international human rights conferences to share strategies and tactics. In spite of these best efforts, authoritarian regimes pose significant hurdles to **civil society** and LGBTQ+ organizations.

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Human Rights under Authoritarianism

Dictatorships have fallen; democracy has spread. But human rights face growing challenges today – and no country is immune.
– António Guterres, UN Secretary-General (2020)

Human rights in authoritarian regimes sounds like an oxymoron – as promoting human rights is usually not a huge priority for dictatorships. However, the application and enforcement of upholding human rights varies significantly from country to country, and not all authoritarian regimes commit gross human rights violations.

Human rights constitute a set of norms governing the treatment of individuals and groups which are supposed to be grounded in ethical principles of what is considered to be fundamental for living a decent life. Most scholarship on human rights from Europe and North America dates modern human rights theory and practice from the Enlightenment period onward (Ferrone 2017).

While there are many different types of human rights, much scholarly attention has focused on civil and political rights – the rights that feature prominently in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which was established in 1948. These rights can be further divided into several categories: *physical integrity rights* (right to life and freedom from political killings, freedom from torture, disappearance and slavery); *individual integrity and empowerment rights* (freedom of movement, residence, thoughts, beliefs, expression, privacy, assembly, association); and finally, administration of *justice rights* (right to a fair trial, equality before the law, freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention).

Though the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was supposed to be considered universal, critics from non-Western countries pushed back that these rights did not take into account cultural differences and did not adequately account for economic and social rights, as highlighted in the 1993 Bangkok Declaration (Davis 1995). These rights included the right to work, the right to work in just and favorable conditions, the right to health, the right to education, and freedom from poverty, want and need. Xi Jinping of China has declared that China has blazed a path for human rights development that is consistent with the country's conditions (Zhang 2022). Indeed, in terms of economic rights, China has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. The country also carries out thousands of executions each year, making it the world's leading executioner (Death Penalty Information Centre 2022). Beyond its high execution rate, China has also imprisoned over one million Uyghurs and subjected those not detained to forced labor, surveillance and sterilization (Maizland 2022).

Many autocrats are fairly defensive when they are critiqued about their human rights records. For example, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi declared in response to criticisms of the regime's crackdown on civil liberties that Western human rights didn't apply to Egypt (Samuels 2016). True, there are different norms and domestic conditions facing countries around the world that may require different approaches. Ultimately, though human rights are norms and context-specific, protests from autocrats about the Western origin of human rights are usually more of a pretext to avoid having to comply with them.

In spite of the criticisms that the study of human rights may be Western-centric (Mutua 2002), the most common way that scholars measure human rights is to look at repression levels (Bagozzi et al. 2021; Poe 2019; Tanneberg 2020). **Repression** is one of the more universal ways to measure human rights violations – as it captures violations to freedom of expression, press, beliefs, association, life, freedom from torture and unlawful killings, and the security of persons. Much of the literature has measured human rights violations by looking at violations of physical integrity (Armstrong 2009), but some scholars also use violations of civil liberties, such as censorship and the suspension of basic political rights (Davenport 2007; Escribà-Folch 2013). Scholars can also turn to measure human rights violations by looking at **Freedom House** Scores, the *Human Rights Protection Scores* and the **Varieties of Democracy** Political Civil Liberties Index as indicators for violence and restrictions. Another common measurement is the *Political Terror Scale,* which looks at political imprisonment, torture, political murder and the scale of terror used to achieve the regime's political objectives (Nordås & Davenport 2013). It's important to note that all of these measures are **continuous measures** of repression, and the measurement of human rights violations is usually categorized by degree and not based on any sort of categorical measurement.

Repression is used by authorities to deter specific activities and beliefs perceived as threatening to political order and to punish those who are committing activities that may threaten the state. Research has demonstrated that regime type is among the most important determinants of repression levels – or human rights violations (Hill & Jones 2014; Davenport & Appel 2014). **Democracies** are far less likely to engage in repression, a pattern that is sometimes referred to as the 'domestic democratic peace.' Why is this the case? In authoritarian regimes, repressive leaders cannot be voted out through elections, which means that they can engage in human rights violations without facing consequences at the ballot box.

Although research shows that repression is far more prevalent – in both severity and incidence – in dictatorships than in democracies (Poe & Tate 1994; Poe et al. 1999; Vreeland 2008), some research argues that the relationship between regime type and repression is non-linear (Fein 1995; Gartner & Regan 1996) and there is 'more murder in the middle.' In other words, **hybrid regimes** (neither fully autocratic nor fully democratic), **anocracies** and transitioning



regimes are more likely to be repressive.

Given how critical human rights are to human wellbeing, improving human rights remains important. In spite of the tensions created by criticizing dictators on their human rights records, naming and shaming may have some impact. A study looking at over 800 challenges to countries in Latin America from 1981 to 1995, found that human rights criticisms do lead to some short-term reduction to repression, particularly in countries that have strong economic ties to other countries (Franklin 2008). Another study demonstrated that when the *United Nations Human Rights Council* engages in naming and shaming of specific human rights violations this can weaken the target government and increase the costs of repression (DeMeritt & Conrad 2019). However, the same study notes that regimes may cease one type of violation only to increase the use of other types of human rights violations. Thus, in spite of these challenges posed, naming and shaming is not a worthless endeavor. Transnational Advocacy Networks can bring attention to human rights violations, pressure governments, and impact public opinion, which may eventually lead to meaningful change (Morrison 2024).

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Box 7.6 Torture

Torture is senseless violence, born in fear (...)
Torture costs human lives but does not save them.
Torture makes torturers.
– Jean-Paul Sartre, *A Victory*, 1958

Torture is a specific technique of causing pain in order to obtain information and punish or intimidate others. Different definitions of torture exist – some limiting torture to those in power, like the *UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (UN 1984; Collard 2018), while others also include those who struggle against those in power and other non-governmental armed groups, organized crime etc. (Hajjar 2013).

Torture is defined by the UN (1984) Convention as: *"any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions."*

Einolf (2007: 103) provides a slightly narrower definition of torture as *"an act in which severe physical pain is intentionally inflicted on a person by a public official while that person is under the custody or control of that official, where there has not been, or has not yet been, a formal finding of guilt."*

Torture has been present since ancient times (Langbein 1977; Hajjar 2013). For an overview of the history, different techniques and types of torture that have been used, see Hassner 2022; Foucault 2019; Hajjar 2013: 14-32; Wisnewsky 2010: 16-48. Torture has been used, as already Foucault (2019) observed, as a way for the ruling groups to publicly show the strength of the regime, to set an example and possible consequences for those not complying with the rules and interests of those in power (see also: Blakeley 2007; 2010; Wilson 2019). Torture, although it may be efficient in the long-term in securing political goals, always undermines the **legitimacy** and support for the specific regime in power while fueling stronger **opposition** (Hassner 2022: 132).

There was a significant decline in the use of torture during the nineteenth century. However, the twentieth century saw a notable resurgence. Einolf (2007) attributed this rise to several factors: the growing number and scale of wars, the intensification of ethnic, racial, and religious conflicts within societies, and the development of more effective tools for detecting treason – a crime historically punished by torture. Rejali (1994), focusing on the case of Iran, argued that rather than disappearing in the context of modernity, torture merely evolved, taking on new forms.

According to Blakeley (2007), three distinct narratives or models are commonly used to explain the use of torture: (A) security, (B) stability, and (C) legitimacy. The *security model* (A) frames torture as a tool for ensuring security, often justified by the need to extract intelligence to prevent threats, such as in the 'ticking bomb' scenario. This rationale dominates public debates, but Blakeley argues that very few cases of torture align with this framework. Instead, most instances of torture are not directly linked to obtaining actionable intelligence but serve other purposes.

The *stability model* (B) views torture as a mechanism for maintaining regime stability. Within this framework, torture is employed by governing elites to suppress opposition and instill fear among potential dissenters. However, Blakeley notes that while torture may provide short-term stability, it often spirals out of control and becomes widespread, as documented by scholars like Chomsky & Herman (1979a/b) and Stokes (2003; 2005). Furthermore, in the long term, regimes relying on torture risk fueling resistance, particularly from exiled dissidents. Hassner (2022: 132) underscores this point: *"Torture is costly in the medium to long term. While it might provide some tactical advantage by providing information that can win battles, its strategic costs may lose the war."*

Liberal democratic states typically invoke the *legitimacy model* (C) to justify the use of torture. In this narrative, torture is framed as a necessary evil in the defense of higher ideals like freedom and liberty. States assign specific identities to those subjected to torture – labeling them as terrorists or security threats – to legitimize their actions. Blakeley (2007) highlights how this model intertwines with liberal values to rationalize practices that would otherwise be condemned, a point also explored by Devetak (2005) and Jackson (2005). Note that Blakeley emphasizes that these models are not mutually exclusive but often overlap and reinforce one another in practice.

Although torture is often associated with **totalitarianism** (Saluppo 2020; Eley 2013; Albanese & Knipe 2019; Sofsky 1997; McLoughlin & McDermott 2002), it is, in fact, a common feature across various types of non-democratic regimes. Torture, alongside other forms of state repression such as mass killings, extrajudicial executions, and arbitrary detentions, is typically linked to **dictatorships** and **personalist rule** (Geddes et al. 2018; Jackson et al. 2010; Claridge 1996; Lopez 1984; Sloan 1984).

Dictatorial regimes are particularly explicit in their use of physical violence to enforce compliance with the rulers' will. These regimes are also among the most egregious violators of human rights, often employing brutal methods to maintain control. As Vreeland (2008: 73) observes, *"Dictators generally have no interest in violence that leaves no marks; intimidation can require that they leave bloody traces of their power in every public square."* This reflects the overt and performative nature of violence in these systems, where the visible display of brutality serves as a tool of intimidation and control – cf. Terror in Box 3.13.

While authoritarian regimes may formally sign international agreements and conventions prohibiting torture, they frequently continue to employ it in practice (Vreeland 2008). This contradiction highlights the gap between their rhetorical commitments and their actual behavior, underscoring the persistent role of torture as a mechanism of **repression** in non-democratic governance.



Keith (2012) and Davenport (2007b) argue that military regimes are more likely to engage in torture and other forms of physical repression because such practices align with their institutional familiarity and operational methods. Davenport's analysis of state repression from 1976 to 1996 underscores the significance of regime type, revealing that **single-party regimes** are the least repressive, while military regimes are the most prone to employing torture and mass killings (Davenport 2007b).

However, subsequent research complicates this view. Svolik (2012), Dragu & Przeworski (2019), Gregory (2009), and Greitens (2016) demonstrate that **military regimes** often delegate the implementation of torture and other forms of physical repression to specialized security agencies rather than relying on the military itself. This distinction highlights the institutional mechanisms through which repression is carried out in such regimes.

Alemán (2023) further explores variations in the tools of oppression across different authoritarian regime types. His findings suggest that 'real' socialist regimes generally refrained from extensive use of torture and killings, whereas military regimes, lacking broader legitimacy, were more inclined to resort to such methods. While some infamous examples of state terror and torture occurred under communist regimes – such as Stalin's Soviet Union or Kampuchea (Cambodia) under Pol Pot – these cases were exceptions often tied to highly **personalist rule**. In contrast, torture was more openly and extensively used by military regimes compared to other regime types, including democratic systems, monarchies, multi-party autocracies, and both communist and non-communist single-party regimes (Alemán 2023: 289).

While torture is often associated with authoritarian regimes, it is important to acknowledge its presence too in **democracies**, particularly during wartime or in the pursuit of higher ideological ends. As Einolf (2007: 106) notes, *"While liberal democratic states use torture against their own citizens much less often than other states, liberal democracy does not by itself guarantee that torture and other forms of violence will not occur."* This tension became especially evident following the 9/11 attacks, when US government agencies engaged in torture techniques as part of the 'War on Terror,' exemplified by abuses at Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo Bay, and CIA black sites (Hajjar 2013; Greenberg 2005; Williams 2006).

Historically, democracies have justified the use of torture by invoking security narratives similar to those employed by authoritarian regimes. For example, France's use of torture during the conflicts in Indochina and Algeria, as documented by Vidal-Naquet (1963), demonstrates how democracies have rationalized such practices in the name of national security. However, there is a key distinction between the narratives of democratic and authoritarian regimes. While authoritarian regimes openly justify torture through security rationales without concern for legal or moral opposition, liberal democracies officially oppose torture based on human rights and legal norms. Nevertheless, when democracies engage in torture, they often adopt the same security justifications, framing it as a necessary response to existential threats (Blakeley 2007: 374-375).

This duality highlights a troubling contradiction within liberal democratic states. Despite their commitments to international conventions prohibiting torture, such as the *UN Convention Against Torture*, they have, at times, created pseudo-legal frameworks to enable its use during crises. This raises serious questions about the means employed by democracies to achieve their goals and how these practices align with their professed values of human rights and the rule of law.

Although it has been a general belief that liberal democratic countries do not engage in torture, the practice shows a different account. Namely, besides the use for internal security reasons, as rationalized, they also tend to support authoritarian regimes and their torture practices in order to secure their own and international elite interests: *"Despite the assumption that torture tends not to be used by liberal states, the reality is that liberal states do use torture through transnational networks of terror that they establish in collaboration with elites in authoritarian states, in the interests of their own and global elites"* (Blakeley 2007: 375).

The US, as the democratic ideal presented in the media and also within scholarly research, has, throughout the twentieth century, supported many autocratic military regimes and their forms of **repression** – including torture – in order to secure their interests. This has been best seen in Latin America, the 'Operation Condor,' support for the military **junta** and Pinochet in Chile etc, but also in other parts of the world. (Chomsky & Herman 1979a/b; Brown 1985; Dinges 2004; Goerge, 2004; McSherry 2005; 2007; Blakeley 2007; Policzer 2009; Bevins 2020).

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Narco-States

Virtually every single illegal drug-producing and/or drug-trafficking country in the world has one day or another been referred to as a narco-state.
– Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy

The common feature of so-called narco-states relates to the substantial influence exerted by the illicit drug trade over their political, economic, and social institutions. Yet, whilst increasingly invoked by policymakers, law enforcement agents, political leaders, journalists and scholars, the term narco-state lacks a clear definition. Applied more as a label than a precise analytical framework, the term narco-state serves as a rhetorical device and political tool to legitimize and enact particular policies in the context of contemporary global relations.

DEFINITION Despite its use across a variety of settings, from international policy-making and law enforcement to journalism and academia, and its growing familiarity as a common term in popular and political discourse, the concept of narco-state lacks any precise definition. The term is broadly used to describe contexts where drug-related activities and organizations wield considerable power over state institutions, gravely impacting the state's ability to govern, as well as its domestic and international standing. Yet those states that have attracted this label vary considerably in terms of geography, history and pervasiveness of the illicit drugs trade. They can be found across the globe, from Latin America to Africa and Asia to Europe. The extent of the narcotics trade and its specific role in shaping these states' respective social, political and economic trajectories similarly varies widely. Thus, while the designation of a country as a narco-state implies some degree of influence by the trade on a state's governance, there is little consensus on the level of that influence.

Drawing on political economy theories, Chouvy (2015) suggests several parameters to understand the scope of the phenomenon and assess would-be candidates for the designation: the proportion of the drug economy relative to the country's overall economy; the drug economy's share of GDP; the surface area occupied by illicit crops compared to other crops and arable land; the degree of active involvement of the state apparatus in the illicit drug trade; the territorial control exerted by the state over areas of drug production (as opposed to merely tolerating non-state actors' activities); and the degree of corruption deriving from drug trafficking organizations penetrating state institutions. Yet, assessments rely



heavily on estimates, given the considerable difficulty in finding trustworthy data, and on subjective interpretations of what is considered a substantial proportion in each of these diverse criteria. Chouvy (2015), for instance, ultimately concludes that no contemporary state fully qualifies. Countries often labeled as narco-states, such as Afghanistan and North Korea, typically lack primary economic dependence on drugs, government sponsorship of drug production as an official policy, or territorial control, as non-state actors frequently drive their drug economies in areas beyond state rule. In other accounts, however, it is precisely that challenge to a state's governance that is key: a narco-state, in this case, is merely a failed state (cf. **state fragility & failure**) where the illegal drug trade plays some kind of substantial role.

Rather than capturing a specific phenomenon, the term tends to oversimplify complex social realities, brushing over specificities that make each case distinct. Discursive power, not analytical precision, lies behind the term's currency: easily instrumentalized, the label imposes a representation inviting particular responses, as discussed below.

SEE ALSO The term operates alongside '**rentier state**' in analogy with 'petro-state,' although **rents** from illegal drugs never reach the same levels of revenue as fossil fuels (see also: **resource curse**). Therefore, the phenomenon is closer to the concepts of 'failed state' and specifically 'mafia state,' 'criminal state,' or 'narco-economy.' The terms 'narcokleptocracy' (**kleptocracy**) and 'narco-terrorism' usually orbit polities branded as narco-states.

ORIGIN Kingsberg (2013) identifies *Manchukuo* (満州国 – *Manshūkoku*), the Japanese puppet state in Manchuria in northeast China from 1932 to 1945, as one of the world's first narco-states. During this period, the drug trade assumed a central role, determining the territory's finances, international position, and even its residents' social categories. Drug use, Kinsberg (2013: 76) writes, was a *"more useful signifier of race than race itself,"* mapping onto racial hierarchies between Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans.

The Japanese *Kwantung* Army (関東軍 – *Kantōgun*), which controlled *Manchukuo*, actively promoted the cultivation and distribution of opium as a means to generate revenue and control local populations. The opium trade was institutionalized through state monopolies that were officially sanctioned by the Japanese authorities. This system not only provided financial resources to support Japan's military and colonial ambitions but also helped undermine resistance to Japanese rule by fostering addiction among local populations. Although the actual network was much larger, spanning other Japan-controlled territories like Formosa (Taiwan) and Korea, *Manchukuo* became notorious for its role in the illicit drug trade, which sparked international criticism and was later cited during post-war tribunals as evidence of Japan's exploitation of narcotics for imperial purposes (Jennings 1995; Smith 2005; Kingsberg 2012).

If *Manchukuo* was a narco-state *avant la lettre*, the term narco-state itself emerged only in the late twentieth century and can be traced to a surge in the demand for illegal narcotics, particularly in North America and Europe. That demand, in turn, drove production in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, where a number of countries' geographies were suitable for the cultivation of plant-based drugs. As both demand and supply increased, so too did the influence of cartels and criminal organizations operating in these states but also increasingly engaged in cross-border trafficking. The transnational drug trade quickly became a global issue.

REGIONAL VARIATION The term narco-state gained traction initially with the ascension of powerful and emblematic drug cartels in Colombia and Mexico in the 1970s and 1980s, accompanied by the US government's declaration of a 'War on Drugs,' associated today, particularly with the administrations of Presidents Nixon and Reagan. Countries such as Bolivia, Honduras, Panama, Suriname and Venezuela all subsequently came to bear the moniker. Already in the 1990s, the narco-state label was extended beyond Latin America; Afghanistan, in particular, gained its infamous status as the world's largest producer of opium, while the focus also turned to Myanmar and North Korea. In the 2000s, Guinea-Bissau assumed a prominent role as a strategic West African transit point for illegal smuggling. More recently, countries such as Syria and Lebanon in the Middle East or Albania in Europe have also been branded narco-states.

Rather than a precise category in political science or a recognized entity under international law, the term narco-state is a political trope and, most prominently, a media buzzword. Indeed, media discourse, with its tendency for embellishment, played a key role in consolidating and popularizing the term in its current form.

CLASSIFICATIONS While no official classifications are used for narco-states, the literature related to the illegal drug trade does distinguish the states involved:

Drug-producing countries are states that cultivate, produce, and manufacture illegal narcotic substances on a significant scale and, therefore, play a key role in the global drug trade. Examples include Colombia and Afghanistan for growing and processing plant-based drugs like coca (for cocaine) and poppy (for opium), and Mexico for manufacturing synthetic drugs like methamphetamine.

Countries of passage (for drug trafficking) are states that serve as transit points for the transportation of illegal drugs from production areas to consumer markets. Not necessarily engaged in large-scale drug production or consumption, these countries are used by criminal organizations to move drugs across borders by land, air or sea due to their strategic location. Examples include Guinea-Bissau in West Africa and Panama in Central America.

Countries of drug consumption are states where illegal drugs are consumed in large amounts, fueling high demand in the global drug trade, as the widespread use of substances like cocaine, heroin or methamphetamine creates lucrative markets for

drug traffickers. The largest drug-consuming countries are some of the wealthiest economies in the world, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE & IMPACT ON POLICY Despite little agreement on a clear definition of the narco-state, one feature common to those countries attracting the label is the fact that, in each, drug trafficking constitutes a source of political power and economic gain with the set of relations engendered between producers, consumers, state actors, traffickers and transnational capital giving rise to complex issues of political economy and governance both within the state and internationally.

Governance Policies addressing the influence of the drug trade must confront the cycles of violence, corruption, and poverty perpetuated by that drug trade's grip on the state, a challenge exacerbated by the erosion of public trust in government institutions. At the same time, such policies must address the narco-state's global dimensions, recognizing its role in transnational organized crime networks and entanglements with related phenomena, including money laundering and human trafficking. The drug trade's influence also extends to domestic and international economies. Illicit drugs have become a global commodity embedded in powerful and well-organized international networks with significant economic power. Finally, states' legal institutions are also implicated, with drug money and actors posing a challenge to the national and international rule of law.

Violence The emergence of a drug economy is both a product of and a contributor to large-scale violence. Narco-states have often emerged in the wake of war: the breakdown of social and political order and state control over borders has allowed an illicit trade to flourish, while the destruction of indigenous or self-sufficient food production has seen its replacement by the cultivation of drug crops. Conflict over control of a cash-cropping economy, in turn, has fueled further violence and insecurity.

Securitization & Intervention A common response to the narco-state label has been the securitization and militarization of the state, with governments allocating considerable resources to countering drug-related crime and violence. Heavy-handed law enforcement approaches have often led to serious **human rights** violations and abuses, as seen in Mexico, and the Philippines. Many governments have also sought partnerships with international agencies such as the *UN Office on Drugs and Crime* or foreign governments, particularly the United States. Countries such as Colombia and Afghanistan, identified as hubs for drug production, have also received significant foreign military and financial aid. At the same time, the labeling of countries as narco-states has served to delegitimize those states and their leaders while justifying and legitimizing foreign intervention. Economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and even military intervention have often followed.

The representation of a country as a narco-state is not merely descriptive but *productive* of a wide range of policies and interventions into states' political economies and institutions. Historically, however, many such policies and interventions in so-called narco-states have failed to produce the desired results. A narrow focus on drug control and suppression, often driven by a militarized approach by consumer countries, has done little to address the pressures facing precarious farmers in drug-producing countries in the developing world, where the cultivation of drug crops offers a means of survival. Such an approach has been unable to promote governance with a view to development, with securitization and militarization proving ineffective to tackle underlying issues of poverty, weak institutions and a fragile rule of law. Indeed, addressing these challenges – and the complex social reality in which they are embedded – requires a far-reaching agenda that extends well beyond the simplistic narratives conveyed by the narco-state label.

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Nuclear Policy of Authoritarian Regimes

Our republic is a responsible nuclear state that, as we made clear before, will not use nuclear weapons first unless aggressive hostile forces use nuclear weapons to invade on our sovereignty
– Kim Jong-Un

The nuclear policy of authoritarian regimes has been steadily a source of concern for the international community because of the hypothetical threat to global security that nuclear-armed states governed by unpredictable and rogue regimes could pose. However, nuclear power is too serious an element not to be a cause for concern, regardless of the type of regime.

DEFINITION The nuclear policy of authoritarian regimes stands out because it tends to comply less with the norms established in international treaties, in particular, the *Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT). The NPT aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It is structured around three main pillars: *non-proliferation*, where nuclear weapon states agree not to transfer nuclear weapons or assist non-nuclear states in acquiring them; *disarmament*, where all parties commit to pursuing negotiations for nuclear disarmament; and *peaceful use*, allowing states to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under strict safeguards by the *International Atomic Energy Agency* (IAEA).

SEE ALSO Paradoxically, T. Doyle II (2013) termed 'nuclear despotism' to refer to how liberal democracies armed with nuclear weapons face ethical dilemmas and contradictory policy consequences, for the decision to eventually use them inherently implies a violation of constitutional and international legal provisions. In this sense, he deems the nuclear ambitions of 'rogue' states are not necessarily irrational (Doyle II 2013: 156). This clearly points to an interesting dialectic relationship between the use of nuclear weapons and undemocratic behavior, irrespective of the type of regime at stake.

ORIGIN After the USA – a democracy – was the first with nuclear monopoly between 1945 and 1949, the first authoritarian regime to develop nuclear policy was the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Under Stalin, nuclear power was exponentially developed and multiplied, either for traditional realist reasons of power maximization or to avoid servility to the West (Weeks 2014: 104). The Cold War not only motivated other powers to engage in nuclear development and tests (cf. France, the United Kingdom, China), as it also surrounded the establishment of the NPT in an environment of "continued and mutual mistrust" between liberal democracies and communist dictatorships (Doyle II 2013: 163). It is, therefore, the logic of the security dilemma that gives rise to the nuclear policies of both authoritarian and non-authoritarian regimes.

LITERATURE Although many have found that regime type has no significative effect on states' decision to pursue nuclear weapons (Fuhrmann 2009; Horowitz 2010; Jo & Gartzke 2007; Montgomery 2005), C. Way and J. Weeks (2014) analyze why some countries choose to pursue nuclear weapons while others do not, especially in the case of non-democracies. They argue that **personalist regimes** are more likely to pursue nuclear weapons than other regime types; they find leaders of such dictatorships are thus especially attracted by nuclear weapons to counter their regime insecurity and face fewer institutional constraints themselves to pursue such policies than the leaders of other (collegial) types of regimes (see also: Cebul 2013).

In comparison, **democracies** seem to present elements that allow them to tame their security dilemmas in a way that prevents proliferation more effectively, such as transparency, greater domestic constraints, adhesion and commitment to the NPT, and a civil society that is proactive in defending the cause (Chafetz 1993; Sasikumar & Way 2009; Miller & Sagan 2011; Sagan 2011). But other studies still find, on the contrary, that democracies actually may enable proliferation in order to satisfy nationalist audiences, for example, or because nuclear weapons programs enjoy public support and can generate domestic pressure in favor of proliferation (Perkovich 1999; Snyder 2000; Kroenig 2009).

D. Deudney (2007) does not seem to draw any distinction between regime types; he argues that *all* nuclear-armed states function, in fact, like 'nuclear monarchies' because the decision-making underlying nuclear use is concentrated in the hands of one individual command authority – hence nuclear weapons are intrinsically despotic.

In his psychological approach to nuclear proliferation, J.E. Hymans states that although there seems to be nothing that unites leaders with nuclear ambitions and actual nuclear weapons, most of them share an 'oppositional nationalism,' whereby they see their nation as opposed in equal terms to an external enemy, which generates a dangerous psychological combination of fear and pride that feeds their desire for nuclear weapons (2006: 1-2).

Traditional motives in favor of nuclear weapons include enhancing national security between rivaling neighbors (by fostering deterrence, aggression is prevented), the interests of powerful domestic interest groups, or seeking national prestige (**legitimacy**) (Way & Weeks 2014: 707). For authoritarian regimes, one additional motive is ensuring the security of the very regime and protecting it from external interference, which is a reason often associated with Pakistan, North Korea or Iraq under Saddam Hussein (Way & Weeks 2014: 707). It is argued that Iran's drive for nuclear weapons is in part dictated by concerns of domestic politics (Weeks 2014: 3-4).

From the perspective of *(non-)compliance* to the NPT by authoritarian regimes, A. Tokhi (2013) has

examined quantitatively the nuclear activities of 19 Middle Eastern NPT signatories from 2001 to 2010 to find that the probability of compliance was higher in regimes where power was less concentrated in the dictator, but was shared with a select group of elites. In other words, the more power **personalization**, the more likely NPT policies are violated.

CLASSIFICATION Given the limited number of states with military nuclear power, as only nine possess it: China, North Korea, France, India, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, the US, and (unofficially) Israel, despite not officially confirming or denying it – the total tally of authoritarian regimes among nuclear powers is proportionally substantial. However, it cannot be said that the nuclear policy of these regimes is essentially different from that of non-authoritarian regimes. Assessing the policy differences between authoritarian and democratic regimes depends on whether or not they adhere to international standards, such as transparency, defined by bodies such as the *International Atomic Energy Agency* (IAEA); whether they are party to the NPT; and whether they are party to the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (TPNW). For if they are not even parties to the treaties, to begin with, the issue of compliance ends up being fairly irrelevant.

EXAMPLES As an illustration, while only three of the nine have ratified the NPT (Russia, the United Kingdom and the US), none of them have joined the TPNW. On the other hand, violations of the NPT have been exclusively carried out by authoritarian regimes. North Korea initially joined the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state. However, it violated its safeguards agreement by secretly developing plutonium separation and uranium enrichment programs. The country withdrew from the NPT in 2003, although the legitimacy of this withdrawal is contested. Since then, North Korea has conducted multiple nuclear tests, beginning in October 2006 and continuing through 2017, despite numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions condemning its actions and imposing **sanctions**. As of January 2024, the 'hermit kingdom' is believed to have assembled approximately 50 nuclear warheads and possesses enough fissile material to construct 70 to 90 nuclear weapons potentially. The country has also developed advanced programs for chemical and biological weapons. In recent years, Pyongyang has significantly increased the frequency of its ballistic missile tests, reflecting its ongoing efforts to enhance its military capabilities (Arms Control Association 2024).

IMPACT ON POLICY Democracies' perceptions of the relationship between nuclear power and authoritarian regimes are based on a strong feeling of mistrust and unpredictability toward the former. This association has already proved to have the potential to lead to conflict and generate what Hymans (2006: 216) terms 'lessons for intelligence analysis' regarding the specific example of Iraq and the US intelligence's inability to interpret the psychology of Saddam Hussein and understand his real intentions, which ultimately is said to have led to the country's invasion in 2003. Another pertinent factor of impact on policy lies in how the rise of nationalist **populism**, such as Boris Johnson, Narendra Modi, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump in nuclear-armed states – some of which are democracies – poses actual risks and dangers to the international order, for their potentially less responsible management of crises, and sometimes erratic **foreign policy** (Meier & Vieluf 2021).

NEW FRONTIERS N. Miller and T. Volpe (2023) have looked at the 'autocratic nuclear marketplace' and examined how Russia was able to supplant the US after the Cold War as a supplier of nuclear exports to the world. They thus connect such evolution to the rise of authoritarian Russia, in that, as unipolarity increased the pressure on Russia to compete for more influence in that matter, Russia has benefited from an 'autocratic advantage' in the insignificance of the internal opposition to that state strategy.

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Rentier States

There is no state with a democracy except Libya on the whole planet.
– Muammar Qaddafi

Rentier states are states that derive a substantial proportion of their revenues from rents (such as oil, gas, minerals, etc.), which affects the social contract between the state and its citizens. Rentier states are characterized by autocratic paternalism, corruption, low levels of state capacity and economic underperformance. Instead of collecting taxes from their populations and redistributing (some of) these funds, these dictators avoid the more challenging task of gathering tax revenues altogether and rely on **rents** from natural resources or other income sources. They effectively invert the phrase 'no taxation without representation,' reasoning that because they do not tax the population, they have no obligation to represent it (Dunning 2008: 52).

DEFINITION Rentier states are countries that derive a substantial proportion of their national income from natural resource-related revenue. Political scientists, and more specifically, area specialists, have argued that this abundance of resources undermines political development, administrative capacity and economic development. As Terry Lynn Karl claims, *"revenues a state collects, how it collects them, and the uses to which it puts them define its nature."* (Karl 1997).

Rentier states rely on external revenues, known as **rents** (usually derived from oil or the exploitation of other natural resources, but in some cases **foreign aid** – instead of extracting the domestic population's surplus production. Because the state easily captures these rents through exports, the state makes few attempts to encourage production and manufacturing, or endogenous growth – see also 'Dutch disease' in Box 1.15. Instead, the state focuses on the allocation and distribution of these rents or 'rentierism.' Much of this allocation and distribution often comes through patron-client networks (**clientelism**, **patronage**), which can give the state a certain measure of stability due to the dependence that forms between the clients and patrons (Smith 2004). Thus, in rentier states, it is only a small proportion of the population that is involved in generating the wealth and it is mostly a small number of elites who are recipients of these 'rents.'

As these states have easy access to income, this enables them to more effectively co-opt and repress their citizens, making them less likely to collapse compared to their resource-poor counterparts. Resource-rich governments can rely on natural resource rents as their primary source of income and use the income to buy political support and avoid having to tax their citizens. Because the citizens usually do not pay taxes (or pay very little), citizens in these countries, in turn, have little incentive to make demands on the regime, dampening domestic democratizing pressure (Beblawi & Luciani 2015).

SEE ALSO Related to broader practices of **patrimonialism** and **neo-patrimonialism**, rentier states are foremost associated with the dismal outcome of abundant natural resource wealth at the state level (**systemic corruption**). The causes of such transformation are studied separately within the frame of **resource curses**. The concept of **rents** became critical in understanding how they structure elite power dynamics within frames of **patronage** or **clientelism**; and by their use in techniques like **co-optation** and **hoarding**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE When comparing states' access to resource rents, the literature suggests that oil (in particular) makes authoritarian regimes more durable (Andersen & Ross 2014; Morrison 2009; Ulfelder 2007; Wright et al. 2015). As mentioned, rents have a stabilizing effect on authoritarian regimes because rents are doled out to specific and important social recipients. This prolongs authoritarian rule by creating rent-funded social contracts, which would defuse the crisis and prevent rebellion. Autocrats survive longer due to oil resources, such as Saddam Hussein in Iraq or Suharto and Sukarno in Indonesia.

Natural resource revenue also provides authoritarian regimes with income they can use to ride out a crisis. During the **Arab Spring**, for example, the oil-rich **monarchies** were able to stave off widespread protests by purchasing public support, while their resource-poor counterparts collapsed in the face of mass unrest (Brownlee et al. 2015). Just days after Ben Ali fled Tunisia and a week before the onset of Egypt's revolution, Kuwait's oil-rich government announced a grant of US$3,500 to every citizen and a year's worth of free staples such as sugar, cooking oil, and milk. Likewise, Saudi Arabia announced an $80-billion package of public-sector wage hikes, unemployment payments, increased college stipends, and investments in low-income housing

(Brownlee et al. 2015). Oil revenues enabled these governments to grant concessions to their citizens and diminish pressure for regime change or meaningful reform.

Natural resource wealth also increases authoritarian durability by enabling autocracies to invest in their security apparatus, enhancing the capacity and loyalty of security actors (Ross 2004) – see also **coup-proofing**. As a result, resource-rich countries have a more robust security apparatus to prevent, deter and repress any protests or potential rebellions. Oil-rich Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), for example, deployed cohesive military responses to protesters that ensured regime continuity (Brownlee et al. 2015). Additionally, because natural resource income allows governments to sustain higher-levels of military spending relative to non-resource-endowed countries, which enhances military support for the regime, natural resource-rich countries also experience fewer **coups** (Wright et al. 2015).

In spite of the appearance of stability, resources affect the quality of state administrative institutions. The rentier state is not a 'Weberian' state, meaning a compulsory political organization with centralized institutions that enforce rules over a territorially defined population (safeguarding its monopoly of violence). The state's legitimacy stems from its ability to maintain order and control through rational-legal rulership. Rentier states are often bloated and inefficient, as there is little incentive to create successful industries and hire the best and the brightest when the state can rely on rent to keep itself afloat. Rentier states are also *"particularly vulnerable to the problems of patronage and corruption as well as bribery and nepotism."* (Gawrich et al. 2011: 6). This, again, is due to the lack of incentives to hire individuals to work for the state based on merit, hard work and expertise (cf. **meritocracy**).

Furthermore, as mentioned higher, because rentier states can gain revenues from resources, they do not need to *develop extractive institutions*. A number of scholars have argued that raising income tax revenue requires states to develop administrative institutions possessing 'Weberian features' (Hydén et al. 2003: 7). The necessity to extract income may force states to develop capable administrative institutions, with competent, experienced, well-paid and autonomous staff. Thus, relying on rent instead of taxes weakens the capacity of institutions (Karl 1997).

Growth rates have been correspondingly unimpressive in resource-rich states as well. For example, in the oil-rich Middle East, after a better-than-average showing between 1960 and 1975, the Middle East recorded the lowest rate of growth in the world between 1975 and 1990 and lost nearly all the ground that it had gained earlier (Owen 1992; Said 2000). States in the Middle East with a steady flow of foreign rents have been afforded the luxury to make huge investments in state-owned enterprises with low levels of productivity. The result has been economic underperformance.

Resource-rich countries that underperform are often referred to as victims of the **resource curse** – whereby having an abundance of resources (oil, gas, minerals, etc.) actually undermines economic growth and stability, and on top of that, they are more prone to conflict. Rentier states can be stable and prosperous, but essentially, this comes down to governments making sound policy decisions to avoid the negative consequences of having extractive economies, as has been the case in some of the oil-rich monarchies.

Rentier states are not exclusively located in the Middle East nor mirror their organizational structure (although case studies *outside* the Middle East have faced more criticism). Also, what constitutes **rent** can be diverse, and is not just limited to natural resources. For example, revenues from canals such as the Suez Canal or pipelines (transit fees) could also be considered rent. States such as Jordan, which relies on **foreign aid**, also have characteristics of rentier states. Rentier states do need to have some degree of monopoly over access to resources in order to benefit from the revenues.

Rentier State Theory (RST) attempts to explain the complex relationship between the state and its citizens in countries that obtain a significant proportion of their revenues from rent. RST explains how resource-rich states use their rents to create legitimacy and maintain a stable system of authoritarian rule. RST has had its most success in explaining authoritarian stability in the Middle East but has faced more criticism in explaining the transformations that have taken place in the Gulf states. In spite of these criticisms, RST explores some of the most important questions about the political economy of oil-rich exporting states, the democratic deficit, the obstacles to development, and the nature of state-society relations in the Middle East.

ORIGIN Conceptualizing the rentier state is arguably traced to the seminal work of Hossein Mahdavy titled *The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier states: the case of Iran*. In this work, Mahdavy (1970) defines rentier states as *"those countries that receive on a regular basis substantial amounts of external rents (...) [and external] rents are in turn defined as rentals paid by foreign individuals"* (Mahdavy 1970: 428).

At the time of Mahdavy's publication (1970), the Middle East more generally (but Iran in particular) was experiencing a political-economic transformation. Mahdavy's work was published after Iran underwent a series of major social and economic reforms known as the 'White Revolution' – a series of sweeping reforms initiated by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in Iran, starting in 1963 and lasting until 1979, aimed at modernizing the economy and society through land redistribution, women's rights, and education reforms, but ultimately contributing to reactionary political unrest that led to the 'Islamic Revolution' of 1978-1979 and Pahlavi's **ouster**. While Mahdavy himself (1970) was Iranian, he wrote and conducted his research outside of Iran, which gave him the space to analyze the Middle East and Iran, more specifically, with both an internal and external perspective.



LITERATURE As mentioned, no literature on rentier states could begin without starting with an exploration of Mahdavy's work, which laid out the fundamentals of 'rentierism' in 1970. Mahdavy's seminal work provides the initial framework to explain how rents affect society relations. To some extent, Mahdavy was ahead of his time, as his writing preceded the huge oil boom of the 1970s when oil prices rose ten-fold with no additional costs in production.

Greater interest in the rentier state emerged when scholars started to investigate the impact of two oil boom periods that started in the mid-1970s in the Middle East. Notable are the works of Hazem Beblawi (1984; 1986; 1987) and Giacomo Luciani (1986; 1990) and their collaborative works (Beblawi & Luciani 1987; 2015). Beblawi & Luciani's original (1987) work elevates the scholarship of RST, criticizing Mahdavi's arguments, which portrayed both the state and citizens of resource-rich states as 'backward.' They also explored the development of the state and used the Yom Kippur/Ramadan war as a key example. While they claim that this 1973 Arab-Israeli war illustrated the unity of Arab states, rents contributed to the divide of these respective states, and subsequently, a rentier vs non-rentier state dynamic emerged. There are a few crucial points to be taken from their contribution.

First, Beblawi and Luciani provided clear criteria to define what constitutes a rentier state. As they see it, there are four major dimensions: (i) more than 40 percent of national income is derived from rents. (ii) The origins of rent must be 'external' to the economy, from foreign sources. (iii) Only a few receive rent in a rentier economy, and domestic society is not actively involved in the accumulation of wealth. (iv) The government must be the principal recipient of the rent. These four dimensions set a more explicit, albeit broad, framework for the application of the RST to cases that fit within the rentier model, irrespective of what region they are in.

Second, they explain why the Middle East, and particularly the Arab Gulf **monarchies,** are often used to illustrate RST. Due to the immense amount of rent revenues that make up their budgets (in some cases 90%), the 'Arab oil states represent the example *par excellence* of rentier states' (Beblawi 1987: 46).

Third, Beblawi and Luciani (1987), through their emphasis on the dimensions of the state, give individual rentier states more agency, especially in the Middle East. In other words, their work argues against the notion that rentier states are monolithic. As a result of the increased agency of the state in their contribution, this allowed the RST to enter into other regional specific case studies. Contributions by Tim Niblock (2004) explain how the distribution of oil rents fosters legitimacy in Saudi Arabia, and this may vary from how oil rents are used in other states.

More recent scholarship on rentierism has looked at how the relationships between oil-rich states and society have transformed (Gray 2020). Older interpretations of RST do not account for transformation and the reform efforts that took place in the Gulf monarchies in the 1990s and 2000s, where deliberate strategies of economic diversification and development took place, along with liberalization of trade and investment. This was possible in small, rentier states but more challenging in rentier states with large populations, such as Iran and Iraq.

Though the rentier state thesis faced more challenges in explaining economic transformation, various studies found that oil does impede political transformations across the world (Ahmadov 2014; Andersen & Aslaksen 2013; Andersen et al. 2022; Ross 2001; 2015) and helped explain authoritarianism in the Middle East (Schlumberger 2006). RST specifically covered the robustness of security institutions in the Middle East (Bellin 2004) and the lack of democratization in oil-rich states in Africa (Anyanwu & Erhijakpor 2014). Michael Ross' (2001) seminal work argued that oil did impede democracy around the world, something which led to a host of studies either supporting the results or offering criticisms that the results no longer hold up (Brooks & Kurtz 2016; Oskarsson & Ottosen 2010). For Ross, oil hindered democracy due to stunted modernization, **repression** and rent **patronage** (Ross 2001). Oil allowed rulers to prevent changes that would normally take place with modernization, such as **democratization**. While democratization has not happened in many oil-rich states, modernization has been something that the field has been trying to address, as shown in the entry on **resource curses**.

Rentier state theory has spawned a large body of articles that have sought to determine how much of an impact there is to having rents. In spite of these notable criticisms of RST, the literature has proved to be a useful concept that other analysts and scholars can use in their respective studies of states with social-economic relations where rent plays its unique role.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The main methodological issue with studying the rentier state is determining whether or not it is rentierism that is driving outcomes or other factors. It has been difficult to establish a clear relationship between rent income and how this leads to different political and economic outcomes. States vary by institutional strength and capacity, political culture and regional and historical contexts, making it challenging to determine whether or not other factors are driving outcomes and making it difficult to isolate the effects of rent income.

A related issue is that Rentier State Theory has faced criticisms with endogeneity – as questions arise about whether it is actually rent that is causing an outcome and not vice versa. For example, there are questions about whether oil dependence is actually endogenous to the quality of its corresponding political institutions (Brunnschweiler 2008). It could be that weak institutions lead to oil dependence and not the other way around.

Other methodological issues have to do with data quality, with many of the best indicators used relying on data that is hard to come by in authoritarian regimes, where there is little transparency. When making comparisons in cross-national studies, it is important to have consistent and comparable data,

and there are often differences in the data quality across countries.

Another issue is that most of the countries that have been the focus of the rentier state are selected on the dependent variable – where there is selection bias, making the actual findings on rentier states not generalizable. Much of the RST has focused on the oil-rich Middle East region, which makes comparison more difficult.

MEASUREMENT There are various ways to measure rentierism. Some scholars have looked at historical trends of resource dependency over time and its impact on economic and political variables. Cross-national analysis has been used to compare countries with varying degrees of resource dependence to determine how this might affect various outcomes.

In general, one way of measuring rent income is to look at *government revenue*s to see how much the government relies on taxation versus rent income. A related indicator is to look at how government spending is financed and the extent to which resource rents are used to finance social welfare programs and public sector employment. Finding these figures is more challenging. For oil, for instance, one can find data on those countries with OPEC membership (cf. Fish 2002), but there are countries where oil is important to their economy, but they are not a member of OPEC.

To illustrate the diversity of measuring resource dependency, here are some common ways to gauge oil rents and some valid critiques: The most commonly used measure has been *oil export revenues over GDP*, which could be easily calculated. It also showed the relative importance played by the oil sector of a country. What this doesn't explain, however, is how oil affects the population, as a country with a massive population would have a much greater challenge, such as Iran, than a country like Kuwait with a much smaller population. It also doesn't take into account the wealth of the country, as a poorer country could look more oil-rich simply because its economy was less developed, not because it produced more oil. Ross (2015: 242) confirms that such measures are biased upward in poorer countries and more conflict-prone countries since their economies are too poor to consume the oil they produce, causing them to export more than they would if they were less impoverished.

Another measurement is taking 'oil exports' as a *share of total exports* (Jensen & Wantchekon 2004), but this does not indicate how much a country depends on oil exports as a percentage of its GDP. *Fuel income per capita* is another measure – this one looks at the total value of oil and natural gas production, including domestic consumption levels and divides that by the country's population. By not using GDP as the denominator, it addresses some issues of endogeneity and captures the abundance of oil wealth rather than dependence on oil for a state's GDP.

Alternatively, *rent leverage* is used to address some of the shortcomings of other measurements. This consists of the ratio of fuel income per capita to GDP per capita, corrected for 'purchasing power parity' (PPP) (Ross 2012). It tackles the issue of population and accounts for the share of the average citizen's income that comes from fuel production and how that share might affect their purchasing power in a given country.

Different approaches look at the diversity of the economic base or how diversified the economy is. By utilizing these methods and indicators, researchers can quantify the degree of rentierism in a state, facilitating comparative studies and policy analysis. However, it is essential to consider the context-specific nature of rentierism and the dynamic changes in the global economy and local governance structures that can influence these measures.

EXAMPLES & REGIONAL VARIATION For *MENA*, Arab Gulf monarchies are considered classic cases of rentier states, with the UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar rich in oil and/or gas rents (Ulrichsen 2016). Since the 1970s, these states have used their oil revenues to develop programs that would destroy independent civil institutions while generating other institutions that could facilitate the state's interests (Chaudhry 1994).

Most notably, these oil-rich **monarchies** used oil and gas rents to keep taxation rates low (or non-existent) and to offer their citizens generous benefits such as subsidized housing, free health care, and other perks. For example, more than 85 percent of Kuwaitis have jobs in the public sector and receive generous salaries and benefits (US DOS 2021), while citizens of the UAE receive massive unemployment allowance, housing allowance, childcare support, and student allowances. Emiratis also have a generous starting salary for even the most entry-level job and are offered retirement benefits at the age of 49, for citizens that have worked for 20 years.

Offering these types of benefits to the natives of the UAE and Kuwait is not that challenging, given the vast amounts of rents these states receive and the small size of their populations. Kuwait produces 32 million tons of oil per capita, and the UAE produces 19.2 million tons per capita, compared with only 1.39 million for Venezuela and two million for Iran. Saudi Arabia, another rentier state that has no personal income tax, produces 16 million tons per capita. But with a population of 36 million people compared to 4.2 million in Kuwait, Riyadh has been forced to diversity its economy and has been undergoing rapid transformation (Baumann 2019).

In some cases in the Gulf, **rents** were used more to repress than to distribute and allocate. In the case of Bahrain, which has some oil and gas reserves (but comparatively lower than the rest of the Gulf) and a small population of just under 1.5 million people (with about 700,000 citizens), the al-Khalifa regime was able to achieve broad support, especially among Sunnis (the royal family is Sunni) through the distribution of patronage. Most of the citizens worked either directly or indirectly for the state. However, the Sunnis constituted a minority, with as much as 60 percent of the country being Shiite, and most of the Shiite population was excluded from the social contract. When an intifada broke out in 1994, Bahrain relied heavily on economic aid from the Gulf



states to give it the revenues to expand, incorporating more Shiite families into the patronage system. But for the protests that erupted in 2011 during the Arab Spring, the Bahraini leadership used **repression** rather than a co-optative approach. Thousands of employees were fired from the public and private sector, hundreds of students were expelled, thousands were stripped of citizenship, and over 180 people were killed (Husayn 2015). The government also bulldozed 30 Shiite mosques during the crackdown (Husayn 2015). In all of these cases in the Middle East, a combination of distribution of rents and repression is used to deter potential rebellion and ensure a stable environment for the regime.

Sub Saharan Africa Outside of the Middle East, this region has a few cases of rentier states, but they have not had as much success promoting authoritarian stability as the Gulf monarchies have had. Gabon is rich in oil, manganese, and timber resources, and like many rentier states, Gabon used its resource rents to maintain authoritarian rule under the Bongo regime from 1967 until 2023 (Omar Bongo ruled until he died in 2009 when his son Ali succeeded him), when the military staged a **coup** ending 56-years of Bongo rule. The regime maintained power for decades by using oil rents to bolster its security institutions, paying expats from France to staff its **security services** and to defend his regime, often referred to as the 'Corsican Mafia' which were only accountable to the Bongos (Decalo 1989). However, the regime failed to provide the population with much-needed public services, which fueled major grievances against the regime, eventually leading to a military coup.

In addition to Gabon, Hagmann and Reyntjens (2016) offer examples of numerous regimes in Africa that maintain authoritarian stability through the use of **foreign aid** rents. Based on the criteria laid out earlier by Beblawi & Luciani (1987; 2015), countries such as Gabon, South Sudan, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea, and Angola would all qualify as having over 40 percent of their national income from wealth, while Nigeria just misses the threshold but is the largest oil exporter in the sub-continent. However, few of these states are able to distribute vast amounts of patronage to their citizens. With over 218 million people, Nigeria's oil rents mostly went into the hands of corrupt politicians and procured unnecessary military equipment, as at least 40 percent of the population lives in poverty (Akpomera 2015).

Latin America *Latin America* is another region that exhibits some degree of rentierism, as the region is resource-rich. Nevertheless, what makes the nature of rentierism in Latin America distinct from rentierism in the Middle East is the value of the rent per capita and the timing of when these rents were discovered. Rentierism had its roots more recently in Latin America – starting with the huge surge in consumer demand from India and China, which led to a rise in the prices of oil and other minerals. The worth of oil exploded in value, giving countries like Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela much more revenue than ever before. By 2014, oil accounted for 96 percent of the total value of Venezuela's exports, and almost all of the foreign exchange into the country came through the state and the country's leadership has used these revenues to promote authoritarian stability.

In the case of Venezuela, the country has been rich in resources since oil was discovered in the Maracaibo Basin in 1922. Annual oil production skyrocketed from a million to 137 million barrels a year by 1929. At the point that oil was discovered in Venezuela, the country had no experience with democracy and endured a series of military dictatorships. But by 1958, Venezuela held its first democratic elections, and oil resources were doled out to the supporters of the two main parties which took turns exercising power, known as the *Punto Fijo* Pact. In 1976, they nationalized oil production and set up the Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA), the main Venezuelan state-owned oil and natural gas company responsible for the exploration, production, refining, and exportation of oil, as well as the exploration and production of natural gas.

Hugo Chávez was elected to power in 1998 on a platform promising to use oil wealth to reduce poverty and inequality (cf. Box 3.8), but several years later, Chávez fired thousands of experienced PDVSA workers who had taken part in a strike, stripping the company of all of the important technical expertise. Even more troubling, Chávez used the PDVSA to launder money, creating fake infrastructure projects and front companies to move money around, and it also laundered billions in illegal profits from the drug trade. Essentially, Chávez transformed the PDVSA into a multi-billion-dollar enterprise that offered oil and financial resources to his allies. Chávez then used his power to hire and promote his cronies and used oil wealth to prop up programs that benefited his loyal supporters.

Chávez then used his popularity to engineer popular referenda that ended **term limits** while taking control of the Supreme Court, creating a parallel Senate and harassing the independent press. As oil prices fell after Chávez died in 2013, Chávez's handpicked successor, Nicolás Maduro, used repression, censorship and electoral manipulation to secure another electoral victory in 2018 in an election that was widely condemned (Brewer-Carias 2019).

Eurasia For this region, the resource-rich Central Asian states have been prone to rentierism. With that said, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan all have rentier characteristics, but not all are rentier states. While Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan can be considered full-scale rentier states, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan could be considered to be rentier economies due to their dependency on rent that is based on both natural resources and other rents such as remittances (Gyene 2016) (Uzbekistan with its much larger population lies somewhat in the middle.) In the case of Kazakhstan, at its peak in 2008, oil revenues constituted 33 percent of its GDP (Sanghera & Satybaldieva 2022). Though the beneficiaries of these rents are overwhelmingly elites, they have been fairly discreet about their accumulation of wealth, leading many Kazakhs to believe that the economic opportunities and outcomes in their coun-

try are largely fair (Sanghera & Satybaldieva 2022). When protests have occurred, the state has used its robust security apparatus and responded with violence, arresting and imprisoning any activists (Marat 2016). Coupled together, these two strategies of distribution and repression have ensured the stability of authoritarian rule in Kazakhstan.

IMPACT ON POLICY Currently, many rentier economies, especially those based on fossil fuels, are undergoing a process of rebuilding their economies. Many reasons induce such an urgent pivot to the diversification of rentier economies. In addition to concerns that oil rents will dry up, there are also global pressures to address the impact that fossil fuels have on the environment and climate change.

It is therefore not surprising to see *National Vision 2030* (Qatar) and *Oman Vision 2040,* which prioritize diversification of their economies as a cornerstone of their strategies for survival and stability. However, to claim that rentier states, especially those in the Middle East are eager to move away from their position as oil suppliers would be premature. Rentier states are largely balancing the need to restructure their economies and become less dependent on resource rents while making the most out of the opportunities from global conditions (such as the Russian-Ukraine war). Therefore, these states now speak more with a language of investment than a language of rent providers. Foreign direct investment has far more resonance in these states, especially in the Gulf.

NEW FRONTIERS Rents are still too often equated with oil and gas and there could be more studies that focus on the variation of rents and their roles in the political economy of states.

In addition, given the shift away from fossil fuels and the pivot to green energy, it will be interesting to explore how rentier states are adapting to this shift. These regimes understand that the natural resources are not as valuable as they once were, and therefore, adapting to this is an existential question for these states. When looking at the Gulf, almost all rentier states have invested greatly in diversifying their economy from an oil-centric economic system to an economy that is embracing foreign direct investment and tourism.

The second way in which these states are adapting is to reinvest the money they already have by boosting their sovereign wealth funds. In recent years, sovereign wealth funds have been more proactive in investing the states' money. This, in turn, also generates non-oil rent for the state, subsequently giving the state longevity in its revenue stream.

The third way that they are adapting is by utilizing the natural resources they still have. If the Russian invasion of Ukraine illustrated anything, it is that notwithstanding the pivot toward clean energy, natural resources (be it oil and gas) are still crucial to the international economy and global geopolitics. Rentier states are simultaneously investing in diversifying their economy while maximizing their revenue from natural resources – including **leverage** in international relations. This can be seen in the OPEC+ alliance, where the oil cartel struck an alliance with Russia to coordinate oil prices in the hope of prolonging the value of oil.

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Spectacle Politics

The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.
– Guy Ernest Debord

Spectacle politics is a neutral term for when a political regime sets up a show with the goal to signal a political message to the international community or its domestic audience. Despite similar behavior, democracies and autocracies envision different applications for their spectacles with different audiences and objectives.

DEFINITION Mary Kaldor (2004) calls spectacle nationalism the performance that legitimizes the existing states. In this regard, spectacle politics is not only a matter of authoritarian regimes and dictatorships. Spectacle politics could be performed in democratic systems as well (the coronation of Charles III in the United Kingdom on 6 May 2023 is one of the bright examples of democratic systems) as the inauguration ceremonies of leaders, commemorations of crucial days and historical anniversaries and remembrances. Authoritarian regimes tend to perform spectacle politics to celebrate the system and the leader.

SEE ALSO The spectacle in politics is often connected with cultural or sports politics as well as **nationalism** in authoritarian regimes. It is closely related to the studies of nation branding and authoritarian urbanism and, in some cases, seamlessly intertwines with **personality cults**.

ORIGIN In August 1995, social psychologist Michael Billig (1995) published a book, *Banal Nationalism,* which deals with the everyday usage of national symbols in the public space. Although he mainly focused on democratic states, it became the point of departure for social scientists studying similar problems in authoritarian regimes. His ideas were developed by Mary Kaldor (2004) in her idea of 'spectacle nationalism.' Billig's work was reconsidered

and revised critically more than 20 years later by his disciples (Skey & Antonsich 2017).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Spectacle politics is applied in many ways to demonstrate a regime's legitimacy, stability and prosperity. Such politics differ mainly according to the chosen field or the target public. In the latter case, the literature (Horák 2020) usually distinguishes the international and domestic public. An external audience is usually presented with the achievements of the regime itself or its ideological superiority (**soft power**), in particular targeting its rivals or competitors. Such spectacle politics could consist of spectacles performed outside the country. It can be the physical participation of the country in events outside the regime – trade fairs, political summits, and sports events (World Championships, Olympic Games). The successes in these events are later transformed, in addition to banal nationalism, into the regime's success.

On the contrary, the absence of important attendees in spectacle politics is often considered an attack on the regime. The boycott of the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980 (Kanin 2019) or the limitation and later elimination of Russian athletes from the world's top events after several scandals or after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, respectively, were among the most prominent examples of such "exclusion from spectacle politics." An excluded regime can also create a 'counter-event' that should substitute the main event (the case of 'The Friendship *(Druzhba)* Games' in 1984 to balance the socialist bloc country boycott of the Olympic Games or the Russia-organized series of ice hockey matches with friendly countries instead of the World Championship.

CLASSIFICATIONS Several ceremonies and rituals within the regime are mostly aimed at the domestic public, cementing the regime's legitimacy ('spectacle nationalism' or 'spectacle patriotism'). These events include the celebrations of 'independence days' and other important state holidays, Memory days, e.g., the 9 May celebrations in Russia and throughout the post-Soviet area, historical data and events commemorations etc. (Wood 2021). In the case of more centralized and personalist systems, the leader's position and **personality cult** is the particular focus of such mass spectacles (Merkel 2013). In addition to spectacle nationalism or spectacle patriotism, such an approach could be called 'spectacle personalism' (see also 'versailling' under **coup-proofing**).

Apart from major events demonstrated to an external public, authoritarian (but also democratic) systems stimulate regular local spectacles such as raising the flag at schools and other places with mass participation (school pupils, state officers or others). Personalist and more extreme authoritarian regimes also enhance the spectacles expressing loyalty to the leader or the regime leadership (such as the 'oath to the president' performed daily in Turkmenistan schools under the rule of its founding president, Saparmurat Niyazov).

While the celebrations in the democratic systems tend to open the public spaces for the public, the spectacles in the authoritarian regimes prefer the ritualized performances where collective action (often forced mass participation) prevails over individual needs. The mass public serves mainly to take part in the performance, while the other part of the public is mostly excluded from the participation, such as in the case of military parades in Russia, China, Turkmenistan or North Korea, and they should limit themselves to hide in their homes and, at the most, watch the spectacle in the media.

IMPACT ON POLICY Demonstrating authoritarian leadership on the world scene (participation in summits with the most influential politicians and mediation of the conflict) also shows the country's importance and acceptance of its leaders in the world. It signals that regimes are considered *de jure* equal players in the international arena and thus generate **external legitimacy** for its power-holders. When events take place on its territory, a regime can demonstrate its ability to organize such an important event (a political summit, an essential economic forum), provide a place for peace negotiations, and host sports or cultural events.

EXAMPLES Sports representation and winning medals in top-sport events became one of the main achievements of communist bloc regimes (USSR, German Democratic Republic (DDR – 'East Germany'), Czechoslovakia), leading up to doping or corruption practices. The banal nationalism in spectacle politics also leads to establishing cultural units representing the countries in the outside world. The case of the *Moranbong Band* in North Korea (Korhonen & Cathcart 2017) and *Eurovision* groups from Eastern Europe partaking in international competitions are bright examples of this approach (the *Moranbong* Band (모란봉악단 – 'Moran hill band' are an all-female musical group and a high-profile and influential component of North Korean popular culture, established by Kim Jong-Un in 2012.)

One of the notable studies of this phenomenon in an authoritarian context was the research by Laura Adams (2010) on Uzbekistan and how the Karimov regime crafted a national identity rooted in tradition, history, and heritage, which serves to legitimize the regime domestically and bolster **external legitimacy**. Specifically, one example is the annual *Navruz* (New Year) celebration. *Navruz*, traditionally marking the spring equinox, was repurposed by the Uzbek government to emphasize themes of national unity, heritage, and state pride. The government organizes large-scale celebrations with music, dance, and theatrical performances that portray Uzbekistan's pre-Soviet history, linking modern Uzbek identity with ancient Central Asian traditions. These festivals highlight Uzbekistan's cultural continuity while subtly distancing the state from its Soviet past.

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Box 7.7 Dubaization & Ashgabatization of Urban Planning in Central Asia

Dubai will never settle for anything less than first place.
– Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Ashgabat feels like a fascist Vegas
– Scott Newton

The rapid development of Central Asian cities, often driven by the ideological ambitions of authoritarian rulers to enhance their regimes' global visibility, has led to extensive and systemic urban transformations. These changes encompass not only city centers but also suburban areas. The transition from Soviet-era cities to more globally inspired urban landscapes includes the construction of new administrative buildings (e.g., presidential palaces, parliaments, universities), commercial facilities (hotels, malls, restaurants, tourist hubs), infrastructure projects (highways, intersections), and symbolic visual art that reinforces regime narratives (monuments, fountains). This transformation primarily targets the perspective of first-time observers – whether the leader is viewing the city from the main streets or the air or foreign visitors (Koch 2018; Horák 2023). Consequently, urban planners prioritize the aesthetics of main thoroughfares and aerial views. In many cases, ruling elites and their families profit from these projects through their involvement in construction businesses.

In Central Asia, most capitals and even regional centers have undergone significant transformations that frequently disregard historical heritage – whether Soviet, Russian colonial or pre-colonial – and the needs of residents. Inspired by Dubai's urban model as a symbol of modern transformation, many regional leaders have sought to replicate its example in their own countries. This phenomenon of 'Dubaization' is not limited to Central Asia but has also influenced other post-Soviet and Asian cities (Valiev 2013; Yigitcanlar & Bulu 2015). While cities like Dubai and Astana were developed on largely undeveloped sites ('greenfield' or 'yellow field' projects), cities such as Tashkent and Bishkek have focused on refurbishing select parts of their urban areas, particularly downtowns. However, Ashgabat (Turkmenistan's capital) and, more recently, Dushanbe (Tajikistan's capital) exemplify a more radical approach: the total modernization of urban landscapes. This process involves not only downtown areas but also peripheral neighborhoods (e.g., Soviet-era mikrorayons), creating what might be termed the 'Ashgabatization' of cities.

Unlike 'Dubaization,' which follows a coherent logic of creating modern urban facilities from scratch, 'Ashgabatization' disrupts existing urban landscapes in ways unanticipated by Soviet or pre-Soviet planners. This approach often leads to degraded living conditions, environmental harm, reduced public transport accessibility (favoring car-centric designs), and the transformation of capitals into 'ghost towns' designed for observation by cars or helicopters rather than for residents. Dushanbe has become a prime example of this trend alongside Ashgabat itself.

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State Fragility & Failure

Without intensifying our efforts to help those living in fragile states, our hopes of a more stable and peaceful world will also be dashed.
– Kofi Annan

While fully-fledged states enjoy full external and internal sovereignty, some countries lack one of these two types of sovereignty. Countries that lack **external sovereignty** – where other states do not recognize the borders or sovereignty of a territory's internal regime – are designated as **de facto states**. Countries that lack 'internal **sovereignty**' run the gamut of being weak, failed or collapsed states. Other terms used to describe these states include *fragile, vulnerable, failing, unstable, in crisis* or *disrupted*. State failure is the process whereby the state and its government are unable to provide security to the population and fail to provide the basic functions of the state. However, there is no universal understanding of how to define such a process of state failure conceptually, and nor is there a clear categorization and typology of failing states.

DEFINITION One of the most commonly used definitions of failed/fragile states is that by the *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD), which says that *"States are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations"* (OECD/DAC 2007: 2). The UK's *Department for International Development* (DFID) defines fragile states similarly as *"those where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor. The most important functions of the state for poverty reduction are territorial control, safety and security, capacity to manage public resources, delivery of basic services, and the ability to protect and support the ways in which the poorest people sustain themselves"* (DFID 2005: 7).

However, while there is some consensus on the basic definition, there is much debate about how the term should be fully conceptualized and classified and what terminology should be used (for discussion, see e.g., Ezrow & Frantz 2013: 1323-1325). One of the more prominent conceptualizations with a typology of weak statehood was developed by Robert Rotberg. His approach is usually taken as a starting point for discussing the problems with understanding state failure, and the *Failed State Index* (FSI) drew from his conceptualization to measure weak statehood.

Rotberg (2003) divides states into *strong* (a), *weak* (b), *failed* (c) and *collapsed* (d). Strong states (a) are those units that control their territories and provide security and order for their inhabitants. Strong states also ensure political rights and civil liberties and create an environment conducive to economic growth. The rule of law prevails, as well as a high level of education, health care and a good condition of the public infrastructure. Weak states (b) are defined as states that are weak by their very nature, i.e., they have some geographical, physical and economic constraints, or they could also be generally strong states but temporarily weakened by internal contradictions, ineffective governance, greed, **despotism** or external attacks. In weak states, there are ethnic, religious, linguistic or other community tensions, but no overtly violent clashes. Weak states also experience a deterioration of public institutions and an increase in crime and corruption within the state.

Failed states (c), according to Rotberg (2003), are classified as territories fraught with tensions where armed **conflicts** between disparate groups are ongoing. High levels of crime and lawlessness are also a common characteristic. Another striking feature is the general economic decline, which has led to the disintegration of infrastructure and the gradual disappearance of all social services. In the peripheries of the failed state, the loss of control over these areas could lead to attempts at separation, inter-group violence and the plundering of local wealth. Collapsed states (d) represent an extreme case of states in terms of their weakness. Collapsed states do not control their territories, and the governments of such countries have lost legitimacy. Power over the state formation is usually taken over by non-state actors (Rotberg 2003: 3-7) – cf. **warlordism**.

Though Rotberg's typology offers a useful starting point, there are different criticisms of his approach. First, Rotberg's typology does not delineate the different degrees of state failure. Rotberg's understanding of weak statehood has also been criticized by Milliken and Krause (2003), who do not see state failure and state collapse as two stages of the same process but as qualitatively different phenomena, each involving a different dimension of state functioning. A distinction is made between how strong or weak the institutions are, how these institutions are functioning and for what purpose. For example, in the case of Rwanda, though often referred to as a collapsed state, the genocide (Box 1.19) was not caused by the disintegration of state institutions. The perpetrators were "*highly disciplined agents of the state who pursued the task of murdering many of its people with hideous efficiency*" (Clapham 2003: 26). The concepts of weak statehood and state failure present more theoretical and empirical problems, mostly due to the complexity of defining and measuring these terms and the insufficient precision given to identifying different stages. As a result, there exist a variety of definitions and also indicators of state failure.

Charles T. Call (2008; 2011) is very critical of the concept of 'failed states,' and he is not alone (Kraxberger 2007; Dingli 2013; Nay 2013; Brinkerhoff 2014). His main concerns (i-v) can be listed as follows: (i) There is a definite cultural assumption of how a 'successful' state should look like, making the concept Western-centric at best and an excuse to intervene in the affairs of others at worst (Bøås & Jennings 2007). This teleological Western bias assumes there



is a 'good' endpoint towards which all states should evolve (Call 2008: 1494, 1499).

"The schoolmarm tone of the concept is apparent: states are 'bad' because they have failed some externally defined test. Even where a state's population might be better served by the temporary or partial assumption of its sovereignty by some assemblage of international or regional actors, (...) the multiple problems of such arrangements – [as] alternatives to the failed state – are not acknowledged or considered." (Krasner 2004, cited in Call 2008: 1499).

(ii) Any broad definition leads to the excessive aggregation of diverse states and various problems under one label. (iii) The concept obscures tailor-made solutions and only offers a single prescription: more order, even when the prevailing order is unjust. (iv) The concept covers up the thorny issues of **democratization**, representation, horizontal accountability and transparency by framing its discourse solely in terms of state-building in an apolitical and technical way. (v) Call states that this discourse also conflates the diverging needs for peace and 'stateness:' Sometimes peace-building is forced to delay state-building, and sometimes strengthening states leads to more instability. Finally, the failed state label obfuscates the role of external actors in how these states 'failed' in the first place. This ahistorical scoring neglects the long legacy of dependency and its impact on the contemporary condition of these states (Call 2008: 1494-1450). This leads to perpetuation and institutionalization of the world hierarchy rather than leveling the 'unequal global playing field.' (Chandler 2006: 64).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE & IMPACT ON POLICY There are a number of risks associated with failed/fragile states. One of the notable impacts is how state failure affects the populations living in them, how this generates a refugee crisis, and may spread the crisis to other regions, thus heightening global security risks and potentially leading to armed conflict. The breakdown of law and order in these regions can lead to humanitarian and economic disaster, which concerns not only the people directly affected but also the population of neighboring states. Analysts also point to the potential of a failed state to develop weapons of mass destruction and contribute to their proliferation. According to Patrick (2006: 36-37), there is empirical evidence that failed states are hotbeds of **terrorism**. Sachs (2003: 30-31) mentions also other concerns like environmental degradation and the spread of diseases. Takeyh and Gvosdev (2002: 96-97) argue that failed states are safe havens for smuggling drugs and using their trafficking to fund the ruling regime, thus contributing significantly to the instability of the wider region in which they are located.

The exact relation between regime type and state fragility remains an obscure and complex one. In contrast to common belief, a strong state is not always a necessary pre-requirement for democracy to develop. Using Large-N data, Gjerløw et al. (2021) find mixed evidence regarding this stateness-first hypothesis and no convincing evidence that countries became richer by following this 'golden sequence' of institutional development. Democratization appears to be favorable for economic development, even in weak states. More research is needed to untangle this complex, multivariate relationship.

All these negative aspects naturally have led the international community to formulate policies toward failed/fragile states. While basic research is focused primarily on explaining and identifying the causes of state failure, in applied research, the core problem is to find out how to intervene effectively to slow, halt or reverse the process of state failure (Iqbal & Starr 2015: 19).

There is no blueprint for fixing state fragility because the effects of all instruments largely depend on the context and the interaction between internal and external factors. Engagement that began out of concern for global security has increasingly been framed in the last decade through a development lens. It is not surprising that national governments and international organizations are trying not to leave fragile states behind and support their journey toward good governance, stronger institutions, economic development, and post-conflict reconstruction, and thus help contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda. This engagement is based on *The Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States* and on the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* (OECD 2007; EU Public Group on Fragility and Crisis Situations 2023).

ORIGIN Research oriented towards the analysis of weak states began during the 1960s to address the internal weakness and instability of newly emerging postcolonial states. It is primarily associated with Gunnar Myrdal, who referred to political units that have failed to fulfill the classical functions of the state as 'soft states.' In his conceptualization, the soft state lacks the basic elements of statehood and has gained sovereignty by virtue of decisions taken by the international community. It has thus avoided the normal state-building process, and the result is a lack of institutionalization, political backwardness and weak performance of the state apparatus (Myrdal 1968: 277). Although the concept was originally designed for the states of Southeast Asia, since decolonization, it has mostly been applied to newly created states in Sub Saharan Africa. The soft state is also characterized by **neo-patrimonialism** in practice, leading to the decline of the state structures and sensitivity to outbreaks of general chaos and violence.

The research into weak postcolonial states was followed up by Jackson and Rosberg (1982), who refer to weak African countries of the time as 'juridical states,' which are sovereign only on the basis of decisions of the international community but lack empirical elements of statehood: the crucial impulse to explore weak statehood came a decade later. The collapse of the bipolar world order and the deepening poverty in the Global South during the 1990s have given new impetus to research on weak statehood. It is no coincidence that foreign policy analysts introduced the concepts of failed and failing states in the early 1990s. Since then, these have been widely disseminated by US administrations and policy analysts

after 11 September 2001, often as a justification for foreign intervention.

The notion of a *fragile state* has had a slightly different trajectory. As aptly observed and summarized by Nay (2013), it has spread internationally among donors, technical agencies and some governments, especially in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and peace-building. In particular, it has been widely used by the OECD and the World Bank since the mid-2000s to designate the poorest and most unstable countries that cannot meet minimum standards set by major donors of development aid (Nay 2013: 2). From this point on, failed/fragile states have come to be seen as a global security threat, regardless of their geographical location. The issue of failed/fragile states has thus made the headlines and entered into the wider public consciousness.

LITERATURE In the context of the growing interest of political leaders, international organizations, and the general public in what is happening in failing states, a wide range of research (meaning also new typologies, terminologies, and ways of measuring weak statehood) emerged after 1995. Georg Sørensen came up with the label *disrupted* state for the unconsolidated postcolonial state on the periphery, often in a continuing state of entropy (Sørensen 1999: 24). William Zartman came up with another (now widely used) term: *collapsed states,* representing entities with extreme cases of governance problems, where the state is unable to provide security to its inhabitants, nor does it ensure control over territory, thus losing legitimacy. He sees the collapse of state institutions as a loss of control over political and economic life in the country. He also convincingly demonstrates that the various functions of the state are very closely interrelated, meaning that if one function is weakened, the other functions begin to weaken as well (Zartman 1995: 1-15).

Lisa Chauvet and Paul Collier also work with the phenomenon of state collapse. In their research on the causes of conflicts, they use the label *failed states*, which they define as low-income countries in which economic policies, institutions, and government are so weak that economic growth is highly unlikely. The state loses legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens because, even when the country is at peace, these citizens suffer. The statistical patterns suggest that such entities are at significant risk of descending into civil war (Chauvet & Collier 2005: 1). Their empirical research has clearly shown that the combination of poverty and stagnation significantly increases the likelihood of conflict.

The World Bank's LICUS initiative (low-income countries under stress) has focused on the identification, analysis and comprehensive assistance to low-income countries under stress since 2004. It refers to such countries as *fragile states* characterized by exceptionally weak policies (socioeconomic as well as political), institutions, and governance, and many are either conflict-vulnerable or post-conflict states (World Bank 2023a). Research by the UK's DFID addresses the issue from a humanitarian point of view. Mostly, applied institutional research has been primarily provided by bilateral or multilateral development aid organizations, such as the World Bank or DFID, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), the *US Agency for International Development* (USAID) as well as the entire spectrum of UN agencies. In an effort to synthesize different approaches, the *Fragile State Index* (FSI) (formerly the Failed States Index, see below) has been published since 2005 by the US think-tank *Fund for Peace.*

CLASSIFICATIONS As previously mentioned, the most commonly used classification of failed states into weak, failed and collapsed states was developed by Rotberg. Another interesting typology of failed states was laid out by Jean-Germain Gros (1996). Gros comes up with five different categories: (a) *anarchic*, (b) *phantom,* (c) *anaemic,* (d) *captured* and (e) *aborted*. Anarchic states (a) do not have a central government and are characterized by the presence of armed groups that fight for power. Phantom states (b) have a central government, but their power is very limited (in some places virtually non-existent), and the economic system operates independently of the government. Anaemic states (c) are characterized by the fact that the power of the central authority is very weak, usually as a result of targeted efforts by anti-government actors to capture government positions. Captured states (d), on the other hand, are characterized by a strong central government that essentially does not allow opposition to emerge. The last type of failed state, according to Gros, is the so-called aborted state (e), which collapsed essentially before it began to take real shape. The cause of such a collapse is often the rapid emergence of the state without the fundamental problems being resolved beforehand (Gros 1996: 458-461).

C.T. Call (2011) proposes an alternative conceptual framework where he separates the shortcomings of a failed state along three conceptional dimensions: legitimacy, capacity and security. This allows for a classification of failed states according to three 'gaps' and exposes different solutions for illegitimate states, weak states and war-torn states:

The legitimacy gap This does not refer to an *external* legitimacy gap but to *illegitimate states*. This lack of regime **legitimacy** concerns the rejection by the political elites and society of "the rules regulating the exercise of power and the accumulation and distribution of wealth." So, only internal legitimacy matters for this analysis, and this gap is the most difficult to conceptualize and operationalize due to these states' lack of transparency and propaganda (Call 2011: 308).

The capacity gap This is a narrower interpretation of *weak states* and refers to "the degree that state institutions are able to provide or regulate the minimal provision of core public goods." It is not about state institutions being capable, but whether they effectively provide security, rule of law, public finance management, and minimal public goods such as primary education and basic health care – in other words, whether they uphold the social contract (Call 2011: 306).



The security gap refers to the condition when states do not provide minimal levels of security in the face of organized armed groups. A situation thus found in *war-torn* societies. Territories can be at war or linger in such conditions post-conflict. In this concept, Call particularly incorporates "the effects of war on infrastructure, social trust, displacement of persons, human right abuses, and contested authority." (Call 2011: 307).

MEASUREMENT By its very nature, measuring state fragility is of most interest to national governments and international organizations in areas related to security and development assistance. Many different organizations are working on fragile state metrics. Many not only use different criteria to assess state weakness, but the majority create their own rankings. We focus on some of the most notable indices. The first index comes from the OECD and is known as the *States of Fragility* data platform. The OECD has developed this multidimensional fragility framework to guide effective action in fragile contexts. It assesses risks and coping capacities across six dimensions: economic, environmental, human, political, security and societal. Since 2015, the *States of Fragility* reports have sought to understand better the implications of fragility for international stability and development. OECD combines 44 indicators from conflict incidents to social protection and food security. All reports can be found on the OECD website (OECD 2022).

The World Bank also has its own methodology, identifying 'fragile and conflict-affected states' (FCS), with an updated list being released annually since 2006. The list functions primarily as a tool to help the World Bank adapt its approaches, policies, and instruments in difficult and complex environments. The latest list of FCS countries contains 17 conflict-affected countries and 20 other countries falling into the category of 'Institutional and Social Fragility' (World Bank 2023b).

The most well-known and discussed ranking measuring state fragility over the past almost two decades is the *Fragile State Index* – a project of the Washington, DC-based think-tank *Fund for Peace*. Since 2005, the index has been published on the organization's website and in *Foreign Policy* magazine. The original title until 2013 was the *Failed States Index*, but since 2014, the annual report has been published under the current title, better reflecting its scope (currently 179 UN members) and no longer just those cases that are experiencing state failure, like before. Their yearly report is widely cited by academics, journalists and practitioners to make broad comparative points about individual countries and regions. The report uses both qualitative and quantitative measures to gauge 12 main indicators (security apparatus, Factionalized Elites, Group Grievance, Economic Decline, Uneven Economic Development, Human Flight and Brain Drain, State Legitimacy, Public Services, Human Rights and Rule of Law, Demographic Pressures, Refugees and IDPs and External Intervention). Each indicator is rated (best-worst) on a scale of 0–10, with the sum of the scores providing an overall score for comparative country rankings. The first places are thus occupied by countries that most closely match collapsed states.

Other rankings of failed or fragile states that have resonated in the public sphere over the past 20 years or so include, e.g., *State Fragility Index* (Center for Systemic Peace), *Country Indicators for Foreign Policy* (Carlton University and CIDA) and *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World* (Brookings Institution). For a discussion about issues of measurement and methodology, see Kaplan 2014; Brinkerhoff 2019.

EXAMPLES There are many examples of failed/fragile states in recent years. In the last decade, the countries that have most consistently been ranked at the top of the FSI have been Yemen, Somalia, Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Afghanistan, Chad and Myanmar.

OTHER LANGUAGES The most important books and academic articles on this topic have appeared in English, being the *lingua franca* of most international organizations and think tanks, from which policy papers and donor strategies originate. However, there exist some well-known and widely cited works in French (Bellina et al. 2010; Gaulme 2011), Spanish (Gutiérrez-Sanín 2010; Zapata Callejas 2014) and in German (Schneckener 2004; Bethke 2012).

NEW FRONTIERS Why is it still relevant to discuss failed/fragile states when the concept has been so often criticized? The answer is simple because it continues to be used in policies on conflict, security and development. State fragility also represents one of the significant challenges to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Though the failed and fragile state concepts are unstable and evolve, they may help shape our understanding of problems, and consequently also how to forge possible solutions. The questions of how to reduce internal state instability, what its causes are, the causal relations between failing institutions and corruption, the security issues, and the economic underdevelopment of the state remain relevant. Future research should continue to analyze the trends and assess their relationship with specific dimensions of state failure. This is meaningful despite the fact that in the field of weak statehood, there is still no widely accepted consensus among academics and practitioners working in basic and applied research on methodological and conceptual issues.

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Box 7.8 Piracy – The Case of Somalia

In politics and in trade, bruisers and pirates are of better promise than talkers and clerks.
– Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

Piracy in Somalia emerged in the early 1990s following the collapse of Siad Barre's regime. Initially concentrated in northeast Somalia and near the southern port of Kismayo, piracy grew steadily throughout the decade. In its early stages, Somali pirates primarily targeted small fishing vessels. However, by the late 1990s, their tactics had evolved to include the capture of large commercial ships traveling to ports like Mogadishu and Kismayo (Marchal 2011).

By 2008, Somali piracy had become a significant threat to international shipping routes along the Somali coast. The introduction of 'mother ships' allowed pirates to extend their operational range far beyond coastal waters, further endangering global maritime trade (Guilfoyle 2012; Percy & Shortland 2013b). This escalation drew the attention of the international community, prompting coordinated responses to address the crisis.

The *United Nations Security Council* (UNSC) authorized anti-piracy military operations, resulting in collaborative efforts led by NATO (Combined Task Force-151) and the European Union (EU NAVFOR). Additionally, individual states such as China, Russia, India, and South Korea joined these efforts (Guilfoyle 2012). The EU's maritime operation, *Operation Atalanta*, played a central role in combating piracy. It worked closely with regional states like Kenya, Seychelles, and Mauritius to enhance security and prosecute captured pirates (Karawita 2019; Reisman 2009). These coordinated actions marked a significant international effort to curb piracy off the Somali coast.

One of the main factors contributing to Somali piracy was the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s (Beri 2011; Murphy 2013; Bahadur 2012; Samatar et al. 2010). The fall of Siad Barre's regime led to a breakdown in law and order, leaving Somalia's coastal waters unprotected and vulnerable to criminal activity. In the absence of a functioning government, pirates operated with relative impunity, becoming a significant threat to international shipping in the region.

Following the first phase of the Somali civil war, characterized by violent clashes between clan-based militias, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established in 2004 through negotiations led by the *Intergovernmental Authority on Development* (IGAD). However, the TFG struggled to gain local support or control Somali territory. By 2006, the *Islamic Courts Union* (ICU) had taken control of Mogadishu and much of southern Somalia. Despite their initial success in establishing order, the ICU was ousted later that year by Ethiopian forces and TFG troops (Menkhaus 2007). The TFG remained weak and illegitimate in the eyes of many Somalis while facing insurgent threats from groups like al-Shabaab (Beri 2011).

In subsequent years, a new government was formed with protection from the *African Union Mission in Somalia* (AMISOM). However, piracy continued to rise despite international efforts to combat it (Besteman 2017; Karawita 2019). According to Percy & Shortland (2013a: 65), five key obstacles hindered effective anti-piracy measures: (a) lack of alternative employment opportunities for locals. (b) Corruption within local governance structures. (c) The nature of piracy victims (e.g., foreign commercial ships). (d) Practices by some shipping companies and insurers inadvertently incentivizing piracy. (e) Pirates' ability to innovate in response to enforcement efforts.

According to Keating (2013: 185), Somali piracy can be explained by two primary factors: (i) the collapse of the Somali state, which created a power vacuum conducive to pirate networks, and (ii) the pirates' development of a successful business model that exploited the vulnerabilities of maritime trade. Hastings and Phillips (2015) analyzed this business model, linking it to both formal and informal institutions in Somalia, particularly the clan system. Shortland and Varese (2016) emphasize that Somali piracy would not have been possible without the coordination and support of clans, local elites, and governments along the Somali coast.

The root causes of Somali piracy are complex and multifaceted. They include poverty, unemployment, deprivation in coastal communities, limited economic opportunities (Jablonski & Oliver 2013), and regional conflicts and instability. Pirates themselves often justified their actions as a response to illegal fishing and toxic waste dumping in Somali waters, portraying themselves as 'coast guards' protecting national resources (Hansen 2012; Guilfoyle 2012; Hastings & Phillips 2015). These grievances date back to Siad Barre's regime, which granted fishing concessions to the *Somali High Seas Fishing Company* (SHIFCO) – a company later privatized after Barre's fall. During the 1990s, SHIFCO monopolized Somali fishing through political corruption (Marchal 2011).

Despite these justifications, piracy was exacerbated by Somalia's political instability. **Warlords** used piracy revenues to fund militias in the 1990s and early 2000s (West 2006; Hastings 2009). The Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which briefly governed Somalia in 2006, banned piracy under Sharia law (Murphy 2013; Jablonski & Oliver 2013). However, after the ICU was ousted by Ethiopian and TFG forces, pirate attacks surged dramatically in 2008 (Coggins 2016). The TFG and subsequent governments were accused of **corruption**, **human rights** abuses, and resource mismanagement. Some members of these governments and Puntland elites allegedly supported piracy directly or indirectly in exchange for profits, creating what Menkhaus (2009) described as a 'pirate version of a **narco-state**' (International Crisis Group 2009; Murphy 2011; Bahadur 2012; Marchal 2011). Piracy revenues were even used for local development projects in Puntland cities like Garowe (Karawita 2019) and provided new job opportunities (Percy & Shortland 2013a).

While many policymakers argue that Somalia's state collapse created an anarchic haven for pirates (Pham 2011), scholars like Coggins (2016) and Percy & Shortland (2013b) contend that anarchy alone is insufficient for organized criminal activities like piracy. Instead, a degree of local governance is necessary for pirate groups to operate effectively. Mantzikos (2011) similarly argues

that weak states – not failed ones – provide the infrastructure needed for networks like pirates or **terrorist groups** to function. In fully anarchic environments, such groups risk betrayal or lack access to essential resources. Besides that, Mantzikos discussed the possible connection between pirates and Islamist groups in Yemen and Somalia and found that they are entangled in an informal network of 'win-win' situations (Mantzikos 2011: 256). Hastings and Phillips (2015) also found that piracy thrived in areas with greater degrees of 'semi-formal governing capacity' and less violence, such as Puntland and central Somalia.

Hastings (2009: 213) finds that *"state failure is associated with less logistically sophisticated hijackings (kidnappings for ransom), while state weakness encourages more sophisticated attacks (those where the ship and cargo are seized and sold)."* Percy and Shortland (2013b) argue that Somali piracy is an *"organized criminal activity and benefits from increased stability."* Therefore, it is very difficult to control it, and the international activities to combat it on the sea are not sufficient.

Regional variations further illustrate this dynamic. Puntland became a stronghold for piracy due to its weak governance structures, while Somaliland successfully suppressed piracy along its coast. Hastings and Phillips (2018) attribute Somaliland's success not to strong state institutions but to a discourse emphasizing Somaliland's inherent order compared to southern Somalia's disorder. They challenge the assumption that the strength of institutions is correlated with the level of order/disorder, which is presented by the 'state failure' literature (e.g., Rotberg 2003) and instead, puts emphasis on the creation of 'national' identities of Somalilanders in contrast to southern Somalia.

This contrasts with Daxecker & Prins' findings that improvements in governance generally reduce piracy risks by enabling states to project force effectively. They note that poorly guarded ports and underpaid security personnel create conditions where piracy flourishes. Furthermore, they argue that regime type matters: democracies with low state fragility reduce piracy attacks, whereas fragile democracies experience higher levels of piracy (Daxecker & Prins 2013).

Somali piracy also had significant implications for international law-making (especially 'soft law'). Guilfoyle (2012) highlights how it contributed to a shift from military responses to law enforcement operations, fostered transnational coordination against piracy, and redirected efforts from sea-based operations to land-based interventions.

In summary, Somali piracy emerged from a combination of socioeconomic deprivation, political instability, weak governance structures, and external grievances like illegal fishing. Its persistence was enabled by local elites' complicity and semi-formal governing arrangements in regions like Puntland. While international efforts have targeted piracy at sea, addressing its root causes on land remains critical for long-term solutions.

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Terrorism & Regime Promotion

Terrorism is the war of the poor, and war is the terrorism of the rich.
– Peter Ustinov (1921-2004), British actor, writer, filmmaker, and humanitarian

Terrorism is the tactic of demanding the impossible, and demanding it at gunpoint.
– Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011), British-American author

Terrorism as asymmetric warfare and its effects on different autocratic regime types are covered in the main entry: **terrorist groups**. This entry is complementary and briefly highlights how terrorism relates to authoritarian **ideologies** and how it affects regime promotion and other behavior in international relations.

The worldviews espoused by autocracies are diverse and evolving; still, in the last century, several ideologies became intricately associated with terrorism. Many terrorist groups emerged as radicalized, militant fractions of larger 'transnational ideological networks' (TINs) in the outer fringes of ideological clusters of regimes, often operating in those territories considered frontlines between ideological camps in global and regional geopolitical competition, aimed at **regime promotion** and fostering **revolution**.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the internationalization of terrorism was partly influenced by the Palestinian plight and the emergence of left-wing revolutionary movements in Europe and North America. These groups were driven by Marxist-Leninist ideology, aiming to overthrow capitalist systems and turn states to **communism** or **socialism**. They frequently targeted government institutions, corporations, and individuals (e.g., kidnapping, **assassination**), which they viewed as symbols of capitalist exploitation and oppression. Notable examples include the *Rote Armee Fraktion* ('Red Army Faction' or Baader-Meinhof Gang) in Germany, the *Brigate Rosse* ('Red Brigades') in Italy, and the FARC ('Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia,' 1964-2017). Older ideology-motivated terrorist groups aiming for violent **revolution** and regime change were the various anarchist movements (**anarchism**) seeking to overthrow monarchies, empires, and state power.

In parallel, one finds the ethno-nationalist or separatist movements that engaged in 'modern' terrorism. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as nationalist movements sought independence from empires and colonial rule, the use of terrorism emerged as a strategy for militant groups who perceived violence as the only viable means of undermining imperial or colonial powers and galvanizing international support. The asymmetrical nature of these conflicts made terrorism appealing: it was a low-cost but highly visible way to challenge better-armed imperial overlords or colonial rulers (spectacle terrorism) (Wilkinson 1974).

The oldest colony in Europe is a prime example, ultimately culminating in the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) with various generations of *Irish Republican Army* (IRA) fighters engaged in different causes. For Africa, the *Algerian National Liberation Front* (FLN 1954-1962) used bombings and assassinations against French colonial forces to draw attention to Algeria's independence cause, while the *Mau Mau* uprising (1952-1960) in Kenya deployed violent insurgency tactics against the British to the same effect. Other famous examples emerged in the South African anti-Apartheid struggle (1961-1994), like some factions of the *African National Congress* (ANC) or the armed wing of the *Azanian People's Organization* (AZAPO) (for more on Apartheid, see Box 4.7). Other examples are the Basque separatist group ETA (Basque Homeland and Liberty, 1959-2011) and the *Tamil Tigers* in Sri Lanka (1976-2009).

These anti-colonial and separatist movements influenced one another worldwide by legitimizing terrorism as a tactic for political change and borrowing tactics. For instance, the *Irish Republican Brotherhood* (1858) was one of the earliest groups to use time-delayed explosive devices, allowing for escape and campaign sustainment. This innovation, along with their establishment of foreign bases, became a hallmark of twentieth-century terrorism. The *Palestinian Liberation Organization's* (PLO) success in using hijackings and attacks on international targets to publicize their cause and gain political recognition had a profound impact on the evolution of terrorism. In addition, the PLO, seeking to advance their own goals and foster revolutionary alliances, provided training and logistical support to various terrorist groups from around the world, including the *Rote Armee Fraktion* in Germany (Hoffman 2006; Chaliand & Blin 2007; Wilkinson 1974).

Probably the oldest form is religious-motivated terror, framed as existential struggles between good and evil, with each side believing that their cause was divinely sanctioned. Such ideology-driven violence is deeply associated with religious wars during previous waves of **regime promotion** (Owen IV 2010) and with some of the earliest insurrections in the age of empire, like the original 'zealots' (first century CE) or the first 'assassins' (1090 – ca. 1275 CE). In modern times, **theocracies** (like Iran or the Taliban) enabled and supported religious terrorism as a more prominent feature of the international landscape in the 1980s, culminating in the rise of al-Qaeda or the *Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL), who themselves also instrumentalized terror (Box 3.13) in their efforts of state-building (**Islamic States**).

Terrorism has generally been ineffective in achieving regime change or **revolution**, with few exceptions. While it can generate fear and disruption, most terrorist groups have failed to achieve their stated political goals. Anti-colonial movements, such as the FLN in Algeria or the *Irgun* (a Jewish nationalist-liberation movement, 1931-1948)

in Palestine, are notable exceptions where terrorism played a role in broader campaigns for independence. However, these successes were influenced by factors like the weakening of colonial powers, international support, and shifting public opinion against colonialism (Chaliand & Blin 2007; Hoffman 2006).

Even in these cases, terrorism was not the decisive factor; it was part of a larger strategy that included guerrilla warfare, political mobilization, and diplomacy. Terrorism is more likely to provoke **repression** than revolution, especially when targeting autocratic regimes, as governments often respond with increased security measures and crackdowns on dissent. Additionally, indiscriminate violence can alienate potential supporters and undermine a movement's **legitimacy** (Chaliand & Blin 2007).

Alternative strategies like peaceful **protests**, coups, and guerrilla warfare (**rebellion**) have historically been more effective in achieving regime change. While terrorism can destabilize leaders or electoral autocracies, it rarely leads to regime transformation and often fails to produce long-term political gains (Adam & Tsavou 2022).

The end of the Cold War (and the end of bipolar ideological confrontation) has reduced the availability of funding for terrorist organizations, resulting in a decline of left-wing terrorist groups, with many turning to organized crime as an alternative form of income. Rapid changes in technology and global financing also facilitated their transnational transformations (Mahan & Griset 2008: 104). Radicalized factions among several strands of **political Islam** still drive terrorism today, especially in areas with protracted conflicts. The COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions in high-capacity states (like Western Europe) have shifted terrorist activities and their centers to West Africa, the Sahel and Southeast Asia. (Hedayah 2022). A comprehensive, recent global overview of terrorist organizations can be found in Romaniuk et al. 2024.

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Youth Bulge & Regime Stability

Youth is the best time to be rich, and the best time to be poor.
– Euripides

初生牛犊不怕虎
(chū shēng niú dú bù pà hǔ)
(Newborn calves are not afraid of tigers)
– Chinese proverb

The concept of a 'youth bulge' refers to a demographic pattern characterized by a large proportion of young people in a population, especially children, teens, and young adults. This phenomenon is often observed in countries where improved healthcare reduces infant mortality, but fertility rates remain high, leading to a surplus of youth relative to adults. Scholars suggest that youth bulges, particularly when combined with limited job opportunities, can contribute to **protests and uprisings** and sometimes even **conflict**.

DEFINITION A youth bulge is a demographic pattern where a large share of the population are children, teens and young adults (Lin 2012). Gunnar Heinsohn (2003) claims that the youth bulge can be defined as when the ratio of adequately prestigious and well-paid jobs is much smaller than the workforce. Thus, countries with a large percentage of young people may also struggle with a high youth unemployment rate.

The youth bulge emerges when infant mortality rates reduce (due to improvements in vaccination distribution and sanitation), but fertility rates remain high. In these countries with high fertility rates, the demographic transition has not fully materialized; there are typically still structural barriers to reducing fertility rates – such as women not being fully integrated into the workforce, having fewer reproductive rights and the need to have large families for social security.

Many countries in the Arab region have been



noted for having a significant youth bulge – that is, a large percentage of the population is at least under 30, with high levels of youth unemployment. In the case of Egypt, there are substantial numbers of university graduates who cannot find employment, which has led to frustration and anger after rising expectations of jobs, steady income and class mobility. For some scholars, this atmosphere can lead to greater instability as there is heightened social and political alienation (LaGraffe 2012).

SEE ALSO The youth bulge is often referred to as 'youth surplus' or a large 'youth cohort.' It is one of the subjects of political demography, an interdisciplinary field drawing on political science, sociology, economics, and geography to understand how population dynamics influence political outcomes on both national and international levels. Youth bulges are expected to correlate with **protests and uprisings** and demands for regime change (**revolution**) and **democratization** and thus challenge regime **longevity, stability and resilience**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Youth bulges are significant because they are used to predict instability. This is relevant for the **revolution** and **conflict** literature, as a youth bulge could be a trigger factor driving and facilitating authoritarian breakdown and/or conflict and **terrorism** recruitment.

ORIGIN The youth bulge concept is relatively new, but similar theories were introduced decades ago by Herbert Moller (1968) and Gaston Bouthoul (1970). Several decades later, the work by Jack Goldstone highlighted the importance of youth cohorts, and in particular, youth unemployment in leading to instability (1986; 1991; 2001; 2002). Samuel Huntington also embraced the concept and theory in his book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996), arguing that youth are an important agent of change. Though Huntington (1996: 261) argued that demographic shifts cannot explain everything, he claimed that *"shifts in the demographic balances and youth bulges of 20 percent or more account for many of the inter-civilizational conflicts of the late twentieth century."*

LITERATURE There is a significant body of literature that has investigated the impact of a demographic explosion on political stability and authoritarian breakdown. Earlier works noted that **revolutions** are most likely to take place in countries with large populations of energetic yet frustrated young men (Goldstone 1986; 1991; Kennedy 1993; Moller 1968). Goldstone argued that a large cohort of young men, in particular, desperate for employment could explain nearly all periods of internal unrest in human history, such as the English Revolution of the seventeenth century and the French Revolution of the eighteenth century. Most twenty-century **revolutions** in developing countries occurred where exceptionally large youth bulges were present (Goldstone 2001; 2002). Iran, for example, went through a demographic explosion before its revolution in 1979 that overthrew the Shah.

Young people are more easily mobilized and are more willing to challenge the *status quo* (Goldstone 2001; Huntington 2006). Young people are also more risk-acceptant when it comes to challenging dictatorships because they have fewer family and career responsibilities (Collier 2000). Youth also notably participated in the **color revolutions** and the **Arab Spring**: The *Bulldozer Revolution* in Yugoslavia (2000), the *Rose Revolution* in Georgia (2003), the *Orange Revolution* in Ukraine (2004), and the Iranian *Green Movement* (2009-2011) (Diuk 2003) – see also Box 6.4 on 'Flowers, Cloth and Spices.'

In particular, the literature has also focused on the relationship between a large youth bulge and unmet rising expectations – or when youth unemployment is coupled with an expansion of education. Studies find that youth are more likely to be unemployed than other age groups, with global youth (15–24) unemployment standing at almost 15 percent, according to the *International Labour Organization* (ILO). At the same time, better-educated individuals are more likely to participate in political activities, such as voting or discussing politics, or taking part in more public forms of mobilization, such as protests (Putnam 1995; Sondheimer & Green 2010). As expectations rise, when this is unaccompanied by jobs, high levels of discontent are created. As Huntington (1963: 48) notes, *"the higher the level of education of the unemployed (…) the more extreme the destabilizing behaviour which results."* The argument is that educated youth cohorts that run into bottlenecks will lead to growing frustrations (Urdal 2006). Youth bulges are also associated with high poverty rates among this segment of the population (Ortiz & Cummins 2012). This adds to youth frustration as another grievance against the state.

Youth bulges often lead to authoritarian breakdown by raising a country's risk of violent conflict (Acemoglu et al. 2017; Raleigh & Urdal 2007). Countries experiencing youth bulges of 35 percent or more of the population are three times more likely to experience violent conflict than countries with demographic structures more similar to developed countries (Urdal 2006). From 1970 to 2007, 80 percent of all outbreaks of conflict occurred in countries where 60 percent or more of the population was younger than 30 (Zakaria 2011).

For the same reason why youth are more likely to join a protest – that they have fewer responsibilities and are more open to new ideas – they are also more likely to join a conflict. High fertility rates and lower child and infant mortality rates ensure the competition over scarce resources, exacerbating grievances leading to conflict (Fuller 2003; Cincotta et al. 2012; Goldstone 2002), greater instability (Goldstone et al. 2014) and violent crime (LaFree & Tseloni 2006; Weber 2019). A youth bulge can harm social cohesion and facilitate social unrest and societal volatility because there are relatively high numbers of unemployed young people (Boyden 2007; Moller 1968). These groups are particularly vulnerable to joining conflicts if the economic and political structures fail to give these groups opportunities to raise demands. In the context of **state fragility**, there will be greater opportunities for violence (Goldstone 2001). Many scholars have noted that younger people were a

source of social unrest, violence and conflict, not just in Europe (Moller 1968; Goldstone 1991) but also in Africa (Peters 2012; Flückiger & Ludwig 2018) and the Middle East (Fuller 2003; Huntington 2000; Hvistendahl 2011; LaGraffe 2012; Roche 2010).

Nevertheless, other studies claim that there is no direct relationship established between a youth bulge causing civil wars (Dhillon & Yousef 2007; Pruitt 2020). Some studies have warned that the youth bulge-conflict relationship all depends on demographic factors. For example, one empirical study showed that the risk of ethnic conflict increases with the presence of a youth bulge (Ahmed et al. 1998), while another has argued that a youth bulge may be more likely to lead only to non-ethnic wars – in countries failing to meet economic demands (Yair & Miodownik 2016).

Other studies have claimed that though a youth bulge may not drive all conflicts *per se*, it can fuel low-intensity conflicts (Urdal 2006) or affect the intensity of a conflict once it erupts (Mesquida & Wiener 1999). Furthermore, other studies have laid out that the impact of the youth bulge is dependent on how corrupt a government is. Corruption coupled with youth prevalence in excess of 20 percent is destabilizing (Farzanega & Witthuhn 2017). Finally, a recent study has demonstrated that a youth bulge is more important than unemployment rates, arguing that growing youth prevalence and growing educational expansion can lead to increased political violence, even when there is low unemployment (Weber 2019).

Other works have argued that youth bulges do not always produce revolution and violence. The West experienced a demographic bulge in the decades after World War II. Rather than fuel instability, this cohort, known as the 'baby boomers,' became an engine for high levels of economic growth. China and India, likewise, each have a large cohort of young workers that contribute to those countries' economic strength. In the absence of economic growth and employment opportunities, however, a large youth population can make for mass discontent (Zakaria 2011) and increase a country's risk of authoritarian breakdown, and possibly conflict.

MEASUREMENT Most frequently, the youth bulge defines a situation where the population share of those 15–24 years old exceeds 20 percent, and the share of those under 15 (often referred to as the children bulge) is higher than 30 percent. Another commonly used method to measure the youth bulge is to use the size of the youth cohort relative to the adult population. This is the ratio of the population aged 15–24 compared to the ratio of the population aged 15–64.

EXAMPLES Many countries in the Global South have seen their youth bulge decrease, such as Vietnam, China, Indonesia and Brazil, but in the Middle East and Sub Saharan Africa, the youth bulge continues to increase. When looking at the **Arab Spring**, the role of younger people who were involved in protests and taking to the streets was notable.

The Arab region had an especially higher number of younger people in 2010, with 42 percent of the population falling into this age group compared to the world's average of 35 percent. In 2011, about 60 percent of the Middle East and North Africa's population was under 30 – twice the rate of North America. Moreover, the Arab world had recently experienced a significant expansion in education, and youth unemployment was staggeringly high. Unemployment in the region averaged at least 10 percent, the highest regional rate of joblessness in the world. For the region's young people, however, the unemployment rate was four times the average (Knickmeyer 2011). Likewise, data measuring the average years of schooling in the population aged 15 and over between 1980 and 2010 showed a significant increase in the Arab world and Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya in particular (Barro & Lee 2010). Inadequate economic opportunities for an increasingly young and educated populace, combined with factors such as a significant rise in food prices, played a major role in fueling the Arab Spring and the breakdown of three longstanding autocracies (Campante & Chor 2012).

IMPACT ON POLICY The impact of the youth bulge has been noted by various disciplines in the social sciences. This includes the economic impacts, social impacts, political impacts and security impacts. This has led policymakers to keep a close eye on demographic challenges in assessing political instability risk and to target countries with policies that tackle high fertility rates and unemployment. Major international institutions have looked at the types of skills that young people may need to make them more competitive in the job market and what state policies can help lift unemployment levels and create a stable job market.

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Box 7.9 Youth Rights in Authoritarian Regimes

Currently, young people very much rely on States to promote and protect their rights. However, most States are reluctant to take a progressive stance towards youth rights and therefore the challenges that young people face accessing their rights are almost never remedied.
– Giuseppe Porcaro, Secretary-General of the European Youth Forum

Young people face many challenges, such as exclusion, underrepresentation and lack of access to human rights (Lippert 2021; OSGEY 2021: 1; Thai Lawyers for Human Rights 2020). Paradoxically, the need to engage meaningfully with young people as a specific category of the population with particular needs and interests has not received enough academic attention (Freddy 2017: 14). Human rights of the youth or 'youth rights' represent an under-explored and a contested concept because the concept of youth rights naturally applies to different populations facing different social, economic and political challenges and different sorts and levels of marginalization. All these differences have produced different and often confusing definitions, paving the way for partly overlapping and consequently vague, sometimes even confusing, legal frameworks for the protection of youth rights. In turn, this overlap also poses an additional limitation of the very concept of youth rights in the context of authoritarian regimes, already not conducive to **human rights** protection in general.

Autocracies often engage with youth to appeal to an active and potentially influential segment of the population (cf. **youth bulge & regime stability**). However, young people are also frequent targets of authoritarian regimes, facing threats and attacks that manifest through violent repression, both offline and online. These crackdowns often target young activists, peace-builders, and community mobilizers. In response, social movements have emerged to resist the oppression of youth, challenge adultism, advocate for youth rights, and promote meaningful youth participation and partnerships between youth and adults (Angel et al. 2015; Freddy 2017: 14; Krawatzek 2022: 1107).

In examining youth rights within authoritarian and democratic regimes, scholars primarily focus on the social and political struggles faced by young people. They also aim to challenge the inequalities embedded in political and legal systems, as well as the broader social conditions shaping the lives of youth in today's complex contexts. This often involves direct criticism of the structural causes and factors that hinder the realization of youth human rights (Reis & Isidório 2019: 2). However, these efforts take place against the backdrop of a broader crisis in the global appeal of human rights and democratic governance (Regilme 2021).

Human rights universally apply to all individuals, including youth, but age is not explicitly listed as a prohibited ground for discrimination in key international documents like the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *International Covenants* (1966/1976) (Cardona 2015: xvii). The concept of youth is contested, defined as a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, with varying age ranges across organizations, such as 15-24 by the UN and 15-35 by the African Union (Ansell 2005; Cardona 2015). This ambiguity creates overlaps with children's rights under the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), which applies to individuals under 18. While the CRC is significant, it inadequately addresses youth-specific challenges and is sometimes criticized as patronizing (Desmet 2012). Scholars advocate for an 'international law of youth rights' (ILYR) to address youth vulnerabilities and promote equal access to rights (Cardona 2015: xviii), though challenges like tokenism and marginalization persist (Campbell 1992; Jones 2009; Mahidi 2010; Tisdall 2015a/b; Josefsson & Wall 2020).

As young people depend on states to promote and protect their rights both nationally and internationally, it is concerning to observe an increasing reluctance among states to adopt progressive positions on youth and youth rights. This issue is particularly pronounced in authoritarian regimes, which are often *"at best hypersensitive, and at worst openly hostile, to rights expressions"* (Massoud 2011: 2). Recent reports from international governmental and non-governmental organizations highlight this troubling trend. For instance, United Nations examinations of conflict and post-conflict societies (UNSC 2018) reveal that civic spaces remain unsafe for youth activism. Similarly, reports from organizations such as CIVICUS (2022) identify young people as one of the five social groups most frequently subjected to assaults on fundamental freedoms in their civic participation.

Moreover, as highlighted by the *UN Human Rights Office* in collaboration with the *Office of the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth* on protecting young people in civic spaces (OSGEY 2021: 6), although individual cases involving threats against young people have been documented, there is a lack of extensive research on the topic and no global reports have been published analyzing *"the various forms and gravity of threats, challenges and barriers against diverse groups of youth who are active in the civic space."*

In addition, it was emphasized by young participants in this study that political threats and pressures are a huge concern of young people because: *"Governments, political leaders and influential actors use sophisticated methods and mechanisms to discourage and suppress young people's right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, among others, and we received reports that paramilitary, intelligence and counter-intelligence services interfered, applied further pressure and carried out political persecution and surveillance on behalf of authorities. It should also be mentioned that it is often precisely this hostility and the disappointment in public institutions and actors which push young activists towards informal and/or non-governmental movements and organizations."* (OSGEY 2021: 6-7)

Systematic research on youth rights in authoritarian regimes remains limited, and there is relatively little knowledge about youth actions and restrictions on their rights, aside from a few case studies focused on



select authoritarian contexts. Authoritarian regimes, or so-called 'authoritarian zones,' pose significant challenges to human rights research, particularly in obtaining reliable data without endangering the individuals involved. Human rights defenders and researchers face heightened risks in these settings, as the regime often targets them. This is especially true when studying young people, who are already considered a vulnerable group in research contexts (Clark et al. 2010).

Conducting empirical research or collecting primary data in authoritarian regimes is particularly difficult due to restricted access for researchers and security risks for both participants and investigators (Hopman 2021: 548). These challenges are compounded by the lack of transparency and the hostile environment created by such regimes. Consequently, certain authoritarian zones remain severely under-researched, to the extent that they effectively "drop off the research map" (Goodhand 2001: 44). This lack of documentation allows some authoritarian regimes to enjoy a degree of impunity, as their actions, including human rights violations, often go unstudied and unrecorded (Hopman 2021: 549).

Scholars have identified certain trends regarding youth rights in authoritarian regimes. For instance, ruling elites in such regimes increasingly recognize the influence of young people both within and beyond their borders. As a result, they often target young diasporas and engage with youth domestically to foster loyalty to the regime (Krawatzek 2022: 1108; Wackenhut & Orjuela 2023). This aligns with Glasius's (2018: 180) observation that authoritarian regimes approach their populations abroad in various ways – repressing and extorting them, co-opting them as clients, or manipulating them as patriots through discourse.

In terms of youth participation, scholars have noted how authoritarian regimes engineer avenues for engagement that recalibrate power dynamics between the younger generation, elite networks, the ruling party, and the state, cf. **youth movements**. For example, Cambodia's shift toward authoritarianism saw an increase in state-controlled participatory channels designed to reinforce elite dominance rather than secure genuine political or social representation for ordinary youth (Norén-Nilsson 2021; Vong 2022). These channels primarily served as arenas for reproducing existing power structures, with expanded youth participation often tied to the mass mobilization of civil servants (Norén-Nilsson 2021: 275). This demonstrates that mobilizing youth participation in such contexts is less about empowering young people or securing their rights and more about sustaining or enhancing the regime's power.

These scholarly findings are particularly thought-provoking given the longstanding popularity of research on the effectiveness of international pressure in improving human rights records in authoritarian regimes. Since the 1990s, this topic has been central to studies in international law, politics, and international relations (Schmitz & Sikkink 2013; Dudai 2019). However, the potential of human rights to drive social and political change remains a point of contention among scholars (Hawkins 1997). Notably, there is a tendency in the literature to overemphasize the perceived positive and liberal aspects of soft interventions by human rights advocates and organizations (DeMars & Dijkzeul 2015; Berger et al. 2022).

This bias is partly rooted in an over-reliance on 'naming and shaming' strategies in human rights research, which have become conventional wisdom among lawyers, diplomats, policymakers, and even transnational networks and activists (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The widespread acceptance of this liberal constructivist approach has contributed to its popularity not only among scholars but also among practitioners. Massoud (2011: 6) notes that some researchers have even begun to overstate the counter-hegemonic nature of social activism around human rights and its role in empowering marginalized groups such as youth in authoritarian regimes (Golub 2006; Sepúlveda Carmona & Donald 2015).

For these reasons, scholars have emphasized the need for caution, even when promoting well-established human rights practices such as youth human rights education in authoritarian contexts – a common activity of international human rights NGOs. While internalizing international human rights discourse and engaging in human rights education, often framed through narratives of positive empowerment, can provide young activists with valuable opportunities, global connections, and access to discursive and financial resources unavailable through governments or private businesses, such efforts carry significant risks in authoritarian regimes.

In these contexts, young people who openly criticize their lack of rights are often perceived as threats to the regime's power, which can provoke violent and even fatal retaliation by the state (Bob 2002; Sika 2019). Additionally, foreign engagement based on human rights can have unintended consequences for youth in authoritarian settings. For instance, regimes may co-opt the discourse and tactics of youth movements while intensifying surveillance and repression of individual activists, thereby suppressing resistance and further entrenching authoritarian control (Massoud 2011: 3).

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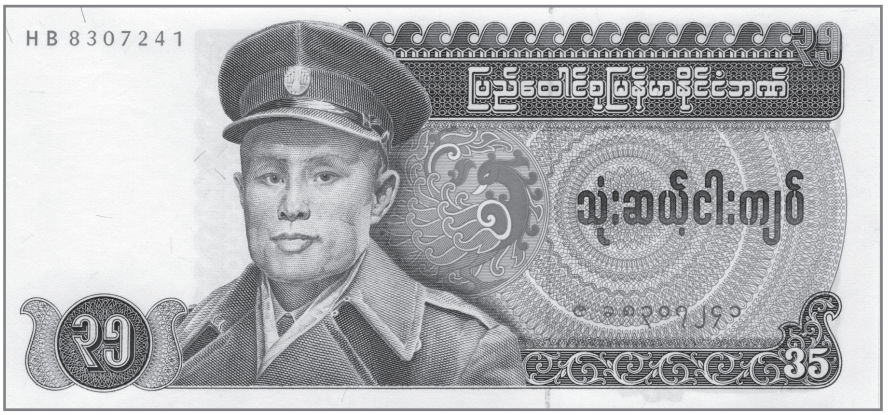
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SECTION 8
INSTITUTIONS & ACTORS





35 Kyat, Burma (1985), depicting General Ne Win, military dictator.

1 Kyat, Burma (1989), depicting General Aung San, independence leader (and his daughter Aung San Suu Kyi hidden in the watermark).

RULERS & FAMILY

Age & Health of Rulers

When the snake is old, the frog will tease him.
– Persian proverb

Dictators die, and the power they took from the people will return to the people. And so long as men die, liberty will never perish.
– Charlie Chaplin, *The Great Dictator* (1940)

Declining health and the advanced age of authoritarian leaders have profound implications for political regimes, primarily by increasing uncertainty, influencing economic performance, and altering the dynamics within the ruling elite. These factors do not necessarily lead to political liberalization but create conditions that can foster instability or reform under specific circumstances.

The leader's death (sudden or not) has been a factor in assessing regime transitions for a long time (cf. Betts & Huntington 1985), but declining health has not been a systemic object of study. While **incumbents** can become incapable for various reasons (e.g., approaching **term limits**), infirmity and decreasing lucidity are key causes of the 'anatine affliction' ('lame duck' syndrome – cf. Box 3.14). The more power is concentrated in a supreme powerholder, the more increasing uncertainty is dangerous for the regime, although collegial regimes through time have often been run by older men (rarely women), as shown in Box 1.12 on gerontocracy.

As authoritarian leaders age, their increasing mortality risk generates uncertainty within the regime. This uncertainty arises from concerns among government insiders about their future positions and benefits after the leader's death (Tanaka 2017; Falcoff 2017). Will a rival faction influence the course of the regime now that the dictator is becoming incapacitated? Who will decide on distributing **rents** when the ruler is gone? Will our faction be purged? Will another faction push for a takeover? Is there a successor all factions can stand behind? Is the ruler able to designate a successor? Will the people accept a new leader?

Such instability can destabilize the regime, creating opportunities for challenges from rivals or reformers. However, in many cases, once the dictator is dead, regime elites are incentivized to maintain stability and continuity and, therefore, tend to coalesce around a successor (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz 2016). They often work to ensure a smooth transition to a similar form of government, particularly in regimes with institutionalized **succession** mechanisms (Hummel 2017; 2020). Thus, the death of a dictator does not systematically lead to political liberalization.

Certain conditions, however, increase the likelihood of reform following a dictator's death. In economically developed countries, there is often a greater latent demand for democracy. Aging dictators in these contexts may implement reforms preemptively to maintain stability or avoid challenges (Hummel 2017; 2020). Moreover, the death of older dictators in such nations can serve as a focal point for pro-democracy movements, potentially leading to successful reform. Additionally, as dictators age, regime outsiders have more time to prepare for post-death contestation. The information advantage held by insiders regarding the leader's health diminishes with age, making older dictators more susceptible to such challenges and increasing the potential for reform (Hummel 2020).

Personalist rule, which lacks institutionalized succession rules, is especially vulnerable to post-death challenges. While elites in these regimes may find ways to address succession issues – sometimes by preemptively removing the dictator – these regimes remain more prone to instability upon the leader's death. Is there evidence that dictators are aware of such inclinations? For instance, (for Imperial China) Wong and Chan (2021) found that elite **purges** also intensify in an emperor's later years, suggesting a concern for protecting designated successors. Blood relatives of emperors frequently faced milder purges, such as title deprivation (Wong & Chan 2021).

Moreover, older leaders generally exhibit a higher propensity for conflict. Horowitz et al. (2005), drawing on an extensive dataset of interstate dyads from 1875 to 2002, examine the relationship between leader age and the initiation and escalation of militarized disputes. The research delves into potential mechanisms behind these patterns, such as declining testosterone levels and shorter time horizons associated with aging, while also recognizing the limitations of using age as a proxy for these factors. Note that regime type matters and that older leaders in personalist regimes are less likely to initiate conflict (Horowitz et al. 2005) than those in other regime types, even if, overall, they are more bellicose (cf. **conflicts**).

The advanced age of authoritarian leaders also affects economic performance. Aging dictators often prioritize short-term gains over long-term investments due to their diminishing time horizons (cf. Box 5.5). This shift in priorities can result in slower economic growth and reduced prospects for sustainable development (Jong-A-Pin & Mierau 2022; Papaioannou & Van Zanden 2015).

The relationship between declining leader health and the inner circle further complicates regime

dynamics. Autocratic rulers tend to share a range of **psychological profiles**, some of which can intensify with a declining mental state, especially negative ones like distrustfulness can become amplified. They may become more rigid, inflexible, irritable, and prone to emotional outbursts, making it difficult to work with others and manage complex situations. Also, if they experience a decline in abstract thinking, memory, and concentration, it becomes difficult to process information and make sound judgments (Post & Robins 1993), making them increasingly reliant on trusted aids (cf. 'co-ruling' in **female rulers**), which in turn can upset the intricate balance of elite factions.

Slow-evolving physical ailments are also taxing for rulers: e.g., prostate cancer (François Mitterand in France and Joseph Mobutu in Zaire), tuberculosis (M.A. Jinnah of Pakistan) or auto-immune diseases (Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines had *lupus erythematosus*). David Owen (2022) – a British statesman and medical doctor – provides the best comprehensive overview available in *In Sickness and in Power: Illness in Heads of Government during the last 100 years.*

The **inner circle** plays a critical role in mediating the leader's decisions and actions, particularly when the leader is partially disabled (Post & Robins 1993). Several factors influence this dynamic, including the leader's awareness of their illness, the nature of the illness, and the political system in place. For instance, a leader who denies their illness may create a 'captive court' overly dependent on a waning despot, leading to political stagnation. Fluctuating disabilities, such as those associated with cerebral degeneration, pose unique challenges as the inner circle may need to shield the leader from decision-making during periods of impairment. This situation can lead to manipulation or factional strife within the ruling elite. Additionally, efforts by the inner circle to conceal the leader's illness – often motivated by self-preservation – can result in harmful delays in treatment and exacerbate governance issues (Post & Robins 1993).

In sum, declining health and advanced age significantly impact authoritarian regimes by fostering uncertainty, shaping economic priorities, and altering elite dynamics. While these factors do not automatically lead to political change or liberalization, they create conditions where instability or reform becomes more likely under certain sets of circumstances. Untangling these exact combinations of circumstances is a work in progress.

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Background of Rulers: Education & Competences

EDUCATION, n. That which discloses to the wise and disguises from the foolish their lack of understanding.
– Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911)

Where do these dictators come from? Who were they before they took power? The background of dictators – as much as their personal lives – remains fascinating.

While the entry on **psychological profiles** ponders the question, 'Can anybody become a dictator?' by peering into their soul and psyche, the entry on **families** offers some insights regarding their relations and collaboration with kin; this entry asks the question, 'Where do they come from?'

Lists of modern autocrats with a synopsis of their biographical information are plentiful: Galván 2013 (Latin America); Besier & Stokłosa 2014; Lee 2016 (Europe). Some paper versions are quite extensive, e.g., East & Thomas (2003) or Coppa (2006). Online versions are limitless and very valuable if curated well, like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* Databases like 'rulers.org' or *Archigos* (Goemans et al. 2009) are priceless as comprehensive overviews of rulers but leave readers in the dark about where these leaders came from.

Nonetheless, tracking down leaders' origins and



personal backgrounds is one thing; answering the question if these are at all related to their behavior in office is another.

Inspired by the works of Francis Galton (1869) and Irving Fisher's *Presidential and Other Great American Families* (1927) on the background of democratic leaders, Pitirim Sorokin (1925; 1926) investigated rulers' backgrounds for non-democracies: He observes that monarchs often display extremes of exceptional talent and mental deficiency, influenced by both heredity and environment. He attributes their prominence to good hereditary traits but suggests that the pressures of their roles may induce mental and emotional strain. This duality reflects the complex interplay between genetic predisposition and the stresses of leadership.

For example, with the God syndrome of doctors in mind and the fact that ophthalmologist-cum-dictator Bashar al-Assad in Syria was perceived as a blight on the medical community, Ludmir et al. 2017 tested (with a limited sample) and found that actually, a disproportionate number of physicians happened to be brutal dictators; see also Drumhiller & Skvorc (2018) on 'doctator' François Duvalier of Haiti. Are such correlations also causations, or does their experience in office change rulers?

Alexander Baturo's (2016) dataset *Cursus Honorum* ('career ladder' in Latin) gathers meticulous data on educational attainment, prior political posts and political experience, details about their time in office (and jail), and post-tenure occupations, covering 1501 political leaders in office for the 1960-2010 period, including interim leaders, in all countries (except small island nations). He found that the backgrounds of rulers in party-based, military, and personalist regimes diverge significantly in terms of their education, careers, and family origins, reflecting some (but not all) distinct characteristics of these regime archetypes.

In party-based regimes (**single-party regimes**), leaders tend to have extensive political experience, often comparable to that of democratic leaders. On average, they spend 12 years in formal political roles and 17 years in politics more broadly, surpassing the political tenure of leaders in military and personalist regimes. These rulers frequently emerge from legislative or party careers and are more likely to have participated in revolutionary movements. Educationally, about one-third of leaders in party regimes lack a university education, a proportion similar to that observed among personalist rulers. Family backgrounds in party-based regimes show a moderate prevalence of middle-class origins (46%) (Baturo 2016).

Leaders in **military regimes** predominantly come from military or security institutions, with nearly all having undergone military education. They are usually drawn from highly institutionalized military organizations and often hold senior ranks – 70% are generals – distinguishing them from military-affiliated leaders in personalist regimes. Their political experience is notably limited compared to other regime types, averaging only four years in formal politics and six years overall. Military rulers are more likely to come from middle-class families (67%), a higher proportion than those in party-based (46%) or personalist (42%) regimes. This is not insignificant, as shown in the case of Brazilian military leaders from 1964-1985, which illustrates how secure middle-class backgrounds and quality education can shape policy priorities, such as focusing on economic development rather than personal enrichment. (Baturo 2016)

In **personalist rule**, dictators exhibit some overlap with military leaders but differ in rank and political experience. While they are more likely to have a military background than party-based leaders, they are less likely to be high-ranking officers compared to their counterparts in military regimes. Their political experience is limited, averaging six years in formal roles and nine years overall – shorter than that of party-based leaders but slightly longer than military rulers (Baturo 2016).

Surprisingly, the educational and professional profiles of party rulers and personal dictators differ only slightly. This suggests that personal dictatorships behave distinctively not due to variations in the rulers' characteristics but rather because of the comparatively weaker constraints on their authority relative to other regime types (Baturo 2016: 150-151).

Assessing how rulers' professional and educational backgrounds influence their outlook, behavior, and the trajectories of their regimes remains a challenging task due to the interplay of multiple factors. These difficulties arise from the complexity of causality, the heterogeneity of contexts, data limitations, institutional mediation, dynamic interactions between leaders and regimes, and the multidimensional nature of outcomes.

For instance, while education might shape a leader's worldview or policy preferences, decisions are often dictated by pragmatic considerations or external pressures like economic crises or international dynamics. Also, the significance of education or professional experience varies across periods, cultures, and political systems. In technocratic regimes, technical expertise might play a central role in governance, whereas in hereditary monarchies or traditional societies, familial norms and cultural expectations may overshadow formal education.

Data limitations and selection bias also pose significant obstacles. Historical records often emphasize rulers' achievements or failures rather than systematically documenting their educational or professional trajectories. For modern leaders, media portrayals and historiographical biases distort narratives.

Institutional mediation adds another layer of complexity. Leaders do not govern in isolation; their decisions are shaped by the institutions they lead and create and the advisers they select and choose to rely on. Their level of micro-management or delegation also plays a big role.

Also, where does the impact of background end and the impact of their **psychological profiles** start? How to untangle these? Education might influence certain aspects of governance – such as technocratic policy preferences – but not others, like inter-

personal leadership style. Even autocratic models of management (in sociology) can, at times, yield benefits, as shown by De Hoogh et al. (2015), since they can positively affect morale and performance through the creation of a psychologically appealing, hierarchically-ordered environment of predictability and security for the team.

Finally, leadership outcomes are multidimensional and dynamic. Rulers are not only shaped by their regimes but also adapt to them over time. Still, the full package of education, skills, psychology, etc., that makes up a ruler's governance style seems to matter and constrains how they are able to transform political systems (although this remains intertwined with systemic factors).

Recent studies took a closer look at populist rulers and found that only a minority transition into repressive personalist dictators, particularly in liberal democracies. While their charismatic appeal and reliance on plebiscitary support enable them to maintain legitimacy and control without large-scale repression, violence would undermine their crafted image of representing 'the people.' Additionally, populists face challenges in securing reliable military backing, as empowering the latter risks creating a rival and threatening their autonomy. While cases like Alberto Fujimori in Peru illustrate that extreme crises can bridge this gap, the inherent tensions between populist agendas and military interests generally act as a barrier to full-scale autocracy (Weyland 2024; Baturo et al. 2024).

On the other hand, François et al. (2019; 2020) found that the perception of a ruler's background affects the choices of investors when assessing the risk of investing or not. There is strong evidence that educated dictators and those with prior business experience attract more FDI. Somewhat unexpectedly, their age or prior political experience does not affect such decisions.

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Families of Rulers

Even the blind favor the people they know.
– Indian proverb

The integration of family members into political regimes, whether in pre-modern monarchies or modern authoritarian systems, reveals a fascinating interplay between familial relationships and political power. Of course, few family constellations are similar; none are identical. The times when a ruling family is propelled into power differ. Do most of the childhood memories of their offspring relate to pre-revolutionary times, or did they grow up in the heart of the regime? Are they allowed in the inner circle or hidden away? Is their mother a regime insider, or has the ruler abandoned the family seeking greatness?

The need for family is deeply human and allows for connection with protagonists and triggers comparisons. Glimpses into the life of dictator's children (Nordlinger 2017) or anecdotal evidence of their intimate relations (Cawthorne 1996), their relation with pets (Box 8.1) might be fascinating for readers to gauge a ruler's level of 'humanity' – but most often



this is not political science. In combination with the laundry list of psychological, social, cultural and structural variables that require accounting for, a comparative analysis with solid insights so far remains elusive, and any methodology behind it is wide open to criticism. A preferred and common framework to analyze family-based networks is **clan politics**, although the study of political **dynasties** is also emerging.

Notwithstanding these diverse dynamics across historical and cultural contexts, a survey of kinship patterns in pre-modern and contemporary times yields some descriptive insights when framed through the lens of comparative politics (deeper anthropological, historical, biological or socioeconomic frames are beyond this entry).

Mothers, Aunts, Uncles, Siblings & In-laws in pre-modern **monarchies**, the involvement of mothers, aunts, uncles, and siblings in governance was both a source of strength and a potential vulnerability. Queen mothers often played pivotal roles as regents or kingmakers, particularly during periods of royal minorities (underage rulers) or succession crises (cf. **female rulers**). For instance, matrilineal societies sometimes empowered female figures to act as intermediaries between generations, ensuring dynastic continuity while limiting the arbitrary power of monarchs (Duindam 2021). These women could act as stabilizing forces, bridging gaps during transfers of supreme power.

Rulers with several daughters might choose not to keep them at home, like Charlemagne, but to send them out to foreign courts. Also, siblings and cousins (sometimes widowed aunts) were actively incorporated in monarchic marriage policies. They secured alliances, expanded the family *Patrimonium* (through inheritance by their offspring), acted as diplomats, promoted and supported religious institutions, attracted investments from the political center, and could wield considerable influence despite dual loyalties. (Bartlett 2020).

While women were often given little say in whom they married – though widows tended to have more autonomy – it would be a mistake to assume that royal women always served merely as pawns in forging alliances, whether foreign or domestic. While many women may have played such roles (though the limited availability of sources might skew our understanding), others were far more influential. Women frequently acted as diplomats, sustaining and sometimes reshaping the alliances their marriages were meant to secure. Consanguineous marriages, such as those between close relatives, strengthened family ties and curbed the emergence of rival branches within royal families (Carney & Müller 2021; Akkerman & Houben 2014).

However, the ambitions of royal siblings or extended family members could also destabilize regimes. Agnatic relatives – brothers or cousins – were frequently appointed as viceroys or generals due to their dynastic charisma but were simultaneously viewed as threats capable of spearheading rebellions (Kumarasingham 2020; Duindam 2021). Monarchs often resorted to surveillance, exile, or even execution to neutralize such threats once **succession** neared. Harem politics (in Box 5.11) provide Ottoman examples.

In modern authoritarian regimes, family members (even in-laws) similarly occupy key positions within the ruling apparatus but with a greater emphasis on consolidating **personalist rule**. According to Baturo (2016), 8% of leaders in dictatorships are relatives of their predecessors, a phenomenon predominantly observed in monarchies of course. **Dynasties** also emerge in democracies. Dictators also rely on family members and close friends as trusted allies, appointing them to significant positions of power (Rubin 1987).

The first reason is **coup-proofing**. Dictators like Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Hafez al-Assad in Syria strategically placed siblings and other close relatives in high-ranking roles within the military or government to secure loyalty and control over critical resources (Rubin 1987). Under the Somozas in Nicaragua, the president's half-brother was also in charge of the **presidential guard**. This practice reduced the risk of betrayal by outsiders while reinforcing the regime's inner circle.

A second reason for hiring relatives (besides trust) is for critical information-gathering and for actually (and truthfully) representing the regime abroad. Under **personalist rule**, why would foreign elites engage with sycophantic ambassadors who have neither power nor influence? (who are expected to report back to the capital in a subjective or embellished fashion out of fear of losing their position). Therefore, key positions are often trusted to family, who are not afraid of getting fired and can speak their mind to the ruler (in private, at least). For instance, Imelda Marcos' brother served as the Philippine ambassador to Washington, the Shah of Iran appointed his son-in-law as his main ambassador for this position, and a relative of the Somoza family held the same role for Nicaragua (Rubin 1987).

Of course, not all ambassador positions are that relevant, and sometimes, family members are sent far away to keep them out of trouble or away from power. Kim Pyong-Il, a half-brother of Kim Jong-Il, served as ambassador to several European countries, including Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. This appointment kept him in a peripheral position, minimizing threats to Kim's family rule while leveraging his presence for diplomatic purposes.

Note that children (not only sons) can be trusted to represent the regime faithfully and provide a direct line to the ruler: Isabel dos Santos in Angola, the daughter of José Eduardo, while not an ambassador, played a significant role in Angola's international business dealings, serving as an informal envoy to key allies. At one point, she was considered one of the wealthiest women in the world. Mussolini's daughter Edda acted as a trusted (informal) go-between with the Nazi leadership (Nordlinger 2017).

The third reason is **hoarding** and expanding the family fortune by allowing relatives to head lucrative business sectors, a practice theorized in **prebendalism** and nepotism (Box 1.1).

However, familial rivalries may still emerge,

as seen in many personalist dictatorships where power struggles among relatives occasionally lead to **purges** or internal instability.

For example, there was significant tension between Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier and his uncle Luckner Cambronne (1929-2006) under Duvalier family rule in Haiti. Cambronne served as a high-ranking official under 'Papa Doc' and became infamous for his role as the head of the feared *Tonton Macoutes*, the Duvalier regime's brutal **paramilitary**. He was nicknamed the 'Vampire of the Caribbean' for allegedly profiting from the sale of Haitian blood and corpses to foreign medical institutions, a practice that earned him international notoriety (Independent 2006). After Baby Doc inherited power in 1971 at just 19 years old, Cambronne sought to maintain his influence over the young ruler, effectively acting as a power behind the throne. However, Baby Doc and his clique gradually grew wary of Cambronne's dominance and forced Cambronne into exile in Miami in 1972.

Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's former president, broke with his son-in-law, Rakhat Aliyev (1961-2015) (married to his eldest daughter Dariga). Aliyev initially held influential roles (successively as chief of the tax police, deputy chief of the security services, ambassador to Austria, and deputy foreign minister) but alarmed Nazarbayev with his growing ambition and ruthlessness. The rupture became irreparable when Aliyev was implicated in the abduction and murder of two bank executives (among other murders and accusations of torture), a scandal that damaged his reputation and directly challenged Nazarbayev's authority. In Kazakhstan's centralized authoritarian system, such disloyalty from a family member posed a significant threat. Nazarbayev responded by stripping Aliyev of his positions, exiling him, and facilitating prosecution abroad while enforcing an end to the marriage with his daughter. In 2015, Aliyev committed suicide in an Austrian prison, awaiting trial (under suspicious circumstances) (Zalmayev 2015).

Children The preparation of children for political roles has been a hallmark of both monarchies and authoritarian regimes. In pre-modern monarchies, children were groomed from an early age for their future responsibilities. Royal education emphasized virtues such as piety, justice, and loyalty while providing training in governance and diplomacy. For example, in medieval Europe, princely education often included lessons on law and statecraft alongside religious instruction (Woodacre et al. 2019).

Notably, the *specula principum* (mirrors for princes) played a critical role in royal education during the Latin Middle Ages by serving as instructional texts aimed at shaping rulers' conduct and virtues. (For autocrats, *The Prince* by **Machiavelli** is the most famous example, alongside Kautilya's *Arthashastra* – cf. Box 2.2.). These works provided moral and practical guidance, combining classical, scriptural, and ecclesiastical influences to define ideal princely behavior with colorful examples. By embedding subtle criticism or outright admonitions, they also sought to foster self-reflection and promote governance aligned with justice and societal welfare (Nederman 1998).

Another example would be the *Siete Partidas* ('Seven Parts') of Alfonso X of Castile, a comprehensive legal code created during his reign (1252-1284) with the aim of unifying the laws and customs of his kingdoms and providing a legal framework for newly conquered territories. Its seven parts contain over 2500 laws, drew heavily on Justinian's *Corpus Juris civilis* and incorporated biblical and philosophical writings, particularly those of Aristotle. The code was part of Alfonso X's broader vision to centralize monarchy (despite objections of the nobility) (Woodacre et al. 2019).

The *Siete Partidas* also presented Alfonso X's take on rulership, particularly in its emphasis on the education of royal children. The code outlined an educational program designed to instill values and skills necessary for rulership in both male and female offspring. It stressed the importance of maintaining peace, upholding justice, and defending the kingdom as core responsibilities of future rulers. Boys were prepared as kings through formal education, while girls were educated primarily by their mothers and female attendants to fulfill their roles as queens. The program emphasized engaging children in learning and enabling them to absorb rules and teachings effectively. This educational focus reflected Alfonso's broader efforts to create a well-ordered kingdom where royal authority extended not only through governance but also through the preparation of future monarchs (Woodacre et al. 2019).

More than siblings or rulers, royal children were used as pawns in dynastic strategies; their marriages secured alliances and expanded territories (Duindam 2021). The public nature of their lives underscored their symbolic importance to the continuity of the dynasty.

Dictators and non-royal usurpers also try to integrate themselves into prestigious networks through the marriages of their children. Franco and Mussolini's daughters married into nobility (Nordlinger 2017) and kept their aristocratic titles and status even after their fathers' dictatorships fell. Their children's marriage linked the founding presidential families of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev's son, Aidar, married Aliya Nazarbayeva, the youngest daughter of the president of Kazakhstan. The marriage symbolized a strategic alliance between two powerful families in Central Asia, reflecting the intertwining of personal and political. The marriage did not outlive the Tulip Revolution and the ouster and exile of Akayev, which was followed by embarrassing corruption inquiries of all involved family members.

In modern authoritarian regimes, (male) children are similarly prepared for leadership roles but within a more centralized and often militarized framework. Dynastic dictatorships like North Korea's Kim dynasty exemplify this trend. Successors are groomed through formal education and exposure to statecraft while being introduced to propaganda mechanisms that glorify their lineage (Baturo 2016). This preparation ensures that they embody the



regime's ideals while consolidating the family's hold on power. However, such grooming can also lead to internal tensions if multiple heirs vie for influence or if external pressures challenge the legitimacy of dynastic succession.

In dictatorships, depending on their age and experience, children can take up their father's previous position before the latter became head of state: Sara Duterte served as mayor of Davao City from 2010 to 2013 and again from 2016 to 2022, succeeding her father, Rodrigo Duterte in that position and upholding his **patronage** networks. Bound by **term limits**, her father (ruled: 2016-2022) stepped down and retired, officially at least. Sara ran as vice president in 2022 and linked forces with presidential candidate Marcos Jr. (see also below). They succeeded in getting elected, but tensions in the regime were mounting between both dynastic networks.

Still, children affiliated with the inner circle at a formative young age may find themselves at the nexus of an international network. Depending on their relationship with their parents, this socialization and natural advantages (knowledge, experience, contacts) usually benefit them in later life, both in politics and business. This seems to be the same for democracies (Folke et al. 2017). Many children of autocrats embark on a career in politics, drawing from the **charisma** of their parents or (grandparents).

Strangely, the 'Mogadishu line' (Box 3.12) of their parents' action – the national and international condemnation that comes from state terror – does not seem to affect them once enough time passes. Marcos' son, Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr., was elected president of the Philippines in May 2022, despite his father's brutal legacy. Alessandra Mussolini (she especially retained the name), the granddaughter of Benito Mussolini, served as a member of the European Parliament (MEP). She was elected as an MEP in 2004 and later re-elected in 2009.

Of course, children can be unruly. Gulnara Karimova, the eldest daughter of Uzbek dictator Islam Karimov, exemplifies how autocrats use family connections to amass wealth and consolidate power. Initially a glamorous public figure with roles in diplomacy, business, and entertainment, Karimova leveraged her father's position to build an empire of corruption. She extorted massive bribes from multinational corporations, particularly in Uzbekistan's lucrative telecommunications sector, funneling billions of dollars into offshore accounts. As a prominent figure in Uzbekistan, Karimova used her influence to silence critics, blackmail competitors, and expand her family's wealth through exploitative practices. Her opulent lifestyle – marked by designer brands, a pop music career under the name 'Googoosha,' and a global socialite image – stood in stark contrast to the poverty and repression faced by ordinary Uzbeks. Her unchecked ambitions, however, made her a liability. Clashing with other inner circle members, including her own family, she was placed under house arrest in 2014 and later imprisoned by the new Uzbek regime following her father's death. She acquired special perks in prison, too, cf. Najibullah 2024. Her dramatic downfall exposed the inner workings of an authoritarian regime where relatives are deployed as tools to enrich the ruling family, often at the cost of public trust. Gulnara's story highlights the corrosive impact of rogue nepotism (Box 1.1) and unchecked power in personalist regimes.

Close friends both pre-modern monarchies and modern authoritarian regimes have relied on non-family members who functioned as quasi-family due to their proximity to power. In monarchies, courtiers and trusted advisers often became indispensable allies to royal families. Their presence at court allowed them to secure positions for themselves or their clients while maintaining influence over royal decisions (Friedeburg & Morrill 2017). Such individuals acted as intermediaries between the monarchy and broader society, facilitating governance while reinforcing the ruler's authority. Due to traditional hierarchies, it was not always possible for non-aristocratic buddies to make such positions permanent and hereditary.

In authoritarian regimes, this dynamic is mirrored by the inclusion of friends, classmates, army buddies, and loyalists who, over time, are treated as extensions of the ruler's family. In Iran, the Shah entrusted his chauffeur with commanding the army (Rubin 1987). In Turkmenistan, the dentist of Saparmurat Niyazov became minister of health (and later president).

These individuals often occupy critical roles within the regime's security apparatus or economic institutions. For example, Saddam Hussein appointed non-relatives from his hometown or tribal network into key positions to create a sense of familial loyalty (Rubin 1987) (cf. 'ethnic stacking' in **coup-proofing**). However, these relationships may become sources of vulnerability if such trusted allies turn against the ruler or defect (if caught, such betrayals are usually fatally punished).

The integration of family members or those treated like family into political regimes highlights a continuity in how kinship ties are leveraged for governance across different historical periods. If networks extend over generations, **dynasties** are naturally formed, and these can be durable. Usually, the lifespan of contemporary dictatorships does not extend for more than two generations, although children and grandchildren of (in)famous rulers tend to get into politics (and sometimes succeed).

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Box 8.1 Pets & Rulers: Feline Fascination & Other Animal Companions

Casa con un gatto, casa con un cuore
(Happy is the home with at least one cat)
– Italian proverb

Queen Elizabeth II and Catherine the Great loved their purebreds (Welsh Corgis and Italian greyhounds, respectively). Alexander the Great's war horse, 'Bucephalus,' and Caligula's 'Incantatus' went down in history. Hitler's affection for 'Blondi' (a German shepherd) is well documented and caught on film. Blondi accompanied Hitler until the very end of his life – she was poisoned by Hitler himself just before his suicide in 1945.

Many rulers are known for their affection toward dogs: Henry VIII – mastiffs, Napoleon – a pug; Kim Il-Sung – poodles; or horses like Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov of Turkmenistan; or fish: General Yamashita (Japan) – koi fish.

Some preferred to show off by keeping exotic animals: Louis XIV – tropical birds; Haile Selassie (Ethiopia) and Saddam Hussein (Iraq) – lions; Qaddafi (Libya) – camels and ostriches; Idi Amin (Uganda) – crocodiles (he even fed them the body parts of his victims).

Still, very few have developed notable bonds with cats, creatures considered independently-minded and aloof. Cleopatra was said to be fond of cats, but these animals had a special status in ancient Egypt.

Cats seem like an unusual choice for authoritarian leaders who often demand loyalty and control. However, some dictators found companionship in these enigmatic creatures, perhaps drawn to their mysterious qualities or simply seeking solace in their presence. For some reason, Soviet rulers really seem outliers when it comes to cats:

Lenin, as a hunter, had an arrangement of dogs (but also some cats), with whom he spent more time as he became infirm. Pets could serve symbolic purposes for dictatorships. For example, for **propaganda** purposes, Lenin's image as 'Grandpa Lenin' was bolstered by photos showing him holding a cat (allegedly called 'Vasily') – an attempt to portray him as amiable and kindly despite his revolutionary fervor.

Stalin's bond with his rescue dog 'Yashka' (named after Yakov Sverdlov, a fellow revolutionary) during his exile in Siberia is well-documented, and many animals were gifted to him throughout his life. He ended up with his colony of squirrels at his dacha – the offspring of one gifted by Khrushchev after WWII – and even a bear. However, there is no significant record of Stalin being particularly fond of cats. Recurrent anecdotes mention Stalin and a cat called 'Pushkin,' a Siberian cat. According to some sources, Stalin reportedly kept Pushkin as a companion in his later years. The cat is said to have been one of the few beings that could approach him without fear. As with Lenin, Stalin's fondness for dogs helped humanize him in propaganda efforts aimed at softening his brutal image.

Nikita Khrushchev, on the other hand, was very much a dog person. As was Fidel Castro (although he was also very fond of a cow named 'Ubre Blanca'), and it was Castro who once gifted two chihuahua puppies to the Soviet leader, sparking a trend for this dog breed in the USSR. Khrushchev also received an English poodle from Queen Elizabeth II during an official visit to Britain – a gift that further solidified his reputation as a dog lover.

An undisputed example of a cat-loving Soviet leader was Leonid Brezhnev, who was gifted a black cat named 'Lama' by the Dalai Lama during an official visit to India in 1969. This cat became somewhat legendary due to a prophecy that accompanied it: if Lama ever behaved strangely, it was believed that Brezhnev was in danger. According to various accounts, Lama 'saved' Brezhnev's life on multiple occasions by exhibiting odd behavior before **assassination** attempts or accidents. Allegedly, the cat's actions led Brezhnev to alter his plans, thus avoiding potential harm.

Another Soviet leader known for his fondness for cats was Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union. In his later years, Gorbachev had a favorite cat named 'Willy' (perhaps named after Willy Brandt, Chancellor of West Germany?) whom he frequently was seen stroking during public appearances (the cat, not the chancellor). Willy the cat even became immortalized in a painting by artist Nikolai Sednin, symbolizing Gorbachev's softer side amidst his role as a global political figure overseeing the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

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Female Rulers & Powerful Women in Regimes

牝雞無晨 *(Pìn jī wú chén)*
(Hens should not announce the dawn)
– *Shangshu* 尚書 – Book of documents

Bees are governed and doe live under a Monarchy (…) admitting and receiving their King (…) by respective advise, considerate judgement, and a prudent election; (…) and their King being deeply bound to them by an oath, they exceedingly honor and love.
– Edward Topsell, *Historie of Serpents. Or, The Second Booke of Living Creatures* (1608)

Although not published until 1608, Edward Topsell's book quoted above compares bee hives with political systems and persists – despite some available evidence on the contrary – that male bees rule hives, i.e., 'bee monarchs.' His book is largely a translation of an unpublished manuscript originally written in 1565 by Konrad von Gesner and later revised by several subsequent writers. Gesner (and others like him) drew heavily on the perspectives of ancient authorities, particularly Aristotle, regarding both the behavior of bees and the use of a bee colony as a metaphor for an ideal, orderly state. Prevalent were such political perspectives based on mistaken notions that a king rules a hive and that its inhabitants are noble, warlike male soldiers (Prete 1991: 119-120)

'Queen bees are impossible and unnatural.' This exact thinking, arguably, was the main reason why so few women occupied thrones as real powerholders. Even just the observation that female rulers have been so rare has deeply permeated our understanding of history that we project this documented gender imbalance even onto prehistorical times.

The depth of this 'permanence bias' never ceases to amaze: Spanish archaeologists reported on a tomb uncovered in 2014 at a site known as La Almoloya, where they found a silver diadem on top of the skull of a Bronze Age woman buried within palace-like ruins, a once-elaborate structure dominating a rocky hilltop overlooking the plains. The site was once part of the El Argar society, which thrived and controlled territories along the southeastern Iberian Peninsula from about 2200 to 1550 BCE (Price 2021). This could only mean one thing: *"A richly adorned female ruler buried in a Bronze Age palace suggests women could also occupy the throne. There's no way to know the true extent of her power, researchers note, but the find could lead others to reconsider their assumptions about the status of women throughout prehistory."* (Price 2021).

This entry explores the historical narrative of female rulers, highlighting the evolution of scholarly attention to this subject. Until recently, academic studies largely focused on individual case studies within specific dynasties or world regions. It is only in the past two decades that more comprehensive and comparative analyses have emerged. Despite this ongoing process, there remains a significant emphasis on female monarchs (not contemporary cases), primarily studied through traditional principles of **succession**, marriage and inheritance.

Weber's concept of **traditional rule** was foremost male-centered in the West and most of the rest of the world but was not immutable. While surviving primary evidence from Sub Saharan Africa and the Indo-Pacific region is sparse in comparison to Eurasia, area specialists have irrevocably challenged the Western-centric bias associated with male primogeniture (Box 5.10). This analytical perspective had been the benchmark for non-Western contexts before and during colonial times. Africa and Southeast Asia boast long legacies of female rule, yet the scarcity of primary sources has hindered a balanced scholarly understanding of this phenomenon, as well as a recalibration of popular understanding about gender norms of rulers.

In contrast, 'Eurasian' female rulers like Cleo-

patra VII Thea Philopater (reign: 69-30 BCE) in Egypt and several 'Greats' like Tamar (Kingdom of Georgia), Margaret I (Denmark, Norway & Sweden), Catherine II (tsarist Russia); Elisabeth I of England & Ireland, are remembered and widely recognized as strong female rulers. Slowly, royal women of earlier times, like several Byzantine queens, Irene of Athens (reign: 797-802 CE) and the (co-)rule of the sisters Zoe (reign: 1042) and Theodora Porphyrogenita (reign: 1042; 1055-1056), or Melisende of Jerusalem (reign: 1131-1152) during the crusades; have gradually trickled in collective consciousness (Carney & Müller 2021).

Another bias in historical narratives is the male dominance in public politics, while the private sphere – where women often played significant roles – is considered less political. Recent studies, spearheaded by those on harem systems (Box 5.11), have contested these views by attributing substantial political influence to women beyond the role of female monarchs, including mothers of rulers, concubines, wives, and sometimes sisters (cf. Akkerman & Houben 2014).

However, when it comes to **charismatic rule**, women have been largely overlooked. This oversight partly stems from Weber's delineation of charisma (which he appropriated) and has historically been biased in favor of male characteristics. Consequently, theoretical frameworks have often favored male examples. (Hyde 1989; Devarachetty 2012; Turai 2017; 2020; Joosse 2014; Joosse & Willey 2020) Some scholars have begun to challenge this gender bias by advocating for greater inclusivity and presenting female charismatic leaders from religious spheres as examples (Turai 2017;020; Joosse & Willey 2020).

The first section of this entry is titled 'Queens, Regents & Dowagers,' focusing on their patterns of rule, ascension to power, and the challenges they faced. The subsequent section examines 'Female Presidents, Prime Ministers & Dictators,' emphasizing Weber's third source of **legitimacy**: legal-rational rulership manifested through **elections**. This section builds on T. Skard's (2022) seminal work that maps how, since 1960, women harnessed **charisma** during election campaigns, inherited it from charismatic predecessors, or emerged from relative obscurity after a lifetime of public service during acute crises or prolonged conflicts. Not all these contemporary leaders were democratic or remained democrats during their tenure. In contrast to male dictators, there is no pattern wherein female rulers regularly gained power through military means.

The third part briefly explores the concept of 'Co-rulers: Wives and Partners' – often referred to as the better (or worse) halves of male dictators, as prominent partners of dictators are often demonized if they are politically influential like Imelda Romuáldez Marcos (wife of Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines) or Jiang Qing ('Madame Mao' Zedong's fourth wife). With the 2024 ouster and exile of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, his wife, Asma al-Assad, has also been scrutinized by the media.

This section connects with the limited literature on this subject and previous understandings of 'inner court' or 'palace politics' – see also Box 5.11 on harems – where women's roles apart from the supreme leadership have been underrepresented. This entry blends with the entry on the **family of the ruler** and other political forces behind the throne.

Queens, Regents & Dowagers The historical scarcity of female rulers can be attributed to several factors. One significant factor is the pervasive gender bias that historically excluded women from warfare, a sphere closely intertwined with monarchy: *"Granted that so many monarchs were also war leaders, at least symbolically, the fact that women were generally excluded from direct participation in warfare is certainly an important reason why they rarely ruled."* (Carney & Müller 2021: 6). This exclusion extended to societal expectations and inheritance practices, making it significantly less likely for women to inherit thrones or wield power. Patriarchal structures and cultural norms further reinforced male dominance in leadership roles, often framing female rule as an anomaly or a threat to the established order.

However, Heari (2020) nuances this: So long as dynastic rivalries were restricted to the ruling dynasty (the political sphere only), the people (including religious leaders) were not in a position to object. Religious institutions and personnel, though commanding popular authority, were still dependent on the sponsorship of the sultan or the caliph and thus not particularly keen to intervene. This resonates with **patrimonialism** and **absolutism** where monarchs could designate female kin above the 'laws of men.'

Women who did ascend to positions of power faced a significant legitimacy deficit, constantly needing to prove their capabilities and combat societal expectations. They encountered challenges to their authority from male-dominated governing elites and often faced opposition and even attempts to depose them.

"Consensual attitudes have been ascribed to women rulers in South East Asia (...). Elsewhere, too, queens on the throne have been described as eager to placate elites and please their peoples. Again, it is difficult to accept such generalizations: the annals of dynastic power include ferocious women as well as gentlemen. (...) While the numbers of women queens like Nzinga who actually led their troops into battle may be limited, we have numerous examples of women as astute political operators and war leaders. (...) It makes no sense to ascribe pacific attitudes and a disposition for consensual decision making to all women on the throne or to assume that all men tended to be violent and irresponsible. More than men, women were confronted with a legitimacy deficit: the assumption of a mismatch between women and supreme power complicated the acceptance of women rule by elites and the populace. This predicament could lead queens to either prove their equivalence to males by conspicuously exerting power and using violence, or, conversely, by showing eagerness to placate elites and please their peoples." (Duindam 2021: 165).

Opportunities for female rule often arose in specific circumstances, such as the absence of male heirs or during times of crisis. Even when they inherited thrones, women rulers frequently needed the support of male figures, whether as husbands,



regents, or advisers, to solidify their authority and navigate the complexities of governance. While formal rules of inheritance sometimes explicitly allowed female **succession**, this did not necessarily translate into widespread acceptance or frequent occurrences of female rule (Monter 2012; Carney & Müller 2021).

Regency served as a pathway for women to gain political experience and influence. Queen mothers often wielded considerable power, particularly when acting as regents for their young sons. Motherhood did not necessarily diminish the power of these queens, but it distinguished their roles from the male-defined aspects of sovereignty, thus not directly challenging gendered perceptions. Dowagers were often admired for being pious, virtuous, loving, and merciful educators. In imperial China, many women wielded *de facto* power as dowager empresses. Similarly, France and the Ottoman Empire, both known for their explicit rejection of female rule, readily accepted queen mothers who were notably influential during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Duindam 2021). However, their authority was often viewed as temporary and derived from their role as mothers rather than as independent rulers (Bartlet 2020).

Regional variations existed, with some areas like Austronesia and Africa showing a more pronounced presence of female rulers than others. The sources highlight a cluster of female rule in East Asia during the sixteenth century, with women leaders appearing in Japan and Korea (Duindam 2021). In contrast, in medieval Latin Christendom, the legal exclusion of women from inheriting the French throne (*Pactus Legis Salicæ* or the *Salic law*) played a significant role in limiting female rule by justifying absolute male primogeniture (Box 5.10).

Female rulers historically came to power through a variety of pathways shaped by cultural norms, inheritance practices, and political circumstances. The most common route was inheritance, particularly when a king had no surviving sons. In such cases, daughters could inherit the throne as legitimate heirs, reflecting the importance of dynastic continuity over gendered expectations of rulership.

However, even in systems that allowed for female inheritance, hereditary charisma, in Weber's understanding, was not easily transferred and women successors often faced significant obstacles. Queen Elizabeth I (reign: 1558-1603) of England and Ireland, the last of the Tudors, refusing to get married, skillfully asserted her authority despite facing persistent doubts based on her gender, the open rejection of her royal claim (by Pope Pius V) and several conspiracies to unseat her.

Claims were frequently contested by male relatives, leading to disputes, civil wars, and power struggles. For example, Isabel I of Castile (reign: 1474-1504) had to fight a civil war against her niece to secure her position. Marriage also played a critical role in shaping the authority of female rulers. Cleopatra VII of Egypt used her lineage, a marriage alliance and political acumen to secure power after she was exiled by her brother Ptolemy XIII; in her military takeover with a Roman alliance, she ended up killing her younger brother (who drowned while fleeing) (Monter 2012).

Regency offered another pathway to power for women, particularly as mothers of underage kings or wives of absent rulers. These roles were often temporary but allowed women to exercise authority, gain experience in governance, and build political networks. Some regents managed to consolidate their influence beyond the temporary nature of their positions through strategic alliances and patronage. For instance, Catherine de Medici's regency (reign: as consort 1547-1559, as regent 1560-1563) in France demonstrated how a female regent could navigate complex political landscapes and wield considerable power.

Empress Wu Zetian (武則天 – *Wǔ Zé Tiān* – 624-705 CE) of Tang China challenged Confucian norms against female rule and was the only woman in Chinese history to rule as emperor formally. She worked her way up as concubine turned empress-consort (after marrying one of the sons of the late emperor in 655 CE), then became empress-dowager (by refusing retirement after the death of her husband in 683 and by not granting the heir (her son) real power); and finally forcing her son to formally transfer power to her in 690 thus establishing the short-lived Zhou dynasty. Wu ruled for 45 years (McMahon 2013).

Although less common than inheritance or regency, some women came to power through usurpation by seizing control from male relatives or rivals. Female usurpers often faced intense challenges in legitimizing their rule due to societal biases favoring male leadership. They typically sought to justify their authority by emphasizing their connection to previous rulers or employing propaganda to bolster their image. A notable example is Catherine II the Great (born Princess Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst, reign: 1762-1796), who rallied the *Ismailovsky regiment* (in which her lover (Grigory Orlov) and his brother (Aleksei) had great standing) to move against her unpopular husband, Tsar Paul III, and convincing the other praetorian *Preobrazhensky* and *Semenovsky* regiments to secure her **coup** (Ivleva 2015). She successfully seized the throne from her husband and solidified her position through political maneuvering and a cultivated image as an enlightened monarch.

Other pathways included election in certain contexts, such as in elective monarchies where queens could ascend to power through complex political alliances and religious considerations. (Woodacre 2018) Overall, the pathways to power for female rulers were diverse but consistently shaped by societal norms and cultural contexts that both constrained and enabled women's access to leadership roles (Duindam 2021). Despite obstacles to female rule, women often rose to power as an ad hoc solution in the absence of male successors, sometimes establishing prolonged periods of female leadership. For example, Queen Nzinga's defiance of gender norms in Angola ushered in a century of predominance by female rulers. Similarly, Madagascar saw queens ruling in its principalities and four queens-regnant

leading the Kingdom of Madagascar between 1828 and 1897 (Duindam 2021).

A broad overview of the world between 1300 and 1900 reveals interesting patterns regarding female sovereignty. In the Middle East and North Africa, no woman appears to have exercised sovereign power over an independent state during this period. However, some women wielded significant authority as regents, particularly during the so-called 'century of women' in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire. In East Asia, female sovereignty was similarly rare, with only two women serving as Japanese emperors *(tennō)*, both as figureheads. Nonetheless, royal women occasionally held *de facto* influence in this region (Amirell 2015; Duindam 2021).

Female rule was somewhat more frequent in Sub Saharan Africa, Central Asia, and mainland South Asia. However, the historical record for these regions is often sparse, limiting our understanding of their roles. In pre-Columbian America, sources are similarly scarce, making it difficult to assess the prevalence of female rulers. These patterns highlight the regional and cultural variations in the acceptance and practice of female sovereignty, shaped by societal norms and historical contingencies (Amirell 2015; Duindam 2021; Gomez 2018; Saidi 2012).

Female Presidents, Prime Ministers & Dictators

Women in modern times have risen to power through a variety of pathways shaped by historical, political, and cultural factors, as well as evolving societal norms. Traditionally excluded from leadership roles, especially in male-dominated spheres such as the military or defense ministries, women have increasingly gained access to power due to shifts in societal attitudes, institutional reforms, and global advocacy for gender equality.

One significant factor has been the changing nature of political institutions and leadership roles. For instance, the role of defense ministers has evolved in many countries from a focus on military aggression to one emphasizing peacekeeping and diplomacy. This shift has made such positions less stereotypically masculine, allowing women to assume these roles. Michelle Bachelet's appointment as Chile's defense minister in 2002 exemplifies this transformation; her appointment symbolized a break from Chile's authoritarian past and reflected a redefined role for the military (Barnes & O'Brien 2018).

Family connections have also played a pivotal role in women's ascent to power in modern times. Sirimavo Bandaranaike (1916-2000) of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) was the first female prime minister in the world in 1960. Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) became the prime minister of India in 1966. Like Bandaranaike, she benefited from her family connection as the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister. Isabel Perón of Argentina became the president of Argentina in 1974 (and the first female president in the Americas). She was the widow of Juan Perón, who had been president three times. She became vice president in 1973 and assumed the presidency upon her husband's death. She was ousted in 1976 by a military coup.

These cases demonstrate how hereditary **charisma** often outweighed considerations of gender or competence when selecting successors for deceased leaders. However, not all women relied on such connections. Leaders like Golda Meir (1898-1978) of Israel (in 1969) and Elisabeth Domitien (ca. 1925-2005) of the Central African Republic (CAR) gained power through long careers in politics or grassroots mobilization, breaking traditional gender roles early in their lives and accumulating political experience that set them apart (Skard 2022).

In 1972, Jean-Bédel Bokassa in CAR named Elisabeth Domitien vice president of his party, and in 1973 she led the first national congress of Central African farmers. Known for her industriousness and popularity, Domitien served as a unifying figure for Bokassa's regime. In 1975, during the *International Women's Year*, Bokassa created the position of prime minister and appointed Domitien, making her the first female prime minister in Africa. This move was partly aimed at gaining international recognition. Nonetheless, as prime minister, Domitien worked to improve women's income and status and was not afraid to speak her mind against Bokassa. When she objected to his plan to crown himself emperor, he dismissed her and her cabinet in April 1976 (Skard 2022).

Global advocacy efforts and legal frameworks have further supported women's rise to power. The adoption of international conventions such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) in 1979 has been instrumental in reducing gender inequality. Countries that ratified CEDAW have made more significant strides in increasing women's political participation than those that did not. Events like the United Nations' *International Women's Year* in 1975 also heightened global awareness about gender issues, fostering greater political engagement among women. Grassroots activism has been another critical driver. Women's movements have historically mobilized around issues of equality and representation, creating pathways for women to enter politics (Skard 2022).

Regional trends also highlight progress toward gender parity. Nordic countries stand out for their high percentage of female leaders and parliamentarians, setting benchmarks for inclusive governance. These advancements reflect broader societal acceptance of women in leadership roles and structural efforts to create opportunities for female representation. (Skard 2022)

Despite these gains, significant challenges persist. Women still face structural barriers within political systems, gender stereotypes, limited access to resources and networks, and discriminatory practices that hinder their progress. By 2010, women comprised only 6% of the world's presidents and prime ministers – a record high but still indicative of a substantial gender gap. Although 37 women rose to power in developing countries and 36 in industrialized ones, the higher proportion of industrialized countries with female leaders (40% compared to 20% in developing countries) reflects more favorable con-



ditions for female leadership in wealthier nations, influenced by factors such as health, education, and income (Skard 2022)

Positive measures such as gender quotas have been instrumental in increasing women's political participation. These quotas take various forms, including legislated candidate quotas, reserved parliamentary seats, and voluntary party quotas. They have been particularly effective in regions like Latin America and Sub Saharan Africa, where they have significantly increased women's representation in parliaments. However, their success varies depending on the political system and context: In dictatorships particularly, such measures implementing **gender equality** are often purely aimed at obtaining **external legitimacy** (Bjarnegård & Donno 2023; Noh 2023; Skard 2022).

Supportive political systems and networks tend to facilitate women's rise to power: Proportional representation electoral systems tend to be more favorable for electing women compared to majoritarian systems. Strong democratic institutions are conducive to women's political advancements (Skard 2022). A familial affinity for politics, mentorship and support from established male leaders have also been pivotal in some cases – examples include President Tito's support for Milka Planinc in Croatia and President Lula's backing of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil (Skard 2022). However, some women have risen to power even in turbulent transition contexts without fully established democratic systems: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia, 2006-2018) and Roza Otunbayeva (Kyrgyzstan, 2010-2011).

Nevertheless, while (democratic) elections bring these women into the highest national office, not all of them have remained democrats (although many were just elected rulers in regimes that lacked some important requirements to be fully considered democratic, i.e., **systemic corruption**). Up until recently, most cases of 'female dictators' could be debated, like Indira Gandhi of India, who declared a state of emergency in 1975, granting herself extraordinary powers and suspending civil liberties. Although this period lasted two years, and she eventually restored democratic processes, it remains a notable instance of authoritarian rule by a female leader within a democratic framework.

One indisputable example is Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, who served as prime minister for over two decades. While democratically elected, her tenure had been marked by increasing autocratic governance, including suppression of opposition, human rights violations, and restrictions on press freedom. The 76-year-old ruled the South Asian nation of 170 million with an iron fist since 2009. In a watershed moment of discontent, she was ousted by mass uprisings, with violent clashes claiming hundreds of lives, forcing her to flee in August 2024 (Ethirajan 2024; The Economist, 2024; Kabir 2024).

Co-rulers: Wives & Partners The relations of dictators with their spouses, partners, or lovers spark the imagination (as do their sex lives, cf. Cawthorne 1996). While many (first) wives just rear the children and come to terms with their husbands' long absences and serial infidelity once these become rulers, other women are paraded around as first ladies and have important symbolic roles (**propaganda**). Still, an ambitious few take an active interest in co-ruling and have become as notorious as their husbands who propelled them into power.

Women in the 'inner court' or 'inner circle' – even when formally barred from holding sovereign power, had various resources at their disposition to grow their influence: They often exploited the 'politics of intimacy,' leveraging their proximity to power and informal networks within ruling households to gather information and manipulate decision-making processes. Roles such as ladies-in-waiting, *maîtresses,* trusted assistants, etc., provided privileged access to rulers, enabling women to act as intermediaries, confidants, and councilors and allowed them to broker favors on behalf of other inner circle members, with the ambition to build **patronage** networks that extended their reach beyond the 'court.' Strategic marriages (for themselves or their relatives) further consolidated power, as women used these unions to secure alliances and access more resources (Akkerman & Houben 2014).

Take, for instance, Magda Goebbels (1901-1945), the wife of Joseph Goebbels. She was a highly influential figure within Nazi Germany, both as a symbol of Nazi ideals and through her close relationship with Adolf Hitler. Often referred to as the unofficial 'First Lady' of the Third Reich, she embodied the regime's vision of the ideal Aryan woman: loyal, elegant, and devoted to **Nazism**. Her influence stemmed from her personal connections, ideological commitment, and her role as a public figure in Hitler's **inner circle**. She acted as a confidante to him and others in the Nazi leadership, which gave her a significant degree of informal power. (Magda's ideological commitment was profound and culminated in her infamous decision during the final days of WWII: she murdered her six children in Hitler's bunker before committing suicide with her husband). For some powerful women in the inner circle, the next level of influence was becoming an (almost) equal, formal partner of the ruler; usually, this required obtaining a marriage (and thus also making sure the ruler gets a divorce).

Co-ruling is not a new phenomenon, although it is rare. As shown in the entry on **families**, kin play a very important role in **monarchies**. Usually, mothers or other relatives took over this task as co-rulers: The Akan societies of Ghana, notably the Asante, had a dual-gender system of leadership where every chief was paired with a queen mother. There were variations on the pairing: aunt and nephew, uncle and niece, sister and brother, or cousins. In any case, both occupied royal stools, symbolizing their authority and had separate responsibilities. They were expected to work together in the interests of the people under their jurisdiction (Woodacre et al. 2019). Eswatini (Swaziland) was renowned for this system as well (cf. **monarchies in Sub Saharan Africa**).

In European and Eurasian monarchies, spouses could become co-rulers. There is evidence that power could be shared both ways. Empress Theodora (reign: 527-548 CE), of humble origins, became

a full co-ruler once she married Emperor Justinian I of Byzantium. In the other direction, William III of Orange (co-ruler: 1689-1694, ruler until 1702), a foreigner in British lands, joined the rule of Mary II of England, Scotland, and Ireland by marriage. On equal terms, Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon (1474-1504) became co-rulers of each other dominions until death parted them. (Ferdinand did become regent of Castile for their daughter Joanna 'The Mad' in 1504. Joanna inherited both thrones from her parents).

Marriages between close kin, including siblings, did not always empower the women involved, especially in the short term. However, these unions often created a form of parallelism within royal power structures that, even if initially superficial, could ultimately enhance women's influence. This long-term empowerment came primarily through their integration into the cultural expressions of royal authority (Carney & Müller 2021).

Eva Perón (Argentina 1946-1952), known as 'Evita,' Juan Perón's second wife, was not officially a co-ruler but wielded significant influence as first lady. She championed labor rights, women's suffrage, and welfare programs, becoming a powerful political figure in her own right until her untimely death at age 33. Perón's third wife, Isabel (whom he met in exile in Spain before his political comeback), became co-ruler in the capacity of vice president, but she became president following Perón's death.

Most attempts at co-rulership do not succeed if they are not formalized in one way or another. Although Jiang Qing (1914-1991) was never given a formal title equating to co-rulership, she wielded considerable power as the wife of Chairman Mao Zedong of the Chinese Communist Party. She held the title of vice premier and served in other high-ranking roles, particularly within the cultural and political apparatus. Her influence was particularly strong after Mao's health began to decline in the early 1970s. After he died in 1976, Jiang Qing and the others of the 'Gang of Four' were arrested and blamed for the excesses of the Cultural Revolution (she committed suicide in prison in 1991).

Co-rulership also has to be fully endorsed by the dictator at a time when he is not yet a lame duck (Box 3.14): Grace Mugabe gained significant political influence in Zimbabwe, particularly during the later years of the aging, ailing Robert Mugabe, already 90 years old. By 2014, she was a key figure in shaping the ruling ZANU-PF party's policies and succession plans. When she tried to sideline Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa and prepare her ascent to the highest office, the latter rallied the old guard and ousted the Mugabes in the 2017 coup.

Another condition is that the regime has to survive long enough to benefit from co-rulership. Elena Ceaușescu (1916-1989), the wife of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918-1989), was an influential and controversial figure during the last years of communist rule in Romania. She held various titles that formalized her position as *de facto* 'co-ruler,' particularly in the realm of domestic policy, the economy, and the Communist Party. She was executed alongside her husband when the regime was overthrown in 1989.

Also, Rosmah Mansor, wife of Prime Minister Najib Razak, was often perceived as a shadow co-ruler due to her alleged influence over state affairs. Her involvement in the *1Malaysia Development Berhad* **corruption** scandal (1MDB) and perceived excesses contributed to Najib's political downfall in 2020.

Co-rulership with a spouse has advantages for arranging **succession** and keeping family control over the regime. It solves both the crown-prince dilemma and provides more guarantees that the deceased ruler's wishes will be respected regarding their preferred candidate. Daniel Ortega, revolutionary leader of the *Sandinistas* who got re-elected in 2007 in Nicaragua, transformed the vice-presidency held by his wife, Rosario Murillo, into a co-presidency in November 2024 (Willems 2024). This means that if either of them dies (Ortega is currently 79 and Murillo 73 years old), the other can oversee the succession of a younger, loyal candidate, probably their son Laureano Ortega.

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Incumbents

If you want to lead the orchestra you must turn your back to the crowd.
– Islwyn Jeneins
(Submission for 'Thought For Today' for the newspaper *The People*, 1933)

Incumbents or current officeholders are considered to have several advantages to maintaining their hold on power in autocratic regimes and less so, in democracies.

ORIGIN 'Incumbent' can be found in Latin as *incumbere*, which means 'to lay upon' or 'remain in position.' In Europe it was originally used to denote holders of a church office (since the early fifteenth century) (Online Etymology Dictionary 2022).

DEFINITION Political science adapted the term for any current holder of a political office or position in the context of the latter's attempts to keep it once their legal term ends. Usually, this process involves winning popular elections (real or rigged), but at times, it can be a confirmation process by the ruling coalition (e.g., the politburo). Since they are holding the reins of power while preparing to extend their mandate, they are in a better position than challengers, hence the term 'incumbency advantage' – see also Box 8.2.

Of course, incumbents can choose not to run for another mandate or can be legally barred from running again due to **age & health** constraints or **term limits** they are unable to change. In this case, the literature considers such incumbents 'lame ducks' – cf. Box 3.14.

SEE ALSO Incumbency politics are very much linked to **elections**, **autocratization**, **personalization** and **term limits**. As shown below, both moderate autocratic regimes and closed ones resort to such affirmation processes, seeking or renewing **legitimacy** for the ruler(s) or the regime as a whole.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Under democratic rule, the incumbent usually means the person who wants or can be re-elected to hold the position for yet another mandate. Typically, the elected president or member of parliament ballots in another election if the legal regulations allow it (Berry et al. 2000; Leuprecht & Skillicorn 2016) – cf. **term limits**.

The 'incumbent' in authoritarian regimes is usually associated with the supreme powerholder, political party or other constellation of the ruling elite and the process to re-legitimize their rule. Using 'managed' elections under the control of the ruling authoritarian regime with a clear incumbent and the opposition, perhaps with the utilization of some 'puppet' candidates tacitly working with the regime, incumbents aim to re-establish the hold of power for themselves and their systems (Levitsky & Way 2002).

More moderate authoritarian regimes with a certain degree of media freedom, alternative parties and movements, or relatively developed civic societies are considered high risk for the incumbent process of rules (Finkel & Brudny 2012). The mobilization of anti-regime forces could seriously challenge the incumbent process before, during, and especially (as many examples show) after the election process. To make this process successful, the authoritarian incumbent should introduce several strategies to overcome the opposing elements, ranging from control over the media, administrative resources, and mobilization of state employers to election fraud and threats for the complete humiliation of the opposition and any disloyal or non-managed alternative candidates.

The pre-election phase usually consists of gaining control over the discourse. Jakob Tolstrup calls this the 'no alternative to the incumbent' policy – the most effective way for a successful campaign (Tolstrup 2015: 678). After the crackdown on the **opposition** (rhetorical or physical), the incumbent mobi-

lizes the masses and creates the notion of irreplaceability. The populist movement applies this strategy even in less authoritarian populist regimes (e.g., Hungary under V. Orbán). If the pre-election phase does not show a convincing chance of winning, the incumbent in the authoritarian regime should apply all tools to get the most ballots and announce its victory (Golosov 2006; von Soest & Grauvogel 2017). The control over the post-election process includes the portrayal of a significant electoral victory (especially after election fraud) to humiliate opponents.

More moderate regimes have two typical development paths of the incumbent process. The first scenario (A) is the inevitable fall of the ruler or ruling party in question. In this case, **democratization** of the particular country or replacing the ruling elite with another authoritarian group (so-called autocratic replacement) is the most common outcome of such unsuccessful incumbents. When speaking about the post-Soviet area, this happened at different stages of the post-independence history in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. The second scenario (B) of a successful incumbent in a more moderate regime often leads to a regime's **autocratization** and suppression of elements that might challenge the regime. Following this way, moderate authoritarian regimes can shift to severe forms of dictatorships – cf. **personalization**.

IMPACT ON POLICY Periodical elections for incumbents are still necessary for authoritarian regimes, especially in those dictatorships where elections do not play a significant legitimization role. The re-election of an incumbent can consolidate the regime for both domestic and international audiences. Moreover, the incumbent re-election process usually validates the previous selection process after the first successful round of elections, showing the firm position of a dictator or the ruling elite.

Established authoritarian regimes can use the incumbent process first to detect the remnant opposition in the country (even beyond its borders), later suppress it, and contain eventual dissatisfaction in society. Therefore, an overwhelming electoral victory for an incumbent is a foundation for dictatorships that require all the techniques to prolong their own rule (Handlin 2016). The incumbent should be able to mitigate the criticism from abroad and supplement the discontent inside the active part of the population (Tolstrup 2014: 675-676).

Finally, the incumbent reelection could serve (as in the case of Russia) as the confirmation of loyalty from regional leaders (Kalinin 2017). In this regard, evidence of turnouts over 100% of the eligible voters in several regions during the fraudulent Russian presidential elections indicates how the local or regional leaders use such processes to cement their own in situ positions and display loyalty.

EXAMPLES Two interesting and, at the same time, different examples of such a kind of incumbent reaffirmation can be found in the 1948 elections in Czechoslovakia (as a confirmation of the communist coup) or the constant re-elections of presidents in Central Asian states (Turkmenistan in 2011 and 2016, Kazakhstan in 2022). In the case of the 1948 Czechoslovakian elections, the communist party (the ruling regime) confirmed its position within the country after a successful coup in February 1948. These 'manifestation' elections cemented the position of the *communist party* (or the *National Front* with the other two marionette parties), determined the communist and pro-Soviet path, and opened the room for the final elimination of any opposition or alternatives. The Central Asian cases affirmed the leading position of the president (and their families) over their respective countries and clearly determined their ruling power.

CLASSIFICATIONS The incumbent behavior in political science could be found in the different spheres of the political life of a particular country. Within the top-down approach, we could distinguish the incumbent affirmation process at the leadership (president, prime minister, dictator) level, all the way down to local governments (mayors, members of city/village councils, up to the local communities (village/community heads, the *kolkhoz* (collective farm) directors, informal communities). Their political parties are another important sphere where political incumbents examine the position and loyalty of the party leadership (the most visible case), but also of party administrators in the political party's executive organs.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Political science researches incumbents' institutional role, electoral dynamics of the system, incumbents' behavior and strategies used to keep themselves in power. The institutional role focuses on the formal and informal political systems contextualizing incumbents' political environment and political culture. **Election** studies look for changes in the electoral processes (electoral laws, constitutions) and technologies for mobilizing voters during pre-election campaigns. Finally, scholars examine the behavior during the election campaigns, including the election management (up to the point of election fraud) and post-election stabilization.

How to cite:

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Box 8.2 Incumbency Advantage

Bèf pa janm bouke pote kon li
A cow never grows tired of its horns
– Haitian Creole proverb

For established democracies, especially the US, many scholars (Cox & Katz 1996; Ashworth & Bueno de Mesquita 2008) find that the incumbency advantage not only has (i) direct effects – tweaking the playing field (gerrymandering) and the value of resources (visibility, staff, funding, media access, connections, cf. **patronage**) – and (ii) an indirect effect – scaring off potential contenders – but also (iii) a quality effect – the experience of the current office holder compared to lesser or inexperienced challengers during the campaign.

In the last decade, these findings have been nuanced with more comparative evidence since they do not apply equally to all (democratic) electoral systems (cf. Moral et al. 2015). Others even identify a clear incumbency disadvantage (Klašnja & Titiunik 2013) – an 'incumbency curse' – for weak party systems of developing democracies. Eggers and Spirling (2015) suggest that incumbency disadvantage may not be due to a decreased tolerance for corruption (cf. Klašnja 2015) or voter discontent (as often claimed) but rather emerges from the personal appeal of candidates (individual characteristics) and the unpredictable dynamic nature of competition in developing countries.

Arguably, with an uneven playing field, **patronalism** and widespread **corruption**, the incumbent advantage is much more pronounced in non-democracies. Incumbents can prevent credible challengers from running, organize vote fraud, or even physically eliminate main opponents, even if election victories do not automatically guarantee that incumbents are immune to **ouster** by non-legal means post-election. (Egorov & Sonin 2014)

Egorov and Sonin (2014) created a game-theory model to assess when incumbents run after gauging their level of popularity and competence, how formidable, motivated and competent the **opposition** is, and considering the risk calculation when relying on outright repression. Their model finds that *"the most competent or popular dictators run in competitive elections, mediocre ones prevent credible opponents from running or cancel elections, and the least competent ones use outright repressions. A strong opposition makes competitive elections more likely but also increases the probability of repression."* (Egorov & Sonin 2014) Seeberg (2019) found that one aspect of state capacity, namely control over territory, aids autocrats in rigging **elections**, relying on local regime agents to help control the media narrative, inhibiting the work of domestic election monitors (Box 3.3), etc. – thus decreasing a regime's reliance on costly **repression**.

Baturo (2021) finds statistical evidence that the autocratic incumbency advantage, however, cannot easily be passed on to successors under competitive authoritarian elections – see also 'lame ducks' in Box 3.14. Note that his focus is on electoral **succession**, not hereditary succession – common for **personalist rule** – since, in the latter case, elections are seldom competitive. The decreased likelihood of success is based on insights that successor candidates (a) cannot rely on the same level of **neo-patrimonialism** and **clientelism** as **incumbents**, (b) might have difficulties convincing fellow elites – some of them disgruntled rivals disqualified from running themselves – and (c) that higher insecurity about the election outcome might make election officials less committed to perpetrating election abuses, fearing for their immunity in a post-election scenario where the regime candidate loses. Baturo (2021) concludes that in authoritarian elections, not all successor candidates are equal, and some are able to mitigate the incumbency disadvantage better, especially if the regime has a hegemonic **party,** electoral victory is more certain. Its presence is likely to improve elite cohesion and enable them to manage both the process of succession and that of elections better.

As shown above, the literature has two strands, the main one assessing the phenomenon of democracies and a newer trend focusing on **electoral authoritarianism**. There is a consensus that the incumbency advantage may result in 'democratic backsliding' (especially in developing democracies), and in non-democracies, it is generally associated with processes of **autocratization** and **personalization**, sometimes even leading to self-coups or *autogolpes* (cf. **coups**). However, the differentiation of incumbency advantage for different autocratic regime types is still very much understudied, with some evidence that the level of institutionalization, the organizational basis of the regime, and the level of personalism could yield different forms and executions of incumbency advantage.

How to cite:

Van den Bosch, Jeroen J.J., 2025. Incumbent Advantage, *Encyclopedia Tyrannica: A Research Guide to Authoritarianism,* Van den Bosch, J.J.J. and Lindstaedt, N., eds., ibidem Verlag.

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Psychological Profiles of Rulers

I know that there are scores of people plotting to kill me, and this is not difficult to understand. After all, did we not seize power by plotting against our predecessors? However, I am far cleverer than they are. I know they are conspiring to kill me long before they actually start planning to do it. This enables me to get them before they have the faintest chance of striking at me.

– Saddam Hussein (1979)

(Cited in Karsh & Rautsi, 2002)

Under what conditions political systems turn into dictatorships has also attracted scholarly attention within the field of psychology, particularly following the conclusion of World War II (Alexander 1949; Gilbert 1950; Janowitz 1950) in an attempt to understand **Nazism**. This phenomenon has been examined from a socio-psychological standpoint, focusing on the intricate interplay of social, political, and interpersonal dynamics that facilitate the emergence and consolidation of authoritarian regimes.

Contemporary psychological research identifies a spectrum of both innate and acquired personality traits that characterize authoritarian leaders, enabling them to seize and maintain absolute control over entire nations. These studies elucidate that such leaders often arise in contexts marked by significant political and economic instability. Despite their varied backgrounds, authoritarian rulers frequently exhibit similar 'dark' personality traits that initially serve as advantages in their ascent to power but ultimately contribute to their transformation into tyrants. Historical figures such as Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein, Muammar al-Qaddafi, and Mao Zedong exemplify this trend, having established regimes characterized by extreme cruelty. Notably, psychological assessments indicate that these leaders rarely display overt signs of mental disorders; rather, they possess a consistent set of personality traits that can radicalize them into terror-driven rulers capable of committing atrocities, including genocide (cf. Box 1.19).

The psychological profiles of these leaders suggest that they may possess an inherent potential for developing brutal personality traits, often combined in 'The Dark Triad,' which includes malignant narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Additionally, elements such as paranoia, an extraordinary ambition for control over others and a predisposition to antisocial behavior are often developed and strengthened during childhood (Haycock 2019). Understanding the underlying psychological mechanisms that drive authoritarian behavior is essential for comprehending the motivations behind their desires to dominate, subjugate, and inflict violence upon their populations.

In psychology, the study of authoritarian rulers' personalities has been conducted using various theoretical and methodological approaches, each offering unique perspectives on the psychological and behavioral characteristics of such leaders. These paradigms include *psychoanalytic approaches* (A), *psychobiography* (B), *behavioral and cognitive models* (C), *trait theories* (D) *and integrative frameworks* (E) that combine psychological and socio-political factors.

PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACHES (A) Historically important, but hardly applicable due to its individual perspective and thus low exploratory power for the study of totalitarian regimes, is the *psychoanalytic approach,* rooted in Freudian and neo-Freudian theories (Freud 1923; Kohut 1977). Psychoanalytic profiling focuses on unconscious motives, early childhood experiences, and defense mechanisms that shape authoritarian leaders' behaviors. This approach identifies traits such as narcissism, aggression, and paranoia as manifestations of unresolved internal conflicts or compensatory mechanisms for early psychological traumas. Projection, a Freudian defense mechanism, is also critical to understanding



authoritarian rulers. They may project their internal fears and aggressive impulses onto perceived enemies, thereby justifying their oppressive policies. These projections serve as a psychological strategy to externalize and distance themselves from their unresolved conflicts. Furthermore, authoritarian rulers often demonstrate a binary worldview – 'us vs. them' – which mirrors the splitting defense mechanism observed in borderline and narcissistic pathologies. The remnants of this approach are also present in contemporary personality profiling, when the leaders' tendencies toward control and dominance are analyzed as attempts to externalize and manage internal insecurities or suppressed fears (Post 2003).

Initially, in psychoanalytic theory, Freud posits that aggression stems from the conflict between the life drive *(Eros*) and the death drive (*Thanatos*). *Eros* serves the survival of the individual and the preservation of the species; in contrast, destructive *Thanatos* realizes the unconscious desire for death. Freud posits that aggression is an inherent drive linked to the death instinct *(Thanatos)* and can manifest when individuals experience frustration or internal conflict (Freud 1915). He suggests that when these drives are blocked, aggression may be redirected outward through mechanisms such as displacement and sublimation. Freud viewed the tension between individuals' aggressive instincts and the demands of civilization as a source of both progress and psychological struggle. Civilization attempts to manage this through laws, norms, and institutions. Aggression, when harnessed and regulated, can drive innovation, competition, and the establishment of social structures. In its destructive role, aggression is left unchecked, and aggression can lead to conflict, war and social disintegration (Drndarevic 2021).

If these aggressive impulses are not resolved through sublimation – a process where aggressive energy is redirected into socially acceptable activities such as artistic creativity – they may result in maladaptive behaviors, including overt aggression or violence. When aggressive urges remain unaddressed, they can create a cycle of unresolved conflict that perpetuates further aggression; thus, individuals may displace their aggression onto others or engage in self-destructive behaviors as a means of coping with their internal turmoil. Aggression drives self-destruction, turning outward against substitute objects.

Seen in this way in Freud's early works, the conflict of death drive and aggression is the driving force behind individuals and subsidiarily civilization as a whole, also explaining the desire for dominance, the desire for power and dominion as opposed to death and decay. For this reason, since the early 1940s, the Freudian paradigm, which was the main dogma of psychological thinking at the time, has been used to describe and understand authoritarian leaders.

An example of the use of Freudian thinking to analyze dictators was the report on the psychological profile of Adolf Hitler prepared during WWII (late 1943 or early 1944) by psychoanalyst Walter C. Langer on commission of the United States' *Office of Strategic Services* (OSS) and officially entitled *A Psychological Analysis of Adolph Hitler: His Life and Legend*. The report was an attempt to evaluate Hitler's personality and predict Hitler's plans and intentions in warfare. Several predictions made in Langer's analysis were corroborated by subsequent events (Haycock 2019), including Hitler's emotional volatility, which indicated that Hitler was probably a neurotic psychopath bordering on schizophrenia as the war turned against Germany (Langer 1972). Hitler's narcissistic personality traits allowed Langer to predict that, being incapable of facing criticism, he would choose revenge against a despised world, believing to the end in his ideological immortality. Langer also predicted Hitler's refusal to engage in peace negotiations or consider surrender and the likelihood of his suicide in the event of defeat.

Langer's report drew upon written material, interviews with individuals who had met Hitler, psychoanalytic theory, and his own clinical experience. As part of his psychological assessment, Langer naturally turned to early autobiographical themes, seeking traumatic experiences in the *Führer*'s childhood that might explain unresolved conflicts related to aggression, self-indulgence, and a chronic fear of death. He identified potential causes in the deaths of Hitler's siblings during infancy, the loss of his overprotective mother (as Langer perceived her) when Hitler was 18 years, and the presumed violence and corporal punishment inflicted by Hitler's father. While the validity of these themes has been repeatedly questioned (Coolidge & Segal 2009; Haycock 2019), the enduring influence of Freudian and neo-Freudian paradigms continues to shape the contemporary psychological profiling of dictators. These frameworks often highlight early trauma and exposure to childhood violence as key factors underlying their inability to develop effective coping mechanisms, ultimately manifesting in tendencies toward unrestrained brutality and the use of terror to govern through fear (Coolidge & Segal 2009).

Neo-Freudian theorists, such as Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott (1971), expanded on Freud's ideas by emphasizing the role of early childhood experiences and interpersonal relationships in shaping aggressive tendencies (Klein 1946). Winnicott viewed aggression as a necessary aspect of psychological growth but noted that pathological aggression arises from traumatic experiences. Also, Otto Kernberg's (1992) analysis centers on the psychological underpinnings of authoritarianism from a psychoanalytic perspective, explaining the personality dynamics of authoritarian rulers by the interplay of aggression, narcissism, and pathological defense mechanisms, focusing on how unresolved internal conflicts and maladaptive personality structures shape leaders' tendencies toward control, dominance, and aggression.

Kernberg (2007) highlights that many authoritarian rulers exhibit a combination of narcissistic and antisocial personality traits. These include grandiosity, entitlement, lack of empathy, and manipulative behavior, often reinforced by an intense need for admiration and validation. The authoritarian ruler's aggressive pursuit of power and control is

tied to their fragile self-esteem and a deep-seated fear of failure or rejection. A core theme in Kernberg's work is the role of pathological aggression in the personalities of authoritarian figures (Kernberg 2018). This aggression is often rooted in unresolved developmental conflicts, such as early experiences of neglect, abuse, or humiliation, which foster feelings of rage and resentment. Authoritarian rulers channel these emotions into outward expressions of dominance, violence, and persecution of perceived enemies. Authoritarian leaders, according to Kernberg, often rationalize their aggressive actions as necessary for the 'greater good.' This rationalization serves to mask their underlying insecurities while reinforcing their self-image as decisive and righteous figures. Such justification is essential for maintaining their sense of legitimacy and authority.

In later works, Kernberg (2007; 2018) also discusses how rulers adhere to less-evolved defense mechanisms, such as 'splitting' and 'projection.' Regarding the former, authoritarian rulers view others and situations in extreme, binary black-and-white terms, demonizing opponents and idealizing loyal followers. Projection, another defense mechanism, is used to externalize internal fears and insecurities onto scapegoated groups or rival powers, justifying oppressive actions and policies. The intense focus on power and dominance often leaves authoritarian rulers emotionally isolated. Their relationships are typically superficial and transactional, as their narcissistic and paranoid tendencies inhibit genuine connections with others. Dictators' emotional isolation and lack of genuine relationships are conjugated and enhance paranoia and delusional ideation. Kernberg (2018) identifies paranoia as a frequent characteristic of authoritarian rulers. This paranoia stems from internal conflicts and aggressive impulses that the leader cannot acknowledge consciously. Instead, these are projected outward, leading to a pervasive suspicion of others and an exaggerated perception of threats to their authority.

The psychoanalytic tradition is also referred to by philosophy and social psychology within the *Frankfurt School* of critical theory: Erich Fromm (1941) and Theodor Adorno (et al. 1950) created the concept of the **authoritarian personality** to explain the Nazi phenomenon of the success of their leaders and public support for **fascism** and **totalitarianism**. This framework has been built upon by many others, as shown in that entry. A complementary thread to the analysis of authoritarian personality, but derived from a separate behavioral paradigm in social psychology (not applied here), are the early considerations of crowd psychology (Le Bon 1896), social engineering by B.F. Skinner (1971) and the influential successors to their early theories, as found in Milgram (1963; 1974) and Zimbaldo (2011), in their studies on obedience to authority.

PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY (B) The analysis of dictatorships, which integrates life history analysis with psychological theories to construct detailed portraits of authoritarian leaders, often draws (to varying degrees) from the psychoanalytic paradigm (Schultz 2005). This comprehensive approach employs diverse methodologies, including qualitative research in psychobiography and comparative studies of narrative identity, to examine the life histories of authoritarian figures (Hollway & Jefferson 2000). Psychobiography investigates the developmental trajectories of such leaders, exploring the interaction between personal pathology and historical context (Isaacson 2010). Analyzing critical life events, childhood experiences, and personality development links these factors to leadership styles and decision-making processes (Elms 1994).

This approach provides an in-depth understanding of the nuanced relationship between personal history and autocratic rule across numerous cases. For instance, studies have examined Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, whose distinct personal histories shaped their decisions during WWII. Similarly, a comparative psychobiographical study of Saddam Hussein and George Bush highlights how their contrasting childhoods influenced their psychological trajectories leading up to the Gulf War (Elms 1994).

An early example of this approach is *The Psychology of Dictatorship. Based on an Examination of the Leaders of Nazi Germany* by Gustave M. Gilbert (1950), which provides a psychological framework for understanding how the personalities and motivations of these leaders contributed to the functioning of the Nazi state. Beginning with an introductory overview, the author sketches the historical background and provides cultural aspects, after which most of the analysis includes the life stories of the Nazi leaders, met by Gilbert as their prison psychologist during the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals. These are based on a summarization of public sources, some autobiographical material written by the defendants while in prison, and Gilbert's interpretation of the results of a few psychological tests: IQ, projection *Thematic Apperception Test* (TAT) and *Rorschach* (inkblot) tests (Murray 1943; Rorschach 1942) combined with his clinical interpretations from (direct) interviews and observations.

Gilbert concludes with an elaborated appraisal of the Nazi leadership and categorizes their top leaders into three distinct types based on their roles and characteristics: first group called 'the Revolutionists' or 'Revolutionary Nucleus' – key figures like Adolf Hitler, Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, and Hans Frank, who were central to the ideological foundation and aggressive expansion of the Nazi regime; according to Gilbert the 'Revolutionists' were fanatic rebels, idealists, and outright adventurers, under whose ideological banner the movement began. This group tends to exhibit more psychopathology than the other groups (Gilbert 1950).

The second group contained 'Political Bandwagoner' or 'Junker-Diplomat-Industrialist' as Franz von Papen, Konstantin Hermann Karl von Neurath and Joachim von Ribbentrop, "fairly normal though ambitious men" (Gilbert 1950) who aligned themselves with the Nazi Party for political gain and influence, helping the revolution gain legitimacy.

Next, 'Agents of Aggression-Militarist' applied to the career officers of the *Wehrmacht*, particularly the officers of the General Staff and High Command; mil-



itary leaders like Wilhelm Keitel and the *Schutzstaffel* (SS – ϟϟ) leadership like Rudolf Höss, who were instrumental in executing the regime's militaristic and genocidal policies. In addition to the militarists, Gilbert identifies another bulwark of unbridled aggression: the *Secret State Police (Geheime Staatspolizei – Gestapo)* as 'a special creation of the totalitarian state' (Gilbert 1950) consisting of the Prussian militarists and the SS-police network with its key figure – Heinrich Himmler. Gilbert suggested that the state police largely consisted of schizoid personalities who were particularly suited to carrying out the systematic extermination of human beings.

Although Gilbert emphasized in his conclusion that understanding the psychology of violent dictatorship requires an integrative approach, combining individual psychodynamics with the broader socio-cultural context, his flagship book faced criticism shortly after its publication (Janowitz 1950; Alexander 1949). In his review, Janowitz (1950) argued that the book's deep emotional tone makes it difficult to reconstruct a coherent analysis and fails to uncover the underlying psychopathology. He accused Gilbert of lacking objectivity, noting that while psychopathological explanations were applied to revolutionary and violent Nazis, the more restrained and so-called 'respectable' figures, such as militarists and diplomats, were given 'cultural' explanations. According to Janowitz, this interpretation inadequately integrates personality factors with socio-historical and cultural conditions.

Psychobiography remains a widely practiced method (Post 2003; Schultz 2005; Runyan 2005) for exploring the complexities of human behavior and personality (Isaacson 2010). By synthesizing biographical and psychological approaches, it represents a partially interdisciplinary framework that not only deepens psychological understanding but also offers profound insights into the lives of influential individuals. This approach highlights the nuanced interplay between personal history and psychological theory (Elms 1994).

The criticisms of the psychobiographical approach outlined above remain largely valid: it is often characterized by methodological elasticity, a lack of a unified conceptual framework, and susceptibility to the idiosyncratic preferences of the biographer. Significant critiques have focused on its reliance on retrospective analysis, subjective interpretations, and an overemphasis on individual pathology. Critics argue that this method frequently oversimplifies complex socio-political phenomena by attributing disproportionate causality to personality traits and early-life experiences while neglecting broader systemic and structural factors (Simonton 1994; Winter 2011).

Additionally, the use of anecdotal evidence and psychoanalytic theories – many of which lack empirical validation – undermines the scientific rigor of the approach (Renshon 2006). There is also a risk of confirmation bias, where historical events are selectively interpreted to align with preconceived psychological profiles. The absence of replicability and standardized methodology further calls into question the validity and reliability of psychobiography as a scientific tool. Moreover, its focus on individual psychopathology can inadvertently pathologize leadership behaviors, failing to account for the nuanced interplay of **charisma**, **ideology**, and contextual factors in authoritarian rule (Winter 2011).

BEHAVIORAL & COGNITIVE MODELS (C) The analysis of dictators' personalities often focuses on how authoritarian rulers process information, respond to threats, and rationalize their actions. For example, their rigid belief systems and tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as threatening are examined as cognitive biases that contribute to authoritarian governance (Jost et al. 2003). Cognitive models in dictator personality profiling aim to understand how such leaders perceive, interpret, and respond to their environment. These models highlight the role of cognitive schemas, biases, and decision-making processes in shaping a dictator's behavior and policy choices.

Schema Theory, for instance, suggests that dictators may develop rigid cognitive frameworks shaped by early-life experiences or formative socio-political contexts, which guide their responses to challenges and reinforce authoritarian tendencies. *Attribution Theory* is also frequently applied, emphasizing how dictators externalize blame for failures and internalize successes to justify their power and actions. Additionally, *Cognitive Dissonance Theory* provides insights into how authoritarian leaders reconcile conflicting information or justify unethical behaviors to maintain a consistent self-image.

While cognitive models offer valuable tools for analyzing decision-making and leadership strategies, they often fall short in addressing the emotional, social, and cultural dimensions of dictatorship. Critics argue that these models risk overemphasizing rational processes while neglecting the irrational, impulsive, or ideologically driven aspects of authoritarian behavior. This limitation underscores the need for a more integrative approach that accounts for the interplay of cognition with broader psychological and contextual factors.

The early foundations of this approach can be traced back to the principles of social engineering (Skinner 1935) and the contemporary assumptions of evolutionary psychology. A notable example of such analysis is Arnold M. Ludwig's *King of the Mountain: The Nature of Political Leadership*, in which Ludwig examines the motivations and characteristics of political rulers throughout the twentieth century. By analyzing a sample of 1,941 rulers from 199 countries, Ludwig concludes that the drive to rule is rooted in 'primitive, evolutionary instincts' (Ludwig 2002), akin to the dominance hierarchies observed in primate societies. This evolutionary psychology framework suggests that the pursuit of power is not primarily motivated by higher-order ideals but rather by basic instincts for survival, territoriality, and aggression shared with our simian ancestors. While Ludwig acknowledges the influence of historical and cultural factors, he argues that these are ultimately subordinate to fundamental evolutionary forces.

Critics, however, have cautioned against this approach, highlighting its lack of objectivity and tendency toward normative evaluations (Rotberg 2003). Although Ludwig offers an intriguing classification of 377 rulers – categorized as visionary leaders, monarchs, tyrants, autocrats, democrats, and authoritarian leaders – based on 24 criteria such as childhood experiences, mental illness and substance abuse, promiscuity and infidelity, loneliness, longevity, and various personal attributes (family background, education, personality traits, health, political careers, and mental health), this approach has notable limitations when applied to profiling dictator personalities. It risks oversimplifying complex socio-political dynamics by prioritizing biological determinism over nuanced psychological and contextual analyses.

Ludwig employed a range of statistical methods to analyze his data, including cross-tabulation analyses to compare the frequencies of categorical variables across different types of rulers, 'analyses of variance' (ANOVA) to compare mean responses for continuous data among ruler groups, and correlation analyses to assess relationships between continuous variables. He also utilized multiple and logistic regression models to identify predictors of political greatness, which he measured using the *Political Greatness Scale* (PGS) – a tool he developed to evaluate the relative political achievements of world leaders throughout the twentieth century.

While Ludwig's work provides valuable insights, his emphasis on evolutionary psychology as the primary driver of political behavior risks overlooking the importance of cultural and historical contexts. Although he acknowledges the influence of these factors, his focus on the 'simian' origins of ruling behavior reflects a universalist perspective that may inadequately account for the diversity of political systems and cultural norms across societies. According to Ludwig (2002), extreme acts of tyranny by dictators such as Saddam Hussein, Robert Mugabe, Alexander Lukashenko, or Pol Pot stemmed from an expanding 'sense of self,' which he likened to a 'molten lava flow' engulfing their populations. He argued that this phenomenon aligns with evolutionary mechanisms: the expanded 'sense of self' serves as a means for leaders to fulfill their sociobiological role as the head of the body politic.

Ludwig further drew parallels between human rulers and dominant alpha males in primate societies – such as monkeys, chimpanzees, or apes – who assume greater responsibility for their communities upon achieving dominance. He suggested that this behavior is not artificial but rather a psychobiological adaptation tied to their essential social role. Moreover, Ludwig hypothesized that a neurochemical with identity-diffusing properties might be released in the brains of higher-order primates, including humans, when they attain absolute power. This theory underscores his argument that extreme rulership behaviors are rooted in biological and evolutionary processes rather than purely cultural or ideological constructs.

Arnold M. Ludwig gathered an impressive amount of detail in his analysis, and some of his conclusions based on statistical analyses of biographical data are particularly noteworthy. For instance, Ludwig found that authoritarian leaders predominantly come from lower- to middle-class families with modest means (**background**). Their parents were predominantly Catholic (52%) and tended to have large families, averaging 5.3 children. Perhaps due to the size of these families, authoritarians were more likely to be later-born males rather than firstborns. They were generally dutiful and respectful toward their parents, being far less likely than other types of dictators to become alienated from their mothers (7%) or antagonistic toward their fathers (11%). Interestingly, they were the least likely (12%) among ruler groups to lose a parent before the age of 14 but were the most likely, along with tyrants (both 64%), to have parents with broken marriages (Ludwig 2002).

Another striking finding from Ludwig's research is the prevalence of violent deaths among twentieth-century rulers (cf. **leader fates** and **assassination**). He noted that 12% of all deceased rulers died violently – 7% by assassination, 4% by execution, and 1% by suicide. Within his sample of 377 rulers, this rate was even higher at 18%. Among specific groups, 29% of transitional rulers, 28% of authoritarians, 25% of tyrants, 21% of monarchs, and 20% of visionaries met violent ends through assassination, execution, or suicide. By contrast, leaders of established democracies had the lowest rate of violent deaths at 11%. Ludwig concludes: *"As might be expected, these rates were lowest for leaders of established democracies (11%) (...) the conclusion that being a ruler is one of the most lethal activities known to mankind."* However, he offers only one explanation for this phenomenon: the evolutionary drive for dominance, in his own words:

"What these assorted results show is that countless individuals will experience great privations, endure terrible suffering, and even risk death to compete for the position of leader. In most instances, they do so long before they have an opportunity to sample or exploit many of the extraordinary perks available to rulers, suggesting that underlying whatever rationales they offer for their actions, a compelling urge fuels their quest. All of these findings are consistent with my thesis that the urge to become "king of the mountain" is what drives these rulers to brave the various dangers, an urge that is likewise found in our simian ancestors when they strive to overthrow the alpha male. Although other interpretations of these findings are possible, none, in my opinion, explains as well why would-be rulers are so driven to court danger, endure so many privations, and even risk their lives to get to the top. Earlier I have observed that under the right circumstances almost any kind of person can become a ruler. However, that does not mean that almost anybody can fulfill the particular requirements of certain kinds of leadership roles. What we now need to explore is what kinds of individuals tend to be drawn to what kinds of rule and, conversely, for what kinds of individuals each of the different kinds of rule tends to be selective." (Ludwig 2002: 124-125)

Arnold M. Ludwig's *King of the Mountain* – despite its popularity since publication – has faced significant criticism. One of the primary critiques focuses



on oversimplification (de Waal 1996). Reducing complex human political behavior to analogies with primate behavior risks ignoring the unique aspects of human social and political structures. This approach often overlooks the critical roles of **ideology**, **propaganda**, and social context in shaping the actions of dictators. While Ludwig acknowledges these factors, his emphasis on evolutionary drives and primate behavior as primary motivators undermines their significance.

A second set of objections concerns Ludwig's methodology and sampling. He began by compiling a comprehensive list of rulers using three main sources: Harris Lentz's *Heads of States and Governments*, E.K. Ambrose's *Chronology of World Leaders*, and the online 'Rulers.org' database. Ludwig prioritized rulers with actual executive power, focusing on *de facto* leaders regardless of their formal titles rather than figureheads or those with nominal authority. To resolve discrepancies and ensure accuracy, he consulted additional sources, including *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Library of Congress Country Studies, Europa World Year Book, and the Lexus-Nexus Academic Universe.

From an initial pool of 1,941 rulers, Ludwig created a special sample of 377 rulers who met two criteria: they had separate entries in either the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or the *Encyclopedia Americana*, and sufficient biographical information about their personal and professional lives was available in English to allow for in-depth analysis. However, this selection process was highly dependent on the availability of English-language sources and detailed information matching Ludwig's chosen criteria. As a result, his analysis is strongly Western-oriented, and critics argue that his general conclusions are unjustified given the limitations of his sample.

While Ludwig acknowledges that his special sample may not perfectly represent all twentieth-century rulers, he contends that its large size and objective selection criteria provide a reasonable basis for drawing general conclusions. Nonetheless, these methodological limitations raise questions about the broader applicability of his findings, particularly in non-Western contexts where different cultural, historical, and political dynamics may shape leadership behaviors.

Ludwig's work, though situated within a specific sociobiological context, highlights a significant trend in contemporary efforts to explain how dictators come to power psychologically. His statistical analysis, which adopts a bottom-up approach, lacks the methodological rigor of being grounded in a broader theoretical framework and has faced considerable criticism. In contrast, the *Trait and Typology-Based Approach*, now gaining wider recognition, relies on standardized tests commonly used in clinical practice and psychological diagnosis to study the personalities of dictators.

TRAIT THEORIES (D) One of the foundational and most widely utilized theoretical models in this approach is the *Five-Factor Model*, also known as the 'Big Five' personality traits. This model has become a widely accepted framework for understanding human personality (Costa & McCrae 1992). Its roots can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century when Gordon Allport and Raymond Cattell laid the groundwork through lexical studies that analyzed language to identify primary dimensions of personality. Subsequent refinements by Tupes and Christal (1961) and later by Costa and McCrae (1985) solidified the model's structure. During the 1980s and 1990s, Paul Costa and Robert McCrae further advanced the model by developing a validated measurement tool, the *Revised NEO Personality Inventory* (NEO-PI-R), which facilitated empirical testing and widespread adoption (McCrae & John 1992).

The *Five-Factor Model* remains a cornerstone of modern personality psychology, offering a robust framework for studying individual differences. It identifies five broad dimensions that capture patterns of thinking, feeling, and behavior: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism – commonly abbreviated as OCEAN or CANOE (John & Srivastava 1999). This model provides valuable insights into personality traits that may influence leadership styles and decision-making processes, including those of authoritarian leaders.

The Big Five personality traits have been extensively validated through factor-analytic studies and are remarkably stable across cultures and life stages (McCrae et al. 2005). Common instruments for measuring these traits include the NEO-PI-R and the *Big Five Inventory* (BFI), both of which demonstrate high reliability and validity (John et al. 2008). Research confirms the model's cross-cultural applicability, though cultural nuances can influence how traits are expressed (Schmitt et al. 2007). Recent advancements have integrated the Big Five with genetics, neurobiology, and artificial intelligence (AI), exploring how digital footprints can predict personality traits (Kosinski et al. 2013). Longitudinal studies further investigate how these traits evolve across the lifespan, providing insights into developmental trajectories (Roberts & Mroczek 2008).

Through widespread use and numerous studies, general patterns in the distribution of Big Five traits have emerged. Individuals scoring high on *openness* are described as curious, imaginative, and open to new experiences, while those scoring low tend to be more conventional and pragmatic (McCrae 1996). Openness has been linked to creativity and exploration, with high scores associated with artistic and scientific creativity (Feist 1998; Kaufman 2013).

The second dimension, *conscientiousness*, reflects organization, dependability, and goal-oriented behavior. High conscientiousness predicts academic and occupational success due to its association with self-discipline and persistence (Barrick & Mount 1991; Roberts et al. 2007). It is also linked to healthier lifestyles and lower mortality risks (Bogg & Roberts 2013), while low scores are associated with impulsivity and disorganization.

The third dimension, *extroversion*, represents sociability, assertiveness, and enthusiasm. Extraverts are outgoing and energized by social interactions, while introverts prefer solitary activities

(Ashton & Lee 2007). Extraversion is associated with positive emotionality, leadership potential (Judge et al. 2002), sensitivity to rewards, and dopamine system activity (DeYoung et al. 2010). It also correlates with higher life satisfaction and social engagement (Breiter et al. 2001).

The fourth factor, *agreeableness,* reflects compassion, cooperation, and altruism. Highly agreeable individuals are trusting and empathetic, while low scorers tend toward skepticism and competitiveness (Graziano & Eisenberg 1997). Agreeableness fosters social cohesion and pro-social behaviors (Ashton et al. 2004) and is negatively correlated with aggression and antagonistic behaviors (Meier et al. 2006).

The final dimension, *neuroticism*, measures emotional stability versus emotional volatility. High scores indicate a tendency toward anxiety, depression, and emotional reactivity, while low scores reflect emotional stability and resilience (Watson 2000). Neuroticism is a risk factor for mental health disorders (Widiger & Trull 1992) and is associated with stress-related illnesses and lower subjective wellbeing (Lahey 2009).

The distribution of Big Five traits in the population follows a normal distribution or bell curve. Most individuals score near the average for each trait, with fewer at the extremes. For *neuroticism*, however, there is a slight skew toward emotional stability; while most people exhibit moderate stability, a minority experiences very high emotional volatility or exceptional calmness and resilience (Schmitt et al. 2008).

Despite its robustness, the Big Five model has faced criticism for several limitations. Critics argue that it oversimplifies personality by neglecting additional dimensions such as honesty-humility or spirituality (Ashton et al. 2004). Others highlight its cultural relativity – while generally universal, it may overlook culturally specific personality dimensions (Cheung et al. 2001). Additionally, the model has been criticized for insufficiently accounting for situational or contextual factors that influence behavior (Fleeson 2004). These critiques underscore the need for complementary approaches to capture the complexity of human personality fully.

The Five-Factor Model (Costa & McCrae 1992) has also been applied to profile authoritarian rulers, identifying low openness and high conscientiousness and neuroticism as significant predictors of authoritarian tendencies. Although the personality profiles of dictators, in terms of the Big Five personality traits, are not universally established, as they can vary based on individual backgrounds, historical contexts, and circumstances, studies in political psychology and biographical analyses suggest that many authoritarian leaders share certain personality characteristics that align with specific patterns on the Big Five traits. These patterns often include a combination of high dominance, low agreeableness, and emotional instability.

While there is no single, universally accepted Big Five personality profile for dictators, research in psychology and political science has identified certain patterns and tendencies that are common among individuals who rise to power in authoritarian regimes. These patterns reflect how specific traits within the Big Five framework may predispose leaders to authoritarian behaviors and governance styles.

Agreeableness Dictators often score low on agreeableness, a trait associated with empathy, trust, and altruism. Low Agreeableness is linked to hostility, manipulativeness, and a lack of compassion. Authoritarian leaders tend to view others as threats or tools to be exploited rather than collaborators or equals. Historical figures such as Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Kim Jong-Un, and Saddam Hussein exemplify this pattern, displaying cruelty, distrust, and paranoia about betrayal (Nai & Martínez Coma 2019). Low Agreeableness often manifests in aggressive actions such as purges of perceived rivals or dissenters, reflecting a willingness to use coercion and force to maintain control.

Neuroticism Dictators frequently exhibit high levels of neuroticism, particularly in terms of emotional instability, paranoia, and anxiety. This trait is associated with fear of betrayal, hypersensitivity to threats, and a strong need for control. High neuroticism can lead to emotional volatility and insecurity, fueling extreme behaviors such as Stalin's **purges** or Saddam Hussein's suspiciousness (Millon & Davis 2000). While some authoritarian leaders display selective emotional stability in external crises, their paranoia and fear of losing power often drive policies of surveillance and ruthless suppression (McCrae 1996).

Extraversion Many dictators display high extraversion, particularly in traits like assertiveness, dominance, and **charisma**. These qualities enable them to project power, manipulate public opinion, and maintain a commanding presence. Leaders such as Benito Mussolini and Saddam Hussein used their charismatic personalities to consolidate loyalty and influence large audiences (Costa & McCrae 1992). High Extraversion can also foster grandiose self-images and a desire for dominance in social interactions.

Openness to Experience Dictators typically score low on this trait, which reflects rigidity, conventionality, and resistance to change or new ideas. Low Openness is associated with a preference for structure and predictability, which aligns with authoritarian policies emphasizing tradition, nationalism, and ideological purity over intellectual diversity or democratic reforms (McCrae & John 1992). Dictators often resist challenges to their authority or innovations that threaten their rigid worldviews.

Conscientiousness Dictators may score high here but in a pathological form. High Conscientiousness in this context reflects discipline, organization, and determination but is often directed toward self-serving goals like maintaining control or manipulating others. Leaders such as Kim Jong-Un or Mao Zedong demonstrated high levels of discipline and focus in achieving their objectives (Barrick & Mount 1991). However, research also suggests that high Extraver-



sion combined with low Conscientiousness can correlate with risk-taking behaviors that lead to bold or controversial decisions (McGhee et al. 2012).

While no single Big Five profile defines all dictators, common patterns emerge: high neuroticism (emotional instability and paranoia), low agreeableness (hostility and manipulation), selectively high extraversion (assertiveness and charisma), low openness to experience (rigidity and resistance to change), and pathologically high conscientiousness (discipline focused on control). These traits help explain behaviors such as purges, betrayals, erratic policies, and the ability to manipulate systems for personal gain (Post 1991; Judge et al. 2002).

Research in political science has increasingly incorporated the Big Five model to study political phenomena such as attentiveness (Mondak 2010), attitudes toward political issues (Gerber et al. 2010), party preferences (Vecchione et al. 2011), and voting behavior (Caprara et al. 1999). However, the model has limitations when applied to authoritarian leaders. It does not easily distinguish between specific antisocial tendencies such as lying or vengefulness (Visser et al. 2017), underscoring the need for complementary approaches to capture the full complexity of dictatorial personalities.

The literature points to an alternative set of personality traits, either in conjunction with the other traits (e.g., the Big Five or HEXACO model: Jonason & McCain 2012) or independent constructs named the 'Dark Triad' (Jones & Paulhus 2014; Paulhus & Williams 2002).

The traits in the Dark Triad, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, are often linked to authoritarian leaders (Paulhus & Williams 2002); some research suggests that there are inherent links between the Dark Triad and authoritarian rule (Glad 2002; Paulhus & Williams 2002; Moghaddam 2013; Lilienfeld et al. 2015; Haycock 2019).

These three 'darker' tendencies are separate constructs from the Big Five but often correlate and can manifest in overlapping behaviors. They can be qualified as 'malevolent' or 'aversive' but are still 'within the normal range of functioning' (Furnham et al. 2013) in that they do not represent clinical manifestations of disorders (but can be associated with them).

Both narcissism and psychopathy are (and, even more strongly, were in the past) names of clinically diagnosable personality disorders and have appeared in classic catalogs of diseases, including mental illnesses, such as the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems – 10th Revision* (ICD-10) of the World Health Organization (WHO), which is the international standard for diagnostic classification. It is important to note that no manifestation of the Dark Triad is a mental illness of dictators; only it can be considered a 'personality disorder' gone to extremes (Haycock 2016; Kets de Vries 2019). There is an important difference between a personality disorder and a mental illness:

"Specific personality disorders (F60.-), mixed and other personality disorders (F61.-), and enduring personality changes (F62.-) are deeply ingrained and enduring behaviour patterns, manifesting as inflexible responses to a broad range of personal and social situations. They represent extreme or significant deviations from the way in which the average individual in a given culture perceives, thinks, feels and, particularly, relates to others. Such behaviour patterns tend to be stable and to encompass multiple domains of behaviour and psychological functioning. They are frequently, but not always, associated with various degrees of subjective distress and problems of social performance." (ICD-10, F.60-F69 'Disorders of adult personality and behaviour').

This means that a person with a personality disorder is aware of their actions, does not meet the criteria for a psychotic disorder, and yet their functioning deviates from the social norms and rules of behavior commonly accepted in their culture and is characterized by a specific cognitive style and perception of the world, which is judged by those around them as 'rigid' (in an unadaptive, unchanging way, despite changing conditions) and different from that represented by the general public.

As for the elements of the Dark Triad, the first of these, psychopathy, appears in the ICD-10 as a subcategory of *Dissocial Personality Disorder,* described as follows:

"Personality disorder characterized by disregard for social obligations, and callous unconcern for the feelings of others. There is gross disparity between behaviour and the prevailing social norms. Behaviour is not readily modifiable by adverse experience, including punishment. There is a low tolerance to frustration and a low threshold for discharge of aggression, including violence; there is a tendency to blame others, or to offer plausible rationalizations for the behaviour bringing the patient into conflict with society." – in the ICD-10 amoral, antisocial, antisocial, antisocial, psychopathic, sociopathic and narcissistic, among others, are listed as characteristics of this disorder.

Historically, *dissociative personality* has been linked to criminality. In 1963, psychiatrist John M. MacDonald proposed a construct later called the *Macdonald triad* (also known as the 'triad of sociopathy' or the 'homicidal triad') as a three-element set of behaviors whose co-occurrence in childhood is interpreted as a signal of a developing pathological or antisocial personality. One of the early predictors for future pathologization of personality is pyromania and cruelty or abuse of animals, especially domestic animals (animals provide 'practice' for the future killing of humans – cf. Patterson-Kane & Piper 2009). In this regard, based on biographical sources, there is no clear evidence that such behavior is common among dictators, although in some countries, **propaganda** portrayed dictators with pets to soften their brutal image (cf. 'pets and rulers' in Box 8.1).

According to clinicians, dissociative personality predisposes people to commit crimes, including the most serious ones, such as serial killings (Haycock 2016), but it also characterizes many people who hold high positions in institutions and companies. Apparently, the combination of these three traits allows many people to rise to the top, although this is usually at the expense of hurting those who stand in the

way of ruthless leaders and at the expense of weaker people manipulated by them (Kets de Vries 2019).

In the Dark Triad, psychopathy is defined as a lack of affect, lack of remorse, and insensitivity and the second trait – narcissism is described as ego-reinforcement behaviors, a tendency to seek attention and admiration.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (fifth edition) – DSM-5 (APA 2013) is a widely accepted classification system for mental disorders (particularly in the US, whereas Europe traditionally relies on the ICD-10, with comparable disease catalogs), defines 'narcissistic personality disorder' (NPD) as a lifelong pattern of exaggerated self-importance, an excessive need for admiration, and a diminished capacity to empathize with others. According to the DSM-5, the key symptoms of NPD include an inflated sense of self-importance, an intense craving for admiration, and significantly reduced levels of empathy.

Fromm (1964) and Kernberg (1984) have identified malignant narcissism as a rare and extreme subtype of NPD. Current research corroborates this, indicating that while many individuals exhibit narcissistic traits, the full clinical manifestation of NPD is comparatively uncommon. Epidemiological studies suggest that approximately 6.2% of the general population has experienced NPD at some point in their lives, with a higher prevalence among men (Stinson 2008). Other investigations propose that this figure may reach up to 10% in some samples (Ronningstam 2010). Malignant narcissism represents an even smaller proportion of the population, with estimates indicating it constitutes around 4% (Schneider 1975).

What distinguishes malignant narcissism from standard NPD is the former's hallmark characteristic of *sadism* – a gratuitous enjoyment derived from the suffering of others (Kernberg 1984). Malignant narcissists exhibit profound deficits in empathy, a feature that sets them apart from other individuals with NPD. While individuals with typical NPD may engage in callous or harmful behavior in pursuit of their goals, they may experience some degree of remorse or regret. In contrast, malignant narcissists are characterized by a near-total absence of conscience. They are willing to inflict significant harm without regret and display consistent patterns of cruelty and abuse (Caligor et al. 2015).

Although malignant narcissists can intellectually differentiate between socially defined notions of 'right' and 'wrong,' these concepts lack emotional resonance for them. Unlike neurotypical individuals, they do not experience the socializing emotions – such as love, guilt, shame, or compassion – that regulate interpersonal relationships and ethical behavior (Kernberg 1984; Ronningstam 2010). Their inability to feel remorse or pity underscores their profound emotional detachment and further delineates malignant narcissism from less severe forms of narcissistic pathology.

Currently – due to the stigmatizing impact – the revised versions of the catalogs DSM-7 and ICD-11 no longer use the terms 'psychopathy' and 'narcissism;' there is a greater discrepancy between dissocial personality as defined in ICD-10, and psychopathy and narcissism according to the classical approach. The new criteria in Section III of the DSM-5 for antisocial personality disorder no longer include criminal behavior, instead focusing on personality traits previously attributed to psychopathy, such as increased egocentrism, low empathy, antagonism or disinhibition.

The third trait in Darl's triad – Machiavellianism, described as a propensity for manipulation and strategic behavior – also poses a greater definitional problem. This factor is measured using the *Machiavellianism scale* (MACH-IV) by Christie & Geis (1970). This scale describes the components of Machiavellian personality: behavioral methods associated with a high tendency to manipulate other people, views on human nature and moral judgments. This factor seems to intersect and co-occur with psychopathy and narcissism (McHoskey 2001), and its meaning and understanding are mainly derived from the appreciation of Niccolò **Machiavelli** (1469-1527) and his amoral guidelines for rulers.

Linking the Dark Triad to the context of dictatorship and exploring the complexity of psychopathy, these facts and ideas enrich understanding of these personality traits beyond their clinical definitions. They highlight the dynamic interaction between individual predispositions and the social forces that shape behavior, political activity and leadership styles.

Peterson & Palmer's (2019) research considers the effects of the personality characteristics of the Dark Triad on political ambition. The research (based on surveys of US politicians) provides substantial evidence for the influence of the Dark Triad on political ambition. Research on nascent ambition has shown that individuals who express political ambition differ by social background, gender, and personality, but those who score higher in Machiavellianism are more likely to have higher political ambition, more likely to enjoy the specific aspects of campaigning, and more likely to predict they will be successful candidates. While narcissism is related to feeling qualified and thinking about running for political office, individuals scoring higher in narcissism are less likely to express interest in the specific work of political campaigning.

Machiavellianism is consistently positively related to whether individuals have thought about running for office and whether they believe they are qualified. Furthermore, in an aspect of ambition previously unexamined in relation to the Dark Triad traits, individuals scored higher in Machiavellianism are more likely to express a willingness to engage in campaigning. While narcissists are significantly more ambitious; there does not appear to be any relationship between narcissistic tendencies and an interest in campaigning. Peterson and Palmer (2019) find consistently negative and significant effects of psychopathy on a willingness to engage in the specific actions of campaigning, (due to their lack of care for others and a lack of desire to interact with people), which perhaps is a function of the noted tendency for those higher in psychopathy



to engage in anti-social behavior.

Other research (Nai & Martínez i Coma 2019) directly links the Dark Triad to political leadership, particularly populist leaders. The research finds that populist leaders tend to score higher on narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. This connection suggests that these traits might play a role in the rise and success of certain types of political leaders, particularly those who employ a more aggressive and manipulative style.

The research reveals the main conjunction between the Dark Triad and the Big Five: the average scores on the Big Five personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability) and the Dark Triad traits (narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism) for a sample of populist leaders – those individuals high in Dark Triad traits tend to score lower on agreeableness and conscientiousness. This suggests that individuals who are manipulative, callous, and self-centered are also likely to be less cooperative, trustworthy, and responsible.

Methodological concerns have been raised regarding the assessment of personality profiles based on mediated data, particularly whether it is possible to study personality without direct psychological examination accurately. Ideally, a psychological evaluation should be based on a direct interview, as some argue that only such an approach can provide systematic and reliable insights into an individual's psychological profile (e.g., Lilienfeld et al. 2018). However, in the case of political leaders – especially authoritarian rulers – a direct examination is rarely feasible. Even in exceptional cases where such an examination might occur, the sample would be small and highly specific, rendering it unrepresentative of the broader population of dictators.

Nevertheless, many researchers now contend that observing the public behavior of leaders can yield unbiased and systematic information about their psychological profiles (Visser et al. 2017). This perspective has led to the production of numerous studies on the topic (Lilienfeld et al. 2012; Nai & Maier 2018; Rubenzer et al. 2000; Visser et al. 2017; Watts et al. 2013). A notable example is Alessandro Nai and Ferran Martínez i Coma's study, *The Personality of Populists: Provocateurs, Charismatic Leaders, or Drunken Dinner Guests* (2019). While this article does not focus exclusively on dictators, it highlights common personality traits among politicians with populist tendencies – including elected presidents with dictatorial inclinations, party leaders with extreme views, and influential figures operating behind the scenes.

The study employs a reliable methodology for assessing personalities through evaluations by both experts and voters. This cross-sectional approach appears more robust, as it allows observers – whether experts or lay judges – to provide systematic opinions that can be quantified and compared to measure perceived character and personality traits (Parry et al. 2014). Such methods offer a practical alternative for studying the psychological profiles of political figures when direct examination is not possible.

A key finding of the article is the observable regularity that populists (33 of 152 mainstream politicians in the study) score lower on three Big Five traits: agreeableness, emotional stability and conscientiousness. At the same time, populists score higher on extraversion, narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism.

If we select authoritarians alone from this sample, taking into account those who, despite their strong inclinations, have (I) not turned their countries into dictatorships – i.e., leaders with authoritarian tendencies, such as Andrej Babiš and Imran Khan; are (II) leaders who tried to turn their country into a (full-blown) dictatorship, such as Donald Trump, Aleksandar Vučić, Viktor Orbán, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Jair Bolsonaro, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Ivan Duque Marquez, and (III) consolidated dictatorships like those of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Vladimir Putin or Daniel Ortega – one finds that when it comes to the Big Five personality traits, the performance of all populists, regardless on their position of the spectrum of personalization and authoritarian consolidation, tend to hover around the average and do not emerge as a significant distinguishing factor of any dictatorial personality.

Importantly, when comparing the scores of the above rulers with dictatorial tendencies with regular populists (never attaining the highest office), the former's Dark Triad scores are much higher and hover above 3 (on a scale of 0 'very low' and 4 'very high') for narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, for the extreme cases.

Uniquely, for this group (for every dimension of the Dark Triad studied), the highest (close to 4) scores were achieved by Donald J. Trump, meaning that he outperformed both Daniel Ortega and Vladimir Putin when assessing his first presidency (of course, the US was not identified as a dictatorship because of his score). Nonetheless, this highlights an important direction for further research as well as a significant conclusion regarding the societal efforts to curb dictatorial tendencies. While Donald Trump displayed numerous authoritarian traits and attempted to undermine democratic norms, the institutional checks and balances in the US largely constrained him from fully steering the country toward dictatorship (at least during his first presidency; his second (ongoing) presidency, in contrast, seems to be failing in this regard and is also manifesting **state capture** by powerful interest groups linked to the Trump administration).

Trait profiling of dictators, while valuable, has notable limitations. Moghaddam (2013) cautions against an over-reliance on dispositional descriptions to explain complex social phenomena like dictatorship. He critiques the tendency to attribute authoritarianism solely to individual psychological traits, such as those associated with the Dark Triad (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy), as overly reductive. Moghaddam emphasizes that many individuals possessing such traits never ascend to power, underscoring the critical role of socio-political contexts that enable the rise of individuals predisposed to authoritarian behavior.

Similarly, Gilbert (1950) questions the concept of the 'psychopathic personality,' arguing that it functions less as a clinical diagnosis and more as a sociological descriptor. He contends that a spectrum of psychopathological conditions – from neuroses to psychoses – may drive antisocial behavior, challenging static interpretations of personality pathology. This aligns with broader critiques suggesting that traits associated with the Dark Triad exist along a continuum, resisting simplistic categorizations.

INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORKS (E) A prominent recent attempt to adopt an integrated multidisciplinary approach to studying dictator profiles is Dean A. Haycock's *Tyrannical Minds: Psychological Profiling, Narcissism, and Dictatorship*. Haycock offers a nuanced exploration of the psychological architecture underpinning authoritarian leadership, emphasizing the interplay between pathological personality traits and behaviors characteristic of tyrannical rulers. Drawing on an interdisciplinary framework that combines psychological theory, historical analysis, and contemporary empirical research, Haycock argues that many dictatorial leaders exhibit traits aligning with narcissistic, antisocial, and paranoid personality disorders. His work highlights how these psychological proclivities interact with socio-political environments conducive to the rise and entrenchment of authoritarian figures.

Through detailed case studies of historical leaders such as Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Saddam Hussein, Haycock illustrates how pathological personality traits translate into political praxis. He identifies hallmark features of despotic leadership – including an insatiable need for adulation, profound deficits in empathy, impulsive decision-making, and a readiness to employ violence – as instrumental in consolidating and maintaining power. Haycock further underscores the centrality of fear, manipulation, and rationalization in sustaining oppressive regimes, providing insights into the psychological mechanisms that underpin authoritarian rule.

While Haycock engages with neurobiological dimensions of personality disorders – such as the roles of the amygdala and prefrontal cortex in emotional regulation and decision-making – he avoids a strictly neuroscientific approach. Instead, he situates his analysis within psychodynamic theory, personality profiling, and historical case studies. This integrative methodology allows for a comprehensive examination of authoritarian personalities within their historical and political contexts.

A key contribution of *Tyrannical Minds* lies in its synthesis of psychological profiling and political science, offering a multidimensional perspective on dictatorship. However, the work is not without its limitations. Critics have noted that an over-reliance on personality-centric explanations risks reductionism by neglecting the complex interplay of structural, cultural, and institutional dynamics that also underpin authoritarian rule. Additionally, Haycock's use of retrospective psychoanalytic techniques – while thought-provoking – may lack the methodological rigor necessary for empirical generalization.

In conclusion, contemporary research highlights the need for integrative frameworks to analyze the psychological profiles of authoritarian leaders. Existing approaches often provide partial perspectives, prompting calls for models that combine psychological, political, and sociological paradigms. For instance, Post's (2005) 'leader-follower congruence' model examines how authoritarian leaders' traits align with societal needs during crises, while Winter's (2003) motive profile analysis explores power, achievement, and affiliation as predictors of authoritarian behaviors. These approaches stress the importance of linking psychological assessments with broader political analyses to understand dictatorships.

While political science has studied the origins and leadership styles of dictators, it often lacks focus on psychological profiles. Biographical similarities between dictators and non-dictators highlight the need for psychological inquiry. However, psychology has faced criticism for reductionist methods that treat contextual factors as secondary (Miller 1999).

To overcome these limitations, scholars advocate for interdisciplinary frameworks that integrate psychological insights with historical and political analyses (Bennis & Nanus 1985; Bryman 1992; Kirkpatrick & Locke 1991; Langer 1972; Nadler & Tushman 1989). A more nuanced understanding of dictatorships requires moving beyond simplistic trait-based models to consider the dynamic interaction between individual personalities and macro-level structures (Coolidge & Segal 2009; Zaccaro 2007). Such multidimensional approaches are essential for elucidating the emergence, consolidation, and longevity of authoritarian regimes.

Despite progress, much literature remains shaped by liberal democratic perspectives, neglecting daily life, beliefs and the use of force under autocratic regimes. Authoritarianism often arises from destabilizing factors like political instability, economic crises, and social fragmentation. Charismatic leaders emerge in fragile contexts, offering stability and order or promising radical change. Cultural traditions prioritizing strong leadership and societal divisions further enable authoritarian consolidation. However, these dynamics are often overlooked by Eurocentric approaches.

A more immersive methodology is needed to understand rulers and their rise to power. Psychological assessments can serve as an 'early warning system,' identifying traits linked to authoritarian tendencies. However, such evaluations must integrate psychological characteristics with economic and political conditions.

As Haycock (2019) notes, traits like narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy thrive in crises marked by instability or conflict. During such periods, authoritarian figures gain prominence as perceived saviors offering stability. Early warning systems could expose these risks and counteract destructive leadership dynamics – but can they be stopped?



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STATE ORGANS

Armed Forces in Dictatorships

Nine citizens out of ten hate me? What does it matter if that tenth alone is armed?
– Attributed to Oliver Cromwell

The term 'armed forces' refers to the organized military forces of a nation, typically comprising various branches such as the army, navy, air force, marines, and sometimes the coast guard or space force. These forces are primarily tasked with national defense and protecting the state's interests against external threats. They are authorized and maintained by a sovereign state and are characterized by their structured hierarchy, discipline, and use of lethal force for warfare.

In a broader sense, 'armed forces' can also include **paramilitaries** or **mercenaries** that are not part of the formal military structure but may perform similar functions or support military operations (although the latter have specific features and functions as shown in their respective entries).

The modern study of civil-military relations can be traced back to the pre-World War II era, with a focus on anti-militarism, as seen in works by authors like Vagts (1937) and Lasswell (1941). The study and its role in politics have evolved significantly since WWII and the emergence of the Cold War, with a heightened scholarly interest in civil-military relations, particularly focusing on civilian control over the military within democratic societies like the US. This interest was partly fueled by conflicts such as the Korean War and events like the Truman-MacArthur dispute (about military strategy and civilian control over the military during the war). Samuel P. Huntington's 1957 work, *The Soldier and the State,* was pivotal in shaping this field by providing a general theory of civil-military relations (Feaver 1999).

In the 1960s, attention shifted toward military coups in newly independent 'Third World' countries, as highlighted by scholars like Finer (1964). This period saw an increased focus on understanding why military forces played a dominant role in these nations compared to Western societies. The concept of 'political culture' (cf. Perlmutter 1977; 1981) emerged as a key factor in explaining variations in military intervention across different regions. Following the Cold War, there was a renewed interest in civil-military relations in the US, driven by concerns about maintaining civilian control over the military-industrial complex (Feaver 1999).

It is well established that military forces possess several inherent strengths that enable them to intervene effectively in political affairs. First, they benefit from superior organization; even the least organized military units maintain a higher degree of structure and coordination compared to civilian groups, providing them with a significant advantage in mobilizing and deploying resources efficiently. Second, the military often holds an emotionalized symbolic status within society, representing national strength, patriotism, and defense. This prestigious position can grant them a powerful (albeit short-lived) claim to legitimacy in the public's perception. Lastly, the military's monopoly on arms and their exclusive control over weapons endow them with coercive power that civilian groups do not possess, allowing them to enforce their will through force if necessary (Finer 1962; Nordlinger 1977).

The role of the armed forces in **dictatorships** is multifaceted and varies significantly depending on the regime's structure and nature. Generally, the military plays a crucial role in both establishing and sustaining dictatorial rule, but the involvement of armed forces, as well as their level of politicization, differs. Military actors can run the regime (military regimes) either directly (cf. **executives**) or indirectly: (i) behind-the-scenes manipulation, (ii) control over cabinet appointments, (iii) blackmail to coerce civilian authorities into complying with their demands (Finer 1962). However, in many authoritarian regimes, they are subordinated to the powerholders (e.g., **single-party regimes**, **personalist rule**, **monarchies**) and are but one pillar of authoritarian control.

Scholars studying military rule argue that military governments typically include a substantial civilian component comprising bureaucrats, managers, politicians, and technocrats. This suggests that a radical dichotomy between military and civilian rule is often unsustainable. Amos Perlmutter (1981: 97), for instance, asserts that *"modern military regimes are not purely military in composition. Instead, they are fusionist, meaning they are military-civil regimes."* Military dictators frequently incorporate civilian technocrats and political renegades into their governing councils. However, this integration does not eliminate the distinction between military and civilian regimes, although the closer a regime gets to the ideal type of pure military rule, the lower its **legitimacy**. Only protection pacts (Box 1.2) can extend the veneer of 'legitimate' military rule; in other circumstances, **repression** keeps such regimes in power.

In many dictatorships, the military is a key player in consolidating power. Military dictatorships are often established through **coups** where military leaders take control, either as individual strongmen (**personalist rule**) or as part of a **junta**. The military's involvement can range from being the supreme political authority (cf. **military regimes**) to serving as a tool for authoritarian leaders to maintain control.

In all regimes, the armed forces are usually divided into several branches, each with specific mandates and scopes of operation, translated into diverse attributes regarding autonomy, commu-

nication lines, hierarchy, internal control over advancements, reputation, recruitment processes, and training. Typically, the army is the most influential branch in military **coups** and dictatorships due to its size and ground presence. It often leads coups and holds significant sway over national politics. The navy and air force may play supportive roles in coups but are generally less involved in direct governance compared to the army. Their involvement varies depending on the country's specific political and military context (and geography).

In some regimes, paramilitary forces or national police are integrated into the power structure, either supporting or counterbalancing traditional military branches. **Police forces** are usually not used when executing coups unless in a supportive capacity. **Paramilitaries** are often used in civilian dictatorships to counterbalance the influence and potential threat posed by the armed forces.

Overall, while the role of armed forces in dictatorships can vary widely, they generally serve as both a source of **power** and a stabilizing force for authoritarian regimes. However, if they rule directly, such regimes do usually not last long. In any case, the 'guardianship dilemma' applies – the need for a strong military to protect against external threats vs. the risk that the same military might overthrow the regime it is sworn to protect – and **coup-proofing** measures by the leadership always result in additional tensions with and within the armed forces. This has significant implications for governance and political stability (and eventual transitions). Notably, units like the **presidential guard** or equivalent are closely associated with the inner sanctum of dictatorships where they operate, often resulting in complex relationships with other factions of the regime's inner circle. **Rebel regimes** are also an exception; while they may have a military structure, they often lack the training and professionalism of regular armed forces, leading to variations in discipline and organizational behavior when they take over.

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Bureaucracies in Authoritarian Regimes

Every revolution evaporates and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy.
– Franz Kafka, Bohemian novelist

Bureaucracy, the rule of no one, has become the modern form of despotism.
– Mary McCarthy, American novelist and political activist

In academic discourse, bureaucracy can be synonymous with public or state administration or government, or it can be perceived as a rational-legal type of administration in the Weberian sense (cf. Max **Weber**). While bureaucracies are frequently considered the most standardized institutions across political systems and regimes, differences between them are often larger than similarities. In particular, this is valid for differences between bureaucracies in democratic and authoritarian regimes. While in democracies, the main role of bureaucracies is the implementation of policies, in authoritarian regimes bureaucracies have a dual nature and, in addition to administering government policies, also exercise effective control over society.

DEFINITION Bureaucracy refers to a hierarchical and formal organizational structure that is characterized by a set of established rules, procedures, and roles to efficiently manage and coordinate complex activities within government institutions at various levels. In Weberian terms, bureaucracy is responsible for implementing and enforcing policies and laws enacted by the government. However, the present understanding of bureaucracy is far more complex.

For example, James Q. Wilson (1989: 10) does not provide any definition of bureaucracy *sensu stricto* but argues that it is *"a complex and varied phenomenon, not a simple social category or political epithet."* Johan P. Olsen (2006: 3-4) understands bureaucracy as an ideal type, which can be characterized *"as a rational tool for executing the commands of elected leaders;"* but also *"as an institution with a raison d'être and organizational and normative principles of its own."* In Olsen's opinion, public administration, in practice at best, approximates the ideal type of bureaucracy



with its clear characteristics, preconditions, and effects.

According to B. Guy Peters (2015: 219), who approaches bureaucracies from the structural-functionalist perspective, modern bureaucracies translate political decisions into action, exercise delegated powers and provide advice and expertise to politicians. Furthermore, at least in democratic societies, bureaucracies work *"outwards to the numerous stakeholders involved with their policies, attempting to balance the views of the multiple actors and still maintain some commitment to a broader public interest."* In terms of bureaucracies in authoritarian regimes, B. Guy Peters (2021: 3) argues that while public administrations in authoritarianism are doing most of the same things that public bureaucracies do in democracies, such as advise on policy, make rules, make budgets, coordinate actions, deliver public services, monitor policies, and audit their activities, they may do them differently.

SEE ALSO Bureaucracies are an important pillar of governance, besides **executives**, **legislatures** and **judiciaries**. Some forms are deeply linked with some cold-war regime types like **bureaucratic authoritarianism**. Moreover, their behavior under **neo-patrimonialism** (in how they blend with various forms of **informality**) has been a key perspective in their study.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Shmuel Eisenstadt (1959: 303) argues that there are basically two points of view on bureaucracy. From the first point of view, bureaucracy is discerned as a modern legal-rational form of administration or *"a tool, or a mechanism created for the successful and efficient implementation of a certain goal or goals."* From the second point of view, bureaucracy is mainly seen as *"an instrument of power, of exercising control over people and over different spheres of life, and of continuous expansion of such power either in the interests of the bureaucracy itself or in the interests of some (often sinister) master."*

What Eisenstadt calls the second point of view has been frequently employed by critics of bureaucracies. These include writers such as Honoré de Balzac, Franz Kafka, and Joseph Heller, who ridiculed bureaucrats and bureaucratic procedures; economic liberals such as von Mises (1944: 1), who had no *"doubts that bureaucracy is thoroughly bad and that it should not exist in a perfect world;"* or modern 'debureaucratizers' such as Osborne & Gaebler (1993), who understand bureaucracy as an inefficient top-down organized monopoly and call for its downsizing, deregulation, and outsourcing of services from private companies. Eisenstadt's second point of view also paves the way for the study of bureaucracy in authoritarian regimes. The handful of authors who have studied bureaucracy in an authoritarian context typically describe it as doublespeak (Riggs 1964) or dual nature (Peters 2023) systems that are often used to exert top-down control at the expense of their effectiveness in implementing policies (Chan & Fan 2021; Peters 2023).

ORIGIN The term bureaucracy combines the French word *bureau* (office) with the Greek word *kratos* (rule, political power). It originated in eighteenth-century France, and it is attributed to the French economist Vincent de Gournay, who made the distinction between *bureaucracy* and *bureau mania*; while the former term refers to a new form of government based on professional 'bureaucrats,' the latter term refers to a situation in which this form of government becomes an end in itself (so-called red tape) (Albrow 1994: 14; Raadschelders 2012: 142).

However, the bureaucratic form of government has ancient roots, with examples found in ancient states such as China, Egypt, and Rome. For example, Albrow (1994: 16) mentions writings by the Chinese fourth-century-BCE author Shen Pu-hai, who *"provided a set of principles which have been linked to twentieth-century theories of administration."* During the medieval and feudal periods in Europe, state administrations were less formalized and often decentralized. Monarchs and local lords had their administrations, but these were not as systematic or standardized as modern bureaucracies. The emergence of a modern state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly in Europe, marked a significant turning point. As states centralized their power, there was a growing need for administrative structures to manage increasingly complex governance issues. The early modern examples of bureaucracies include eighteenth-century France, the Prussian administration under Frederick the Great, and the Napoleonic administration in post-revolutionary France, the latter becoming a starting point in the spread of bureaucratic principles to other countries and continents (Raadschelders 2012: 142).

While most modern writings on bureaucracy mainly focus on democratic countries, it is important to note that the concept as such originated in the autocracies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was frequently seen as a separate form of government by contemporary authors (Albrow 1994: 106). For example, J.S. Mill (1861: 113) described bureaucracy as a political system, where the *"work of government [is] in the hands of governors by profession"* and differentiated it from representative governments, where power is vested in elected officials. Later authors, such as Frank J. Goodnow (1900), already differentiated between politics and bureaucracy as two dichotomous but closely interrelated systems.

Modern understanding of the term bureaucracy comes from Max **Weber** (1922), who identified its key features, including a hierarchical structure, division of labor, written rules and procedures, and impersonal relationships. Weber considered bureaucracy as a consequence of the rationalization and modernization of society, of a transition from **charismatic rule** or **traditional rule** to legal-rational rulership. Independently from Weber, whose work was only translated into English in 1946, the study of public administration had developed in the US. While Fredrick W. Taylor's work was rather atheoretical and based on experiments, Luther Gulick (1937) provided a descriptive analysis of bureaucratic organizations. The work of Chester Barnard (1938) paved the way

for the behavioral and organizational tradition of studying bureaucracy (Kaufman 1960 2017; March & Olsen 1976; March & Simon 1958; Olsen 2006). Using economic tools of analysis, authors such as Downs (1965), Tullock (1965), and Niskanen (1971) developed the public choice theory of bureaucracy, followed by the principal-agent theory of bureaucracy, which draws from organizational theory and post-neoclassical economics (Moe 1984).

Most of the aforementioned research has focused on democracies or, as in the case of the debate between Carl Friedrich and Herman Finer, addressed the question of to what extent bureaucracy can be controlled by elected politicians (Meier & Krause 2003: 4). However, bureaucracy is present in all modern societies, including the non-democratic ones. Indeed, a number of scholars studied bureaucracy in Nazi Germany (Breton & Wintrobe 1986; Peterson 1966), in the Soviet Union (Gregory 1990; Pakulski 1986), and other communist states, such as China (Harding 1981) or Czechoslovakia (Beck 1961; Valenta 1979). An increasing interest in the study of authoritarian regimes in the second half of the twentieth century resulted in the formulation of several types of authoritarianism where bureaucratic government played a major role. The type of **bureaucratic authoritarianism** was coined by Guillermo O'Donnell (1973; 1979), the type of 'military-bureaucratic authoritarianism' was formulated by J.J. Linz (1975; 2000), and the type of 'bureaucratic-authoritarian communism' was developed by Herbert Kitschelt et al. (1999). These concepts, however, were not meant for studying bureaucracies in authoritarianism but rather for understanding how such regimes function. The systematic inquiry of bureaucracies in authoritarian regimes began only after the institutional turn in the late twentieth century (Pepinsky 2014).

LITERATURE Authoritative accounts of bureaucracy or public administration in general that debate the history of the concept, discuss the main theoretical approaches, and provide overview studies on particular research topics include Albrow (1994), Beetham (1996), Perry & Christensen (2015), and Meier & Krause (2003). The literature on bureaucracies in authoritarian regimes is fragmented into a number of case studies, with the exception of the two summarizing articles by Peters (2021; 2023), the latter being published in a special issue *Studying public administration in authoritarian regimes* (*Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*, Volume 43, Issue 1).

CLASSIFICATIONS Despite agreement among scholars that types of authoritarian regimes matter in terms of bureaucratic performance (Bolkvadze 2017; Knox & Janenova 2023; Ripoll & Rode 2023), there is no general typology of bureaucracy in authoritarian regimes. Some authors rather focused on typologies of bureaucrats in authoritarian regimes, such as Salazar-Morales & Lauriano (2020), who, in Latin American countries, differentiate among patronage appointees, technocrats, partisan loyalists, and careerists. Hasmath et al. (2019) undertook a similar approach in China, where they recognized three personality types of bureaucrats – authoritarian, consultative, and entrepreneurial.

MEASUREMENT The *World Bank Bureaucracy Lab* published an open-access data set, *World Wide Bureaucracy Indicators,* measuring employment and compensation within the public sector. The dataset was compiled for 202 territories on the basis of household surveys and administrative data and covers the period 2000-2018 (Baig et al. 2021). The *Bureaucracy Index* was founded in 2016 by the *Institute of Economic and Social Studies* with the aim of measuring the bureaucratic burden, which is a specific time cost. Unfortunately, it has only been compiled for several European countries so far. The bureaucratic burden has also been measured for Latin America using different methodologies (Levy-Carciente 2022).

Several authors attempted to measure bureaucratic performance, such as Rauch & Evans (2000), who compiled data for 35 less-developed countries. The *Rigorous and Impartial Public Administration Index* relies on expert evaluations and data from V-Dem. It measures how much public officials adhere to the law and administer it without arbitrariness and bias. The *Quality of Government Expert Survey* developed at the University of Gothenburg is based on a survey of experts and documents the organizational design of public bureaucracies and bureaucratic behavior in 117 countries (Nistotskaya et al. 2021). Data on the quality of bureaucracy in individual countries can also be abstracted from several composite indices, such as the *Fragile State Index* (mainly the indicator P2 – Public Services) or *Worldwide Governance Indicators*.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Studying bureaucracies in authoritarian regimes raises several methodological issues. Above all, the availability of reliable data. While authoritarian regimes make available fine-grained data on various administrative and economic issues, these data are frequently manipulated and biased and have to be approached with caution (Carlitz & McLellan 2021). Independently constructed indices often have a limited geographical scope (see 'measurement' section above) and are therefore not suitable for comparative studies. Fieldwork in an authoritarian context brings a number of security and ethical issues for both researchers and researched officials. An excellent discussion of the pitfalls of researching bureaucracies in a 'closed context' is provided by Janenova (2019).

EXAMPLES Research on bureaucracies in authoritarian regimes has addressed a number of topics, from the role of bureaucracy in economic development to anthropological studies of bureaucrats themselves. Recently, several studies revealed that some authoritarian regimes often deliberately hinder the effective functioning of their bureaucracies. For example, Chan & Fan (2021) claim that in China, bureaucrats are systematically sent to unfamiliar work environments and that agencies that are more exposed to the resultant inefficiencies are also more likely to come under direct control by senior politburo members (see also: Box 8.4). The pattern of tar-



geted intervention suggests that bureaucratic control in authoritarian regimes is predicated not only on centralized power in general but also on the deliberate creation of friction that prevents independent action from the bottom up.

IMPACT ON POLICY An effective and professional bureaucracy is typically seen as a key condition for the realization of successful **development** policies (Pepinsky et al. 2017). Knox and Janenova (2023: 18) argue that the character of **political regimes** belongs among the crucial factors that affect bureaucratic performance; however, as Croissant and Wurster (2013: 4) demonstrate, *"the prevalent dichotomy of democracy-dictatorship is of limited use for studying of patterns of performance and persistence across political regimes,"* and that the bureaucratic and economic performance is more a function of the forms of authoritarian regimes.

For example, **bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes** of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as post-Cold War **electoral authoritarianism**, typically rely on bureaucratic and economic performance as a source of legitimacy, and failing bureaucracy and economic difficulties may threaten the survival of the regime (Epstein 1984; Schneider 1992; von Soest & Grauvogel 2017). While Duvanova (2017) investigated how the authoritarian government in Kazakhstan delegates political authority to bureaucratic agencies in order to ensure better economic performance, Knox and Janenova (2023) demonstrated that bureaucratic performance in neighboring Kyrgyzstan is significantly lower because politicians interfere in the work of officials. A relatively large bulk of literature studies the appointing of officials in authoritarian leaders and its impact on bureaucratic performance (Burkhardt & Libman 2018; Chan & Fan 2021; Reuter & Robertson 2012). A number of studies also investigate how bureaucracies are used in order to discriminate against political opponents (Gehlbach & Simpser 2015; Rochlitz et al. 2021). Dozens of authors explored the structure and performance of bureaucracy in post-Mao China (Hasmath et al. 2019; Huang 2002; Jiang 2018; Lieberthal & Lampton 1992).

NEW FRONTIERS Students of bureaucracies claim that most of the research on the topic has been so far conducted on democracies and that also bureaucracies in non-democratic countries should be scrutinized (Peters 2021: 5). The research on bureaucracies in authoritarian regimes, however, is fragmented and is typically realized in the form of case studies and more comparative studies are needed. Ashley et al. (2021) propose three trajectories for further research on bureaucracy, including bureaucracy in authoritarian regimes: to build generalizable theories to enhance global applicability, to be more inclusive of diverse perspectives in the mainstream of public administration scholarship, and to scale up the lens of inquiry beyond the nation-state to include global governance actors and organizations. A growing body of literature (Mussagulova & van der Wal 2021; Ongaro 2021) also points to the fact that bureaucracy has been mainly studied from the Western perspective and that non-Western philosophies of public administration should also be put under scrutiny.

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Executives in Authoritarian Regimes

Governments and their leaders both attract and repel because they are at least ostensibly powerful and give those who belong to them an aura of strength, of auctoritas, which fascinates, tantalizes, but also worries and, in the worst cases, frightens those who are the subjects and the spectators of political life.
– Jean Blondel (1992: 277-278)

Comparing executive models became all the rage in the early 1990s in the aftermath of the post-Soviet transformations of Central and Eastern Europe when power relocated from politburos (Box 8.4) to executive branches (cf. Taras 1993). The executive branch is a fundamental component of governance across all types of political systems, from the simplest social organizations to complex nation-states. It plays a crucial role in the administration and implementation of policies, serving as a focal point of political life. Such institutions successfully constrain autocrats only when elites are given real access to state power, such as appointments in the executive (Meng 2019). However, defining and comparing executives can be challenging as not all 'governments' are the real locus of power; some have real constraints, others mere *façades* with power located in a party's top leadership or a tutelary body such as a royal council or Islamic judiciary.

In its broadest sense, the executive branch is tasked with running an organization, whether it be a small group or a large nation-state. Its primary functions include policy conception, implementation, and coordination. Executives can be classified based on their structure – whether they are collective (cabinet style) or hierarchical (constitutional presidencies) – and the concentration of power within them (or outside). Governmental leadership is critical in shaping the executive's operation, with leaders (constrained or not) varying significantly in their influence and effectiveness. Even in consolidated democracies, there is usually a high level of **informality** and discretion to the (internal) organization of this branch and the recruitment of its members serving as staff or advisers to the executive powerholder. Almost all positions in the executive are political as are the people who occupy them. If the latter are not (merely) technocrats, then the reason for their selection was also politically motivated.

The delineation of who is included is opaque: *"It is difficult to define governments as their boundaries are somewhat unclear. For instance, they often include under-secretaries or junior ministers – regarded as members of the government as they are appointed by ministers and leave office at the same time as them – but others also fulfil the same conditions, such as the personal staff of ministers. Thus one may have to take junior ministers into account, as well as the personal staff of leaders, since they may play an important part in decision making. This is the case with many of the advisers of the American president or with the members of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. While governments may have a clear nucleus, composed of the leaders and at least many ministers, a 'grey zone' whose boundaries are not precise forms, so to speak, the 'tail' of these governments."* (Blondel 1992: 268).

Executives can be classified along several dimensions: by their structure (collective vs. hierarchical), by the principle of appointment or dismissal (hereditary succession, military force, ruling party, direct election, confidence requirement), by regime type (democratic vs. authoritarian), and by the degree of 'stateness' – the capacity of the state to dominate society (Teorell & Lindberg 2019). These classifications are not mutually exclusive; for instance, semi-presidential systems combine direct election with legislative accountability.

Democratic regimes feature executives who are accountable through mechanisms such as free elections, legislative oversight, independent judiciaries, and a free press. These systems ensure that executives remain answerable to citizens and other branches of government. In contrast, non-democratic regimes routinely lack or erode these accountability mechanisms. The sources of **legitimacy** reflect these disparities; democratic executives derive legitimacy from citizen consent expressed through elections, whereas non-democratic executives may rely on tradition, religion, claims of national interest representation, or economic development promises to legitimize their rule. Decision-making processes in democracies tend to be inclusive and deliberative, involving cabinet discussions and consultations with stakeholders and **opposition**. Non-democratic regimes often concentrate decision-making power within a small elite or a single leader but might resort to **co-optation** to divide and conquer opposition forces when they have to.

Usually, real power is located in executives, and these are modeled into super-presidential formats that directly dominate **legislatures** and **bureaucracies** while narrowing the scope of **judiciaries** so they can rule unconstrained. In **monarchies** and **ideocracies,** there are alternative sources of legitimacy and power is usually located outside the executive, which is responsible for implementation and day-to-day management, but not for important policy-making. In **military regimes**, the real powerholders do not have a source of true legitimacy and 'hide' behind civilian cabinets, issuing and controlling policy indirectly from 'Supreme Military Councils' or 'Committees of National Salvation.' This approach first emerged in Burma in 1962 and was subsequently adopted by **juntas** in the rest of the world (Blondel 1992: 273). In most dictatorships, but especially in **personalist regimes**, the structure of executives does not reflect the actual power relations, and a main function is to offer **patronage** to regime insiders (cf. prebendalism). For instance, Vladimir Putin stepped down from the presidency in favor of D. Medvedev between 2008 and 2012, taking up the nominally subordinate post of prime minister, but there is no

doubt where the real power was located during this 'tandemocracy.'

Studying executive branches today requires moving beyond simplistic classifications to consider regime dimensions that cut across **dichotomous categories**. Dictatorships can differ more from one another than they do from democracies, and the structure, function and behavior of executive branches are a prime example of this. A nuanced approach involves analyzing both formal rules and informal practices that shape executive behavior, staff recruitment or selection, the real checks on its power as an institution, and its different functions in political systems. For instance, since governments are more visible than the informal leadership behind them, the real powerholders can 'fire' their governments (or force them to resign) to signal a regime's responsiveness to popular grievances and channel dissent.

As with the other branches of government, comparing executives across regime types yields interesting insights into their function, behavior and roles. However, individual careers in executive bodies are rather short (more so in democracies). The tenure of ministers and leaders is typically brief, averaging only four to five years, with few remaining in office for a decade or longer. Historically, communist states saw longer durations compared to other systems, apart from traditional monarchies (Blondel 1985). As a whole, governments, especially ideological ones, can be long-lived, but even as institutions, they are very malleable (extra ministries can be created, and old ones can be merged), and thus, their exact role in stabilizing regimes or enabling transitions is difficult to compare.

In conclusion, understanding executives requires recognizing their idiosyncrasy and dynamism within political systems, and therefore, the scholarly focus has foremost been on the **political regimes** behind them. The global trend toward constitutional and electoral conformism has strengthened this approach. By examining formal structures alongside informal practices and considering broader political contexts, some comparative insights can be gained, although diachronic perspectives within individual cases can be more useful for assessing autocratic troubleshooting. Because of the dearth of sources on non-democratic executives, the *Encyclopedia Tyrannica* directs readers to the topics of **term limits**, **succession**, **constitutional authoritarianism**, **personalization** and the following theoretical frames to assess power relations among elites: **selectorate theory,** audience costs (Box 7.1) and veto players (Box 6.6). For executives in Western democracies, consult Cohn 2021.

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Intelligence Services in Dictatorships

We did not act according to the rules of a girls' boarding school.
– Markus Wolf, head of the foreign intelligence division of the *Stasi* (1990)

Dictatorships differ in many substantial ways, but they are all known for utilizing seemingly all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-feared clandestine agencies. These operate relentlessly behind the curtains, gathering information, spreading deception, and sometimes making certain 'enemies of the state' inexplicably disappear from the face of the earth. In the meantime, they make sure that the dictator's secrets remain sufficiently protected. The enormous role of intelligence services is one of the hallmarks of dictatorships, as well as one of its greatest dysfunctions and, quite often, one of its major flaws that leads to their downfall.

DEFINITION Intelligence services (agencies) are clandestine specialized governmental institutions responsible for safeguarding national security predominantly by supporting decision-making through collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information on various individuals, groups, threats, issues, events, and phenomena. They may be assigned other duties that bring them closer to the functions of the police, military or other security institutions.

At the most general level, intelligence agencies can be divided into foreign and domestic. The former operates mostly abroad, whereas the latter concentrates on internal matters. Domestic intelligence agencies are often labeled 'security services' or 'counterintelligence,' but the latter term can be understood in many ways. From a narrower perspective, counterintelligence comes to combating espionage and other forms of external actors' unwanted



activities. Some counterintelligence functions are also performed by foreign intelligence services (external counterintelligence). However, counterintelligence is often coupled with related issues, such as countering the proliferation of weapons and certain hazardous substances, combating terrorism and organized crime (especially transnational), protecting classified information and critical infrastructure, and, last but not least, monitoring groups and individuals that may pose a threat to the regime. Therefore, in relation to services focused on internal affairs (domestic intelligence), the label 'security service' may seem more appropriate. In some countries, the difference between the rather defensive-oriented security services responsible for countering state threats, and the more offensive intelligence agencies is clearly highlighted, hence, for example, the name of the Dutch law: *Intelligence and Security Services Act*. The term 'security service' is even more fitting when an institution's intelligence function is coupled with law enforcement agency (LEA) powers, i.e., the power to use deadly force, apprehend suspects or conduct interrogations and search premises within criminal procedure. This is not a textbook construction, as these are considered two different security areas, but it does happen.

Dictatorships' intelligence services are commonly associated with the function of political police (secret police). The term 'political police' has unequivocally pejorative connotations, evoking associations with suppressing opposition and tormenting dissidents. However, every state, regardless of the type of the regime, including full-blown liberal democracies, cannot do away with some sort of 'political policing' (Joyce & Wain 2014: 216) for the very same reasons it requires public health inspectors or fire departments. All formal and informal radical, extremist, subversive and separatist groups must be monitored and (if need be) combated. What is essential is the scale, means, control and oversight of the function and of the intelligence community as a whole. Its overgrowth and dominance over other intelligence services' functions are typical for dictatorships, as well as the fact that such institutions operate as LEAs.

In democratic states, with broad freedom of speech and political pluralism, this function is carried out in an incomparably narrower scope, is based on the idea of proportionality, and is usually not referred to by the term 'political police.' Rather, the legal terms such as protection of the 'free democratic basic order' (Germany's BfV), protection 'from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy' (UK's Security Service or MI5) or 'protection of the constitutional order' (Poland's ABW) are used. Also, the function is sometimes associated with the term 'high policing.' Using the term 'political police' in the context of a democratic state is problematic in the sense that it may misleadingly be equated with LEA functions, which is often not the case (and may sound like an insult).

Intelligence services are also divided into a military branch, which is responsible for the protection of the armed forces, its infrastructure and the armed industry, and a non-military ('civilian') branch, which deals with all other issues of state security. The often-used term 'civilian intelligence services' can also be misleading, as it is inherently oxymoronic. Although these are not necessarily uniform institutions (it would be quite a challenge not to stick out from the crowd while wearing a rank slide and garrison cap), they are paramilitary, strictly hierarchical structures equipped with a vast variety of intrusive powers. They are 'civilian' mainly in the sense that they are not a part of the military.

In practice, the shape intelligence services take is diverse and depends primarily on historical conditions and the needs of individual countries. There were and are institutions combining foreign and domestic intelligence (e.g., Croatia's SOA), civil-military hybrids (e.g., Germany's BND), or agencies performing both intelligence and LEA functions. The last of these matters is particularly controversial due to the fact that, as mentioned, the purpose and *modi operandi* of LEAs and intelligence services fundamentally differ (combating crime *versus* providing information, respectively). In some countries, combining these two functions is considered ineffective, pathogenic and difficult to reconcile with a democratic order. This model of separation has a long tradition in the United Kingdom, with which it is most often associated, whereas in Germany, the fusion of LEAs and intelligence agencies is outright forbidden.

The reason for such a provision stems from the experience of the period of Nazi Germany. In 1939, many police and intelligence institutions were combined into the *Reich Security Main Office* (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA), a quasi-police authority or supervisory body. It included, among others, the *Secret State Police* (*Geheime Staatspolizei*, commonly abbreviated as *Gestapo*), responsible for suppression of opposition, the *Kriminalpolizei (Kripo)*, responsible for suppression of crime, and two divisions of the *Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst)*, internal *(Inland-SD)*, and external *(Ausland-SD)*, responsible for informing on and enforcing various ideological matters. The massive party-state machinery of the RSHA became an instrument of the NSDAP's racial and extermination policy. As Michael Wildt points out, it was *"a new type of a uniquely National Socialist institution, linked directly to the Nazi concept of Volksgemeinschaft"* (national community). Its functions were *"aimed to establish a total racist order and to exterminate the regime's enemies"* (Wildt 2002: 17).

Above all, bitter lessons came from the actions of the *Gestapo*. The relatively small institution, established in 1933, had comprehensive executive powers and operated virtually outside any law, being responsible for countless atrocities. After the war, the *Gestapo* was, alongside SD, recognized as a criminal organization by the *International Military Tribunal* (the Nuremberg trials). In 1949, in postwar, Allied-occupied West Germany, American, British and French military governors issued a document in which they agreed that, among others, the federal government should be permitted to establish *"a body for the collection and dissemination of information on subversive activities,"* but that it should not

have 'police powers' (*"keine Polizeibefugnisse"*). Since then, the letter has been known as 'the police letter' *(Polizeibrief)*. The quasi-constitutional principle of separation of LEAs and intelligence agencies was henceforth established (*Trennungsgebot zwischen Polizei und Nachrichtendiensten*).

Apart from the UK and Germany, separation is also firmly established in, for example, Portugal (SIED) and the Netherlands (AIVD). As one of the officers of the AIVD explained: *"The police and intelligence services are two sides of the same coin. They are very close to each other, but they will never touch."* (Vis 2012: 9).

However, there is nothing inherently faulty about the opposite model; everything depends on the specifics of individual countries, the shape of their security systems and intelligence communities. Some existing dictatorships utilize it (e.g., Russia's FSB, Belarus' KGB), as well as some democratic countries (e.g., the FBI in the US, Austria's DNS, Denmark's PET, France's DGSI), including those that have experienced dictatorships (e.g., Estonia's KAPO, Poland's ABW). In some countries, this model was used but eventually abandoned (e.g., Lithuania's VSD). As of 2024, in ten of the 27 EU Member States, civilian domestic intelligence agencies perform some police functions. Those that do not rely on LEAs support. It is clear that LEAs and intelligence services must work together and that the institutional and legal framework should encourage them to complement each other effectively.

SEE ALSO This entry is dedicated to intelligence services, sometimes regarded as secret services or reduced to political (secret) police, and, with one small exception, it does *not* discuss the role of special (operations) forces, military units responsible for carrying out complicated, clandestine missions behind enemy lines (spec ops). Moreover, police services are not discussed here. As the functions of intelligence agencies and LEAs are indelibly intertwined, it is recommended to read this entry alongside the one dedicated to **police forces** to get a complete picture. Related entries encompass **repression**, **purges**, **coup-proofing**, and informants (Box 3.11).

ORIGIN The term 'intelligence services' highlights the basic function of this type of institution, which is obtaining information valuable from the state's point of view. This is reflected in many languages, such as in Chinese (*qíngbào*), Dutch (*inlichtingen*), French (*renseignement*), German (*nachrichten*), Russian (*razvedka*) or Spanish (*inteligencia*). The tradition of this type of institution is as long as the tradition of the state. Although intelligence agencies as we know them today are a product of the last 100 years, it is possible to trace their lineage back to ancient Rome (*frumentarii*), classical Greece (*kataskopoi*), feudal Japan (*oniwaban*), the early modern papacy (*l'entità*), Renaissance Venice (*camera nera*) or Russian Tsardom (*oprichnina*). It is not without good reason that intelligence is often called the 'second-oldest profession.'

Regardless of the period, geographical location and methods of exercising power, rulers have always been interested in the resources and intentions of their neighbors and adversaries, both internal and external. While striving to guard their own secrets, they try to gain access to the other side's sensitive knowledge, employing scouts, secret collaborators and saboteurs, and hope to predict future events. Achieving any of these objectives would not be possible without properly trained and equipped soldiers, clerks, diplomats, messengers, and other 'special tasks' personnel.

On the one hand, the genesis of intelligence services is most often associated with waging wars – the army needed scouts to count enemy troops and their material, to observe their movements, and to anticipate their plans. Over the centuries, however, knowledge derived from intelligence competed with – and often lost to – superstition: the belief in prophecies and destinies and meanings behind shapes in animal entrails or signs in the sun, moon and stars. Only a handful of outstanding commanders were able to truly understand and embrace the power of 'intel' for conquest. Carthaginian general Hannibal, who used the vast network of Gallic spies in preparing his daring crossing of the Alps (218 BCE), is one of the most striking examples. Those who overlooked intelligence often suffered devastating defeats. This is best exemplified by the total obliteration of three Roman legions in the battle of Teutoburg Forest (9 CE). The Roman army disregarded both combat intelligence and counterintelligence and was easily outmaneuvered by the forces led by a defector, which it failed to uncover and neutralize. Even Alexander the Great, the creator of one of the largest empires in history, relied heavily on clairvoyance. Ultimately, the whisperings of various charlatans led him to believe that he was the son of Zeus (Andrew 2018: 39).

Throughout history, intelligence services have played a crucial role in domestic politics. Rulers often relied on these services to spy on rivals and gauge public sentiment. Trusted couriers were essential for securely delivering secret messages, adhering to the 'eyes only' principle. Activities such as information gathering, espionage, cryptography, cryptanalysis, clandestine influence, and surveillance were conducted long before formal state institutions were established for these purposes. While the organizational structures and technologies have evolved, the primary objective has remained consistent: to rapidly and comprehensively acquire valuable intelligence.

During the early modern period, a systematic approach to understanding state institutions, including security apparatuses, began to emerge. This approach, known as *Polizeiwissenschaft*, eventually evolved into police science and, in part, intelligence studies. Identifying the first 'true' intelligence service is challenging, but Belgium's *Sûreté Publique*, established in 1830 and a precursor to today's *State Security Service* (VSSE), is one of the oldest still in operation. In the nineteenth century, many countries consolidated their secret political police forces. By the mid-century, German states were forming political police and counterintelligence units within their criminal police departments. In 1880, the



Ottoman Empire established the *Yıldız Intelligence Agency*, which was succeeded by the Special Organization that later played a role in orchestrating the Armenian genocide. A year later, the tsarist *Okhrana* was created as a small unit within the main police force. Shortly thereafter, London's *Metropolitan Police* formed the *Special Branch* in 1883, and in colonial India, the *Central Special Branch* was established in 1887 as the first iteration of what is now the *Intelligence Bureau*.

The widespread rise of intelligence services in a shape similar to today's took place at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is when two famous intelligence services, considered to be one of the oldest, were established: British MI5 and MI6. In the beginning they were parts of one institution, the *Secret Service Bureau*, from which they branched out in 1914. In 1908, the US created the *Bureau of Investigation*, the predecessor of today's FBI, and in the same year, Romanians established *Siguranța*. WWII and the Cold War led to the flourishing of intelligence services. The world's political history is sometimes trivialized as endless competition for resources. If that is so, information continues to be one of the most treasured and sought-after goods.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Intelligence services (as well as LEAs) play such a big role in dictatorships, and the control of citizens' lives takes on such a large scale that they are often called 'police states,' which can be perceived as a definitional alternative for terms such as 'totalitarian,' 'fascist,' or 'authoritarian' (Seri 2013: 125; Tipton 2013: 13-16).

The main characteristics of intelligence services in dictatorships are (A) politicization, (B) dominating the security apparatus, (C) lack of accountability, (D) repressiveness, and (E) excessive size.

Politicization (A) refers to the distinctive relationship between intelligence services and power structures. This issue is complex because – unlike law enforcement – intelligence services are, by design and definition, inseparably linked with politicians and politics. After all, they are supposed to be the eyes and ears of decision-makers, the 'nation's first line of defense,' as the CIA puts it. As their task is to be the state's early warning system, they are expected to serve politicians, which means dealing with strictly political issues. Thus, when the politicization of intelligence services is called out in democracies, it is not about politics in general but rather current political rivalries – that is, involving services in political competition, using them to fight the legal opposition or to manipulate public opinion. In a dictatorship, however, there is no distinction between a state's general interests and the particular interests of those in power. They are considered to be the same thing, which makes the role of intelligence services all the greater.

In dictatorships, the functions and structures of intelligence services are, as compared to democracy, drastically expanded. The dictator needs it this way for two reasons: to spy on his own people and to spy on everyone else. Dictatorship's intelligence services lead the way in performing a diagnostic-preventive function (cf. **police forces**). Even the most trusted individuals have to take into account that their phone calls are wiretapped, and their correspondence goes through regular *perlustration*. In dictatorships, everyone at the top is systematically spying on each other. The goal of the intelligence agency carrying out the duties of political police is to be the dictatorship's most trustworthy channel of information, a tool designed for verifying the news and rumors that flow from the entire apparatus through the palace corridors, at once cleansing and corroding. Apart from Nazi and communist institutions, the *Organization for Vigilance, and Repression of Anti-Fascism* (OVRA), the secret police of Benito Mussolini's fascist regime (cf. **Fascism**), is a good example. Its possibilities were virtually endless. It ignored the law and formal structures, surveilling everyone, dissidents and fascists alike. Also, it had the power to influence the activities of other bodies, e.g., intervene in police investigations (Ebner 2011: 54).

Typically, the persons whom the dictator entrusts with authority over the intelligence apparatus automatically become some of the most influential figures in the state, regardless of their formal position. As the holders of the greatest secrets and the guardians of access to them, these overseers become widely recognized as some of the most prominent persons in the dictatorship, both by their political associates and by the public. Their knowledge, powers, and (often) accompanying crimes may seem endless. For a period, they may be considered omnipotent and impossible to be dislodged from their positions, but in a dictatorship, being the head of the secret service is usually a position with a short expiration date.

When a spymaster's position grows too much at the dictator's expense, he may find himself falling from grace. Many overambitious, traitorous, reckless or simply unlucky spymasters ended poorly, forced into retirement (Manuel Contreras in Pinochet's Chile), jailed (Ma Jian in China), shot (Nikolai Yezhov in the USSR) or hanged (Wilhelm Canaris in Nazi Germany). Even if they remain faithful and competent, the ever-changing internal balance of power may eventually bring them down. As soon as their patrons are gone, they quickly meet their downfall. After killing and tormenting people by the thousands, Lavrentiy Beria, once the second most powerful person in the USSR, was himself executed by his fellow comrades. His sovereign, Joseph Stalin, who died ten months earlier, could not protect him.

However, another issue is the fate of spymasters after the fall of the dictatorship. Manuel Contreras, who played a crucial role in the regime's systemic kidnapping, torture, and murder of thousands of civilians, was convicted of numerous human rights violations and was serving a 505-year prison sentence for crimes against humanity when he died in 2015. Also, Erich Mielke and Markus Wolf, who headed East Germany's *Ministry for State Security*, better known as *Stasi*) were held accountable, although not necessarily to the extent that corresponded to their crimes or that would satisfy the public. History is full of cases like the one of Matthias Warnig, another prominent *Stasi* officer, who moved to Russia after the fall of communism and got involved in building

the Nord Stream gas pipeline.

Political figures may use competing security institutions to get 'in the loop' and to provide themselves with at least partial protection from surveillance. To this end, they may try to instrumentalize the age-old rivalry between civilian and military intelligence. Moreover, intelligence services, like any other bureaucratic structure, are not monoliths. Influential factions in the government, *junta* or a party are constantly trying to get access to the heart of the apparatus through trusted officers, which contributes to factionalism, political backstabbing and ever-changing alliances. Therefore, the everyday functioning of top-tier intelligence officers becomes inextricably linked with political intrigues at the heights of power, and a significant part of their resources are wasted on fictitious or artificially created palace intrigues. Continuous monitoring of the ambitions, conflicts, contacts and private lives of the elites becomes one of the most absorbing duties of intelligence services. The dictator takes advantage of this chaos, playing off his subjects on the principle of *divida et impera*. Motasem Abuzaid, who studied various intelligence networks in Syria and Iraq in the sixties and seventies, argued that intelligence agencies become instruments of conflict resolution, i.e., that they were being used "as tools for resolving internal elite disputes" (Abuzaid 2024).

The dictatorship's intelligence services are not only concerned with detecting (or fabricating) conspiracies at the top of politics but do the same thing at the very bottom. For example, while installing his New Order, the Indonesian authoritarian regime, Suharto made sure that intelligence would flow to him even from the provinces. The established territorial commands kept him up to date with information on *any* threat, even at the village level (Mufti Makarim 2021: 81). The key concept is the 'internal enemy:' vaguely defined and constantly reinvented by the propaganda. In a democratic regime, the limits of political policing are set by the constitution, freedom of speech and political pluralism, alongside specialized public administration structures responsible for oversight and control, but such restrictions do not exist in dictatorships.

The agencies of nondemocratic regimes tend to perceive all groups that are, for whatever reason, 'different' as a potential threat and thus worthy of monitoring. This includes, for example, youth subcultures. The actions of the *Stasi* are demonstrative. They even prepared an illustrated leaflet for their officers explaining who the metalheads, punks, and new romantics were, labeling them 'negative-decadent' (Stasi Mediathek). One may wonder what listening to The Cure has to do with national security, but it must be remembered that these subcultures were a product of Western counter-culture movements, which was more than enough to consider them suspicious by East German intelligence. Moreover, in the world of intelligence, no detail is too small, and even seemingly insignificant information may further the service's interests. Knowledge about someone's musical preferences may be useful in, for instance, a recruitment process or undercover work.

In non-democratic regimes, the extensive responsibilities of intelligence apparatuses often lead to staffing challenges. This creates a paradox: to maintain impermeable ranks, these services should avoid excessive expansion. As they grow larger, they risk becoming weaker. Finding enough suitable candidates is difficult, especially since social advancement, while beneficial for political police, does not address shortages in areas requiring specialized knowledge such as foreign, military, economic, and signals intelligence. Consequently, dictatorships often rely on cadres from the previous regime. Although trusting representatives of the *ancien régime* is challenging, replacing a counterintelligence officer is far more difficult than replacing a police officer due to the lengthy and costly training involved and the invaluable knowledge they possess. Therefore, ideological principles often take a backseat to effectiveness.

The same principles apply to the confidential human sources (HUMINT – 'Human Intelligence') of the *ancien régime*, often referred to as 'snitches,' 'rats,' 'informants,' or 'agents' – cf. Box 3.11) Although these individuals may have worked against the emerging dictatorship, the new regime's officials often resist the temptation to exact revenge. Even the most oppressive regimes recognize certain inviolable rules regarding HUMINT. For instance, after the Nazis took control of Germany in 1933, Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich assumed command over the police in Munich. They became the superiors of Franz Meixner, who managed political intelligence in the region. Meixner later recounted how they pressured him to reveal informants who had reported on Nazi activities. He repeatedly refused, arguing that the agreement between a service and its informants is sacrosanct (Meixner 1965: 186-187). The short-term satisfaction of betraying this trust would lead to long-term intelligence failures, as few would be willing to cooperate with a regime known for breaking faith. While it is difficult to estimate how many agents from previous regimes are co-opted, it is evident that executing informants yields little benefit. Dictatorships are driven by ideology, but even ideological fervor has its limits.

With co-optation, past injustices of the previous regime are overlooked. This process is complex, as these services often symbolize the oppression of the old regime that is being overthrown. For example, after the Kingdom of Romania fell to communism in 1947, the infamous *Securitate* was established, largely built on the remnants of the pre-communist *Siguranța* rather than starting anew (Stan 2004: 343) using its reports and information for a new direction (Stan 2009: 131). Similarly, following the 1917 Russian Revolution, the *Okhrana*, a symbol of tsarist repression, was disbanded. While some of its headquarters were destroyed and leaders jailed, its functions were absorbed by the *Cheka*. Notably, some top-tier *Okhrana* officers fled and were recruited by Western services, while others joined the *Cheka* (Brackman 2001: 209). The *Cheka* benefited significantly from seizing *Okhrana*'s files, gaining valuable techniques for their operations (Bagley 2007: 108). In Nazi Ger-



many, the *Gestapo* incorporated not only most of the Weimar political police staff, all their files and card indexes, but also their informants (Mallmann 1997: 34).

Intelligence's *longue durée* can be illustrated by the career of Reinhard Gehlen, a military intelligence officer who served during both the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany. After WWII, he was one of the founders and the first president of the *Federal Intelligence Service* (BND). In his memoirs, he recalled one of his meetings with Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the FRG. *"General, is there anybody you can still trust?"* – asked the chancellor. Gehlen replied: *"Where there is no trust, Chancellor, there can be no intelligence service. But we call it a 'watchful trust.'"* (Gehlen 1972: 150). Under Gehlen, some former Nazis were welcomed into the service, with Karl Silberbauer, Anne Frank's captor, being one of the most known examples. It would be hard to read it as a part of the German concepts of 'dealing with the past' (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) or 'coming to terms with the past' (*Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*).

Dominating the security apparatus (B) – This is a key characteristic in dictatorships: While the security system as a whole is crucial for establishing and maintaining a dictatorship, it is the political police that serves as its lifeblood. After a regime takeover, the *de facto* dominance of intelligence services becomes apparent, often relegating other security institutions to subordinate roles. The extent of this dominance varies by regime type. In military juntas, intelligence services are typically integrated with the military, whereas in civilian dictatorships, law enforcement often merges with the intelligence apparatus, which then becomes the leading entity. Border protection and the penitentiary system may also fall under their control to some degree.

This hierarchical structure can lead to internal conflicts, such as the rivalry between the 'civilian' RSHA and the military intelligence agency *Abwehr* in Nazi Germany. Dictatorships and their security apparatuses are not monolithic. Adolf Hitler was always suspicious of the *Abwehr,* which had served both the *Reichswehr* of the Weimar Republic and later the *Wehrmacht* of Nazi Germany, doubting its loyalty to the regime. In 1944, he dissolved it and subsumed its functions into the RSHA *(Ausland-SD)*.

Due to the role of intelligence services, there are times when they have to tell political leaders what they do not want to hear. When the conclusions and recommendations of intelligence products diverge from already established political plans or ideological principles, they are often ignored. Some politicians anticipate products that will confirm their beliefs and intuitions, and when that does not happen, they are eager to ignore them and to 'shoot the messenger.' Ken Kotani (2009) noted this cognitive bias known as belief perseverance in Japanese intelligence in WWII. The ego of despots is particularly fragile, and personalist rulers are more likely to dismiss unwelcome reports, but the problem also occurs in democracies.

Greater importance, more prestige and higher salaries arouse reluctance and jealousy among police officers, as being transferred from the police force to the intelligence service is considered a promotion, not the other way around. This domination goes even beyond the security apparatus, infecting the justice system and the prosecutor's office. For example, as John Christian Schmeidel (2007: 40) points out, the *Stasi "subsumed all criminal, and judicial organs that in the West are presumed to keep a healthy distance from one another. Officers of the criminal police, the Kripo [Kriminalpolizei], were either IMs [unofficial collaborators], Ministry officers themselves, or directly subordinate to them. Prosecutors, trial judges, sentencing tribunals, and prisons were answerable to the Stasi."* One of the former officers of the Citizens' Militia, the main police force of communist Poland, assessed the political police as follows: *"We didn't particularly like each other with our colleagues from the Security Service. We shared the nation's view on this, although our reasons for this reluctance were completely different. They thought they were better than us. Moreover, they were the only ones who performed an important service for the country, and what all of us could do is to lie down, fetch, and, when necessary, bark"* (Nyzio 2020: 285).

An extreme example of the expansion of intelligence services and their assumption of other state functions is illustrated by their power to administer extrajudicial punishment. This is exemplified by the *Special Council* of the NKVD, which had the authority to sentence 'traitors of the Motherland' and their families (i.e., collective punishments) to labor camps based solely on investigative materials, without a trial. In 1942 alone, the *Special Council* sentenced nearly 47,000 people, compared to less than 22,000 sentenced by all general jurisdiction courts during the same period (Budnitskii & Hale-Dorrell 2019: 470).

Similarly, in communist Hungary, the *State Protection Authority* (ÁVH) absorbed numerous responsibilities from other institutions. As Peter Kenez (2022: 69) noted, the ÁVH oversaw border guards, prisons, foreign intelligence, and counterintelligence and even managed political reliability within the army. It also included a department to protect against 'economic crimes,' effectively transforming it into a ministry rather than merely a service. Such expansions highlight how intelligence services in authoritarian regimes often extend their influence beyond traditional boundaries, consolidating power and control across various state functions.

Non-political accountability (C), a crucial aspect of democratic states' security systems, is an alien concept for any dictatorship. Oversight and control over intelligence services in democracies are conducted by various entities, such as courts, prosecutor's offices, supreme audit institutions, ombudsman's offices, internal affairs divisions, civil society organizations, and parliamentary bodies. In dictatorships, these do not exist at all or are merely a façade. Naturally, public opinion is kept completely in the dark, except for official **propaganda.** Intelligence services themselves assume the role of censors and propaganda mouthpieces.

The formal powers of supervisory bodies and the letter and spirit of the law often hold little real sig-

nificance. Consequently, researchers often overlook bodies like the *State Duma Committee on Security and Corruption Control* or the *Federation Council Committee on Defense and Security* in Russia, which nominally oversee security apparatus activities. It is widely understood that the true oversight lies elsewhere.

Dictatorships are generally unconcerned with legal provisions governing intelligence services, justifying their covert operations under the guise of 'national security.' Typically, they conduct these extralegal activities discreetly to maintain plausible deniability. However, in countries with a strong legal culture, efforts are made to at least give these actions an appearance of legality. For instance, the *Gestapo* operated within a framework that required a technical basis for all actions, even if it sharply contrasted with established legal traditions. This led to the creation of new laws to legitimize their practices (Bramstedt 2013: 160). The Nazis attempted to mask illegal activities with legal façades, such as forcing political opponents to sign documents stating they were detained at their own request.

Repressiveness (D) is a defining feature of dictatorships, extending beyond mere blackmail, threats of arrest, and discrediting to include mental manipulation and physical beatings. Intelligence services work in tandem with police forces to enforce harsh penal measures, but their activities often extend further to include kidnappings, systemic torture, medical experiments, and assassinations – often disguised as 'disappearances,' (unlikely) suicides or accidents (like the 'defenestrations' in Putin's Russia), or 'casual' murders by 'unknown perpetrators.' While some of these actions are not entirely unheard of in democratic countries, they are relatively rare. In dictatorships, however, especially during their establishment phases when remnants of the previous system are being eliminated, such acts become central duties of the political police. The NKVD/KGB and Gestapo committed notable atrocities, though they inspired imitators elsewhere. These 'additional activities' of secret services, which far exceed the traditional roles of intelligence, contribute significantly to the infamy of dictatorships. Daniela Richterova (2024) likened the *State Security* (StB) of communist Czechoslovakia to a 'Swiss Army knife,' highlighting its wide range of functions.

The *National Intelligence and Security Authority* (NISA) under Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines (AMLC, 1976), Argentina's *601 Intelligence Battalion* (Lessa 2022: 125, 294-295), Chile's DINA (Kornbluh 2016: 170-171), Japan's *Kempeitai* (Kratoska 1998: 115), and Cambodia's Khmer Rouge's *Santebal* 'keeper of the peace' unit (Chandler 1999: 130) are all infamous for their extreme torture techniques (cf. Box 7.6). (The references detail the scale of their terror (Box 3.13) and how they pioneered or innovated torture techniques).

Intelligence services in dictatorships are often integrated into these regimes' war machinery, participating in conquests and oppressing newly acquired territories. This is exemplified by the actions of the Nazis and Soviets but also extends to colonial empires. Owen Sirrs (2021) highlights that the legacy of extralegal surveillance, indefinite detention, torture, and 'disappearances' by the Portuguese political police, PIDE, during António de Oliveira Salazar's *Estado Novo* regime, persisted in Portugal's former African colonies of Mozambique and Angola. The influence of communist intelligence services from Cuba, the Soviet Union, and East Germany was even more pronounced (Sirrs 2021: 69).

Enormous size (E) – Combining mass surveillance, persecution and systemic torture, the sharp end of the judiciary, policing, special operations, etc., requires significant infrastructure and various resources, turning intelligence services of dictatorships into bureaucratic behemoths. They are usually several or even a dozen times larger than in democracies, both in terms of the size of their ranks and the number of assets they run.

One way to measure their scale is by estimating the number of collaborators in (historical) intelligence services. Romania's *Securitate* grew from 5,000 in 1950 to nearly 15,000 over four decades. In communist Poland, secret police numbers fluctuated, peaking at 35,000 in 1952 and reaching 25,000 with 100,000 informants by 1989. East Germany's *Stasi* had up to 180,000 collaborators and employed 75,000 to 91,000 people in the 1980s. Czechoslovakia's StB had up to 15,000 employees and 100,000 collaborators. North Korea had the highest internal security ratio at 1:124 (personal to population), with East Germany coming second (1:166). For comparison, the ratio for Chile in the early 1970s was 1:2,600 (Chestnut Greitens 2016: 9).

Russia has a long history in intelligence, with notable organizations such as the tsarist *Oprichnina* and *Okhrana* and the communist-era *Cheka*, OGPU, NKVD, NKGB, MVD, and the well-known KGB. The KGB's staff in 1991 was estimated at around 720,000, including 230,000 border protection troops (Hilger 2010: 85). In Russia, military intelligence services often play significant roles beyond defense. Currently, Vladimir Putin's regime relies on the *Federal Security Service* (FSB), the *Main Directorate of the General Staff* (GRU, now GU), and the *Foreign Intelligence Service* (SVR). Soldatov and Borogan (2010: 80) note that key data on these services are undisclosed; however, estimates suggest the FSB employs over 200,000 people. A recent source finds that approximately 350,000 serve in the FSB (including over 200,000 in its Border Service), about 37,000 in the GU (with around 25,000 *Spetsnaz*), and at least 15,000 in the SVR (BMI 2023: 311-312).

Among dictatorships, communist China has one of the largest intelligence apparatuses in the world, both internal and external. Similar to the services of post-Soviet dictatorships, the boundaries between Chinese counterintelligence, foreign intelligence and law enforcement are blurred (Mattis 2012). Remarkably, little is known about the main component of the apparatus, the *Ministry of State Security* (MSS). Nigel Inkster (2019), the former assistant chief and director of operations and intelligence of the MI6 and expert on China, assesses that: *"The overall number of MSS cadre officers is likely to be in the region of 100,000 with up to 40,000 deployed overseas, and the*



remainder within China." (Inkster 2019: 200).

Some intelligence services that are empowered with investigative (i.e., police) functions have tactical (counter-terrorist) units as well, which are being used to detain individuals identified as posing a threat. However, for most, it is rather unheard of to possess special operation units. For Russia, however, it is a long-standing tradition. The most notorious example is the previously mentioned *Spetsnaz*, special forces of military intelligence service GU (until 2010 GRU). Although *Spetsnaz* is involved in conducting classical espionage, it is primarily known for acts of terrorism, diversion and partisan operations (Suvorov 1991: 10-16). Similarly, *Spetsgruppa A* (Alpha) operates within the FSB, carrying on the tradition of *Osnaz*, special forces of the Cheka, NKVD and KGB. In line with this custom, the Belarusian State Security Committee (KGB RB), the successor to the KGB of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, has its 'special purpose' unit as well. (For more on Belarus, consult Usov 2023).

Russia's intelligence services are notorious for alleged extrajudicial killings and assassinations, a practice that persists post-Cold War (Volodarsky 2020: 240-247). Although the KGB no longer exists, its mindset endures in its successors. Robert Baer (2022: vii) noted, *"The KGB is a way of thinking as much as it is an organization."* This is evident in the suspicious deaths of many of Putin's opponents. The 1999 Russian apartment bombings, which killed over 300 people, are widely believed to have been orchestrated by the FSB and GRU to justify the Second Chechen War and boost Putin's popularity. Alexander Litvinenko, a former FSB officer who defected to London, claimed the bombings were an inside job and co-authored *Blowing up Russia* on the topic (Felshtinsky & Litvinenko 2007). He was later fatally poisoned with polonium-210.

Dictatorship secret services do not need to rely solely on physical abuse or forced confessions to oppress their citizens. They have access to a range of administrative measures, such as job dismissal, expulsion from educational institutions, and denial of passports. In efforts to control and recruit individuals, they often use blackmail, supported by compromising materials known as *kompromat* (Box 8.3). James P. Choy, who studied *'kompromat* regimes,' noted that modern autocratic regimes maintain power not through overt force but by manipulating public opinion via sensationalist media and systematic blackmail (Choy 2020: 12). Coercion is not always the most effective method; other motivators include financial or sexual incentives, power dynamics, or ideological alignment. These are collectively referred to as SMICE motivators (sex, money, ideology, compromise/coercion, ego).

LITERATURE To understand the origins, nature, and evolution of intelligence services, several key works are invaluable. These include studies on historical contexts like *Information Gathering in Classical Greece* (Russell 1999) and *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome* (Sheldon 2004), as well as explorations of specific systems such as *Venice's Secret Service* (Iordanou 2019). Broad, cross-sectional analyses like *The Secret World* (Andrew 2018) provide foundational insights, while comparative perspectives are offered by Johnson 2010; Williams & Deletant 2001 and Caparini 2014 (for Eastern Europe and the Balkans). Additionally, books such as *The Ethics of Intelligence* (Bellaby 2014) and *The Regulation of Intelligence Activities under International Law* (Duroy 2023) or Leviathan's Heirs (Warner 2022) examine the ethical and legal dimensions and legacies of intelligence, respectively. A synthesis of the changing functions can be found in *Intelligence in an Insecure World* (Gill & Phythian 2018).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES While the concept of 'democratic policing' is legitimate albeit problematic (Fu & Chen 2023: 5-8), the idea of 'democratic intelligence' is, according to Gill & Phythian (2018: 154), 'as oxymoronic as military music.' Intelligence services operate in the shadows, and this must remain so. Even in the model democratic countries, security institutions are characterized by limited transparency and eagerness to hide behind the comfortable 'national security' clause, refusing to disclose even trivial information. Conducting in-depth research on contemporary intelligence services will most likely prove to be a far more challenging undertaking than studying existing LEAs. Sometimes, archival documents from the quite recent past, such as intelligence reports, are being declassified and made available to the public, but this is hardly a well-established practice. Declassified or leaked documents are particularly cognitively valuable but often too incomplete, too scarce and too circumstantial to treat them as fully representative and ultimately conclusive. Obviously, it is an even more demanding endeavor when it comes to existing dictatorships. The general information is often available, but the lack of possibility to 'look inside' the institution often makes it impossible to conduct more exhaustive studies and limits scientific inquiries to scratching the surface. Naturally, even working with open data, it is possible to conduct interesting research on tightly sealed apparatuses, as demonstrated by the study of the Iranian case conducted by Carl Anthony Wege (1997). However, investigating historical cases opens up more possibilities. The fall of a 'police state' is often associated with the opening of at least some of its archives, which paves the way for substantial research. This too, however, is paved with obstacles (see also **police forces** for shared 'methodological issues').

The legacy of fallen dictatorships and their secret services is complex, involving dysfunctional intelligence practices, public distrust, and sensitive archival materials. These archives contain personal details of officers and sources, as well as the operational methods of the services, which evolve rather than undergo revolutionary change. The dilemma of handling these archives stems from fears of political scandal and unrest, while intelligence services aim to protect their secrets (cf. lustration in Box 3.7).

Different countries have adopted varied approaches to these archival issues. After the Berlin Wall fell, East Germany's secret police files were quickly opened, leading to the establishment of the

Stasi Records Agency (the 'Gauck agency') for processing the past. Conversely, Latvia initially restricted access to KGB archives until 2018, when they were gradually made public, revealing shocking names of secret collaborators. In Finland, the *Tiitinen list* – named after Seppo Tiitinen, head of the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service (SUPO) – containing names of Finns suspected of *Stasi* contacts remains classified until 2050 despite ongoing controversy (Martelius & Pietiläinen 2024).

In some cases, post-dictatorship archives have proven less sensational than anticipated. In Poland, a restricted collection managed by the *Institute of National Remembrance* was opened in 2017 but contained nothing groundbreaking. Even when archives are underwhelming, they hold significance for intelligence scholars. Ethical and methodological challenges arise from incomplete and misleading records. Intelligence services often engage in deception and self-deception, complicating historical analysis. Malcolm Muggeridge, a journalist who joined the *British Intelligence Corps* during World War II, famously remarked on the unreliability of such records: *"Diplomats and intelligence agents (…) are even bigger liars than journalists, and the historians who try to construct the past out of their records are, for the most part, dealing in fantasy."* (Muggeridge 1973: 149). It is a focal methodological warning to treat intelligence services' historical accounts in accordance with the even more famous Russian proverb: "Trust, but verify."

Finding ways to capture the essence of intelligence transformation comprehensively is one of the most interesting research areas, as well as methodological challenges. The optimal, but also the most difficult, way is to adopt a very broad approach, combining law, political science, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, and history, and to conduct international comparative research. A strong theoretical framework is needed, of which convincing attempts can already be found in the literature. An example is the work of Sofia Tzamarelou (2024: 11-35) on the cases of Portugal, Greece and Spain. She presents the criteria based on which 'intelligence democratization' can be measured, including its key indicators, which involve lustration (Box 3.7), control and oversight, recruitment, targeting, and civil society.

As societies transition from authoritarian regimes, they grapple with the legacy of repressive intelligence services that felt omnipotent. These services, once integral to maintaining the power of dictatorships, face significant institutional challenges as they adapt to a democratic political order.

In many cases, the continuity of personnel and practices from the previous regimes complicates reform efforts. (Watts 2001: 21) For instance, in Brazil and Greece, the transition to democracy involved attempts to demilitarize and democratize intelligence services that had been heavily militarized (Stepan 1988: 13; Braat 2024: 861). Conversely, South Africa's transition from Apartheid (Box 4.7) saw more successful reforms. The country's intelligence services were transformed to align with democratic principles, although this process was iterative and closely tied to broader democratization efforts (Segell 2021: 73-74). Similarly, Spain's transition involved significant reforms under Emilio Alonso Manglano, who found the intelligence apparatus in a deplorable state (militarized, backward, closed to the outside world) but gradually modernized it post-Franco (Fernández Miranda & Chicote Lerena 2024: 43).

The complexity of reform is evident in Portugal, Japan, and the Baltic States. When the Carnation Revolution of 1974 (Box 6.4) brought down the Portuguese dictatorship *Estado Novo*, the only regime's bastion that put up armed resistance was the headquarters of the political police – the *General Directorate of Security* (DGS), a successor of PIDE. The Portuguese were so radical in their resentment toward political police that for years, they refused to build a new civilian intelligence apparatus, deciding to leave this matter in the hands of the military (Tzamarelou 2024: 135). After WWII, Japan's intelligence services were disbanded under Allied occupation, leading to a fragmented intelligence apparatus supervised by the *National Police Agency* (NPA), whose role expanded over time, but the country still faces issues of compartmentalization and lacks a unified foreign intelligence service (Soo 2024; Sieg & Kubo 2015). The Baltic States, despite claims of building from scratch, faced challenges in staffing new institutions after the collapse of the USSR (Watts 2004; Česnuliavičius & Visockas 2007).

In other countries, however, policies in this area are minimal, and post-Francoist Spain became known for adopting a radically different approach: the 'Pact of Forgetting,' established 1975-1977 (but this was undermined in 2006 when the so-called *Historical Memory Law* was adopted). Ukraine's intelligence apparatus allegedly "inherited all of the Ukrainian KGB's personnel" (Fluri & Polyakov 2021). Hugyik (2021: 41) found that the regime change in Hungary had no huge impact on the military services.

Public debates on the continuity of personnel and practices persist, as seen in Poland's discussions on pensions for former communist officers (Kujawa 2016). For the Greek case, see Ετήσια Έκθεση (2023) and Mandravelis (2024); for Slovakia, Romania, and the Czech Republic, consult Williams 2001; Deletant 2001.

Andrew & Dilks (1984) argue that intelligence services play a critical yet often overlooked role in global affairs. At the same time it is vital not to overestimate the power of dictatorships' political police. Historical myths about the omnipotence of secret police often stem from propaganda or post-dictatorship narratives shaped by former dissidents. These myths can distort perceptions of agencies' actual capabilities and influence. This is best exemplified by studies on the East German Stasi conducted by Mallmann & Paul (1994) and on PIDE (Portugal) conducted by Simpson & Louceiro (2021). To understand these agencies fully and hold them accountable, researchers must approach each case individually, acknowledging the diversity within repressive institutions and avoiding sweeping generalizations.



NEW FRONTIERS As shown above, the transition from dictatorship to democracy often involves complex challenges in reforming intelligence services, which are deeply intertwined with transitional justice and public trust. All regimes co-opt institutions from their predecessor because their information is so valuable and sensitive; dictatorships do so without blushing, and democratic successor regimes are unable to forgo some continuity of personnel and practices, even if this brings with its own set of challenges, such as balancing national security needs with civil liberties (e.g., data collection) with demands for civilian oversight while burdened with an authoritarian legacy and systemic public distrust. Improving control and oversight of intelligence remains a central challenge for democracies; for a supervisory system to be effective, appropriate legal conditions must be met. Born et al. (2005) argue that without legal powers, financial resources, and staff, an oversight body is deemed to be a 'toothless' institution, no match for a government or its intelligence services (Gill & Phythian 2018; Born & Leigh 2007).

Regarding the contemporary challenges of intelligence services, consult Wagner (2022) for the ongoing 'arms race' concerning surveillance systems and corresponding countermeasures (cf. **cyber-warfare**) and how democracies are to respond to that (Vitkauskas 1999; Bellaby 2014); Thuillier (2023) for its mission creep under the cover of terrorist threat: Raphael & Blakeley (2016) and Schmidt (2018) on the misconduct of democracies in combating **terrorism**; Keefe (2010) for private non-state intelligence agencies; Ghioni et al. (2023) on the abundance of available data in the age of technology and the use of 'open source intelligence' (OSINT) and the limits to state's intrusion into interpersonal communication in democracies (Walton 2021). For this clandestine ecosystem, the next adaptation is likely the harnessing of AI for secret intelligence (cf. Ghioni et al. 2023), although currently only a few states, mainly global powers, possess sufficiently developed intelligence apparatuses to face up to this challenge truly.

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Box 8.3 Kompromat – Blackmail

If you've got them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.
– White House saying

Kompromat (компромат) is a term used to describe compromising material or information that can be used to blackmail or influence someone, particularly in politics or business. The term is of Russian origin and is a combination of the words 'компрометирующий материал' – *'komprometiruyushchii'* (compromising) and *'material'* (material or information). The term is often associated with Russian intelligence practices, where the gathering and dissemination of *kompromat* is seen as a standard tool of statecraft. *Kompromat* can take many forms, including secretly recorded videos, photographs, documents, or other evidence that may be used to discredit or damage someone's reputation, career, or personal life. The release of kompromat is often timed strategically to cause maximum damage or embarrassment to the target.

Main contributions on studying *kompromat* are Ledeneva (2006), who investigates *kompromat* in Russia; Pearce (2015), who innovatively applies the concept to Azerbaijan; Surowiec (2017), who focuses on *kompromat* in Russia's hybrid warfare and propaganda; and Choy (2020), who attempts its theoretical generalization.

An example of the usage of *kompromat* is the case of Azerbaijani investigative journalist and human rights activist Khadija Ismailova. In 2012, Ismayilova published a series of articles that exposed corruption and abuses of power within the Azerbaijani government, above all business dealings of Azerbaijan's ruling family, including President Ilham Aliyev and his wife Mehriban Aliyeva. The articles revealed that the family had amassed a vast personal fortune through corruption and abuse of power. Ismayilova had to challenge a number of compromising materials, including a leaked video showing her in an intimate situation with her partner. In 2014, Ismayilova was arrested on trumped-up charges of inciting a former colleague to attempt suicide, and later on charges of tax evasion and abuse of power. She was held in pre-trial detention for several months before being sentenced to seven and a half years in prison in September 2015. Ismayilova's arrest and imprisonment were widely condemned by human rights organizations and the international community, who saw it as retaliation for her investigative reporting. She was released from prison in 2016 after serving more than a year and a half, following a global campaign for her release. Ismayilova continues to work as a journalist and human rights activist, despite facing ongoing harassment and intimidation from the Azerbaijani authorities. For more on Ismayilova's case, see e.g., Jurik (2021) and Voorhoof (2019).

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Judiciaries in Authoritarian Regimes

Justice is blind, but judges have eyes.
– Matshona Dhliwayo, Zimbabwean-Canadian philosopher

Authoritarian regimes have adopted a number of nominally democratic institutions, including constitutions envisioning the separation of powers. While in democracies, judiciaries should be independent on both executive and legislative and act as institutions that interpret and apply the law, ensure justice, and uphold the rule of law, in authoritarian regimes, their role is more ambiguous – often tools of the regime, but not always.

DEFINITION Judiciaries exist both in democracies and authoritarian regimes. However, there is a significant difference in how the laws are applied and interpreted in both systems. In democracies, the principle of the rule of law stipulates that everyone, including government officials and the state itself, is subject to and accountable under the law. In authoritarian regimes, the principle of the rule of law is typically replaced by what is called rule by law. This implies that the state and governmental policies are based on laws, but genuine separation of powers is weakened or missing. This implies that while judiciaries in authoritarian regimes are formal institutions that nominally apply and interpret the law, they also perform different functions than their democratic counterparts, from serving as "institutions of repression" to "sites of active resistance" (Moustafa 2014: 282).

SEE ALSO This entry takes a closer look at the role of **informality** in various types of institutions in dictatorships, see also **legislatures** and **bureaucracies**. A related entry is **authoritarian constitutionalism**, explaining how courts are used to subvert the ideas of **constitutionalism** and manipulate them to prolong or deepen authoritarian control, espousing **legitimacy** derived by (non-democratic) legal-rational rule (cf. Max **Weber**).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE In conventional wisdom, judiciaries in authoritarian regimes are frequently seen as mere pawns in the hands of a dictator and typically described using metaphors such as 'kangaroo courts' or 'telephone justice' (Moustafa 2014: 282). However, these metaphors provide a very limited view of the rather diverse and complex role of judiciaries in authoritarian regimes.

For example, Aquilar Férnandez and Ríos Figueroa (2014) – following M. **Svolik** – argue that authoritarian leaders use judicial institutions to deal with two fundamental problems: authoritarian control and authoritarian power-sharing. These judicial institutions may include prosecutors, judges, and courts. Other authors, such as Moustafa (2014) and Ginsburg & Moustafa (2008), identify a number of possible roles judiciaries can play in authoritarian regimes. They can be summarized as follows: (i) judiciaries exercise state power *vis-à-vis* opposition, they establish social control and sideline political opponents; (ii) judiciaries advance administrative discipline within state institutions and solve coordination problems among competing factions within the regime; (iii) judiciaries maintain cohesion among various factions within the ruling coalition; (iv) judiciaries facilitate market transitions; (v) judiciaries contain majoritarian institutions through authoritarian enclaves; (vi) judiciaries can implement controversial policies and reforms so as to allow political distance from core elements of the regime; (vii) judiciaries can bolster regime **legitimacy**.

ORIGIN In his groundbreaking work on authoritarian regimes, J.J. Linz (1964: 225) described authoritarianism as a regime where power is exercised *"within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones."* This observation by Linz is also very telling in terms of understanding judiciaries in authoritarian regimes. Judiciaries are formally defined, but either the way how they are formally defined contradicts their independence from the executive, or their definition is relatively vague and provides many opportunities for informal practices and networks to influence judicial independence and objectivity.

However, for several decades, research on authoritarian regimes had largely ignored judiciaries; at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first century, several authors (Barros 2002; Solomon 1996) demonstrated that the empirical reality in many authoritarian and even totalitarian countries contradicts popular wisdom. While the role of courts in selected authoritarian countries has been studied since at least the 1970s (Toharia 1975), a groundbreaking work in this regard was a volume edited by Ginsburg & Moustafa (2008), which brought together studies analyzing the role of judiciaries in a number of contemporary authoritarian and hybrid regimes mainly in Latin America, but also in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Egypt, China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey.

LITERATURE The volume edited by Moustafa & Ginsburg (2008) provides an excellent overview of existing theoretical approaches to the study of judiciaries in authoritarian regimes, as well as a careful selection of case studies from different continents. The monograph by Hilbink (2007) provides a concise theoretical account of the role of the judiciary in democracy and dictatorship and proceeds with a comprehensive analysis of Chile under and after Pinochet. More recent theoretical contributions were provided by Moustafa (2014) and Kureshi (2021).

CLASSIFICATIONS One of a few typologies of judiciaries in authoritarian regimes is provided by Kureshi (2021), who focuses on judicial relationships with authoritarian regimes. On the basis of two binary variables (normative and utilitarian interlinkages), he identified four types of courts: loyal, controlled, collaborative, and competitive.



MEASUREMENT Several composite indices measure the rule of law, such as the *Rule of Law Indicator,* one of the *Worldwide Governance Indicators* provided by the World Bank (Kaufmann & Kraay 2023), or the *Rule of Law Index* provided by the *Global Change Data Lab.* Regionally focused dataset *Nations in Transit* by Freedom House provides an indicator of 'Judicial Framework and Independence' in post-communist Eurasia.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES Studying judiciaries in authoritarian regimes presents several methodological challenges stemming from limited transparency, political constraints, and lack of data. To address these methodological challenges, researchers studying judiciaries in authoritarian regimes often adopt a combination of approaches, including interviews with anonymous informants, analysis of legal documents, and triangulation of data from various sources (such as composite indices) to enhance the robustness of their findings.

EXAMPLES China is one of the most frequent cases for studies on judiciaries in authoritarian regimes. For example, Wang (2020) argued that China under President Xi Jinping was able to make courts independent of local officials and significantly reduce external court interference. Ahl (2019) focused on the *Chinese Supreme People's Court* as an example of judicialization of authoritarian politics and concluded that *"the court has certain room for maneuvering and can simultaneously promote an agenda relating to its own institutional interests"* (Ahl 2019: 275). A number of studies also focus on the role of courts in regime transformation (Helmke 2002; Kapiszewski 2011; Sánchez et al. 2011; Solomon 2000; Sólyom 2003). Recently, the impact of constitutional reform on the judiciary in Turkey and the performance of the *Turkish Constitutional Court* has been studied by Aydin-Cakir (2018), Bâli (2013), and Varol et al. (2017).

IMPACT ON POLICY In authoritarian regimes, judiciaries typically have limited power and influence compared to their counterparts in democracies. However, as discussed above, the exact impact of judiciaries on policy-making in authoritarian regimes varies depending on the specific characteristics and goals of the particular regime. For example, in their study on competitive authoritarianism, Levitsky and Way (2010) recognize the judicial arena as one of the four arenas of contestation between the opposition and the authoritarian government.

NEW FRONTIERS Most of the studies on judiciaries in authoritarian regimes are single case studies; the number of cross-regional comparative studies is limited, although exceptions do exist: Rusakova et al. 2021; Solomon 2010; Wang 2020. Most case studies embrace a qualitative and descriptive approach; however, a pioneering work in this regard is Solis and Zvobgo (2023), who quantitatively analyze judicial independence in terms of protecting the press. More cross-regional comparisons, applications of existing typologies, and quantitative studies are needed.

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Legislatures in Authoritarian Regimes

The fifth convocation of the State Duma had approved the vast majority of bills presented to it; this fact demonstrates the great advantage of our country in comparison with other countries in this time of crisis.
– Vladimir V. Putin, Russian president and war criminal

Authoritarian regimes have adopted a number of nominally democratic institutions, including legislatures. While in democracies, legislatures are responsible for passing laws and controlling the government, in authoritarian regimes, their role frequently differs and spans from a mere *façade* or rubber stamp to an institution used for controlling the **opposition**, **co-optation**, and distribution of prebends (cf. **prebendalism**).

DEFINITION Legislatures in authoritarian regimes should be seen as formal institutions, but at the same time, they typically perform different functions than their democratic counterparts (see section **key significance**). Gandhi et al. (2020: 1363-1365) summarize the two main differences between legislatures in democracies and authoritarianism. First, in authoritarianism, legislatures do not represent constituents, and instead of reelection, legislatures are rather driven by other incentives. Second, legislatures in authoritarianism do not exist with a genuine separation of powers; on the contrary, they can be bypassed or controlled by the executive or ruling party.

SEE ALSO This entry follows several others that highlight **informality** in various types of institutions under dictatorship, like **judiciaries** and **bureaucracies**. A related entry is **election & electoral malpractice** and that of authoritarian parties.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE As Gandhi et al. (2020: 1360) note, the widespread presence of legislatures in non-democracies represents a *"central puzzle in the study of authoritarian politics and institutions."* Naturally, answers to this puzzle differ significantly, but they can be summarized into four main analytical perspectives. First, the legislature in an authoritarian context is merely ceremonial; it does not have any substantial power and acts as a rubber stamp. Second, the legislature in an authoritarian context is a remnant of once a fully democratic institution, or it is a kind of proto-democratic institution that may develop into a fully democratic one. Third, the legislature in authoritarian regimes performs functions that are unique for the particular regime. Fourth, although the power of legislatures is limited and the dictator can dominate the decision-making process, the legislatures play a significant role in policy-making.

The first analytical perspective finds strong empirical support from quantitative data from the V-Dem dataset, which clearly shows that legislatures in authoritarian regimes are relatively weak and may be indeed considered as rubber-stamp institutions or as a democratic *façade* – if their formal role, i.e., approving the laws, is observed (Williamson & Magaloni 2020: 1530). The second analytical perspective is typically used by authors studying electoral or competitive authoritarianism (Levitsky & Way 2010; Schedler 2006; 2013). In this regard, legislatures, as well as elections are arenas of genuine but unfair contestation between the incumbent and opposition. The third analytical perspective is shared by scholars who focus on the informal role of legislatures in power-sharing arrangements which enable co-optation and concessions as well as distribution of **rents** (see also **rent-seeking**), prebends (see also **prebendalism**) and other pay-offs.

For example, Jennifer Gandhi (2010) argues that nominally democratic institutions, including legislatures, are used by dictators if they need to make concessions and find compromise. She also adds that institutionalized dictatorships tend to be more liberal and that institutionalization has a positive impact on economic growth, but she does not share the assumption that nominally democratic institutions have a positive impact on the survival of a dictator (cf. also Gandhi & Przeworski 2007).

Additionally, legislatures in authoritarian regimes can serve as a mechanism for gathering information and feedback from different segments of society. Authoritarian rulers need to maintain a level of control and stability, and legislatures provide a controlled environment where grievances and demands can be articulated without spilling over into less violent forms of contestation. This can help the regime gauge public opinion and preempt unrest by addressing certain demands before they escalate



into broader movements (Pepinsky 2014).

On the other hand, Ezrow and Frantz (2011: 2) argue that *"dictatorships rely on parties and legislatures because they help to prolong their survival."* Wright and Escribà-Folch (2012) claim that while the existence of a legislature in authoritarian regimes increases their stability, it is the existence of more political parties, which increases the likelihood of democratic transition. In one of his previous studies, Wright (2008) also argues that it is only binding legislatures, i.e., those that effectively constrain the dictator, which has a positive impact on economic growth. An innovative argument on the role of legislatures in authoritarian regimes was brought by Reuter & Robertson (2015), who claim *"that legislatures reduce social protest by providing rent-seeking opportunities to key opposition elites who, in return for access to these spoils, demobilize their supporters."*

Recently, there has been growing attention to the fourth analytical perspective, i.e., the role of legislatures in policy-making. Authors supporting this analytical perspective argue that dictators *"do not [...] make all policy decisions themselves"* (Williamson & Magaloni 2020: 1527) and delegate them to other actors, including legislatures. As summarized by Gandhi et al. (2020) and Williamson & Magaloni (2020), there can be a plethora of reasons for this, stemming from the fear of making unpopular decisions to the distribution of non-financial pay-offs for authoritarian elites. In some cases, legislatures engage in open debates on delegated policy issues, holding officials accountable and shaping public perceptions of government performance. In Vietnam, for example, such debates can influence how the public assigns blame for poor performance (Williamson & Magaloni 2020).

ORIGIN The history of a legislature as an assembly with the authority to adopt laws dates back to ancient city-states, such as Athens and its Ecclesia. In medieval European monarchies, the power to legislate was usually shared by both the monarch and the states as representatives of the nobility, the clergy, and the commoners. In the Enlightenment period, political philosophers such as John Locke and Charles Louis de Montesquieu formulated the theory of separation of powers, where the legislature was independent of the executive. In modern democracies, the legislature is not only independent of the executive, but the legislators are elected as people's representatives in free and fair elections and the legislature as such constitutes one of the fundamental democratic political institutions. **Democracy**, however, is not the only regime that has institutionalized legislatures; according to Przeworski et al. (2013), about 80% of non-democracies that have existed from the nineteenth century up to the present have had legislatures.

A pioneering work on the role of legislatures in authoritarian countries was Portes' (1977) analysis of the Mexican legislature. However, the systematic research on legislatures in authoritarianisms dates back only to the 1990s with the institutional turn in studies of authoritarianism (Pepinsky 2014) and has been growing since that time.

LITERATURE The main accounts of the neo-institutionalist approach in studies of authoritarianism are: Svolik 2012; Gandhi 2010; Frantz & Ezrow 2011; Barros 2002. A general overview of studies of legislatures in authoritarian regimes is provided by Schuler & Malesky 2014; Gandhi et al. 2020; Williamson & Magaloni 2020.

CLASSIFICATIONS There are two main options for classifying legislatures in authoritarian regimes – (A) according to the logic of their formation and (B) according to their position in the political system. In the first case (A), Przeworski et al. (2013) differentiate between (i) fully-appointed legislature, (ii) partially-elected legislature, and (iii) fully-elected legislature. In the case of a fully-elected legislature, the criterion to what extent the elections are competitive can also be added. On a large dataset, Prezeworski et al. (2013) also demonstrated that the likelihood of fully-elected legislatures in authoritarian countries is less likely in monarchies and more likely in civilian non-hereditary regimes.

A similar typology was provided by Gandhi (2010), who simply distinguished between elected and appointed legislatures and demonstrated on her own dataset that the elected ones largely prevail. In the latter case (B), a few classifications have been developed, but they generally follow the same logic. For example, Gandhi et al. (2003) differentiated between rubber-stamp legislatures and strong legislatures, while Wright (2008) distinguished between binding and nonbinding legislatures, reflecting to what extent the legislatures constrain dictatorial power. The agency of this institution is also a metric in measures of **personalization**.

MEASUREMENT The basic feature that can be measured is the legislature's size. While in democratic countries, the size of the legislature is typically a function of population size and the effective number of parties (Jacobs & Otjes 2015), other factors play a role in dictatorships. For example, Taagepera (1972) demonstrated that in communist dictatorships of the second half of the twentieth century, there was a tendency toward larger legislatures, possibly because of a larger social mobilization, while other types of regimes, including democracies, had smaller legislatures without significant differences in their size. However, Tollison's (1988: 349) claim that *"larger legislature generally means that reaching decisions about passing laws is harder"* would suggest that excessively large legislatures in authoritarian regimes are more likely to signal rubber-stamp assemblies than those that effectively constrain the dictator.

Another variable that can be measured is the legislative performance expressed by the number of legislative defeats of the dictator in the legislative assembly or by the number of legislative amendments. As Bonvecchi and Simison (2017: 535) argue, the *"probability of these outcomes tended to be higher the more fragmented and unstable the distribution of political power."*

Fish and Kroening (2009) developed the *Parliamentary Powers Index* (PPI), a composite index measuring parliamentary strength. It was applied to leg-

islatures in authoritarian regimes by Wilson & Woldense (2019) and Wiebrecht (2021). Quantitative data on the strength of legislatures are also provided by the V-Dem dataset (**Varieties of Democracy**).

Finally, it is also the political composition of a particular legislature that can be measured. Figures that may be relevant in terms of the weakness or strength of a particular legislature or that may be indicative of the type of regime include political fragmentation, the proportion of opposition deputies in an authoritarian legislature or the proportion of non-partisan deputies. See also political **parties** and **elections** in authoritarian regimes.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The basic methodological challenge of studying legislatures in authoritarian regimes dwells in the fact that they typically perform different functions than legislatures in democracies. This may lead some scholars to the conclusion that legislatures in authoritarian regimes are a mere *façade*; while this may be true in some cases, it has to be stressed that even a *façade* fulfills certain roles. In other words, legislatures as institutions in authoritarian countries should not be studied using D. Easton's model of a political system *(systems theory)*, where it is supposed that legislatures fulfill constitutionally prescribed roles such as control of the government, representation, and legislation, but rather using G.A. Almond's model of structural functionalism, where different institutions can perform the main input and output functions of each political system.

Frequently, the legislatures in authoritarian countries may fulfill functions rather within informality than within formal constitutional settings. Misperception of the function of legislatures in authoritarian countries can lead to two types of false conclusions which form a kind of vicious circle. (a) Assuming that legislatures in authoritarian countries are always a *façade* with no meaningful function in the political system may lead to underestimating or overlooking their roles. (b) Sticking to the analysis of their nominal functions as stated in constitutions may lead to false assumptions that they are a mere *façade*. To sum it up, legislatures in authoritarian countries should be studied in relevant theoretical contexts; given the fact that many of their functions can be studied as informal practices and that individual deputies can belong to informal networks, in terms of fieldwork, appropriate research techniques should be used. See the section on methodological issues in the entry **informality**.

EXAMPLES One of the most researched legislatures in authoritarian regimes is China's *National People's Congress*. In his major work, Truex (2016) developed the concept of "representation within bounds." He argues that the *Chinese Communist Party* encourages legislators to reflect the needs of their constituents for non-sensitive issues. Truex (2014) also studied the composition of the *National People's Congress* and its links with large Chinese companies, and the example of China's Food Safety Law provided insight into the legislative process in an authoritarian regime (Truex 2020). Other studies on China's Congress were also provided by Liu (2023) and Lü et al. (2020).

Another relatively well-researched legislature in an authoritarian regime is the *Russian State Duma*. For example, Krol (2020; 2021) demonstrated that the State Duma, as well as other parliaments in post-Soviet authoritarianisms, show a high level of legislative activity and initiatives. However, she also observed that parliamentary activity is higher when the opposition in the State Duma is weak (opposition members are typically excluded from the legislative process) and that *"loyalists exploit an external threat of a large opposition by demanding more concessions in exchange for their loyalty"* (Krol 2020: 265). Noble (2017; 2020) and Krol (2021) also provide a fresh look at how bills are amended in the State Duma.

IMPACT ON POLICY In authoritarian regimes, legislatures typically have limited power and influence compared to their counterparts in democratic systems. However, as discussed above, the exact impact of legislatures on policy-making in authoritarian regimes varies depending on the specific characteristics and goals of the particular regime.

NEW FRONTIERS While there has been an explosion of literature on the role of legislatures in authoritarian regimes, it concentrates on a few cases – China, Russia, Vietnam, and Kazakhstan. More case studies and comparative studies from different regions and on different types of authoritarian regimes are needed, as well as studies focusing on both present-day and historical cases.

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Parties in Authoritarian Regimes

The party is everything to us; it is our guide through history and our weapon for achieving great victories for socialism.
– Nicolae Ceaușescu, *The Romania We Love* (1983)

The *Encyclopedia Tyrannica* touches upon the subject of ruling parties across several entries, with a particular focus on **single-party regimes**, which are considered the archetypal party-based regime type. That entry also makes mention of several regime types where single-parties are likely to occur, such as communist, fascist, or colonial regimes (see its section on 'classifications'). However, not all **political regimes** can be conceptualized solely through the nature of their ruling political party.

Therefore, this entry provides an overview of different types of ruling parties that can exist within various regimes, noting that political regimes can transition between different types of parties during their lifespan.

For instance, a military regime might begin as a no-party regime – closely aligning with the pure type of **military regime** – but could later organize and win uncompetitive elections while retaining military power. These elections are unlikely to be very free or fair, resulting in a hegemonic party system. If the electoral move is just performative, and a party structure is created to facilitate **co-optation** and **patronage** distribution, this military regime can become a single-party hybrid. So, this entry notes that different types of parties can appear in several authoritarian regimes and may be combined with other forms of domination like military rule, monarchies or guiding ideologies.

Nonetheless, various regime classifications attempt to systematize and label these party types and link them to specific regime types. Table 8.1 illustrates how associated regime classifications often overlap with specific types of ruling parties, indicating a lack of consensus among scholars on classification methods. Competing views are often found in **trichotomous categories**, though some newer **polychotomous categories** also differentiate **elections** and the degree of freedom and fairness among them.

Table 8.1 – Different Ruling Parties, Legitimacy & Classifications

Source of Legitimacy	*Democratic Ideology*		*Patronage & other ideologies*		**Guiding ideology*
	Elections				*Repression*
Type of party	**Democratic Party**		**Dominant Party**	**Hegemonic Party**	**Totalitarian Party***
					Single-Party
Assoicated regime classifications	*Liberal democracy*	*Electoral democracy*	*Competitive authoritharianism*	*Hegemonic electoral authoritarian*	*Closed autocratic regimes*
	Democracy		*Electoral authoritharianism*		
			Hybrid regimes		

Source: Authors' own work, based on Gilbert & Mohseni 2011; Schedler 2006; Levitsky & Way 2010

This overview of ruling parties is not merely classification along a scale of pluralism; other dimensions, like **ideology,** play a crucial role. For political regimes to be considered liberal democracies, they must also embrace democratic ideology – 'electoralism' alone is insufficient. To classify as **ideocracy**, a dominant guiding ideology with a blueprint for societal transformation needs to be present, and the party needs to be a vanguard mass party to merit the label **totalitarianism**.

Also, technically all ruling parties can become vehicles for **personalist rule** (not shown in Table 8.1), and these can operate in democratic systems (e.g., the US under Donald Trump's first term), dominant party systems (J. Kaczyński and the *Law & Justice Party* (PiS) in Poland) or hegemonic party systems (Viktor Orbán and *Fidesz* in Hungary), but also in single-party systems (Mobutu's *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) in Zaire/DRC or Nazarbayev's *Nur Otan* in Kazakhstan) and even in totalitarian parties (the *Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (CPSU) under Stalin). The constitutional guardrails and check-and-balances of those political systems (if any are left) may slow the ongoing **personalization** (spreading from the party to the rest of the regime). Alternatively, leader change, **succession** or **democratization** can result in transformations in the other direction (toward collegial rule).

Different party types can evolve into neighboring types; democratic parties may become dominant if democratic values are abandoned. Dominant parties can become hegemonic if they control a large enough share of the **legislature** and suppress competition. When competition is effectively eliminated, the regime enters the realm of single-party systems, though significant variation remains between regime types: Parties can have armed wings or not. Furthermore, military-civilian hybrids might allow some competition and become hegemonic-party hybrids or merely set up civilian party structures to distribute **patronage** and **co-opt** potential challengers, thus forming a military single-party amalgam.

This entry on parties in authoritarian regimes is conceptually linked to entries on **elections & electoral malpractice** and illustrates how various regime classifications – from **trichotomous categories** and **continuous measures –** have focused on capturing the nature of party rule among autocratic variations. Recently, **polychotomous categories** have joined this analytical effort in pigeonholing various from of electoralism.

TOTALITARIAN PARTIES Totalitarian systems, which have become increasingly rare, rely on one single party, which is all-encompassing. In these systems, the party is an extensive organization capable of mass mobilization. Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski identified a 'totalist ideology' as an important characteristic of totalitarian parties (1956). Totalitarian parties are known for espousing a specific ideology that is meant to guide society toward a utopian vision for the country (Linz 2000). As these types of systems often emerge from revolutionary movements, the ideology may evolve from being in a state of constant **revolution** to the implementation of the party's objectives (Cassinelli 1962). Citizens are indoctrinated with the party's ideological program, in some cases, from birth (Tucker 1965).

In order to implement this utopian agenda, parties in totalitarian systems are completely fused with the state, and the party organization is superior to or equal to the government (Linz 2000). At every level of government and in every aspect of daily life, the party dominates and permeates society. The party plays an important role not just in implementing the agenda of the party but also in activating citizens to be loyal foot soldiers of the regime (Linz 2000). These types of parties tend to be led by a highly charismatic leader, but as a **personality cult** develops, this may, ironically, weaken the party's organization over time (Tucker 1965).

Today very few parties would qualify as a totalitarian party, with the exception of the *Worker's Party of Korea* (WPK) in North Korea. In the last few years, North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has reinvigorated the WPK as the core political organ of the regime (Albert 2020). In spite of this, the WPK does not meet that frequently, with the last major meeting taking place in 2016, which constituted the first full meeting of the country's ruling elite in 36 years. In contrast, in the Soviet Union, the CPSU held party congresses every few years to hail the major historical and ideological accomplishments of the party (Tertiitsky 2016).



SINGLE PARTIES Political parties in single-party dictatorships are parties that have exclusive control over policy-making and political offices (Geddes 2005). Other parties may be allowed to operate and compete in elections, but their power is minimal, as the single party dominates the legislature (*de jure* or *de facto*) with no genuine pressure coming from other parties. At best, other parties operate as token opposition parties that work with a single party. Genuine opposition parties may be banned, see most of its members imprisoned or face constant threats and harassment. Elections may take place but only serve to funnel information about how popular the ruling party is or not and do not pose any threat to the ruling party's domination (Gandhi & Przeworski 2007).

In terms of the structure of **single-party regimes**, the party's leader is almost always the leader of the country, who is selected for this position by the party's central committee or politburo (Box 8.4). The power of the leader of the ruling party varies depending on the leader's **charisma** and popularity, as well as on how much veto and monitoring power other party members possess over the leader (Tsebelis 2000). In the case of Mexico, under the *Institutional Revolutionary Party* (PRI), though the president was always powerful, the PRI factions kept any one president from seizing total control (Langston 2017) – see also **term limits**. This contrasts with the single-party regime in Angola under the *People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola* (MPLA) led by José Eduardo dos Santos, who was president for 38 years.

The ruling party in single-party regimes is a fairly extensive organization but does not control every aspect of citizens' lives.However, the party controls nearly all of the state institutions and dominates most aspects of political life, including local government, civil society and the media. Most civil service jobs would require membership in the party. This is often used as a way of luring citizens to join the party and become loyal members – as was the case when *Golkar* was building up its operation in Indonesia under Suharto (Smith 2005).

The party also remains somewhat committed to an ideology, but this may evolve. Many single-party regimes emerge from revolution, lose their revolutionary zeal and are forced to adapt to a new role as a ruling party. In addition to emerging after a revolution, more generally speaking, research has demonstrated that most one-party dictatorships are established in the aftermath of another dictatorship (Magaloni & Kricheli 2010).

Single parties operate in closed authoritarian regimes, such as in China, where the *Chinese Communist Party* (CCP) has dominated since 1949. Though officially eight other political parties are allowed to exist in China, the CCP chooses their leaders and none of these parties have ever pushed for any reform or openly opposed the ruling party (Baptista 2021). The main role of these small opposition parties is to provide a greater veneer of legitimacy and offer occasional consultation. Though they are allowed to exist, there is never any doubt about what party is in charge.

HEGEMONIC PARTIES There are two interpretations of hegemonic parties. Some scholars see hegemonic parties as dominantly controlling the legislature (Howard & Roessler 2006), while others explore the possibility that hegemonic parties could be operating in competitive authoritarian regimes – a narrower subset of electoral authoritarian regimes (Levitsky & Way 2002). In the latter's view, hegemonic parties are used synonymously with dominant parties (see below) but heavily favored to win, though the victory is not always decisive. In the former view, however, the hegemonic party wins almost all of the seats. The reality is that there may be a wide range of victories for hegemonic parties, with Singapore under the *People's Action Party* regularly receiving over 80% of legislative seats (Tan 2015), while *Fidesz* in Hungary is holding 58% of the seats as of 2024. Regardless of how hegemonic parties are conceived, the party dominates the legislature, but there is some competition. Other genuine **opposition parties** actually exist and try to contend elections.

Cambodia's People's Party used to be hegemonic, while other opposition parties were allowed to compete until 2018, when it banned all opposition and won all 125 seats in the *National Assembly* – becoming a single-party regime (Morgenbesser 2019). It is possible that Mexico under the PRI was better conceived as a hegemonic party than a single-party regime, but that depends on the degree of competition that the PRI faced over time. The PRI had dominated with more than 80% of the vote for years in the presidential elections and won 100% of the vote in 1976. However, by 1988, the level of competition had changed, and the PRI presidential candidate, Carlos Salinas, only won with 50.7% of the vote.

Because hegemonic parties are not the only viable parties, they have to rely to some degree on obtaining citizen acquiescence. State resources are used to reward those who are loyal and to punish those who are disloyal. The hegemonic party tends to benefit from a dense organizational network that is used to monitor citizens, while control over state resources is used to induce citizens to support the party (Magaloni 2006). Hegemonic parties put a great deal of effort into winning elections and bringing out a large turnout, even though they are almost certain to win no matter what (Simpser 2005; Magaloni 2006). The hegemonic party aims to rule with a super-majority to project an image of invincibility and to push through the party's agenda, although the exact mechanism of such an intimidation effect has not been proven (Ananyev & Poyker 2022).

As a result of this focus on winning elections, the ideological strength and commitment of hegemonic parties varies considerably. Some hegemonic parties have a more cohesive ideology, such as *Fidesz* or the *Justice and Development Party* (AKP) in Turkey, which are both committed to right-wing **populism**, conservatism and **nationalism**. In comparison, the *Kenyan National African Union* (KANU) is supposed to have a center-right ideology but has become more focused on **patronage** allocation and **clientelism** along tribal lines (Kanyinga 1994).

DOMINANT PARTIES In the study of comparative authoritarianism, dominant parties represent a distinct type within a broader spectrum of electoral party systems. Such ruling parties can be understood in relation to others, either as weak or nascent hegemonic parties or rogue actors in competitive multi-party systems. In any case, they differ in terms of political competition, institutional structures, the role of opposition, and the uncertain outcomes of meaningful but flawed **elections**.

A dominant-party system is characterized by a political party that consistently controls government power over an extended period by successfully dividing the opposition and creating winning coalitions and/or skewing the playing field (unfair) without restricting it for challenges (no parties or candidates are banned on political grounds; the elections are still 'free').

Unlike hegemonic parties, which entirely suppress the opposition and operate in a context where genuine competition is no longer a threat, dominant parties exist in systems where the opposition, despite significant disadvantages, might still win. **Levitsky & Way** were the first to classify political regimes along these criteria, but other **trichotomous categories** have covered them as well: e.g., **Schedler**. Hadenius & Teorell (2007) found that such types of electoral autocracies were the main pathway toward **democratization**.

Elections under dominant party systems are competitive but not fair, as the dominant party manipulates institutional rules, its incumbency advantage (Box 8.2), resources (i.e., media coverage), and the political environment (e.g., COVID-19 restrictions) to maintain and improve its position or set up elections for the regime to win them. This manipulation often includes **patronage** networks, media control, and systemic electoral advantages. Zambia has been classified as a competitive authoritarian regime, particularly under President Edgar Lungu's leadership. Despite efforts to manipulate state resources and control the media and judiciary to secure reelection, Lungu lost the 2021 election to the opposition leader Hakainde Hichilema (Kerr et al. 2024).

By comparison, hegemonic parties go further in eliminating political contestation, relying more on (overt) **repression**. Unlike dominant parties, hegemonic parties do not rely on subtle manipulation but instead outright ban or suppress any alternatives to their rule. For this reason, one can theorize that dominant parties rely on domestic **legitimacy** sourced from **elections**, while hegemonic parties rely more on coercion and, foremost, use elections to signal to international audiences and gain some **external legitimacy**.

Giovanni Sartori's typology (1976) of party systems provides a framework for understanding where dominant parties fit in relation to other types. Sartori distinguishes between systems with no competition (hegemonic), limited competition (dominant), and full competition (multiparty systems). Dominant party systems thus inhabit a gray area between authoritarianism and democracy: these **hybrid regimes** use democratic institutions as a *façade* while undermining their substance to ensure the ruling party's prolonged dominance.

PERSONALIST PARTIES Political parties in **personalist regimes** are subsumed under the leader or created by the leader in order to serve their purpose. As described above, such **personalization** can take place in any party structure. Alberto Lioy (2023) provides a comprehensive examination of the definitions and classifications of personal (pertaining to a leader) and distinguishes between *personalist* (being and acting as such) and *personalized* (having become so) political parties.

A political party may exist, but its policy platform mirrors the dictator's interests. The party does not have much of an ideology at all. For example, in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) led by Joseph Mobutu, the *Popular Revolutionary Movement* (MPR) embodied 'Mobutism,' an eclectic ideology that glorified Mobutu personally and reflected his thoughts and actions. The party's ideology advocated acts of loyalty to Mobutu, public praise of Mobutu and promotion of his **personality cult** (Ikome 2008). In Russia, the *United Russia Party* (Единая Россия – *Yedinaya Rossiya*) is also not ideological, though Russian elites may share the same set of values and beliefs as Vladimir Putin (Snegovaya & McGlynn 2024). *Nur Otan* in Kazakhstan and the *Yeni Azerbaijan Party* are also hegemonic personalist examples (Bader 2011).

In personalist regimes, the party is kept intentionally institutionally weak to mitigate threats to the dictator's power. The leader dominates the party's internal life and makes all of the important decisions, such as the direction and vision of the party's platform (Loxton & Levitsky 2018). Parties in personalist regimes are also very transient. They do not tend to outlast the leader. For example, in the case of Peru under Alberto Fujimori, disposable parties were created, which were minimalist organizations formed for a single election and then discarded, such as *Cambio 90* in 1990, *New Majority* in 1995, and *Let's Go Neighbours* in 1998 (Levitsky 1999).

Rather than serving as a vehicle to attract mass support, the party in personalist regimes is utilized by the dictator to serve the dictator's interests and co-opt a narrow group of elites. The dictator may frequently shuffle positions in the party from one person to the next in order to generate suspicion and competition among elites. The party is also not filled with technocrats or anyone with expertise (Ezrow & Frantz 2011). Instead, the party is filled with loyalists, other family members and cronies. Though it may be important to be a member of the party to receive a position in the state, the **bureaucracy** is largely hollowed out. All of the institutions of the state serve as rubber stamps to the personal whims and interests of the dictator. The party is not involved in any decision making – as the dictators themselves make the most important decisions. While members of the party in more institutionalized systems can provide consultation, which may slow down policy output, the personalist leader is free to rule by decree. The party lauds all of the decisions of the leader, and offers little restraint to the leader (Ezrow & Frantz 2011).

If the personalist dictatorship holds elections, the



process is very transactional. Voting is based on fear, reward, or both. The party provides no representation or accountability, nor does it offer information to citizens. There is a wide variation in the performance of personalist dictatorships when it comes to the role of the party in motivating citizens to vote and get involved in political processes, but usually, the party in personalist regimes is a thin organization. Based on case studies, voter turnout is low, and the party cannot play a significant mobilization effort. One study looking at Venezuela and Russia found that the party was considerably less effective in motivating citizens to vote compared to employers (Frye et al. 2019).

PARTIES WINGS Some political parties are attached to militant groups. This may take place in two ways – either a violent non-state actor decides to build a political wing and participate in politics (such as was the case with *Hamas* and *Hezbollah*), or a political party in opposition decides to change tactics and turn to violence, such as was the case with the *Mozambique Liberation Front* (FRELIMO) in Mozambique (Ezrow 2017). In the case of the latter, the party formed in opposition to colonial rule by the Portuguese and originally tried to use peaceful tactics, but changed course when that was not working and launched a massive guerrilla movement for independence from Portugal in 1964. While the militant wing was fighting, the political wing mostly advocated socialist ideals and later nationalism (Martins 2017).

Political wings of violent non-state actors can enjoy high levels of **legitimacy** and political support, and many try to build up their membership by providing services to the community, such as education, healthcare and housing. Because of this, parties with militant wings have sophisticated levels of organization and recruitment. The political wing of the group will engage in contesting elections and participating in conventional politics, while the militant wing will engage in combat, armed conflict and or terror activities. Sometimes, the political wing denies that they are working with the violent wing, such as *Sinn Fein* and the *Irish Republican Army* (IRA), publicly declaring their separateness (Hueckel 2007).

Political parties with militant wings have very clearly articulated political agendas and objectives. The ideology is relatively coherent and may be moderated to appeal to a wider section of the public. Political parties with violent wings are often more careful in terms of how they use violence than violent non-state actors who lack political wings. They may want to temper the levels of violence, such as has been the case with ETA in Spain. Though ETA is not officially attached to any political party, it has been accused of being unofficially attached to *Euskal Herritarok*, a Basque party that has had the same goals as ETA and has never produced a statement claiming that it rejected violence (Bourne 2015). The party was banned in 2003, but in the past, it was able to win several seats in national parliamentary elections. Its electoral success was largely affected by the level of violence of ETA.

Political parties with militant wings are often well-networked as well. The party may receive more financial support from expats or private donors. Groups like *Hamas* benefited from support from private donations in the Persian Gulf, but today, most of its funding comes from Iran – providing the organization with about $100 million a year (Robinson 2024). *Hamas* uses that money to provide social services to attract potential members and to fund weapons and training.

Political parties with violent wings are not always associated with authoritarianism. In the case of South Africa, the *African National Congress* (ANC) was at various points labeled a **terrorist group** by the West. After the *Sharpeville Massacre* in March of 1960, where the police killed 69 Black South Africans during a peaceful protest, ANC leader Nelson Mandela felt that the organization had no choice but to abandon the non-violent strategy. It warned the South African government that acts of **terrorism** would ensue if the government did not move forward with constitutional reform to increase the political rights of Black South Africans, but these warnings were ignored. Fast forward to 1994, and the ANC, under the leadership of Mandela became the ruling party in South Africa. They have dominated South African politics ever since and are considered to be moving toward competitive authoritarianism; now, they are losing their support base after decades of **systemic corruption**.

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Box 8.4 Politburo: The Engine of Communist Rule

Cadres decide everything.
– Joseph Stalin (1935)

The 'Politburo' (политбюро *(politbyuro)* short for политическое бюро – *politicheskoe byuro* or 'political bureau') was the principal policymaking and executive committee of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union (CPSU). It held supreme authority over both party and state decisions, making it the most powerful governing body in the Soviet political system. The Politburo was responsible for formulating policies, making key decisions, and overseeing the implementation of these policies across various sectors of government and society. It was the top of the pyramid in the *nomenklatura* system, cf. Box 1.11.

The first Politburo was created by the Bolshevik Party in 1917 during the Russian Revolution to provide continuous leadership during the uprising. After the revolution, it became a permanent body following the Eighth Party Congress in 1919. Over time, it assumed a dominant role in Soviet governance, overshadowing other institutions like the Central Committee. The Politburo's power extended across all aspects of Soviet life, including economic planning, military strategy, and internal security. The Central Committee nominally elected its members, but, in practice, it was a self-perpetuating body that controlled its membership.

Gorlizky (2007) exposed the internal dynamics of the Politburo under Stalin and argued that, rather than a single unified Politburo, there were actually multiple distinct 'politburos' by the late Stalin period. It suggests that even a political system as hierarchical as Stalinism demanded an appearance of unity and authority at its peak. Throughout the 1930s, Stalin reshaped the Politburo into a tool of his rule: what had once been a forum for political debate and struggle was, by the time of WWII, transformed into a compliant committee composed of Stalin's allies and sycophants. Unlike the Council of Ministers, the Politburo retained specific institutional responsibilities, including oversight of foreign affairs, security matters, and organizational issues. After the war, Stalin experimented with various organizational structures for the Politburo. This diversity, along with the smaller size of these politburos, allowed Stalin to turn his cabinet into a responsive and adaptable instrument of governance under his **personalist rule** (see also: Gregory & Naimark 2008).

The Politburo was remolded and adapted with each CPSU Secretary-General, and while it "subjected the whole of the USSR to its ruthless dictatorship, but itself bowed time and again to the leader of its own making" (Löwenhardt et al. 1992) unavoidably, the Politburo was dissolved along with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. For its evolution, see Löwenhardt et al. 1992; older works are: Rigby 1972; Laird 1986.

In other communist countries, such as China (政治局 – Zhèngzhìjú – 'political bureau') or Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian states, equivalent terms were used during their communist periods (in German: *Politbüro* in Spanish: *Politburó*, both derived from Russian). In those regimes, similar bodies also existed with comparable functions.

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Police Forces in Dictatorships

A particularly important link of the socialist state, the apparatus of the 'front line' – the Citizens' Militia
– General Wojciech Jaruzelski, dictator of the Polish People's Republic (1981)

There are many types of dictatorships, and the line separating them is often blurred, especially as they can evolve/devolve into other forms (Wahman et al. 2013; Lidén 2014). Therefore, there is no single, specific way in which dictatorships deal with policing. However, all cases are characterized by the fact that dictatorships distort the role of law enforcement. Unlike their democratic counterparts, dictatorships' police forces are exceedingly politicized and straightforwardly coercive. Since *"the quality of policing is the quality of ruling"* (Marenin 1985: 101), the way the dictatorships' police operate constitutes a key statement of its very nature.

DEFINITION Police forces are paramilitary public institutions responsible for enforcing the law, protecting people's lives, health and possessions, preventing and combating crime, and maintaining public security. They can be divided into main (primary, regular), sectoral (e.g., border guard, customs police, fiscal police, military police), specialized (e.g., railroad police, agencies responsible for VIP security or combating specific types of crime), and auxiliary (various supporting institutions, including that of voluntary or part-time nature). In countries where religion has a direct impact on the legal system, especially **Islamic states**, there may also be official religious police (morality police) responsible for enforcing customary principles. This should not be confused with vice squads, which are common types of police units that deal with crime associated with 'immoral' offenses, such as pornography, prostitution, gambling and psychoactive substances. Police are uniformed institutions, but not all officers operate in uniforms. Some law enforcement duties require the ability to 'blend in with the crowd,' such as criminal investigation units, patrolling using unmarked police cars, or sting operations (undercover work or covert operations). This form of policing is called 'plainclothes law enforcement.'

Typically, in unitary states there is one nationwide main police force and other agencies, which are all subordinated to the central government. Nationwide police activities can be complemented by other police-like institutions, subordinated to local governments (municipal police or guards), whereas in countries with a federal system of government, there are several separate law enforcement entities, with various levels of government (states, provinces, regions, cantons, units, counties, municipalities, cities) overseeing their agencies. In the federal model, the central law enforcement institutions are typically responsible for combating major offenses, such as transnational organized crime.

Modern police agencies began to take shape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their evolution in the twentieth century was different in democratic and non-democratic states. The functioning of police services is illustrated by many theoretical models, describing both their *modus operandi* (placement on the repressive-preventive axis or policing by consent versus policing by coercion) and the way they are organized (e.g., concentration *versus* deconcentration). What characterizes police forces of fascist, communist and other oppressive regimes is their orientation toward repressiveness and strict centralization.

Police forces of non-democratic regimes perform two types of functions. The first includes activities typical for every law enforcement agency (LEA), regardless of historical or geographical conditions and the type of regime, such as combating criminal misdemeanors and felonies, traffic enforcement, patrol service and riot police. The second type of function is political. Even though police officers of non-democratic regimes are primarily involved in

typical policing, their relationship with society is distorted. The institutions' priorities are turned upside down, as 'serving and protecting' is possible as long as it is reconcilable with the bounds of service to the dominant group or authority. If it goes beyond that, the interest of the dominant group or authority takes precedence. This is usually openly expressed in the police oaths, in which loyalty to various ideological principles is emphasized first, whereas serving society comes second. For example, officers of the infamous *Deutsche Volkspolizei* (German People's Police), the national police in East Germany during the first postwar decade, swore to be loyal to the 'socialist fatherland,' and citizens were mentioned only in the third sentence of the oath (Burkhardt 2000: 162). In the Soviet Union, the oath emphasized the prevailing ideology: *"I, a citizen of the USSR, hereby taking the oath of the Soviet Militsiya, do solemnly swear that I will serve faithfully to the end the Soviet people, Soviet homeland and Soviet government"* (Lucas 2013: 268).

SEE ALSO Please note that this chapter is dedicated to the criminal police, and it does not discuss the role of political police (secret police) in dictatorships. The secret police deals with the security and interests of the state (political crimes or crimes against the state), and hence, it is a part (or a function) of intelligence services and is examined in a corresponding entry. As the functions of LEAs and intelligence services are indelibly intertwined, it is recommended to read this chapter alongside the one dedicated to intelligence apparatuses (see – **intelligence services**).

ORIGIN According to most popular interpretation, the term 'police' derives from the Greek word 'πολιτεία' and the Latin word 'pŏlītīa' ('state,' 'government,' or 'constitution'). The French lawyer Nicolas de La Mare (1639-1723) is often cited as the author of the first theoretical work devoted to the police: the four-volume *Traité de la Police* – more specifically, it covers the various functions of public administration. However, there were other concepts and traditions already in place, most notably the German *Polizeiordnung*. Until the nineteenth century, when modern police institutions were established, the term was used to name all activities concerning the enforcement of state's laws (the classical function of the state, cf. Habermas 2008). It is no coincidence that the formation of modern police, which took over loose local militias and citizen guards, coincides with the emergence and spread of nation-states in the late eighteenth century. *The Metropolitan Police Act* of 1829, orchestrated by Sir Robert Peel, the British home secretary, is considered to be the first legislation establishing a modern police force. (Hence, in the UK the police are still referred to as 'bobbies' (from Robert).) In Asia, the first LEA was established during the same period in British-controlled Singapore and Hong Kong. Western solutions quickly began to replace traditional Asian institutions, e.g., the Japanese samurai police. However, some local characteristics have survived to this day and, in turn, are the subject of inspiration in Europe (such as *kōban* (交番), a small station effective in Japanese community policing).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE LEAs (and intelligence services) play such a big role in dictatorships, and their control over citizens' lives can take on such a large scale that some regimes are often called 'police states,' which can be perceived as a definitional alternative for terms such as 'totalitarian,' 'fascist,' or 'authoritarian' (Seri 2013: 125; Tipton 2013: 13-16). Determining the boundaries between two dichotomous concepts, authoritarian policing (AP) and democratic policing (DP), is not as undemanding as it may seem. Typically, AP is defined simply as the antithesis of DP, but this does not exhaust the problem. In some specific cases, it may be considered whether DP is at all possible under dictatorship, with Singapore being one of the examples (Tan 2023). Hualing Fu and Weitseng Chen (2023: 5-8) made a convincing attempt to sort out this issue. They singled out the most important property of DP: 'police neutrality,' which in turn is associated with 'professionalism,' 'institutional autonomy,' comprehensive control mechanisms, democratic accountability and 'operating within the framework of the rule of law.' Following their line of reasoning, I argue that the main characteristics of police forces in dictatorships are (A) politicization, (B) militarization, (C) lack of accountability, (D) lack of transparency, (E) repressiveness and (F) excessive size.

Politicization (A) refers to the distorted relationship between LEAs and power structures. For dictatorial police, the main point of reference is not the state apparatus or the general social interest but the dictator, **junta**, or ruling party. Often, this connection has its origin in the very installment of the dictatorship, which relies on the support of previous systems' key public institutions, including (at least part of) the army and the police (Dunnage 2007: 112-113). Even before taking power, the elites of the future dictatorship may infect the existing security services by filling them with their supporters and slowly taking them over from the inside. After gaining power, the replacement of the entire police force (several or tens of thousands of people) and the formation of new services completely from scratch is most often unfeasible. Thus, there are attempts to co-opt representatives of the 'old order,' combined with rebranding, structural reforms, changes in subordination, or creating competing services, based on the 'divide and conquer' principle (cf. **coup-proofing**). If the dictatorship is established after a devastating war, the situation is more straightforward because there is little to nothing left of the previous police (like in Hungary or Poland after World War II). Often, the creation of new services is associated with deep purges among the officers of the 'old world.' The case of the Romanian police is particularly glaring. When the Romanian People's Republic was established after the war, the communists created the *General Directorate of Militia*, replacing two 'bourgeois' institutions: the 'Police' and the 'Gendarmerie.' Four years after the communists took over and two years after the Militia was created, only 1% of its officers still derived from former institutions (Şinca 2014: 7).

No dictatorship could be established without the police, nor can it last without it. A dictator can do



without the public's **legitimacy** but not without the support of the police. Consequently, the genuine issue of authoritarian control for the dictator is not the declining legitimacy among the population but the fact that such dissatisfaction spreads and *"begins to infect the elites tied to the regime itself,"* including law enforcement (Fukuyama 1992: 16).

As police forces are one of the fingers in 'the armed fist' of any dictatorship, their professional independence is limited. Unlike their democratic counterparts, they tend to be at least partially fused with political organizations' structures, ministries, intelligence services, or military apparatus. Some glaring examples are the Police of communist Poland and the Citizens' Militia *(Milicja Obywatelska)*, which was partly merged with the Ministry of the Interior and the political police. The police of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the 'Public Security' (*Veřejná bezpečnost* in Czech, *Verejná bezpečnosť* in Slovak), which was one of the branches of the National Security Corps. The 'Carabiniers of Chile' *(Carabineros de Chile)* gained military status after the 1973 coup d'état that ousted S. Allende and brought A. Pinochet to power. The 'General Police Corps' (*Cuerpo General de Policía*) of Francoist Spain performed both the function of the criminal and political police.

The Russian primary police force has operated under dictatorship conditions for most of the last hundred years. After its founding in 1917, the *Workers' and Peasants' Militsiya* (милиция) abetted the establishment of the Bolshevik dictatorship of Vladimir Lenin. Soon after, it became a tool of the genocidal, totalitarian dictatorship of Joseph Stalin, later of the communist one-party state, and eventually, it became one of the pillars of Vladimir Putin's 'informational autocracy' (Treisman 2018). The Soviet Union was, deservedly so, labeled 'the world's largest-ever police state' (Kotkin 2003: 173). In the beginning, the *Militsiya* was "little more than an adjunct to the political police: cops became spies" (Galeotti 1997: 142). However, it underwent significant changes as intelligence services grew larger. Louise I. Shelley argues, *"Under Lenin and Stalin, the militia's political functions took precedence over the maintenance of social and economic control. Khrushchev de-Stalinized by shifting militia priorities away from political functions to crime control and economic policing"* (Shelley 1990: 501). In 2011, the force went through rebranding and was replaced by the 'Police of Russia.' In general, however, little has changed. In 2012, Mark Galeotti (2012) wondered *"whether Putin is willing to do more than simply discipline and centralise the police and admit the possibility that sometimes even the Kremlin must be constrained by the law."* More than a decade later, after multiple incidents of police officers brutalizing peaceful protesters opposing the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is clear what the answer is.

Instantly after a dictatorship is installed, the prevailing **ideology** (if any) is pumped into the bloodstream of law enforcement, which is reflected not only in organizational changes but also in naming conventions, professional holidays, insignia, commemorative plaques, monuments and revered heroes. It is often accompanied by rewriting history or copying the 'good practices' of fraternal dictatorships (Grossheim 2018). There is a full-scale 'fascistization' ('communization,' 'Nazification,' 'anti-communization,' etc.) of the institution, which fundamentally alters the police culture. Jonathan Dunnage (2012: 37) appropriately captures the essence of the process describing interwar Italy: *"In the mid-1920s, members of the Italian police forces became guardians of an authoritarian state and fascist civilisation in the making."*

One of the particularly interesting and alarming phenomena concerning law enforcement is the process of *militarization* (B) of the police, i.e., the implementation of military procedures, practices and equipment into policing. It can be present in democratic countries (Phillips 2018), but dictatorships are particularly known for such transformation. In **military regimes,** the lines between the armed forces and the police are 'often blurred.' In some cases, the police become 'subsumed by the military, rather than operating as a parallel security unit.' Sometimes, LEAs are *"rendered powerless and subordinate, but usually the police institution itself is militarized, with military officers assuming a policing role. As a result, the police operate with a military mindset, prioritizing national security and regime survival over public safety."* (Frantz 2018: 3.).

During the rule of the *Government Junta of Chile* (1973-1990), it happened on such a scale that police forces became 'the poor cousins of the military regime' (Dammert 2006: 61). In Brazil, the dictatorship (1964-1985) centralized the security apparatus, linked the police to the army, and made the 'Military Police' *(Polícia Militar)* similar to its civilian counterpart. In Francoist Spain (1936-1975), the military took control over all elements of law enforcement, the newly established main institutions, the 'General Police Corps,' and quasi-municipal police – the 'Armed and Traffic Police Corps' (municipal police) (Arango 2018: 79; Del Clot 2023: 36-37). After the unification of Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, a federal system was introduced, and the member states kept their own police forces. By 1936, they were all absorbed into the newly formed 'Order Police' (*Ordnungspolizei*), as Adolf Hitler decided to 'unify the control of police duties in the Reich.' The position of chief of German Police was given to Heinrich Himmler, *Reichsführer* (chief) of the 'Protection Squadron' (*Schutzstaffel* – SS – ᛋᛋ in Armanen Runes) (Broszat 2014: 274). Consequently, as Bob Carruthers (2014: 366) explains, the 'Order Police' became formal members of the SS when, by ministerial directive, they were granted ranks in the SS commensurate with their police rank. Non-military or hybrid dictatorships often follow this path as well, e.g., by significantly expanding riot police and assigning military personnel to oversee law enforcement.

All elements of a dictatorship's security apparatus, including police forces, perform a diagnostic-preventive function. The law enforcement agencies of non-democratic regimes are responsible for analyzing public sentiment, uncovering and working

against anti-system opposition alongside intelligence services. Typically, in authoritarian dictatorships, this type of function is focused on groups and individuals actively working to undermine the system, whereas under **totalitarianism,** everyone who, for whatever reason, is perceived as 'different' can be recognized as a threat.

This includes, among others, youth subcultures, especially counterculture movements, as well as sexual, religious and ethnic minorities. Crusades against various internal or external enemies, who are manufactured or exaggerated and demonized, are fought with no end in sight and with no intention of finding it. Perpetual conflict and the fear it generates are what fuels such dictatorships, providing it with a purpose and ways to discipline or mobilize the public. Therefore, if an 'us-versus-them' mentality is built and the socio-political reality is presented as a 'dog-eat-dog world' (Norris & Inglehart 2019: 444), security and the institutions responsible for maintaining it become particularly important.

The intensity of those processes varies from case to case, depending on the regime's scope of interest. Authoritarian regimes (**authoritarianism**) focus on controlling the public space. They are generally satisfied with the passive obedience of society (hence their focus on suppressing the public). In contrast, totalitarian regimes are equally interested in the individual's private life and upbringing, with the utopian goal of constructing a new society (hence their focus on mass mobilization) (Cohen 2015: 40). However, in dealing with those matters; usually, intelligence services lead the way, and the police perform an auxiliary or executive function.

The focus on coercion and submission to the will of the dictator causes a serious obstacle in building and maintaining public trust. The intelligence services and the military can, to some extent, manage without it, but for the police services, this kind of deficit is devastating. Lack of trust cuts police officers off from information, forcing them to reach for clandestine ways of obtaining it: surveillance and confidential human sources. Only superficially, this makes for a sufficient alternative: no police force can function effectively without the support of ordinary people who report crime, point out problems and offer advice. Subsequently, a vicious circle is created: the more the police rely on wiretaps and criminal informants, the less trust it generates. Soon, the patrolled streets begin to resemble an occupied territory, and police cars seem like the occupying force. The sound of a police siren is no longer associated with 'the help is on the way' but rather with 'trouble is coming;' someone is going to be searched, battered or arrested. Even Leon Trotsky (1993: 32) pointed out in 1934: "Without the support of the masses, the militia is nothing."

Since a dictator's survival relies heavily on the police's support, he must ensure that only 'trustworthy' people are recruited into service. Thus, political criteria play a key role in the police recruitment process. Although the formal affiliation of rank-and-file police officers to the dominant group, movement or party is not necessarily required, it is obligatory to accept its 'principles.' However, middle and top management positions are reserved for people closely and actively associated with the dominant group. Any dictatorship pays much attention to police education and its training system, saturating the materials with appropriate content and thus ensuring that vital 'principles' will be deeply rooted in the minds of new officers.

As installing and maintaining a dictatorship is impossible without the support of LEAs, the regime tries to keep its police officers content by generously distributing tangible and intangible goods. The police, along with the ruling party, intelligence services, economic, administrative and military apparatus, is often perceived as a significant vehicle of social advancement. The dictatorship does not abide by insubordination, but it is willing to tolerate police misconduct or, on some occasions, actively encourage it (Esparza 2022). Police officers, especially at the middle and top levels, can count on more or less formalized opportunities to exclude themselves from the legal system. Disregarding various pathologies, cover-ups and other forms of working above and around the legal system is not a system defect, but a feature.

The asymmetry in compliance with the law is tied to the weakening or even complete elimination of *non-political accountability* (C). Civil administration, courts, prosecutor offices and the media, even if they are formally entitled to do so, do not carry out real, substantive supervision and control over LEAs. Rather, they are, to a greater or lesser extent, part of the same process and play their roles adequately. This creates a specific form of loyalty of officers, not necessarily based on ideology, fear or genuine admiration, but rather on common interest. Once the dictatorship has been solidified and the revolutionary fervor that led to its installation has faded, mundane issues begin to come into play. As long as the dictatorship provides steady work, attractive wages, prestige and at least partial protection from criminal responsibility, it can count on the support of its 'iron fist.' However, this situation is challenging for the dictatorship itself. As the police are, both internally and externally, perceived as a privileged group, separated from society, self-centered and self-contained, demoralization inevitably takes hold. This may lead to a 'double-edged sword' situation: due to its special position, the security apparatus can usurp the right to be a parallel center of power, even threatening the dictator himself. Studies show that in the years 1946-2010, dictatorships collapsed primarily through coups (35%), followed by elections (26%) and popular uprisings (17%) (Geddes et al. 2018: 179). However, this observation applies primarily to intelligence services and the military, as they are closer to state affairs than regular law enforcement agencies are (see – **intelligence services**). Police forces' actions during **coups** can have significant implications for the outcome and the level of violence and repression experienced by the population, but they usually play second violin to the actions of the armed forces.

In democracies, *transparency* (D) is one of the features that distinguishes law enforcement from



intelligence agencies. As institutions with close, daily and direct contact with the public, the former is much more open about their procedures than the latter. This applies to dictatorships as well, but to a much lesser extent. Typically, the public's knowledge of police services is limited. Even basic information, such as the number of officers, is considered sensitive and kept confidential. The aim is to create the impression of greatness and omnipotence of the apparatus, which is supposed to function as a deterrent. Ubiquitous, multidimensional propaganda reinforces this impression. Regardless of whether it is the military dictatorship in Brazil or the communist dictatorship in Poland, the mechanism is similar. As dictatorships do not tolerate a free press, it is practically impossible for the public to obtain reliable information on the state and the problems and proceedings of LEAs. As mentioned higher, supervision by the state's external authorities is also limited or non-existent. The communication conducted by the dictator's police is one-way only (Guerra 2016: 43-45). Undemocratic police do not feel the necessity to explain their actions, do not admit to any wrongdoings, and, as a matter of principle, do not apologize. Society is supposed to be a passive recipient of its messages, not a participant in the dialogue.

One of the defining features of dictatorships, which determines the shape of law enforcement, is overall *repressiveness* (E). The penal systems of dictatorships are characterized by harsh laws and the instrumental use of provisions, broadly defined and intentionally vague. Officially justified by the protection of security and public order, in practice, the goal of many hazy, oppressive regulations is to combat groups and individuals identified as 'dangerous' arbitrarily.

The strict law of dictatorships must be enforced accordingly. The forms, scale and justification of the use of force is one of the most controversial issues concerning any law enforcement. In dictatorships, it becomes even more challenging, as non-democratic states are infamous for excessive use of force and various human rights violations, including kidnapping, torture, enforced disappearances and death squads. Dictatorships often utilize the 'peace and order' slogan to justify police brutality and harsh punishment. The argument that living under an oppressive dictatorship has its downsides, but at least the regime guarantees greater public security, is dubious at best. While strict border control, widespread surveillance, a weapons monopoly and public fear can indeed reduce crime or at least improve the public's sense of security, it is no more than delaying the problem. The deep, systemic problems that dictatorships generate in the long run, such as inequality, exclusion and injustice, usually come to the fore sooner or later (Sá Motta 2022: 110). No matter how brutal and determined the police may be, it is not capable of solving social problems – only politics can.

To be effective in enforcing harsh laws, dictatorial police forces have an *excessive size* (F). They must be adequately large in terms of the number of stations, units and officers to exert control. To this end, dictatorships are eager to set up quasi-police, paramilitary auxiliary forces responsible for assisting the police in riot control, combating counter-revolutionary movements ('internal enemies') and performing functions such as civil defense or emergency management. (cf. **paramilitaries**) Examples include the *Hilfspolizei* (Nazi Germany), the 'Portuguese Legion' (under the Portuguese *Estado Novo*), *Somatén Armado* (the Francoist Spain), the 'Voluntary Militia for National Security' (Italy under Benito Mussolini's dictatorship), the 'Public Security Auxiliary Guard' and the 'People's Militias' (communist Czechoslovakia), or the 'Volunteer Reserve of the Citizens' Militia' (communist Poland). What deserves a separate mention is the Chinese case. The 'Chinese Communist Party' created the 'Militia' (民兵 – *Mínbīng*) to work alongside the 'People's Police' (national police force) and the 'People's Armed Police' (specialized military police). The exact size of the Militia is unknown, but official data are staggering. In 2010, the Beijing regime informed the world that it has eight million people serving in 'the primary militia' (Information Office of the SCIO 2011: 19) but did not comment on the second part of the institution: 'the general militia' which also should be counted in millions. This number is the result of many years of reforms that resulted in the Militia's size reduction. Back in 1957, the number of Chinese militiamen was estimated at thirty million (Dreyer 1982: 78).

Such militias are not state institutions per se but rather serve as the private guards of the dictator, the ruling party or junta and/or balance out the regular armed forces (cf. **coup-proofing**). During the establishment phase, when a dictator takes over, they are often engaged in combating the forces of the 'old order.' In the long term, they ensure that the society 'stays alert.' Eventually, those guards and militias become one of the elements of the militarization of social life, which is typical of dictatorships. The idea behind it is simple and effective: the more people serve the system, the more stable it is.

LITERATURE To understand the origins, nature and evolution of police forces, it is worth reaching for works such as *The Evolution of Policing* (De Guzman et al. 2013) and *A Short History of Police and Policing* (Emsley 2021). Particularly scarce and therefore especially valuable are works offering cross-sectional, comparative perspectives on the subject, such as *The Politics of the Police* (Reiner 2010), *The Oxford Handbook of Police and Policing* (Reisig & Kane 2014), *Comparative Policing* (de Maillard 2022) or *Regime Type and Beyond* (Chen & Fu 2023); and those approaching the issue from a different angle, such as *Police Forces: a Cultural History of an Institution* (Mladek 2007) or *Gender Inclusive Policing* (Prenzler 2023). The trials and tribulations of contemporary policing have been presented in a thought-provoking way in *Shielded* (Schwartz 2023) or *America on Fire* (Hinton 2021).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES All security institutions, even in the most transparent full democracies, are to some degree hermetic and exclusive. As a substantial portion of relevant data is considered

'sensitive,' the basic problem related to the scientific inquiries on police services concerns limited access to source materials. Conducting participant observation, interviewing or surveying active LEA officers is possible but challenging. The general legal framework and basic information are easily accessible, but internal procedures are at least partially classified. Researchers interested in studying police culture or socio-political preferences of officers are not necessarily welcomed with open arms by the management.

In non-democratic states, which are significantly less transparent than democracies, the problem is all the greater. As long as the dictatorship exists, conducting in-depth scientific inquiries, both domestic and external, on its law enforcement is out of the question, and researchers are reduced to scratching the surface. Some valuable insights may come from whistle-blowers, defectors, refugees, or independent investigative journalists, but it is insufficient to conduct comprehensive, comparative research. For example, little to none can be said about law enforcement in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or about the General Command of the Law Enforcement of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its predecessors (see Alasti 2023: 220-222).

Typically, the regime conducts its own 'research,' glorifying its services and condemning 'anti-system forces.' It shapes a bizarre *esprit de corps* within the framework of a bunker mentality – no one understands the regime but the regime itself. The scarce materials that dictatorships do make available to the public are often deliberately misleading. For dictatorships, lying to the public is "a matter of systematic policy" (Wolin 2017: 261). This is even more so when it comes to issues of existential significance for its survival, such as crime rates, identified threats and the morale among the officers.

Some countries that have undergone **democratization** (for example, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Ukraine) have established national memory institutions responsible for researching and documenting their non-democratic past, as well as sharing surviving source materials with the public. The establishment of such institutions contributed to the development of knowledge about law enforcement in dictatorships. However, the usefulness of these resources is limited by two factors. First, it is standard practice for dictatorships to dispose or privatize records of their oppressive, often illegal practices, which results in archives being largely incomplete. Second, the source materials that did survive should be studied especially carefully and critically, as, due to notorious false accounting, tampering with evidence and the propaganda of success, they do not necessarily reflect the actual state of affairs.

A particular type of methodological challenge concerns the necessity to keep scientific inquiries free from moralizing judgments and overgeneralizing. Obviously, all dictatorial police forces should be condemned, but they should not be equated. This remark applies to both international and domestic comparative studies. Even in a dictatorship's police, there are units performing duties unrelated to the type of regime, such as traffic control or chasing down common criminals. Hence, a generalized negative opinion about a dictatorship's police, to which the researcher is entitled or even obligated, should not lead to equal condemnation of all people serving in it. Most specifically, studying the roles of police in autocracies should not turn into a generalized critique of law enforcement as a whole. Not necessarily "All cops are beautiful" (Constantinou 2021: 5-16), but certainly not "all police is conning bastards" (Brogden 1981: 202-228).

NEW FRONTIERS Dictatorships are known to be especially eager to utilize technological innovations. Currently, one of the most important fields of change in policing concerns the acquisition and processing of personal data, which is best exemplified by mobile tracking systems, digitalization of public services and biometric identifiers. Never in history has access to information on citizens been so cheap, simple, and comprehensive. Furthermore, it is subject to constant automation. These innovations have led to the creation of new terms, such as the 'electronic police state,' '**digital authoritarianism**,' or 'digital totalitarianism' (Filimowicz 2022). The process poses a serious challenge to civil liberties and, as such, should be considered in the context of civilian oversight of law enforcement. Obviously, dictatorships do not consider this as a problem, and focus on maximizing such benefits. The rise of smart cities packed with hyper-surveillance features, such as facial recognition systems, will have a tremendous impact on law enforcement, not only embracing racial profiling but also leading to its automation (Joh 2022) and the dehumanization of policing (Jackson 2020). Among the dictatorships, communist China is particularly active in the area of mass surveillance, with its unprecedented flagship project – the 'Social Credit System' (社会信用体系 – *shèhuì xìnyòng tǐxì*). Hence the term 'the perfect police state' (Cain 2021).

Global freedom has been declining for 17 consecutive years (Freedom House, 2023). As democratic backsliding continues, the properties of non-democratic law enforcement will spread. This applies both to countries with a long democratic tradition as well as to those that have gone from dictatorship to democracy in the last few decades. Already, there are claims that some democratic states are becoming disturbingly similar to dictatorships when it comes to their policing. This is best exemplified by law enforcement in the United States, which in recent years has been the subject of numerous works regarding militarization, violence, civil forfeiture, no-knock raids, double standards and lack of accountability (Hinton 2021; Aiello 2023). The question raised in the literature about whether DP is possible in authoritarian regimes can be easily reversed: is AP possible in democracies? Further reflection on what constitutes a democratic police is needed, and this makes it all the more essential to conduct comprehensive, comparative and longitudinal studies.

An interesting issue that is not given enough attention, especially in the form of detailed comparative analysis, is the long shadow of dictatorship looming



over some LEAs (one of the noteworthy exceptions: Chen & Fu 2023). The post-dictatorship police services go through democratization and various adaptive changes, but the question remains if those transformations are solid and profound or come down to superficial matters, such as colors of the uniforms or phraseology (see also: **authoritarian legacies**). Maria Pia Guerra, who studied the legacy of 'the National Security Doctrine,' which was adopted during the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil, concludes that *"Just as in the dictatorship, the police continue to be conceived as bodies for the defence of the State, not as bodies for the protection of society. The citizen is not perceived as someone who receives a public service, but is suspected of breaking the political-social order, a potential criminal."* (2016: 115). Similar conclusions emerge after taking a closer look at the police forces of some post-communist countries.

The **democratization** of the post-dictatorship police is a long, complicated endeavor that must go beyond the modification of legal provisions. In order to be successful, it must include changes in internal procedures and, above all, constructing a new police training model. Building and maintaining trust in law enforcement in post-non-democratic countries requires overcoming prejudices and stereotypes related to the past. Even decades after the dictatorship collapses, society remembers the injustices inflicted by the police, especially since its victims are publicly commemorated. This evokes parallels and controversies, chiefly in situations of high-profile police scandals and times of social unrest.

The anti-police sentiment remains present in some post-non-democratic societies. After hundreds of people who voted in the 2017 Catalan independence referendum were jostled and injured by the riot police, one Barcelona resident commented: *"The police is the same as the time of Franco, only they had horses back then."* (Horowitz 2017). Studying the role of LEAs in dictatorships is not only a historical endeavor but a very current necessity, especially given the fact that democratic backsliding continues throughout the world. The quality of policing and civil-police relations should not be discussed solely in the context of reducing crime and civil liberties but also as one of the most important indicators of a state's condition.

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Presidential Guards & Praetorians

Why do you quote laws to those of us with swords in our hands?
– Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, 106-48 BCE)

For a coup d'état to succeed, the leadership has to be taken in or taken out. Capturing the leader increases the likelihood that a coup attempt succeeds (Matthews 2023), and for this reason, the regime leadership requires additional protection. This is much more pronounced in dictatorships, where the risk of **coups** is higher and where **assassination** is also more likely than in democracies.

Throughout history, rulers have consistently relied on trusted military units for protection. In earlier times, rulers would lead their armies into battle, safeguarded by loyal regiments and specialized bodyguards. For instance, Alexander the Great depended on his 'companions,' a literal translation of *hetairoi* (ἑταῖροι). These were an elite cavalry unit and a crucial part of his military forces (shock troops). Its members were not only soldiers but also close friends and allies of Alexander, often drawn from Macedonian nobility. The most notable among them was Hephaestion, who was Alexander's closest friend and possibly his lover.

DEFINITION A presidential guard or equivalent can be defined as a specialized unit responsible for the protection and security of the executive leadership. This unit is often composed of elite personnel trained to ensure the safety of the president through various means, including physical protection, intelligence gathering, and strategic planning. Since rulers once tended to ride into battle themselves, this protection was drawn from elite military units; however, in democracies today, they often recruit from law enforcement. Note that sometimes **paramilitaries** can be used by (personalist) rulers for this exact purpose. In this case they can also be considered to be 'palace guards' despite not being recruited from the military or law enforcement.

The concept of a presidential guard has its roots in famous and notorious palace guards (in urbanized, sedentary polities) and even further in time in nomadic or itinerant rulers accompanied by their 'blood brothers' (their *comitatus*). Since the decoupling of military command and civilian rule (in line with the rise of professional armies) and the emergence of democracy, we find increasingly disparate variation in the constellation, mission and behavior of executive protection units in democratic and



non-democratic regimes. For dictatorships, these units still exhibit similar behavior that can be traced back to the ancient bodyguards like the Praetorian Guard, infamous for their dual role as protectors and kingmakers.

ORIGINS The term 'praetorian' draws back to the *praetoriani* (the bodyguards of the *praetorium* or 'headquarters of a magistrate' in Latin), meaning the (in)famous Roman 'Praetorian Guards,' troops personally selected by top officials for personal protection. They were the archetypal 'palace guard' – drawn from the military – and allowed to carry weapons (but only in civilian dress (toga), *ergo* their name *cohors togata*) beyond the *pomerium*, the sacred boundary marking the inner sanctum of the city of Rome where the religious and political centers were located. Outside the inner city, other units such as the *Vigiles* (who functioned as both a police force and fire brigade) and city cohorts were also allowed to carry weapons, of course, but in the political heart of the empire, the praetorians owned the monopoly on violence.

SEE ALSO Note that the term 'praetorian' today has two meanings. Its oldest meaning goes back to the Roman palace guards, and is a group-label for such executive protection units through time. The second meaning is distilled from the same historical example's tendency to intervene in politics, especially **succession**, by becoming a key political player (as an armed institution), often acting as kingmakers. The label 'praetorian' in this sense has been applied more widely in military-civilian relations and is attributed to militaries as a whole that intervene in politics. Coup 'leaders' may be classified as praetorians (cf. **coups**), and **military regimes**' mission and behavior can be classified as such (depending on the scope and length of their intervention, cf. Nordlinger 1977). So, in the second case, the label is no longer attached to any particular protective unit but describes the interventionist nature of any military organization. To recap, at the peak of irony, presidential guards (descending from ancient praetorians) are still the most common solution (cf. **coup-proofing)** to protect the regime leadership from 'praetorian' enemies within the state.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Creating special security or palace guards presents inherent dilemmas. First of all, these solutions exacerbate the problems they are meant to solve: these protective units can drain military resources and demoralize regular troops due to better pay, equipment and training they receive, with lesser risk of being into combat. As (*de facto*) separate units, they pose a threat to the unity and hierarchy of command and control structures. For these reasons, they can actually trigger coups d'états, as happened in Mali in early 2012: Mali had been facing a resurgence of rebellion in its northern territories, led by the Tuareg rebels who sought greater autonomy. The Malian army, feeling overwhelmed and under-resourced, became increasingly dissatisfied with the government's handling of the conflict. This discontent culminated in a **coup** on 21 March 2012, when a group of low-ranking soldiers, led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, seized control of the government. The coup leaders expressed their frustration over the lack of support and resources provided to them for fighting the well-armed Tuareg forces. It did not help that elite protective troops (with necessary equipment) remained stationed near the capital and were not employed in the war effort.

Modern democracies typically avoid the creation of such guards from the military forces to maintain an egalitarian military ethos, as their existence can trigger inter-branch rivalry. Instead, democratic leaders rely on law enforcement agencies for executive security, with techniques and training, however, comparable to those of paratroopers and special forces.

EXAMPLES The protection of politicians throughout history has often involved the establishment of specialized organizations, with the level of protection directly impacting the potential costs for would-be attackers. The Praetorian Guard served the Roman senators and later emperors. This elite unit traces its origins back to at least the Scipio family and was operational until it was dissolved by Constantine I in 275 CE. The size of the Praetorian Guard varied over time, initially consisting of nine cohorts of 500 to 1000 men each under Emperor Augustus (Torgler & Frey 2012: 360). However, over time, the Praetorians became deeply involved in political affairs, often assassinating the very emperors they were meant to protect. The list of victims is long and includes Caligula (41 CE), Claudius (54 CE), Galba (69 CE), Vitellius (69 AD), Pertinax and Didius Julianus (both in 193 CE), Caracalla (217 CE), and Elagabalus (222 CE).

The praetorians are believed to have been involved in the murder of Commodus (192 CE) and Gordian III (244 CE), too, as co-conspirators. Didius Julianus became emperor immediately after Pertinax's assassination. He is infamous for having purchased the throne in an auction held by the Praetorian Guard, who had killed Pertinax for imposing discipline and reform on the unit. Didius Julianus was killed for not paying up. They were the first two victims in 193 CE, the 'year of five emperors.'

Similarly, the Janissaries (*yeŋiçeri* – 'new soldier') served as the household troops and bodyguards for the Ottoman sultans. Established in the fourteenth century, soldiers for this elite infantry regiment were recruited via Devşirme ('collecting' – a 'child levy' or blood tax) or the practice of forcible taking children from occupied Balkan (Christian) territories, converting them to Islam and training them into loyal slave-soldiers.

The concept of slave regiments has ancient roots, with the *Mamluk* system (where *mamlūk* means property) or *Ghulām* system (*ghilmān*, meaning slave boys) involving slave regiments and eunuchs who were trained and educated at the expense of their masters for roles in protection and administration in Persian and Islamic polities. The Ottomans, in particular, revived the *Mamluk* system, which enabled subsequent sultans to distance themselves from the unreliable 'blood brothers' of their fathers' original

ghazi-retinue by supplanting the latter with their loyal armies. (The Mamluks were also cavalry regiments like traditional retinues) (Van den Bosch 2021: 413).

This recurring institution of slave mercenaries formed a distinct military caste across various regions, including the Middle East, Central Asia, and India, from the early ninth to the nineteenth century. Detached from their kin and tribes, these soldiers developed personal loyalty to their masters and received specialized training, making them one of the earliest systems of **coup-proofing** in pre-modern states. They held privileged positions and often shared in the wealth of their masters, whom they defended against both palace intrigues and battlefield threats. On (more than one) occasion, Mamluks seized supreme power and established dynasties, notably in Egypt from 1250 to 1517 and in India from 1206 to 1290 (Van den Bosch 2021: 413).

In the Ottoman Empire, the Janissaries were designed for exactly this purpose and became the largest military presence at court, with numbers fluctuating significantly over time, with a strength of 6,000 men in 1475 and reaching 113,000 men by the eighteenth century (Torgler & Frey 2012: 360).

Like their Roman counterparts, the Janissaries also became politically influential and were responsible for the assassination of rulers they were supposed to protect, such as Sultan Osman II in 1622. They acted as kingmakers, most often indirectly, meaning new sultans had to negotiate for their support and, at times, directly, e.g., by putting Mustafa IV on the throne in 1807. In any case, by the late seventeenth century, the Janissaries had become increasingly corrupt and less effective militarily. They were more interested in trade and artisanal activities than in maintaining their military discipline and prowess. The force was disbanded in 1826 by Sultan Mahmud II (Palmer 1953; Nicolle 1995; Goodwin 2014).

The Swiss Guard, officially the *Pontifical Swiss Guard*, has served as the pope's personal bodyguard since 1506, established by Pope Julius II. Their primary role is to protect the pope and his residence. Known for their military skill, Swiss mercenaries were historically sought after as elite bodyguards, leading to their recruitment by the Vatican. A significant moment in their history was during the Sack of Rome in 1527, when 147 guards died defending Pope Clement VII. (This event is commemorated annually on 6 May with the swearing-in of new recruits). Today, the Swiss Guard performs both ceremonial and security duties in Vatican City. They protect the pope during public appearances and events, wearing distinctive Renaissance-style uniforms. Despite their historical origins, they are a modern and well-trained force dedicated to serving the pope and the Catholic Church.

The *Garde Impériale* was formed in 1799 to protect the French consuls and gained prominence under Emperor Napoleon. It included various divisions, such as the Old Guard, Middle Guard, and Young Guard. This transition began at the Battle of Marengo on 14 June 1800, where the Guard played a critical role in battle. Napoleon recognized the need for a robust battlefield reserve, leading to several decrees that expanded the Guard's size and capabilities. In 1804, this force numbered 8,000 men, but by 1812, it included over 51,000 officers and men, comprising various infantry and cavalry regiments, artillery companies, and support units. The Guard acted as a strategic reserve during key battles such as Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, and Borodino. (Their ultimate defeat occurred at Waterloo in 1815 when Napoleon sent them into battle in a desperate move to turn the tide in his favor) (Haythornthwaite 2012; Lachouque & Brown 2017).

In the twentieth century, Adolf Hitler's bodyguards saw themselves as modern-day praetorians. The *Schutzstaffel* – SS – ᛋᛋ in Armanen Runes) was established in 1920 as Hitler's personal guard. Initially limited to 280 personnel until 1929, it expanded significantly under Heinrich Himmler to include 52,000 men by 1932 and grew to encompass 250,000 men at the start of WWII, eventually forming 38 divisions during the war. Hitler's personal security was initially provided by the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (LSSAH) until it became part of the *Waffen-SS* during the war. Subsequently, his personal security duties were transferred to the *Reichssicherheitsdienst* (RSD) (Höhne 1979; Graber 1982; Hoffmann 1980, cited in Torgler & Frey 2012: 360-361). As dictatorships consolidate, these protective units grow in size and take on additional roles beyond merely guarding the ruler. War seems to be a catalyst for this trend: A notable example is the *Waffen-SS* and particularly Hitler's personal LSSAH regiment, which developed its own tank division, spearheaded most military campaigns as elite units and ended up working as a sort of 'fire brigade,' to counter allied attacks (Cox 2001: 3).

Similarly, Saddam Hussein's Iraqi *Republican Guard* (modeled after the SS) was a small force initially but expanded significantly during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s and became active in battle. Despite this expansion, a battalion always remained to protect Hussein. His son Qusay was in charge of the *Amn al-Khas*, the presidential security detail. Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire also relied on soldiers from his hometown for his *Presidential Security Division* (Cox 2001: 3).

LITERATURE Executive protection units, palace guards or presidential guards, hereafter used interchangeably, are studied as individual case studies but seldom comparatively. From the examples above, it is clear that they all start as elite protective units. Due to their superiority, these units expand under non-democratic rule (revolutionary, totalitarian or just personalist), not only in size, as they have a strong tendency for mission creep, taking on additional responsibilities aimed at consolidating the regime or the leader's personalist rule. War seems to be an absolute catalyst for their expansion.

Dictators' reliance on such units creates a conundrum: while they are crucial for protection against **assassination** and **coups** d'état, their loyalty is often tied personally to the dictator. Moreover, this loyalty may not transfer well to successors, leading to



friction and distrust. When successors are not able to control such units they inherit, the latter enters the inner sanctum of the regime as a political player. This is thus the moment when praetorians start acting praetorian and often become increasingly bold in their demands, often acting as kingmakers while their military effectiveness erodes over time. This probably is the effect of increased **patronalism** inside such units, where meritocracy is replaced by **clientelism** and personal networks.

These patterns are very visible in historical examples: both in tsarist Russia and the USSR, similar, almost cyclical trends can be observed. Under Ivan IV the Terrible (1530-1584), the *streltsy* (стрельцы – musketeers) were established as part of a standing army, as infantry units, typically armed with long guns (arquebuses, later muskets) and pollaxes. Initially made up of commoners, the *streltsy* evolved into a hereditary military caste by the mid-seventeenth century. They lived in distinct settlements known as *slobody* and were responsible for police and security tasks in Moscow and various border towns where they were stationed. Many also practiced trades and crafts. By 1681, the *streltsy* numbered around 55,000, with 22,500 based in Moscow. As a hereditary class, they guarded the tsars until they became too praetorian. They mingled into the **succession** dispute between Peter I (the Great) and his half-brother Ivan V but were unsuccessful in preventing Peter I from ascending the throne. After a series of uprisings during Peter's reign, he brutally suppressed their revolts and gradually disbanded them (Britannica 2011). Soon after, he selected and elevated his own loyal, protective units: the *Preobrazhensky* and *Semenovsky* regiments.

In time, these units also started influencing tsarist **successions** (supporting Katerina I, Elisabeth I, and Katerina II 'Catherine the Great'), and they continued to be relied upon even after the monarchy's fall by the transitional government (March to November 1917). During the October Revolution, these units were involved in various capacities but did not significantly intervene in power struggles (Cox 2001: 11-12).

The Bolsheviks established special units before forming the Red Army, like the *Osobnogo Naznacheniya* (особого назначения – 'special purpose' units, shortened to 'Осназ' – *Osnaz*) controlled by the *Cheka* (ЧК – an abbreviation for the *Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Sabotage, and Speculation*). These units were tasked with protection, but elite units also participated in suppressing uprisings (i.e., the Kronstadt and Basmachi rebellions) and executing opponents. (They were given the order to execute the tsar and his family). Lenin also relied on the *Fourth Latvian Rifles* regiment for Kremlin security after moving the capital to Moscow in March 1918 (Cox 2001: 12).

Under Stalin's regime, personal control over leadership security was intensified. The *Osnaz* became part of his new NKVD (НКВД – *People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs*), directly controlled by Stalin and notoriously headed by Genrikh Yagoda (1934-1936) and Nikolai Yezhov (1936-1938), who both perished after falling out of favor with the secretary-general. These units participated in special missions and internal (elite) purges. After Stalin died in 1953, the former head of the NKVD (1938-1946), Lavrentiy Beria (also an ethnic Georgian like Stalin), tried to take over the politburo but was eventually thwarted and executed (Cox 2001: 12-14).

Beria's attempted takeover exemplifies how personalized protection units could become praetorian when left leaderless. After Stalin's death, security responsibilities were once again divided among different apparatuses to prevent any single entity from wielding excessive power.

Table 8.2 shows the diverging role of ruler's personal guards in three types of armies (professional, praetorian (i.e., interventionist) and revolutionary) adhering to Amos Perlmutter's original classification.

Perlmutter's (1969; 1977) well-known typology highlights the varying logic of these three forms of armies, and his overview helps systematize the role and function of 'palace guards' in regimes with professional armies (consolidated democracies and some civilian dictatorships), praetorian regimes with a history of military interventions (military authoritarian regimes or unconsolidated democracies) and revolutionary (authoritarian and totalitarian) regimes. The categories are ideal types, and can partly overlap, but do expose the main differences.

In professional armies, executive protection units have only this main function. Their size matches the importance of those they protect and the threat level, mostly emanating from outside the regime. Threats are lower in democracies due to the number of veto players (Box 6.6) and **term limits**. These units are integrated into the regular structure of the armed forces and are most often established by law enforcement agencies (not the military). In the US, for instance, the *US Secret Service* plays this role. It is a federal law enforcement agency originally part of the *Treasury Department* but has been moved under the *Department of Homeland Security* since 2003. Presidents have no say in its recruitment and command structure.

In praetorian contexts where coups are likely, presidential guards or their equivalents are directly accountable to the ruler. Under **personalist rule**, they are often headed by a family member of the dictator. As regimes consolidate or with increased **personalization**, their functions move beyond **coup-proofing**. Especially as the regular armed forces are increasingly distrusted, under-equipped and purged, these loyal executive protection units are relied upon for special operations and personal missions set by the ruler. As long as the ruler is in power, they tend to be very loyal. The trouble starts after the ruler suddenly dies or is incapacitated, becomes a **lame duck** or is about to get ousted by mass protests. For instance, in 1999, routed by uprisings, the fleeing president of Niger, Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara, was shot by his presidential guard while attempting to board his plane at the airport. Soon after, its commander, Major Daouda Mallam Wanké took control of the country.

Table 8.2 – Types of Armies & Palace Guards

CATEGORIES		**Professional Armies**	**Praetorian Armies**	**Revolutionary Armies**
Main missions		Territorial defense against external enemies. Conquest and foreign operations.	Keep the regime in power. Protect it from external and internal enemies. Protect their own interests.	Enable, protect and expand the revolution. Protect it from external and internal enemies.
	Ruler's personal guard	Protect the executive leadership. (Size matches this mission)	Protect the executive leadership from coups and assassinations. But as flagship units they also can serve as shock troops in military campaigns and execute personal orders of the ruler, especially extrajudicial killings of elites, targeted mass repression, or anti-coup measures.	
Expertise (the management of violence)		Specific knowledge based on objective standards of professional competence.	Professional knowledge is not strictly observed.	Professional knowledge is oriented toward social-political values.
	Ruler's personal guard	Rigorous additional training in protective techniques and emergency responses.	Rigorous training in protective techniques and urban warfare, equipped (and paid) better than regular troops. For the regime, (personal) loyalty trumps military competence. Revolutionary units retain their professionalism longer.	
Client (Soldier is responsible to whom?)		State (subordinate to civilian authority)	Loyalty varies: It can lie with the nation, an ethnic group, a tribe, the military itself, or the state.	*Before revolution:* party-movement *After:* loyalty can shift to the state, the nation, or become confused if the party becomes identified with other entities.
	Ruler's personal guard	Military hierarchy is respected. Units obey orders from their commanders.	In *personalist regime*s: directly commanded by and only loyal to ruler. The head of the unit can be a family member of the ruler. In *collegial regimes:* such units are underdeveloped and enjoy less autonomy.	In *personalist regime*s: commanded by and only loyal to ruler. In *collegial regimes:* commanded by the party-movement on behalf of the whole leadership
Corporateness (group consciousness & bureaucratic organization)		Hierarchical, cohesive-organic, collective, subordinate.	Hierarchical, non-cohesive, collective, with shifting subordination	Egalitarian, highly mobile, based on cadres
	Ruler's personal guard	These units are drawn up from several branches of law enforcement, security services and (not always) military. They share resources with other branches and are integrated as a specialized division within the official structure and hierarchy.	These units are established as *(de facto)* independent organizations, with their own hierarchy, budgets, recruitment programs, armories and barracks. They are much larger than in democracies because they are equipped to protect against coup d'états while the risk of assassination is also higher. Sometimes, there are parallel units tasked with ruler protection, all commanded by the leadership directly and in competition with one another. The more autonomy these units have the more friction there is with regular military structures.	
Conscription & recruitment		Restrictive, universal only in war	Restrictive	Universal
	Ruler's personal guard	Rather restrictive: Designated branches of the armed forces and security services recruit from within and from volunteers coming from other branches or law enforcement. Recruitment is procedural. Their command is not appointed by rulers.	Exclusive: Recruits receive additional training (often from foreign instructors) and often share background with ruler (ethnic or place of origin, i.e. 'ethnic stacking') or served directly under the ruler before. Command is personally appointed by the ruler, less so in collegial regimes.	Exclusive: Recruits are highly-trained and must have track record of revolutionary fervor. Sometimes they share background with rulers or served under them before. Leadership is personally appointed by ruler or party-movement leadership.
Ideology & mindset		Conservative	Traditional, materialist, anti-socialist	Revolutionary, dedicated to the party movement.
	Ruler's personal guard	Coservative, patriotic.	Personal loyalty to rulers. Usually bound by patronage and personal ties.	(Extreme) devotion to the cause (i.e. zealots) and to the leadership (in personalist cases: personal loyalty trumps ideology). Can act as a radical faction blocking reforms.



Disposition to intervene		Low	Permanent and continued.	High before and during the revolution, low after the revolution.
	Ruler's personal guard	Low	This varies: under *personalist rule*, these units have no future in a new political order without the ruler. They intervene in politics, only after rulers are incapacitated or have died, become lame ducks, face ouster by popular revolution, or 'betray' the unit by trying to flee. With *established succession rules*, such units may become part of the inner circle and become kingmakers (first indirectly later more overtly) until disbanded.	
Source: Author's own work, based on: Perlmutter 1977.				

Under personalist rule, there is no bright future for these units under a new political order without their patron. In Burkina Faso, after the flight of dictator Blaise Compaoré in 2014, his old *Régiment de sécurité présidentielle* (RSP) tried to steer and control the **transition** with Lieutenant Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida, the deputy RSP commander, briefly assuming the role of acting president after Compaoré's ouster. Later that month, Zida was appointed prime minister in a power-sharing agreement with opposition forces. On 16 September 2015, the RSP staged a coup, taking President Michel Kafando and his government hostage. The army intervened, leading to Kafando's reinstatement on 23 September. The RSP was officially disbanded two days later, a decision that had triggered the coup in the first place.

In (collegial) non-democracies with established **succession** rules, leadership is usually more restrained and cannot utilize its presidential guard for personal missions. Here, these units can count on a continued role after a leader transfer, but – as shown throughout time – loyalty is not easily passed on to new leaders of the next generation. Hereditary rule in personalist regimes somewhat mitigates this issue as family members are usually in charge of the palace guard and thus often have blood ties to their successor. In general, the trend is that these elite protection units become too autonomous and powerful after the death of their creator and are likely to become bolder over time, changing their position from indirect to direct kingmakers until they are ultimately disbanded. Like with coup traps (Box 5.2), any new palace guard units in the future are likely to repeat the pattern.

There are some notable differences in revolutionary regimes. Here, ideological zeal is an additional factor that keeps these troops more disciplined and professional over time. As shown in the example of the USSR, the NKVD was personalized under Stalin, and its successor was remodeled back into official state structures. So, their constellation, mission and functions can vary and change over time. However, once they succeed in becoming a political actor within the regime (like the *Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps* in Iran), they often take on the role of the reactionary, hardliner faction blocking reform and viciously defending their own interests (Alfoneh 2008; Nader 2015). In any case, more research is needed to explore the additional differences of such units in revolutionary contexts on regime **transitions** and as a factor in **revolutionary legacies**.

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SEMI-REGIME ACTORS

Mercenaries & Private Military Companies

Commerce has changed the ethics of citizenship and the incentives for national service
– Michael Ignatieff

Private military companies and mercenaries have long been intertwined with the dynamics of modern conflicts, offering a unique blend of military and security services to a diverse array of clients, including governments, multinational corporations, and non-governmental organizations. Their relations to dictatorships remain understudied.

DEFINITION Private military companies (PMCs), also known as private security companies (PSCs) or PMCs, are private entities that provide military and security services to various clients. These services can range from combat operations and security patrols to logistical support and training.

Conversely, mercenaries are usually referred to as individuals who are hired to fight in armed conflicts by parties other than their own government or military. They are motivated primarily by financial gain rather than ideological or nationalistic reasons. Mercenaries have been used since ancient times in various wars and conflicts around the world. In modern times, their use has been regulated by international conventions and treaties, although their use still occurs in various conflicts with highly controversial outcomes.

Alongside mercenaries, there is the concept of 'legionnaires' – foreigners who are neither citizens nor subjects of the state whose military they serve (Grasmeder 2021: 147). Legionnaires can be either volunteers or conscripts. They are typically recruited directly by the state to serve in its military. Mercenaries are individuals who are hired as independent contractors. They operate independently or through private military companies.

While traditional local security firms primarily focus on basic security functions such as building surveillance and access control, PMCs offer a much broader range of services that encompass military methods, leadership training, and specialized equipment. International security firms, often referred to as PMCs, are equipped to handle a wide array of security challenges, ranging from providing armed protection and security consulting to conducting reconnaissance missions and participating in armed combat operations. They typically employ personnel with military backgrounds who possess expertise in various aspects of warfare, including tactics, strategy, and leadership (Adams 1999).

Anna Leander's (2019) argument underscores the critical importance of considering civil-military relations as a regulatory concern within the debate on regulating PMCs. She highlights that the influence of security professionals, whether organized privately in PMCs or enrolled in public armed forces, shapes security concerns and political priorities. She suggests that existing regulations have not adequately addressed the impact of PMCs on shaping politics. She emphasizes that the significance of regulating the role of PMCs in influencing political dynamics has been underestimated. Therefore, she advocates that it is essential to place the issue of regulating 'civil-PMC relations' on the regulatory agenda.

Using the term 'military' to describe these services highlights the qualitative distinction between firms operating in conflict zones within a military context and those primarily engaged in security services in stable environments. This semantic distinction underscores the specialized nature of the services provided by these firms and the unique challenges they present in terms of governance, regulation, and accountability. The trend toward privatizing military functions reflects both a broader enthusiasm for outsourcing state capacities in the industrialized world and specific factors driving the demand for such services. One significant factor is the reluctance of key states to intervene in conflicts that do not directly align with immediate strategic interests or lack domestic support for intervention. Non-state actors such as transnational corporations and humanitarian organizations operating in fragile states are increasingly facing threats from non-state violence. This dynamic compels them to seek security solutions from the commercial sector due to a lack of viable alternatives. The privatization of military functions thus emerges as a response to both the changing nature of conflict and the evolving security needs of various actors operating in complex and often volatile environments.

The expanded definition of PMCs provided here encompasses a wide range of firms operating outside their home states, offering services with the potential for lethal force and influencing military capacities through training and advice. This definition acknowledges the concerns of regulators and humanitarian agencies regarding such activities. It also recognizes the challenge of delineating between offensive and defensive operations, particularly in low-intensity conflicts lacking clear front lines.

SEE ALSO Mercenaries and PMCs are one type of non-state military actor that operate within the complex landscape of modern conflicts. When hired by dictators, they often find themselves pitted against insurgents, **rebel regimes** or **warlords** alongside **paramilitaries** and other (semi-)regime actors. They sometimes play a role in **coup-proofing** regimes as a backup for or staffing **presidential guards**, but they



can also be sent out for special military assignments not suitable for the regular **armed forces.**

KEY SIGNIFICANCE PMCs may be employed by governments, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or other entities that require specialized military or security expertise, especially if deployed in conflict zones. The diverse roles that PMCs can fulfill highlight their versatility and specialized expertise. Providing security for high-profile individuals or facilities often requires a unique blend of skills, including threat assessment, close protection, and risk mitigation strategies. PMCs with experience in this area can offer tailored solutions to meet the specific security needs of their clients, whether they are corporate executives, government officials, or diplomatic personnel (O'Brien 2000; Singer 2001; Percy 2009). Their ability to gather intelligence, assess terrain, and identify potential threats can provide insights for military operations, security planning, or risk management purposes. Training local forces is an area where PMCs can make a significant impact, particularly in conflict-affected regions where building capable and professional security forces is essential for stability and peacekeeping efforts. Operating in conflict or post-conflict environments, PMCs can provide critical support to stabilize and rebuild communities by offering security solutions, training local personnel, and facilitating humanitarian efforts. Their involvement in such contexts reflects the evolving landscape of security, where non-state actors and asymmetric threats play a significant role.

The presence of PMCs in high-risk environments like oil fields, mining sites, and shipping routes underscores their role in safeguarding critical infrastructure and commercial interests. However, the outsourcing of military functions to private companies raises legitimate ethical and legal concerns. The potential lack of oversight, transparency, and accountability inherent in PMC operations can create opportunities for abuse and misconduct, including human rights violations. Ensuring robust regulatory frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and adherence to international humanitarian law are critical to mitigate these risks and uphold ethical standards in the use of PMCs.

One of the main advantages of hiring mercenaries is their flexibility and readiness to engage in combat. They can be quickly recruited and deployed, and their allegiance is typically to the entity that pays them rather than to any cause. However, their use can also be controversial, as they may lack the discipline and loyalty of regular military forces, and their actions can sometimes lead to **human rights** abuses or other violations of international law.

ORIGIN The use of mercenaries or hired soldiers is an age-old practice that dates back centuries. Throughout history, rulers and states have employed mercenaries for various reasons, including supplementing their own military forces, accessing specialized skills or expertise, and distancing themselves from the political or moral implications of a conflict. In modern times, the term 'mercenaries' has evolved to encompass a broader range of private military actors, including PMCs and security contractors. These entities offer a wide range of military and security services to clients ranging from governments and multinational corporations to NGOs and political movements. The motivations for hiring mercenaries or private military services in the twenty-first century can vary widely, from addressing security gaps or resource constraints to pursuing strategic objectives with greater flexibility and discretion. However, as with historical practices, the use of mercenaries in contemporary conflicts raises ethical, legal, and political concerns regarding accountability, transparency, and adherence to international humanitarian law.

As economic pressures and shifting political priorities lead major states to reduce their armed forces and scale back foreign military interventions, smaller states, as well as other entities such as corporations or non-state actors, may find the mercenary route increasingly appealing. The emergence of PMCs or international security firms in the 1990s reflected this changing dynamic. PMCs distinguish themselves from ordinary security firms by providing a broader spectrum of services, including combat operations, intelligence gathering, logistical support, and training of security personnel. They often operate in conflict zones, post-conflict environments, or high-risk regions where conventional military forces may be constrained or where additional security measures are required to protect assets, personnel, or infrastructure.

By recognizing and addressing the influence of PMCs on political processes, regulations can better ensure accountability, transparency, and adherence to democratic principles in the conduct of security operations. This perspective broadens the scope of regulatory efforts beyond purely operational aspects to encompass the broader societal and political implications of PMC activities. The assertion that PSCs and other forms of private force provide states with a convenient means to pursue foreign policy goals they might otherwise struggle to achieve holds merit. By outsourcing certain military functions to private entities, states can potentially pursue objectives with less public scrutiny and political risk. However, this approach can also lead to unforeseen consequences when proper policies and oversight mechanisms are lacking. One of the most significant risks associated with the use of private force is its potential to undermine war efforts. Poorly managed or unregulated private security engagements can result in operational inefficiencies, coordination challenges, and even human rights abuses, all of which can weaken the effectiveness of military campaigns.

Reliance on private forces can expose states to scandal and reputational damage, particularly if contractors engage in misconduct or illegal activities. This can erode public trust, damage diplomatic relations, and hinder the state's ability to achieve its foreign policy objectives. Gentil-Fernandes et al. (2024) find that foremost rulers with weak ties to the international community are likely to hire merce-

naries. Leaders with high **coup** risk and low international accountability are especially likely to do so. The use of private forces can complicate rather than simplify the pursuit of policy goals. The involvement of private actors introduces additional layers of complexity to decision-making processes, coordination efforts, and accountability mechanisms. Moreover, private forces may have agendas or incentives that do not align with the state's interests, leading to divergent objectives and potentially counterproductive outcomes.

From the supply side, dictatorships, especially great or regional powers, sometimes set up PMCs (see below), usually for the same purpose as other states use paramilitaries to lower their accountability when outsourcing violence. **Paramilitaries** are, of course, used domestically, while mercenaries are sent to foreign theaters. These states do not use mercenaries for **coup-proofing**.

From the demand-state, dictatorships with unreliable armed forces, usually war-torn countries with a history of praetorianism (cf. 'coup traps' – Box 5.2) and with the available funds (i.e. **resource curses**) can hire mercenaries. E.M.F. Grasmeder (2021: 192) found that *"when states find themselves simultaneously threatened externally and constrained domestically, they are likely to enlist legionnaires as a tool to balance between these political and security pressures."*

Mehrl and Abel Escribà-Folch (2023) find that **personalist regimes,** in particular, recruit foreign nationals into their armed forces. By having soldiers who are not connected to domestic social networks, dictators can minimize the likelihood of military conspiracies against them. Foreign recruits are less likely to engage in or support **coup** attempts due to their dependency on the regime for their livelihood and status. In addition, the presence of foreign recruits in the armed forces can deter mass uprisings by signaling the regime's willingness to use violent repression against protesters. In a global sample from 1946 to 2010, the authors find that higher levels of personalism increase the likelihood of recruiting foreign legionnaires.

Van den Bosch (2021: 108; 250-251) – in a sample of Sub Saharan personalist dictators – noted a difference between tyrants with a civilian background (i) and military strongmen (ii) when it comes to recruitment patterns. The latter (ii) have a military background and use **paramilitaries** for dealing with rebels, but not for **coup-proofing**. The former (i) absolutely do not trust the armed forces, often heavily coup-proof them by reducing their abilities to execute a coup and counter threats by creating paramilitaries. Sometimes civilian despots (i) also rely on mercenaries to protect their regime, like François Bozizé in the Central Africa Republic, who staffed his **presidential guard** with Chadian mercenaries but also convinced South Africa to deploy (about 400) hirelings (in exchange for mining contracts) to secure the capital.

Lastly, it has been argued that private forces, whether they operate as mercenaries, PMCs, or PSCs, possess the inherent ability to influence civil wars and conflict dynamics in which they are involved (as shown in the entry on **coups** sometimes they are hired to take over a small (island) states, although they are not successful in that regard). Their actions and presence can significantly shape the trajectory and outcomes of conflicts, highlighting the importance of establishing clear policies, regulations, and oversight mechanisms to mitigate risks and ensure responsible conduct (Percy 2009).

LITERATURE The governance of PMCs has not been thoroughly examined in a sustained manner. Much of the existing literature focuses on specific incidents involving PMCs or offers normative arguments based on **human rights** principles, often lacking a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon itself. A particular gap exists in differentiating between modern PMCs and traditional mercenaries, which is crucial for understanding their roles and implications in contemporary conflicts.

CLASSIFICATIONS The expansive nature of PMCs renders them a military tool with significant and far-reaching consequences. Operating outside conventional legal frameworks, PMCs have an expanding field of activity that encompasses a wide range of military services. These span a broad spectrum and may include specialized tasks such as strategic planning, intelligence gathering, investigations, reconnaissance (land, sea, or air), flight operations (staffed or unstaffed), satellite surveillance and intelligence, knowledge transfer with military applications, and providing material or technical support to traditional armed forces.

The versatility and expertise offered by PMCs make them attractive partners for governments, international organizations, and other entities seeking military capabilities beyond what traditional armed forces can provide. The examples of South Africa, the US, and Russia illustrate different models of PMCs, each with its distinct characteristics and operational approaches.

The South African model, exemplified by historical company *Executive Outcomes* (EO), resembles traditional mercenaries. PMCs operating under this model conduct autonomous military campaigns and finance their operations using resources from the countries where they are deployed. For instance, EO's support of the government forces of Sierra Leone in 1996 was partially funded through diamond concessions obtained in the country.

In contrast, the US *Blackwater* model represents a form of 'military entrepreneurship' that integrates PMCs within and strengthens the traditional armed forces of a powerful state. In response to budget pressures and the need to optimize military capabilities, the US government made significant cuts to the army's budget between 1989 and 1993. As part of this process, the *US Department of Defense* began subcontracting various tasks, including logistics, to civilian companies like *Blackwater*. This allowed the military to focus on combat operations while outsourcing non-combat functions to private contractors. This privatization of military functions became a key component of US strategy, particularly in the context of the war against **terrorism**.



Russia also has its model of proxy-PMCs, like *PMC Redut* (ЧВК Редут), *PMC Patriot* (ЧВК Патриот) or the *Wagner Group* (see 'examples' below). In contrast to the Western model (e.g., the US), Russian PMCs are primarily used as tools of state influence and irregular warfare. Most are proxies for its **intelligence services** (GRU) and serve to advance Russia's geopolitical interests by providing Moscow with a means to project power, influence foreign governments, and secure economic gains, such as access to natural resources. While PMCs are technically illegal under Russian law, they operate in a legal gray area that provides the Kremlin with plausible deniability. The lack of formal recognition means that these companies do not pay taxes or have official legal standing within Russia. PMCs are appealing to Moscow based on their deniability, the lack of state accountability for their actions perceived expendability in comparison to Russian forces, and lower costs (Katz et al. 2020; Doxsee 2022).

However, it is notable that Russia, like the US, has utilized PMCs as part of its military strategy, particularly in conflicts such as the Syrian civil war and the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. These diverse models of PMCs reflect the varying approaches of states to outsourcing military functions and leveraging private sector expertise in the pursuit of national security objectives. Each model presents unique challenges and implications, highlighting the complexity of the private military industry and the need for careful consideration of its role in contemporary security contexts.

MEASUREMENT & METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The difficulty in assessing even the total size of the private military services market stems from various factors, including limited access to data and the reluctance of governments to disclose details about their use of such services. Additionally, some PMCs may generate significant income from activities such as resource exploitation in the countries where they operate, further complicating efforts to measure the market size accurately. The statement made by President Putin regarding the finances of the *Wagner Group* in 2023 represents a notable shift in approach, particularly in the context of Russian involvement with private military actors. Putin's disclosure of substantial financial support provided by the Russian state to Wagner, along with efforts to discredit its chief, Yevgeny Prigozhin, sheds light on the extent of state involvement in financing and supporting private military groups. While specific disclosures like Putin's statement offer glimpses into the financial dynamics of certain PMCs, they may not provide a comprehensive picture of the entire industry. Nonetheless, such revelations underscore the significance of state sponsorship and support in the operations of private military entities.

The estimated value of the global security industry provided by *Transparency International Germany* in 2016, exceeding two hundred billion dollars, gives a sense of the scale and economic importance of the sector. However, this figure may not fully capture the breadth of activities and revenue streams associated with private military services, given the diverse range of actors and operations within the industry.

There is an urgent need for a realistic regulatory approach to address the challenges posed by unaccountable actors wielding significant force. This approach must balance the interests of both consumers and suppliers within this evolving industry. Achieving this balance is essential for ensuring accountability, transparency, and ethical conduct within the private military sector. Without such regulation, there is a high risk of exploitation, human rights abuses, and unchecked influence in conflict zones and beyond.

EXAMPLES The *Wagner Group* (ЧВК Вагнер – 'PMC Wagner,' also known colloquially as the 'musicians' or the 'orchestra') represents a unique and highly controversial approach to private military operations, differing significantly from traditional models observed in South Africa, the US, and Russia. The Wagner Group operates with a wide-ranging scope and exhibits a disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law, operating largely with impunity. Unlike other PMCs, the Wagner Group's activities transcend traditional military roles and extend into criminal enterprises, resembling a cross between a special forces team and a mafia-style organized crime network. This multifaceted approach was evident in Ukraine, where the Wagner Group acted as a paramilitary, parastatal criminal group, engaging in combat operations as well as other destabilizing activities.

Prior to its involvement in Ukraine, Wagner was active across the globe, challenging Western interests in regions such as the Central African Republic, Mali, and Syria. Its activities included attempts to undermine EU missions and member states' activities in Africa. Wherever they operated, Wagner forces were accused of committing serious **human rights** abuses, including torture, rape, and summary executions. Beyond its combat role, the Wagner Group was also involved in information warfare through its close association with the *Patriot Media Group* for orchestrating a powerful campaign of **disinformation** to advance its interests and those of the Russian government. This included efforts to influence **elections** in both the US and Europe using troll farms and **propaganda** tactics. Despite its significant influence and disruptive activities, the Wagner Group's recent rebellion in Russia led to a crackdown, resulting in the closure of *Patriot Media Group*. This event highlighted the limits and associated risks of the Wagner Group's approach, serving as a cautionary tale for emerging powers tempted to follow similar paths of private military expansion and exploitation.

The role of the Wagner Group, acting as a private group, in effect replacing the regular Russian army on the battlefield in Ukraine, has been remarkable. In this instance, Wagner's 'client' was the Russian state itself, although the relationship between Wagner's forces and the Russian military establishment has been notably tense. This tension culminated in overt rebellion in June 2023, when Wagner clashed with the Russian armed forces and began advancing toward Moscow after seizing control of Rostov,

the headquarters of the Russian Southern military district (a mutiny that did not end well for its founder, the Russian oligarch, Yevgeny Prigozhin, 1961-2023). While the Wagner Group's activities in Ukraine have garnered significant attention, its operations in Africa have received less publicity despite making substantial inroads across the continent. Specifically, the Wagner Group has been involved in countries such as Libya, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali. In these contexts, the Wagner Group's activities extend far beyond the typical scope of a PMC, as its service portfolio in Africa is extensive and encompasses a range of activities beyond conventional military operations. The nature of the Wagner Group's involvement in these countries and the implications of its activities warrant careful analysis and scrutiny. By examining case studies from Africa, it becomes apparent that the Wagner Group's role as a private military actor transcends traditional boundaries and raises significant questions about accountability, legality, and the broader implications for regional stability and security (Marten 2023).

IMPACT ON POLICY The increasing reliance on PMCs by states is part of a broader trend involving the restructuring and adaptation of traditional tools of state sovereignty in response to evolving security challenges. This trend encompasses various aspects such as border and territory control, protection of infrastructure, and addressing hybrid threats and propaganda in the contemporary security landscape.

In Western contexts, this shift toward PMCs is often driven by factors such as budgetary constraints, public pressure to reduce direct state investment in the military (exemplified by Cold War fatigue in the 1990s), and the complexity of out-of-area operations. In other regions, the rise of PMCs can be attributed to the general weakness of state structures, including the military, and the increasing prevalence of conflict zones.

Governments frequently turn to the private sector as a means of optimizing their resources and achieving greater efficiency in security operations. However, despite their utility, PMCs are increasingly viewed as problematic due to concerns regarding legitimacy, accountability, and their potential to undermine state sovereignty.

Accountability issues surrounding PMCs raise questions about their effectiveness and their broader impact on promoting peace and stability. Moreover, there are challenges associated with ensuring the demilitarization of PMCs once their engagement in a conflict or security operation concludes.

Addressing these issues requires comprehensive regulatory frameworks that hold PMCs accountable for their actions, ensure transparency in their operations, and establish mechanisms for demilitarization and post-conflict transition.

NEW FRONTIERS The utilization of PMCs as a means to bolster national security and stability can paradoxically lead to the erosion of state institutions, both in democratic and autocratic contexts. In states where institutions like the police, judiciary, and military are fragile or where the rule of law is vulnerable to challenge, turning to private armies might seem like a pragmatic choice. However, this reliance on PMCs carries significant risks. One concerning aspect is the potential for private entities to encroach upon areas traditionally reserved for state authority. PMCs may expand their influence into domains historically governed by state institutions, undermining the state's monopoly on violence and weakening its overall control. Moreover, PMCs often recruit actively in contexts where state institutions are weak, such as during periods of significant demobilization from armed forces or in environments with lax control over access to military equipment. This recruitment can exacerbate existing security challenges and contribute to the proliferation of armed groups outside state control. Countries emerging from conflict face particular challenges in this regard. The presence of PMCs in post-conflict environments can complicate efforts to establish effective governance structures, foster reconciliation, and rebuild trust in state institutions. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to strengthen state institutions, enhance oversight and regulation of PMCs, and promote accountability for their actions.

The challenges of post-conflict reintegration and disarmament of PMC fighters are significant, particularly in contexts where state institutions are fragile. Reintegrating former PMC fighters into civil society and gaining control over their weapons can be complex and may require coordinated efforts involving various stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, and civil society groups. Without effective reintegration and disarmament measures, there is a risk of continued violence and instability even after the formal cessation of conflict.

Moreover, the business model of PMCs is inherently tied to the existence of conflict or the threat of conflict. This reliance on conflict for profitability can incentivize PMCs to perpetuate or exacerbate instability rather than work toward peace and stability. PMCs, especially those closer to the mercenary model, may have little interest in achieving peace as it could undermine their financial interests.

There is also a risk that PMCs, particularly those operating in areas with weak governance structures, could establish control over regions and assert legitimacy. This can further complicate efforts to establish effective governance and the rule of law, potentially leading to the creation of parallel power structures that undermine state authority. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that prioritize 'disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration' (DDR) programs for former PMC fighters. Additionally, efforts to strengthen state institutions, enhance governance, and promote accountability are essential for mitigating the risks posed by PMCs to peace and stability in conflict-affected regions.

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Paramilitaries & Death Squads

Be wary of paramilitaries. When the men with guns who have always claimed to be against the system start wearing uniforms and marching with torches and pictures of a leader, the end is nigh. When the pro-leader paramilitary and the official police and military intermingle, the end has come.
– Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (2017)

Paramilitaries and death squads are armed non-state actors that engage in acts of violence against the population at the behest of a regime. Though not officially part of the state, the violence caused by paramilitaries and death squads is sanctioned by the regime either explicitly or implicitly through the regime's lack of activity. They are almost always used by non-democratic regimes to induce compliance through fear and to deter the public from supporting the opposition (Rummel 1994). They are also often used in the context of an ongoing conflict.

SEE ALSO Death Squads and paramilitaries can be referred to as state-sponsored militias, especially if they are former **warlords** that are co-opted into the regime (Ahram 2011). At times, **mercenaries** fulfill the same functions (e.g., regime protection, **coup-proofing**, executing **repression**), but a clear distinction should be made between militias and paramilitaries that oppose the regime and/or try to take over power, cf. **rebel regimes**. Death squads and paramilitaries fulfill overlapping tasks within the larger spectrum of coercive regime **repression**, with the former more often involved in more 'covert' and 'targeted' activities (opposition assassination, sabotage, terror attacks (Box 3.13), disappearances, etc.) and the latter also in 'overt' forms, like voter intimidation and strike breaking and sometimes act as **presidential guards** (or their equivalent). Their indirect link with the state reduces their accountability and boosts the deniability of rulers.

DEFINITION Death squads and paramilitaries are violent non-state actors (or irregular organizations) that operate outside the formal security sector and central government command but usually receive support from factions of the state (Grajales 2011). Though they remain outside the law, they often enjoy some of the resources, access and status that is exclusive to the state/regime or foreign government. The state may never officially acknowledge the links with paramilitary organizations and death squads, yet they do little to eliminate them. It is elements within the state itself that play a role in their creation and direction, though the state usually refuses to recognize any links to the group. They also may make alliances with multiple powerholders in the system, such as the economic elite. Brenda Breuil and Ralph Rozema claim that death squads and paramilitaries operate somewhere in between the state security apparatus and the criminal underworld of killers and torturers (Breuil & Rozema 2009). Paramilitaries and death squads are mostly offensive tools of authoritarian regimes to target groups that aim to change the *status quo*, challenge the state's or regime's legitimacy, or are otherwise considered problematic for the state and the economic and political elites.

Paramilitary-style forces are more commonly

found in dictatorships because the latter often create these types of units to offset the power of the regular military (cf. **coup-proofing**). Dictatorships that use paramilitary organizations for this purpose will often build these units to be close in size or even more powerful than the regular army so that they can serve as an effective counterweight (Sudduth 2017). In Syria, under Bashar al-Assad, the paramilitary forces consisted of over 100,000 men (Makara 2013), while in Saddam Hussein's Iraq, just one paramilitary group – the *Fedayeen Saddam* (*Fidā'iyyī Saddām* – 'Saddam's Men of Sacrifice') – had about 40,000 members (Otterman 2005).

In addition to the size of paramilitary organizations, the dictator may reassign the more capable soldiers to this outside unit, as Hussein did by moving more skilled troops to the *Republican Guard*, from the Iraqi army (Powell 2019). In Yemen, under Ali Abdullah Saleh,, paramilitary units were given priority over the regular military and were considered the foundation of the regime's security (Makara 2013). The paramilitary may also be the recipient of more funding and better weapons, as was the case in Sierra Leone when Siaka Stevens built up paramilitaries at the expense of the country's army (Berg 2020). Because paramilitary organizations are usually the recipients of better funding and training, they are often better at fighting than the regular army – though in autocracies, that is often not their main purpose (Powell 2019).

Paramilitary units that lie outside the law and assist the regime in denying responsibility often have a reputation for brutality (Seigel 2018). They enable the state to perpetuate violence against state enemies while still maintaining a clean international appearance. Paramilitaries do not depend on being considered legitimate domestically or to the international community. Paramilitary groups are used on behalf of the political establishment to handle the dirty business of targeted kidnappings and killings, massacres, ethnic cleansing and forcible resettlements. In Colombia, the AUC (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* – United Self-Defense Forces) was especially brutal and was involved in many atrocities, such as kidnappings (Raphael 2009). The biggest victims of the AUC were ordinary Colombians, and many Indigenous communities were displaced (Grajales 2017).

In addition to **coup-proofing**, paramilitary organizations are often used to counter efforts for reform and support the incumbent regime in defending the political and economic *status quo*. (By definition, paramilitaries are never attempting to overthrow the established order.) This is another reason why democracies are less likely to have paramilitary organizations: meaningful **elections** can be held to resolve these sorts of disputes. In contrast, in hybrid regimes and autocracies, violence is used to protect the established order. In Nicaragua, the US-backed 'Contras' (derived from *la contrarrevolución*) were one of the most notable right-wing paramilitary groups, comprising recruits from the former *National Guard* of the Somoza dictatorship, ousted in 1979 (Miranda & Ratliff 1992). Their official role was to undermine the military support structure of the new Nicaraguan Marxist Sandinista government (allied with Cuba), but they were noted for terrorizing Nicaraguan villages and bombing health clinics, schools, irrigation projects, power plants, oil pipelines, ports and bridges (Roberts 1990). For a while, RENAMO (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* – 'Mozambican National Resistance Movement') played a similar role in southern Africa on behalf of South Rhodesia and the Apartheid regime (cf. Box 4.7).

Autocracies are often successful at using paramilitaries in counterinsurgency. Russia has been able to successfully suppress the vast majority of the insurgencies that it has faced in the last century this way (Byman 2016). Paramilitary organizations tend to have the same political views as military hardliners and can be used effectively by the regime to uphold the *status quo* (Mazzei 2009).

Though paramilitaries often receive some sort of funding from the state, they are also largely self-funded, usually by being involved in black market activity, illegally selling weapons, drugs or other valuable commodities such as oil and diamonds (Naylor 2017) – cf. **resource curse**. They may also develop a system of taxation or side payments in exchange for protection (Saab & Taylor 2009). This is particularly the case in scenarios where they control large rural areas (Grajales 2017).

There is no consensus over whether or not a 'death squad' is a type of paramilitary group or *vice versa*. We see these two groups as very similar but with slight differences. A paramilitary group consists of armed men that are organized on a military model and are dependent on the existing armed forces, while also autonomous in terms of their tactics. A death squad has more structural, tactical and strategic autonomy from the regular army and police than a paramilitary organization. The death squad may be considered to be a comparatively smaller and more clandestine and shadowy organization that preys on regime opponents. Paramilitaries (like militias) can incorporate **youth movements** and actively recruit children (cf. Box 8.5). Death squads are not known for this.

A death squad differs from paramilitaries because its primary activities involve carrying out extrajudicial killings, massacres, and/or enforced disappearances. However, like paramilitaries, death squads enable the state to have plausible deniability (Sluka 2000). The state never takes responsibility for the atrocities committed. Some of these atrocities are quite significant. The Contras were responsible for killing as many as 8,000 civilians and assassinating as many as 910 state officials (Brody 1985). As mentioned, the usage of both paramilitaries and death squads causes violence levels to escalate in conflict settings.

Paramilitary forces sometimes identify themselves as self-defense units, but they are largely aggressive and are more likely to commit **human rights** abuses compared to insurgencies that they target. Paramilitaries might also be involved in controlling territory and municipalities, while death squads are usually only involved in extrajudicial



killings, kidnappings and other violent acts (Sanford 2003). A paramilitary organization is also more likely to receive funding and training from state authorities than a death squad, and it may be harder for the state to distance itself.

Death squads are distinct enough from the state. Nevertheless, because many of the members come from the **armed forces**, death squads are usually linked to the state's security apparatus or possibly some rogue element of it, though technically, they are autonomous from the state. They are also not a lone actor, and have many members involved that may be divided into small cells. There is also a tiered system with a leader at the top, along with other positions such as hitmen, drivers and look-outs. The head may have more direct links with other security forces and may be responsible for recruiting and paying off the foot soldiers. In other cases, the foot soldiers may not know who the leader of the organization is. Death squads can also be distinguished from vigilantism (cf. Box 1.6), as they are not spontaneous organizations and are much better planned, financed and executed.

Death squads are well equipped with weapons, often because members were already in possession of them. To avoid being noticed, death squad members usually do not wear uniforms, though sometimes they may wear masks. In the case of the DDS *(Davao Death Squad)* in the Philippines, the death squad members did not wear uniforms, only baseball caps, and jackets and buttoned shirts to hide firearms and knives, but no masks. They rode around on motorcycles with no license plates.

Paramilitary units are usually recruited from elite, well-trained portions of a country's military and police force from members or units that have been made redundant or other breakaway units. Active-duty military officers were recruited to join paramilitaries in Colombia, with the AUC having a huge membership of 80,000 at its height. The recruitment of death squad members also usually comes from the secret police forces, special counterinsurgency units (cf. **intelligence services**), government soldiers, regular police members, **mercenaries** and expelled police officers. Death squads may also recruit members of the military or police who are in need of more income. In the case of Brazil, a police officer could be working at a desk by day and working covertly for a death squad by night (Scheper-Hughes 2006).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Death squads and paramilitaries are prevalent around the world and have usually been used by non-democratic regimes as a tool of repression that blurs private and public interests. The privatization of state violence most negatively impacts civilians. Instead of security forces being used to defend a nation's borders, armed men are used to suppress internal 'threats' from civilians directly. Paramilitary organizations and death squads have been responsible for millions of deaths and hundreds of thousands of disappearances. Case in point, from the period 1980 to 2000, over 300,000 people have 'disappeared' (Sluka 2000). In spite of this, their establishment is encouraged, or at least tolerated by the state, risking the state's monopoly over the use of force. They illustrate the deterioration of the rule of law in non-democratic regimes and the militarization of both state and society.

Death squads, in particular, are also significant because they are the embodiment of state terror (Box 3.13). Death squads are how authoritarian regimes deal with political opponents and members of different ethnic and religious groups that supposedly pose a threat to the regime's rule. Death squads gun down members of the **opposition** and engage in different acts of torture (Box 7.6). Yury Zhukov (2007) argues that regime type affects freedom of action of death squads and paramilitary groups. Authoritarian regimes face few constraints when combating revolts and face little pressure to minimize the use of force.

Paramilitaries and death squads enable the state to have plausible deniability (Sluka 2000: 227). The state never takes responsibility for the atrocities committed. From 1947-1949, the Soviet Union engaged in a brutal enemy-centric counterinsurgency campaign in western and southwestern Ukraine against the *Ukrainian Insurgent Army* (UPA), a secessionist movement. The Kremlin used Ukrainian non-state actors to conduct violence on the USSR's behalf. The usage of both paramilitaries and death squads causes violence levels to escalate (Zhukov 2007).

Death squads also affect the **legitimacy** of the state and encourage a culture of impunity, though they sometimes operate with the public's consent, as has been the case with the upper and middle classes in Brazil. They operate with immunity from any sort of prosecution and can threaten witnesses and intimidate judges. They are also not brought to trial due to inefficiencies in the **judiciary**. For other countries, such as in Central America, the death squads' pursuit of impoverished citizens has deeply affected the public's **trust** in the state.

Once death squads and paramilitary organizations are created, they are often difficult to control and may be able to evade the government and develop their own agenda (Dasgupta 2009). In Central America, the paramilitaries were more violent than the insurgencies that were assigned to fight, and both the paramilitaries and the death squads paid no attention to the notion of human rights.

ORIGIN It is disputable when the term death squad was first used. One of the earliest versions of a death squad may have been in Argentina in the 1840s or early 1850s. Dictator General Juan Manuel de Rosas created a death squad group called the *Mazorcas* to carry out extrajudicial killings of his opponents. The group comprised members of the police but Rosas kept an official distance from them. More death squads served at the behest of authoritarian regimes all over Latin America, including Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru, during the Cold War (Campbell & Brenner 2002). In the Latin American context, death squads engaged in non-institutionalized forms of violence to preserve the economic and political *status quo* (Peralta & Beverly 1980). Due to an endless supply of US military funding, this helped reinforce the belief that the military had a right to use violent

repression against the **opposition** (Malloy & Seligson 1987).

Though death squads have been prevalent in Latin America, they are not unique to the region or the Cold War period. Death squads also appeared in Germany, Romania, and Africa; South African death squads operating with the support of the Apartheid regime (Box 4.7) formed in the 1960s. South African death squads also operated in Namibia in the 1970s and 1980s to fight against Black African political parties.

LITERATURE Much has been written about where death squads and paramilitaries emerge, usually in conflict and violence literature. One of the themes in the literature is what explains the emergence of these types of groups. Death squads often emerge in settings where there is an **oligarchy**, which has a monopoly over the country's resources and wealth. They also emerge in states where there may be a significant degree of wealth for parts of the population. In contrast to **warlords**, death squads and paramilitaries do not just emerge in failed states (cf. **state fragility & failure**); they emerge with the complicity of the state (Mazzei 2009). In contrast to organized crime, the act of violence is not utilized to financially benefit members of these groups directly. As stated previously, they also tend to emerge in non-democratic regimes, particularly during a conflict.

Death squads have often been formed to defend the interests of the wealthy or other elite groups, while paramilitaries tend to have the same political views as military hardliners (Mazzei 2009: 30). Paramilitary organizations and death squads are often set up to protect property rights against landless peasants and to prevent any sort of agrarian counter-reform (Grajales 2011). Both groups use violence to protect the established order and are never attempting to overthrow it. They enable the state to perpetuate violence against state enemies while still maintaining a clean international appearance and plausible deniability (Grajales 2011). Death squads are also usually right-wing and counter-revolutionary in that they oppose any group that aims to challenge the *status quo* (Sluka 2000). They are more likely to emerge in societies where there is an alliance between the military and the economic elite. The ideological orientation of paramilitary organizations has been mostly right-wing, but there have been left-wing paramilitaries as well.

Scholars have also investigated why individuals join these violent groups. Though recruits join out of some grassroots activism and not just for a salary, financial gain is a big motivation for many death squad members. In the case of the DDS, which targets criminals in the Philippines, members are paid much more than they would normally, earning as much as $2,000 per operation (Ezrow 2017). While some DDS members were recruited from the security apparatus, many recruits were either unemployed or petty criminals. Due to this financial incentive, the DDS was able to grow from only ten members to 500 by 2009 (Breuil & Rozema 2009).

As mentioned, scholars have noted that paramilitaries and death squads are both tools of repressive regimes to deal with the opposition and maintain order, especially in cases where the traditional military is hesitant to fire on their people (Rummel 1994; Sluka 2000). Both groups' success is not dependent on being considered legitimate domestically or by the international community. Paramilitaries sometimes emerge in states that are unable or unwilling to maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of force. Paramilitaries might be used to fight against an insurgency or some other organized (or semi-organized) violent non-state group.

As for death squads, they are often sub-contracted by the state to avoid being associated with the atrocities committed. In other words, the state allows and/or tacitly supports death squads to do the dirty work that it does not want to be legally liable for. They are used on behalf of the political establishment to handle targeted kidnappings and killings, massacres, ethnic cleansing and forcible resettlements that the state does not want to be associated with. For example, in Argentina, during military rule (1976-1983), death squads were used by the regime to kidnap the children of 'subversives' and torture them in front of their parents and *vice versa*. Death squads aim to eliminate the leaders of these 'subversive' movements and terrorize or kill their sympathizers; in contrast to paramilitary organizations, death squads mostly target civilians (Gurr 1988). States may also subcontract work with paramilitary units when facing international constraints. For example, Serbs mobilized paramilitary units during the Bosnian conflict in order to avoid international condemnation.

In addition to operating in areas and in ways that the government wants to avoid directly being involved in, paramilitaries are set up by authoritarian regimes to offset the power of the regular military. This is in line with **coup-proofing** the regime to prevent the military from attaining too much power and posing a direct challenge to the dictator. These paramilitaries are also staffed by loyalists and are tasked with monitoring the activities of the military and other elites (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz 2017). Paramilitaries are the first group that a dictator may turn to deal with domestic unrest (**protests & uprisings**). For example, in Libya, Muammar al-Qaddafi's first line of defense was his paramilitaries, not the regular army.

CLASSIFICATIONS There is considerable overlap and ambiguity among the existing terms, as the scholarship has not yet reached a consensus on these concepts. In some cases, a paramilitary organization is also a death squad because the organization is large and set up to offset the regular forces, but it mainly engages in torture and killings of innocent civilians (see the example of the *Tonton Macoutes*). As for paramilitary organizations, there is some distinction between left and right-wing paramilitary groups. There may also be a difference between groups that have more autonomy from the state and those that have less autonomy. The death squads in El Salvador during its civil war in the 1970s and 1980s were closely associated with the right-wing ARENA



party, while it has been harder to trace the death squads from Brazil in the 1990s.

EXAMPLES There are numerous examples of paramilitaries and death squads that have been established to terrorize the population. The *Tonton Macoutes* was a paramilitary death squad in Haiti set up by personalist dictator François Duvalier in 1959. The Haitians nicknamed this warlord-led goon squad the 'Tonton Macoutes,' after the Creole translation for a mythological bogeyman, about an 'uncle' *(tonton)* who kidnaps and punishes obstreperous children by snaring them in a gunnysack *(macoute)* and carrying them off to be consumed at breakfast. Their official name was the *Volunteers for National Security* (*Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale* – VSN). Unlike most death squads, the group was officially part of the Duvalier regime, though it was never part of the regular **armed forces**. At its height, the group had more than 10,000 members, who wore a uniform of straw hats, denim shirts and sunglasses. This casual look contrasted with the machetes they carried, which they used indiscriminately to instill terror.

The group was set up to provide information for the Duvalier regime and detect any subversion. Like other death squads, they were used to strike terror into anyone who opposed Duvalier. Their methods were particularly violent. Showing no mercy toward civilians, they would often stone people and light them on fire, and people would often disappear at night. Dead bodies were showcased in order to intimidate the public. Even the smallest infraction could lead to a violent reprisal by the group. Because they were poorly paid, they often resorted to stealing and exacting private contributions by force (Ferguson 1988). In total, the group slaughtered more than 600,000 Haitians (Fuller & Wilentz 1991).

In Guatemala, the *Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes* was founded by disgruntled Guatemalan army officers in 1963. They practiced a scorched earth campaign, razing 626 Mayan villages. *Mano Blanco* was another death squad that was involved in the kidnapping of Archbishop Mario Casariego in 1968 in order to provoke a **coup**. Though most of the violence took place between 1980 and 1982, selective **assassinations** continued up into the 1990s (Sanford 2003). The Guatemalan paramilitaries kidnapped, tortured to death and buried peasants in hidden graves.

In the Colombian conflict, paramilitaries have been commonplace. One of the most notable paramilitary organizations was the *United Self-Defence Forces* (AUC), which fought against leftist guerrillas such as the FARC. The paramilitary organizations were particularly violent and were responsible for 80% of the killings (Sanford 2003: 76). Most of the victims were unarmed civilians, often people who worked for NGOs, churches, unions and community activists. Even as late as 2002, paramilitaries killed far more civilians than guerrilla combatants but were barely a target of the government (Grajales 2017).

In El Salvador, death squads were organized by the armed forces to destroy entire villages, including women and children, with a total disregard for human decency or the rule of law. The ARENA party directed all activity in association with the security force members. ARENA party leader Roberto D'Aubuisson sometimes gave directives directly, while at other times, underlings of the party took their own initiative. ARENA was essentially an umbrella organization for a diverse group of death squads, all controlled by the same paymaster. The prevalence of so many death squads gave the appearance of mass participation and multiple sources of responsibility (Arnson et al. 2000). In the dirty war in El Salvador, a UN report found that 10% of the deaths were due to right-wing death squads.

In Nicaragua, the 'Contras' (*Frente Democratico Nacional* – 1981-1988) were one of the most ruthless right-wing paramilitary groups. They comprised recruits from the former National Guard of the Somoza dictatorship. Various factions from the Somoza regime started a series of rebellions to overthrow the Sandinista government, cooperating only very loosely (Miranda & Ratliff 1992). Their official role was to undermine the military support structure in Nicaragua from the Cuban government (Roberts 1990: 78). In Nicaragua, the Contras terrorized Nicaraguan villages, bombed health clinics, schools, irrigation projects, power plants, oil pipelines, ports and bridges.

This usage of irregular violent groups continued with the second regime of Daniel Ortega. In 2018, in Nicaragua, after students protested against the government's bungled response to wildfires that ravaged the coast, paramilitaries were used to attack and scatter the students. Paramilitaries were used again two weeks later to go after pensioners protesting against cuts to public pensions. Paramilitaries have become more formalized, becoming Ortega's own forces that he uses to attack, harass and imprison opposition members (Thaler & Mosinger 2022).

Under the rapidly autocratizing rule of Rodrigo Duterte, death squads emerged again in the Philippines, ostensibly to target drug dealers and drug users, with little attention to the rule of law. In Duterte's 'war on drugs,' there were a staggering number of unlawful killings that took place. The new strategy of extrajudicial killings leaves no day in court for the victims. This is not the first time that Filipinos have faced the terrors of violent non-state groups that the state has supported. Under dictator Ferdinand Marcos, from the 1960s to the 1980s, paramilitary forces were used to target various rebel groups and other innocent civilians. One of the most notable atrocities was when 20 protesters were killed by paramilitary forces in Escalante, Philippines, in September of 1985 (Youngblood 1986).

MEASUREMENT ISSUES There is no clear definition of what constitutes a death squad or a paramilitary organization. Unlike **terrorist groups**, there are few databases listing paramilitary and death squads, though many scholars have put together an appendix of different groups from a regional perspective. It is also difficult to prove the government's role in supporting or dictating the activities of death squads. Providing proof usually comes at a great cost to local human rights organizations and monitors, who are

themselves often among the prime targets of the death squads.

The *Pro-Government Militias Database* (PGMD) by Sabine C. Carey, Neil J. Mitchell and Will Lowe (Carey et al. 2013) is updated with the involvement of colleagues (Carey et al. 2022) and is a significant resource for studying pro-government militias (PGMs), which include groups often associated with paramilitary activities and sometimes death squads. The PGMD provides extensive data on the characteristics, behavior, life cycle, and organization of over 500 PGMs across the globe from 1981 to 2014. It includes information on how these groups are linked to governments, their recruitment methods, and the types of violence in which they engage. Its definition of 'pro-government militia' incorporates **mercenaries & private military companies**.

IMPACT ON POLICY Because death squads and paramilitary organizations have been responsible for gross **human rights** abuses, there has been renewed attention paid to these types of violent groups by human rights organizations, international organizations and some democratic states. Overall, while international law imposes certain obligations on paramilitary groups, enforcement is challenging due to their often-clandestine nature and the political complexities involved in holding states accountable for creating and protecting such entities.

NEW FRONTIERS In spite of all of the research done on terrorism – or violence by a non-state actor against the state and its citizens, very little research has been done on state terror or the use of terror (Box 3.13) by the state against its citizens. This is in spite of the fact that there are more examples of state terror than of **terrorism** (Sluka 2000). Others concur that most of the terror since WWII has been carried out by states, most of which have been authoritarian regimes. In the 2022 war in Ukraine, Vladimir Putin mobilized Chechen *Kadyrovcy* paramilitaries, private military companies and death squads. The 2022 slaughter of civilians in Bucha may have involved not just the Russian military but death squad violence. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine will, unfortunately, provide new evidence of death squads and paramilitaries as Russia engages in more dirty tactics and escalates attacks on civilians. More work needs to be done to understand the impact of death squads and paramilitary organizations, what their relationship is to the state, and in what ways they serve dictatorships beyond **coup-proofing** and **repression**.

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Youth Movements as Paramilitary Organizations

Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud auf seinem Eid! Ein Bilderbuch für Gross und Klein
(Don't Trust A Fox On His Green Heath, Nor The Jew On His Oath! A picture book for grown-ups and little ones)
Illustrated by Elvira Bauer, published by *Der Stürmer*, 1936
(Nazi propaganda for young children)

Militarized youth movements, such as the *Komsomol* (Коммунистический союз молодёжи – 'Комсомол') and its entry-level 'Little Octobrists' (7–9 years) and 'Young Pioneers' (8–15 years) in the Soviet Union or the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) in Nazi Germany, serve as archetypes of paramilitary youth organizations. Less known is the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* in Fascist Italy. Established in 1926, this organization aimed to promote loyalty to the state and instill fascist ideology among Italian youth. It also included various age-specific groups, such as the *Figlio della Lupa* ('Son of the She-Wolf') for younger children and the *Avanguardisti* for older boys, who received military training and ideological education. The *Balilla* was instrumental in creating a highly nationalistic and politically active youth population loyal to Mussolini's regime.

These groups are characterized by their structured, military-like training and **indoctrination** activities aimed at preparing young people for future roles in the state or party apparatus. These cases had an overwhelming ideological component, designed to instill the dominant **ideology** of their respective regimes – **Fascism** in Italy, **Communism** in the Soviet Union and **Nazism** in Germany. The primary goal of these organizations was to create loyal followers who would support and perpetuate the regime's goals.

These youth movements provided military-style training to prepare members for potential service in the armed forces. This training included physical fitness, discipline, and sometimes direct military skills such as shooting and marching. Such movements were tools of state mobilization, used to harness the energy and enthusiasm of youth for national projects and to reinforce regime **legitimacy**. They often involved mass participation in state-sponsored events and public demonstrations of loyalty. By engaging young people in organized activities, these movements helped socialize them into the values and norms of the regime while also exerting control over their social development and interactions.

Under **totalitarianism**, the *Komsomol* and *Hitlerjugend* played crucial roles in shaping the political landscape of their respective countries by ensuring that future generations were aligned with the regime's values and objectives. In doing so, they functioned similarly to **paramilitaries**, albeit with a focus on youth indoctrination rather than immediate combat roles.

The concept of paramilitary youth organizations intersects with broader discussions on paramilitaries and child soldiers. Paramilitaries are organized groups that are structured similarly to military forces but are not part of the official armed forces. They often operate with some level of state support or approval and can be used for internal security, political repression, or other state interests. Militarized youth movements often serve as feeder systems for paramilitary groups by providing basic military training and ideological indoctrination, preparing young members for future roles in paramilitary or regular military forces.

While militarized youth movements do not typically engage directly in combat like child soldiers (cf. Box 8.5), they share similarities in terms of indoctrination and training. These organizations socialize children into accepting violence and military discipline from a young age, which can blur the lines between youth movements and child soldiering. However, these movements primarily focus on future preparation rather than immediate combat involvement. Also, the recruitment of children is

usually by pressuring parents or obligatory participation, not forced abduction.

The dimension of sexual violence is also very different: child soldiers (separated from parents or legal guardians), especially girls, are particularly vulnerable to being forced into sexual slavery. For youth in paramilitaries, there are no data (to my knowledge on systemic sexual violence); also, youth organizations typically segregate sexes. However, where they did not, like when Baldur von Schirach integrated all youth movements into Hitler Youth in order to gain complete control over youth between the ages of ten and eighteen (due to mandatory participation), adolescents also gained newfound independence and freedom in the organization. This led to sexual adventurism and promiscuity: young boys and girls socializing formed sexual relationships; girls frequented train stations and barracks for one-night stands with soldiers, and soon unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) were on the rise, while homosexuality in the boys' branch of the organization alarmed the leadership (Champion 2023).

In non-totalitarian dictatorships, militarized youth movements can also be seen as part of a broader strategy to maintain power by ensuring loyalty among future generations. The *Futuwah* ('Youth Vanguard') movement was established in the late 1970s by the Iraqi *Ba'ath* Party; *Ashbal Saddam* ('Saddam Lion Cubs') emerged after Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War. The latter served as a feeder program to the *Fedayeen Saddam* ('Saddam's Men of Sacrifice'), a paramilitary organization controlled by Saddam's son Uday. In 2015, Russia set up the *All-Russian Military Patriotic Social Movement* (Юнармия – *Yunarmiya*), a direct continuation of the Soviet practices but ultra-nationalist.

By instilling ideological conformity from a young age, these regimes aim to create a population that is less likely to challenge their authority. This strategy is similar to the use of foreign recruits or legionnaires by authoritarian regimes to reduce ties between the military and society (like the historical Zulu age regiments, cf. Gump 1988), thereby minimizing the risk of coups and uprisings (**coup-proofing**). However, save from mandatory enlistment, the motivations behind adolescents' reasons to join such movements are understudied (Muldoon et al. 2008).

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CHALLENGERS

Anti-Party Candidates

Only dead fish go with the flow
– African proverb (according to the Internet)

Anti-party candidates are simply candidates who reject working with parties or an established or institutionalized organization. They are politicians who prefer to subordinate political parties to their personal needs (cf. **personalization**). Anti-party candidates are connected to anti-establishment discourse and, in some cases, authoritarian populism (**populism**). These candidates use this type of discourse in order to garner more support from dissatisfied voters. Anti-party candidates describe themselves as outsiders who are acting outside of the system (Schedler 1996; Ignazi 1992). They present themselves as agents of change, with politics as the root of all evil. They are suspicious of institutions, and instead want to personalize them by creating personalized parties (Archer 1992).

Anti-party candidates rise in different ways: some have split from their previous parties, and others gain prominence in regional politics, such as Fernando Collor of Brazil (1990-1992) and Alberto Fujimori of Peru (1990-2000). Some are successful political entrepreneurs who veil their ties with politics in order to launch themselves as independent candidates (i.e., Silvio Berlusconi, Ross Perot, and (when running for his first term) Donald Trump). In some cases, they are just flash candidates who emerge in flash parties that do not last very long. Their emergence is often indicative of weak institutions in new



democracies (Cabada & Tomšič 2016).

Anti-party candidates tend to engage in attack politics. They are confrontational and use combative language – such as the rhetoric associated with fighting wars. They also engage in crude and undiplomatic attacks and other aggressive tactics. They may appear to be neutral and above the gridlock of politics but are actually far from it. They can be uncompromising and may be unwilling to be patient enough to work through the rules and institutions that govern democratic processes (Vogelezang 2019). Once in power, they often aim to destroy the democratic institutions that stand in their way and are more interested in repudiating the system (Levitsky & Cameron 2003; Mainwaring 1998; Schedler 1996).

In consolidated **democracies**, anti-party candidates rarely succeed because strong parties can prevent their rise. In countries with weak parties, the voters are more likely to vote based on image, candidate characteristics and personal connections to a politician rather than based on **ideology**, making anti-party candidates more common and more successful. Some anti-party candidates do not care about ideology and base the party on their persona, while others have been attracted to populist platforms (Ezrow 2011). Anti-party candidates also rise in instances where the labor sector has become informal, and there are weak connections between parties and labor unions. The spread of mass media, and later, social media, has also incentivized politicians to use their connections with voters to avoid having to rely on a party for their future. Former president Fernando Cardoso once remarked that in Brazil, it is more useful for an aspiring politician to own a TV station than a political party (Sanchez-Sibony 2022 29).

In Russia, in the decade following the breakup of the USSR, parties were weak and had little control over nominations. This allowed many candidates to run and win office as independents, leading to a *Duma* (parliament) filled with independent candidates (Mainwaring 1998). This made it difficult for Russia ever to establish an institutionalized party system that could meaningfully check the executive (Moser 1995).

Because anti-party politicians are unrestrained by a party, this leads to erratic and disjointed policies. They cannot govern effectively because they are political neophytes. Without political skills and knowledge, they often try to circumvent the political process. In Latin America, anti-party candidates have been frequently elected, leading to ineffective and undemocratic governments (Levitsky & Cameron 2003). When Alberto Fujimori won the election in 1992 in Peru as an anti-system candidate running with a non-party called *Cambio 90* (which lacked a platform, base and structure), his main goal was just staying in office. He governed by dismantling institutions that stood in his way such as the **legislature** and the **judiciary**, and the **opposition** parties were too weak to stop him (Levitsky & Cameron 2003).

Anti-party candidates are unable to provide accountability and the systems are too unstable. We can see the effects of this with some examples. Pakistan has struggled with anti-party candidates, as parties embody the personalities of specific politicians. Most recently, Prime Minister Imran Khan was ousted in 2022, joining a long line of Pakistani prime ministers who failed to complete a single five-year term. Thus, anti-party parties and candidates are connected with poor performance of the larger system.

Donald Trump is also an anti-party candidate who decided to run with the *Republican Party*, requiring total loyalty to him personally, causing the *Republican Party* to abandon its commitment to its core values. This impact has been long-lasting. A study in the US showed that there has been a 'Trump effect.' Respondents react positively to candidates employing anti-establishment rhetoric. Though voters do not explicitly claim to want this, this translates into voters voting for candidates who are poorly experienced and ill-equipped to govern (Hansen & Treul 2021).

Anti-party candidates are both a consequence and cause of party system decay and volatility: they are a sign of dealignment. As a result of a dealignment, citizens may be less likely to participate in election campaigns. Citizens are also more vulnerable to manipulation and demagogic appeals (Dalton et al. 2000) (cf. Box 4.6). The party is important to habituating the public and politicians to democratic norms and practices of debate and tolerance (Lipset 2000; Randall & Svåsand 2002). With anti-party candidates, the relationships that are critical to democracy between parties and citizens are not able to flourish.

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Civil Society & NGOs

If we want any significant development,
we must co-opt civil society
– Nelson Mandela

Civil society is pivotal in representing individual and collective interests outside the realms of government and business. Encompassing a diverse array of entities, including advocacy groups, grassroots movements, and faith-based organizations, such various entities play a crucial role in shaping public life and promoting societal wellbeing. Among these, non-governmental organizations stand out as organized, mission-driven entities addressing issues like **human rights** and environmental conservation. The interplay between civil society and political power is complex, as they often collaborate with governments while maintaining independence to ensure democratic accountability. This dynamic relationship is essential for understanding their impact on global governance and policy-making.

SEE ALSO As part of the **opposition** landscape, civil society is similarly subjected to **repression** and **co-optation** by regime actors. While **democratization** theories have identified a key role for civil society in and after **transitions** (i.e., **democratic consolidation**), not all the organizations it encompasses share democratic norms and goals, as shown in the entry on **uncivil society**.

DEFINITION Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) refer to a broad and comprehensive category that includes all associations that are different from states and able to represent individual and collective interests. It deals with the aggregate of non-governmental organizations, institutions, and individuals that operate outside of the government and the business sector and play a crucial role in shaping public life, addressing political power, and promoting the wellbeing of society. It encompasses a wide range of groups and activities, including advocacy groups, community organizations, grassroots movements, charitable organizations, and faith-based groups.

Among them, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are the most organized and purpose-based non-state actors. They are private, non-profit organizations that operate independently of government involvement. These organizations are typically driven by a specific mission or cause and address various social, economic, environmental, and humanitarian issues. NGOs can focus on a wide range of issues, including **human rights**, **democratization**, environmental conservation, healthcare, **education**, poverty alleviation (cf. **development**), conflict resolutions, and more.

The United Nations (UN) defines civil society as the 'third sector' alongside business and government, whereas the *World Bank* more specifically includes the wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious, or philanthropic considerations.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE CSOs and NGOs play a key role in complementing governmental efforts in several policy fields. They often work collaboratively with governments, businesses, and other stakeholders to achieve their goals and create positive social impact. In many cases, NGOs and associations may be useful in addressing gaps and in providing a variety of goods, assistance, and social services.

The relationships between NGOs, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and states are essential for analyzing the policy-making dynamics at all levels, particularly in sensitive policy fields, where states are dominant actors, like human rights, security and defense, conflict resolution and crisis management and political development, to name only those which are most studied.

NGOs have significant impacts across various policy fields. In international development, they have reinforced their agendas while maintaining links with states and operating within international organizations. Although achieving effectiveness remains challenging, NGO participation can be politically innovative if they maintain independence and neutrality (Irrera 2022).

In migration, especially in Europe, NGOs have been active in assisting migrants and refugees for decades. Partnering with states and EU initiatives, they perform a variety of functions to support vulnerable populations (Irrera 2019; Pries 2018). Scholars highlight the role of intermediaries, often better performed by civil society than the state, in providing goods and services and including marginalized citizens in government programs.

NGOs, in particular, have played an intermediary role for migrants and refugees, facilitating their



integration into host communities and mitigating poor governance effects (Ambrosini 2017). This role became crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic when NGOs provided essential services like shelter and food during lockdowns.

NGOs also contribute to strengthening the rule of law and anti-corruption policies. Comparative studies show that external actors often rely on local authorities and political elites for aid policies. Civil society groups and NGOs are vital in **democratization** efforts and reinforcing the rule of law by acting as both recipients of aid policies and enforcers of compliance with criteria. Understanding the distinction between formal and informal actors is crucial for analyzing post-conflict developments and responses to EU demands.

In hostile or authoritarian climates, NGOs have increasingly taken on innovative roles in intermediation and implementation, stepping into gaps left by states to protect vulnerable populations. The COVID-19 pandemic further legitimized their involvement, opening up spaces for policy debate between state and non-state actors.

A notable development is the emergence of non-governmental 'search and rescue' (SAR) operations in the Central Mediterranean since 2014. Initially complementing EU and state efforts, these operations have evolved into significant humanitarian activities, though they face criticism from populist political elites who view them as facilitating illegal migration.

In conflict zones, NGOs operate under severe security risks, with frequent attacks on humanitarian workers. Despite these dangers, many NGOs persist in their missions, highlighting the critical but precarious role they play in areas where state intervention is limited or absent. This situation underscores the dilemma faced by the humanitarian system: the need for increased civilian expertise amid growing conflicts versus the heightened vulnerability of aid workers.

ORIGIN The study of civil society actors is inherently multidisciplinary, incorporating insights from history, political philosophy, sociology, political science, and international relations (IR). The concept of civil society is multifaceted and challenging to define precisely, adding complexity to analyzing its nature, roles, and impact. A key aspect is understanding the *identity* of these actors, which include a diverse range of organizations, groups, and individuals outside government and market spheres. Examining their origins, goals, structures, and methods is crucial for evaluating their effectiveness and impact.

The *interaction* between civil society actors and political power is significant in scholarly analysis. This involves studying how these actors influence political outcomes through advocacy strategies, lobbying efforts, and negotiations with political institutions. The relationship between power and democracy within civil society is critical; scholars explore how civil society actors contribute to democratic processes by representing diverse voices, advocating for human rights, and holding power accountable. However, there is ongoing debate about the challenges civil society faces in maintaining independence while engaging with political power. The risk of **co-option** and the impact of funding sources are elements that shape this complex relationship.

Over time, the *capacity* of civil society to maintain independence amid political power has evolved. Historical factors, changes in communication technologies, and shifts in global governance structures influence the dynamics between civil society and political power. Scholars continue to explore these dynamics to deepen understanding of the role and impact of civil society actors in contemporary societies.

LITERATURE Most prominent historians and political philosophers unanimously agree on the fact that the concept of civil society is associated with the non-public sphere (Trentmann 2000; Rosanvallon 2000). Enlightenment thinkers, Locke, Hegel, and de Tocqueville offered distinct perspectives on the relationship between individuals and the state, the nature of political power, and the role of associations in a democratic society. Their ideas have had a lasting impact on political theory, shaping discussions on governance and individual rights.

John Locke (1632-1704) asserted that individuals possess natural rights to life, liberty, and property. Locke argued that people form governments through a social contract to secure these rights and protect themselves from the state of nature's potential chaos. Governments derive their **legitimacy** from the consent of the governed. The primary purpose of government is to protect individual rights. If a government fails in this duty or becomes tyrannical, individuals have the right to rebel and establish a new government that better safeguards their rights.

Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) had a different perspective. He emphasized the role of the state in realizing human freedom. He argued that the state is the embodiment of the ethical life of a community and for a close relationship between the individual and the state. In this perspective, the state and civil society should not be completely separated, but the first rather plays a crucial role in fostering ethical development and freedom within civil society.

Finally, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1589) explored the nature of democracy in America in his seminal work *Democracy in America* (1835-1840), observing the importance of voluntary associations in American society, which he believed played a pivotal role in maintaining democracy and preventing the tyranny of the majority.

Voluntary associations, such as community groups and civic organizations, provided a check on the power of the state and allowed individuals to participate actively in civic life. They were the 'habits of the heart' that contributed to the success of democracy by fostering a sense of responsibility and civic engagement among citizens.

In his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), German philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas delves into the historical development and transformation of the public sphere, examining its role in the legitimization of political power.

The public sphere is a domain in a society where private individuals come together to engage in critical discussion and debate about matters of common concern, serving as a space where citizens can engage in rational-critical debate, express their opinions, and contribute to the formation of public opinion. This is the basis upon which deliberative democracy is grounded, with the legitimacy of political power derived from the free and open deliberation of citizens. Political decisions are considered legitimate when they are the outcome of a communicative process that involves the active participation of citizens.

Habermas expressed concern about the erosion of the public sphere and the diminishing role of citizens in shaping political decisions and used to criticize the tendency of modern societies to be dominated by technocracy and bureaucratic structures, limiting the influence of ordinary citizens. In other words, any limitation to the role of CSOs could represent a challenge to democracy and its legitimacy.

In the IR scholarly community, despite the dominant state-centric views, the role exerted by civil society started to arise in terms of non-state actors. The term non-state actors may be quite general and refers to all actors that are of non-state character, as well as those who are not necessarily structured in an organization. It thus covers a wide range of actors who may offer several identities, interests and needs. International organizations (IOs), lobbies, corporations, NGOs and non-profit organizations can be considered non-state actors because they have members and internal management structure but no territory; they are autonomous but not sovereign and able to influence various policy fields at a global level (Charountaki & Irrera 2022).

When it comes to CSOs, debates are various and passionate. Prominent theoretical schools offer contrasting views on the role of civil society in international relations.

Realists view civil society as a tool of powerful states to advance their interests abroad; liberals perceive it as a positive force contributing to global governance, and Marxists as a potential vehicle for challenging and transforming the existing social and economic order.

The pluralist perspective rather recognizes the diversity of actors and interests in the international system and provides a framework for understanding the complexities of global politics in an era marked by the rise of non-state actors, interdependence, and the emergence of a global society. Theories on international democracy mainly focus on participation, relations with international governmental organizations (IGOs), and the application of **human rights** and universal principles to the global system. Reflections on how non-state actors can participate more in global policy-making combine with efforts to foster a more just, accountable, and participatory global order.

According to Larry Diamond (1994), a prominent American political scientist, CSOs play essential roles that only they can efficiently fulfill. First, CSOs constrain and limit state power to prevent authoritarianism and abuses, establishing checks and balances, upholding the rule of law, and protecting individual rights to ensure state authority is not unchecked.

CSOs also provide education for democracy, as an informed and educated citizenry is crucial for participating in democratic processes, making informed choices, and holding leaders accountable. This **education** fosters a culture that values democratic principles. Furthermore, CSOs offer channels for representation. Democratic governance requires mechanisms for citizens to express preferences and have them represented in decision-making processes, such as through free and fair elections, political parties, and institutions that represent diverse societal voices.

Civil society also recruits and trains leaders who understand democratic principles, uphold the rule of law, and are committed to serving the public interest. Additionally, CSOs facilitate conflict mediation and resolution. Constructively managing conflict is vital for democratic stability, requiring institutions and processes that mediate conflicts peacefully to foster social cohesion and prevent violence.

Finally, CSOs enhance accountability and responsiveness by ensuring leaders are accountable for their actions and government institutions respond to citizens' needs. This involves mechanisms like a free press, independent judiciary, and oversight institutions (Diamond 1994).

If Diamond's work contributed to the broader understanding of the conditions necessary for the establishment and maintenance of democratic systems, Samuel Huntington reflected on a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between political institutions and civil society. A multi-layered civil society, in his view, enhances the vibrancy of political life but also underscores the importance of fostering positive and constructive relations between societal actors and the formal structures of governance. The quality and nature of such relations influence the stability and effectiveness of political institutions. In democratic societies, a healthy and constructive relationship between civil society and political institutions is essential for the functioning of a robust democratic system. A solid democracy requires not only strong and effective political institutions but also an active and multi-layered civil society. A diverse civil society, with various groups and associations representing different interests, can contribute to a more dynamic and responsive political system.

Challenges may arise when the quality of relations between civil society and political institutions is strained. Issues such as **corruption**, lack of trust, or a weak rule of law can undermine the effectiveness of political institutions and erode public confidence.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The participation of NGOs in international institutions and the forms this participation takes is a central topic in theoretical debates. Scholars face significant challenges in studying NGOs and civil society due to the complexity and diversity of their roles. Contrary to the belief that NGOs emerge from declining state sov-



ereignty and maintain independence by avoiding political power, it is argued that these actors, especially NGOs, flourish under stable and effective governance. The dialogue between NGOs and political entities is broad, ranging from friction – where relationships are complex in areas like human rights – to open consultation, where NGOs provide expertise when political power is lacking. Cooperation occurs when both parties benefit: NGOs gain legitimacy and access to funding, while governments enhance representation and accountability.

The roles of NGOs in major global policy fields are part of a broader discussion on civil society's engagement in political participation, representation, and democratizing decision-making processes within IOs. These roles are difficult to measure and investigate due to their multifaceted nature. Global civil society cannot be reduced solely to NGOs, yet understanding it requires recognizing their influence. The practical configurations available to NGOs allow them to structure their interests, define their objectives, and determine how to engage with intergovernmental actors. Relationships with political power – whether positive or negative – have been crucial to the development and implementation of NGOs over the years.

CLASSIFICATIONS & MEASUREMENT Although NGOs typically resist categorization, scholars have developed several classifications, particularly in sensitive policy fields like humanitarian action. NGOs participate in interventions at various levels and interact with other actors within the humanitarian system through different methods. Operational NGOs engage directly in crises by mobilizing resources, implementing projects, and offering expertise. In contrast, campaigning NGOs participate indirectly by garnering public support and fundraising on a smaller scale (Willetts 2001).

Stoddard (2003) identifies three types of NGOs based on identity attributes: (i) Wilsonian organizations – named after President Woodrow Wilson, these NGOs emphasize cooperation and multilateralism with governments and international institutions (e.g., CARE). (ii) Dunantist organizations – named after Henry Dunant, founder of the *Red Cross*, these NGOs adhere to impartiality, neutrality, and independence (e.g., *Médecins Sans Frontières*). (iii) Faith-based organizations – these operate in alignment with religious principles (e.g., *Christian Aid, Islamic Relief*).

Regarding conflict management and humanitarian intervention, NGOs are categorized as: (a) Pragmatist Wilsonian NGOs – likely to work alongside interventions. (b) Principle-centered Dunantist NGOs – participation is contingent upon strict adherence to humanitarian principles. (c) Solidarist NGOs – focused on addressing the root causes of conflict. (d) Faith-based NGOs – guided by values of charity and compassion.

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Opposition – Parties & Movements

Opposition is not necessarily enmity; it is merely misused and made an occasion for enmity
– Sigmund Freud

Opposition parties and movements are pivotal in shaping political landscapes by challenging the ruling government's policies and ideologies. They serve as a critical counterbalance, offering alternative visions and representing underrepresented segments of society. Operating within and outside formal political structures, these entities engage in various activities, from participating in elections to organizing protests and civil disobedience. Their significance is highlighted by their role in historical transformations, such as the civil rights movement in the United States and the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa. These movements not only advocate for change but also influence global political dynamics by fostering democratic accountability and innovation.

DEFINITION Opposition parties and movements can be defined as those political entities or organized groups that challenge the policies, actions, or ideologies of the ruling government or dominant political forces within a country. They provide an alternative vision, critique the decisions made by those in power, and often seek to represent the interests of segments of the population not adequately served by the ruling party or government. They can arise for various reasons, including political, social, economic, or cultural grievances.

They typically operate within the framework of a country's political system, participating in **elections**, parliamentary debates, and other political processes. They aim to win public support and, ultimately, gain power to implement their own policies and agendas. Opposition movements, on the contrary, may operate both within and outside formal political structures. They can include grassroots organizations, social movements, advocacy groups, and civil society organizations that mobilize people around specific issues or causes. These movements often use tactics such as protests, demonstrations, petitions, and civil disobedience to raise awareness, pressure the government, and effect change (Maguire 1995; Kolinsky 2016).

SEE ALSO This entry is, of course, directly related to aspects of authoritarian behavior like **co-optation** and **repression**. In addition, opposition is fully associated with organizing and mobilizing for **protests & uprisings,** and it plays a key role in **democratization** and **transitions**.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Opposition parties and movements vary widely across different countries and regions, each with unique goals, **ideologies**, and methods of operation. Civil resistance movements, for example, have been instrumental in achieving significant social and political transformations throughout history, from the civil rights movement in the US to the anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa (Box 4.7). Nonviolent resistance often attracts broader support, garners sympathy from the international community, and can lead to lasting change without the destructive consequences associated which is usually produced by violent conflict (Schock 2013; Chenoweth 2021).

ORIGIN The study of opposition parties and movements has its roots in political science and sociology, with scholars examining various aspects of political dissent, opposition, and resistance. Further studies, mainly in the IR field, concentrated on civil resistance movements and activism in global issues. The modern study of social movements emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, influenced by scholars such as Max **Weber** and Emile Durkheim. Theories of class struggle and social change and concepts like authority, **bureaucracy** and social solidarity contributed to understanding the dynamics of collective action and dissent.

In the twentieth century, Maurice Duverger (1952) and Robert Michels (in Linz 2017) examined the role of political parties in democratic systems, including how opposition parties function within political institutions and compete for power. Comparative politics studies introduced the analysis of political systems, institutions, and behavior across different countries. By using case studies and comparative methods, investigations demonstrated how political dissent varies across cultures, regimes, and historical contexts.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Charles Tilly (1998) and Sidney Tarrow (1993) developed the field of contentious politics (cf. Box 5.8), which examines the causes and consequences of political contention, including social movements, **protests**, and **revolutions**.

Globalization pushed scholars to shift their focus on transnational movements and activism, which transcend national boundaries and address global issues. This research explores how opposition movements collaborate across borders, leverage new communication technologies, and navigate transnational political networks.

LITERATURE The literature on political parties and movements is vast and encompasses various disciplines such as political science, sociology, history, and anthropology. The issue of political opposition and its various meanings across different political systems has been a topic of ongoing interest and study, albeit with perhaps less advancement compared to other aspects of comparative politics. While Robert **Dahl's** seminal work in 1965 laid an important foundation for understanding opposition within Western democracies, subsequent studies have expanded the scope to include different political systems and various dimensions of opposition. Other scholars such as Ionescu & Madariaga (1968), Schapiro (1972), Tokes (1979), Kolinsky (1988), and Rodan



(1996) have contributed to the field with comparative studies. These works explored aspects of opposition that were not addressed in Dahl's original study, offering insights into how opposition functions within different political contexts beyond Western democracies and the realm of political parties alone.

Despite the passage of time since Dahl's initial work, there is still much to be understood about the nature and role of opposition in political systems worldwide (Blondel 1997). The application of the 'theory of collective action' to understand social movements, particularly those aimed at challenging authorities and addressing grievances, provides a framework for analyzing the dynamics of opposition and political change. This theory identifies several key factors that contribute to the emergence and success of social movements, as well as the interactions between challengers and the authorities.

Specifically, this theory highlights four macro-societal conditions that are conducive to the formation of social movements: dissatisfaction with the *status quo,* the presence of an ideological framework that motivates action, the capacity to mobilize resources and support, and opportunities for collective action to occur. These conditions set the stage for individuals and groups to engage in various forms of opposition, ranging from conventional methods such as petitions and protests to more unconventional tactics like strikes.

The relevance of expectations regarding the participation of others in collective action is emphasized as well. The decision to engage in opposition activities is influenced by the perceived benefits and costs of participation, which in turn depend on the expectations of how many others will join the movement. This dynamic plays a crucial role in shaping the scale and intensity of social movements. Lastly, the conflict dynamic between challengers and targets, as well as the authorities, manifests in various ways, including negotiations, coercion, and repression. Understanding this dynamic is essential for comprehending the strategies and tactics employed by both sides during opposition movements.

When applied to historical events such as the overthrow of communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989, these theories offer insights into how seemingly powerful regimes were toppled by popular movements lacking prior leadership and organization. They also explain the **transition** to democracy in some cases and the emergence of authoritarianism or xenophobic **ultra-nationalism** in others, as seen in the breakup of Yugoslavia and subsequent civil war.

Another strand of literature that has added meaningful insights to the notion of participation and opposition is the one about civil resistance (Skilling 1997; Tokes 2016). Even in this case, a wide range of theoretical perspectives, case studies, and analytical frameworks are encompassed by examining the dynamics, strategies, and outcomes of nonviolent resistance movements. Gene Sharp (1973; 1993) is considered one of the pioneers in the study of nonviolent resistance. His books, including *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973) and *From Dictatorship to Democracy* (1993), provide comprehensive analyses of the principles, strategies, and tactics of nonviolent resistance movements. Other works have investigated the tactics and strategies employed by the civil rights movement in the US as one of the first examples of nonviolent resistance in challenging systemic oppression (King 1996).

Chenoweth and Stephan (2008) have offered empirical research comparing the effectiveness of violent and nonviolent resistance movements. They argue that nonviolent resistance is often more successful in achieving its objectives than violent insurgency. They define civil resistance as a *"Nonviolent resistance is a civilian-based method used to wage conflict through social, psychological, economic, and political means without the threat or use of violence"* (Stephan & Chenoweth 2008: 7). The main features of these movements are the absence of physical violence or the threat of physical violence against human beings; the provision of social or political objective and the non-institutional and indeterminate nature.

CLASSIFICATIONS & MEASUREMENT Political opposition includes political parties, factions, or individuals who oppose the policies or actions of the ruling government, offering alternative policies or seeking to replace the ruling party through elections. Social movements are organized groups of people who advocate for social change or protest against globally perceived injustices. Several examples can be investigated. Labor movements often involve labor unions negotiating with employers or staging strikes and protests to achieve their goals. Human rights activists focus on promoting and protecting **human rights**, as well as the rights of marginalized groups such as refugees, minorities, and Indigenous peoples. In addition, regional or ethnic movements represent the interests of specific regions or ethnic groups within a country, seeking greater autonomy, cultural recognition, or political representation for their communities.

Other groups are committed to the protection of the environment, conservation of natural resources, and action to address climate change or to the promotion of religious freedom and tolerance.

Some of them may represent the interests of specific categories, like student movements, addressing issues such as education reform, student rights, and social justice, and often mobilizing through protests, sit-ins, and other forms of direct action. Others focus on addressing global issues such as poverty, inequality, and injustice and advocate for international cooperation, solidarity among marginalized groups, and systemic reforms to address the root causes of global problems.

They can vary greatly in their goals, strategies, and tactics, but they all play a crucial role in representing interests, promoting social and political change, and holding those in power accountable (Helms 2004; Norton 2013).

Opposition parties and movements can be classified in various ways based on different criteria, including their objectives, strategies, ideological orientations, and organizational structures. The most important and investigated is the last one.

Organizational structure Opposition may be exerted by traditional political parties, which are formal organizations with established leadership structures, membership dues, and hierarchical decision-making processes, by social movements, which are rather informal networks of activists, volunteers, and supporters mobilized around specific causes or grievances, often characterized by decentralized leadership and spontaneous grassroots participation; and civil society organizations, like NGOs, advocacy groups, or professional associations that operate independently of the government and may engage in advocacy, public education, or service delivery (Morris & Braine 2001; Norton 2013).

Strategies Opposition can seek to influence government policies and decisions within the existing political system through legal and institutional channels or fundamentally transform or overthrow the existing political order through radical means, such as mass **protests**, armed struggle (**rebel regimes**, **terrorist groups**), or **revolution**. Forms of single-issue opposition are also possible, trying to advocate for specific policy changes or addressing a particular social, economic, or environmental issue.

As for strategy, opposition actors mostly operate outside formal electoral processes and utilize tactics such as civil disobedience, protest movements, or grassroots organizing to challenge the ruling authorities. Electoral opposition rather primarily engages in electoral politics, contesting elections to gain political power and influence within the existing democratic framework.

Ideological orientation When it comes to ideological orientation, an opposition can support traditional left-wing principles, like social justice, equality, and progressive reforms, often advocating for policies such as wealth redistribution, social welfare programs, and environmental protection, or right-wing ones, prioritizing free-market principles, and conservative values, advocating for limited government intervention, deregulation, and traditional social norms (Zald 2000; Gillian 2008).

In an increasingly changing environment, however, the centrist opposition, opting for a moderate or pragmatic approach, seeking to balance competing interests and promoting compromise and consensus-building, is not rare.

Scope Lastly, opposition may operate at the national level, seeking to influence policies and decisions of the central government or focus on issues specific to a particular region, city, or locality, often advocating for decentralized governance or autonomy. It can consist of multiple political parties or social movements that form alliances or coalitions to collectively oppose the ruling government or advance shared objectives or rather comprise individual politicians, activists, or organizations that operate autonomously and may not be formally affiliated with any larger coalition or party.

Classifications are not mutually exclusive, and opposition parties and movements often exhibit characteristics that span multiple categories. Additionally, they may vary depending on the specific political context and the criteria used for analysis.

EXAMPLES Several examples have been investigated to illustrate the diversity of opposition movements in terms of their goals, strategies, and historical contexts, as well as their impact on political and social change.

The civil rights movement in the US aimed to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans (**racism**). Led by figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X, the movement utilized nonviolent protests, marches, and civil disobedience to challenge systemic racism and secure legislative victories such as the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964 and the *Voting Rights Act* of 1965 (Morris 1984; Dierenfield 2013).

The *Anti-Apartheid Movement* in South Africa sought to dismantle the Apartheid system of racial segregation and white minority rule. Led by figures such as Nelson Mandela, the movement employed a combination of nonviolent resistance, international solidarity campaigns, and armed struggle to challenge the Apartheid regime (Box 4.7). It ultimately culminated in the transition to majority rule and the election of Mandela as South Africa's first Black president in 1994 (Seidman 2001; Kurtz 2011).

The **Arab Spring** refers to a series of pro-democracy uprisings and protests that swept across several countries in the Middle East and North Africa, including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen. Sparked by grievances over political repression, economic inequality, and corruption, the movement utilized social media and grassroots mobilization to challenge authoritarian regimes and demand political reforms. While the outcomes varied across countries, the Arab Spring led to significant political changes and upheavals in the region (Salamey 2015; Korotayev et al. 2022).

The Hong Kong protests, also known as the *Umbrella Movement* and later the *Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement* (see also Box 6.4), emerged in response to proposed extradition legislation that would allow individuals to be extradited to mainland China for trial. The movement evolved into a broader pro-democracy and anti-authoritarian movement, with protesters demanding greater autonomy, democratic reforms, and protection of civil liberties. The protests involved mass demonstrations, strikes, and acts of civil disobedience, drawing international attention and sparking debates over Hong Kong's autonomy and China's **human rights** record (Ortmann 2015; Lee & Chan 2018),

IMPACT ON POLICY Opposition parties and movements play a crucial role in the functioning and consolidation of democracy. They serve as a check on the power of the ruling government by scrutinizing its policies, decisions, and actions. Through parliamentary debates, inquiries, and public criticism, opposition parties hold the government accountable for its conduct, thereby ensuring transparency and accountability in governance. They represent diverse political interests and viewpoints within society that the ruling party may not adequately rep-



resent. By providing an alternative political platform and agenda, opposition parties give voice to marginalized groups, ideological minorities, and dissenting opinions, thereby enriching democratic discourse and representation.

Competitive multi-party **elections** are a hallmark of **democracy**, and opposition parties provide voters with meaningful choices at the ballot box. By offering alternative candidates and policy proposals, opposition parties foster electoral competition, which incentivizes political parties to respond to the preferences and concerns of voters. The presence of credible opposition parties enhances the legitimacy of democratic elections and governance. When ruling **parties** win elections in competitive environments with strong opposition, they derive their mandate from a broader segment of the population, increasing their legitimacy and accountability to the electorate (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen 2015).

Opposition parties contribute to policy innovation and debate by proposing alternative solutions to societal problems and challenging the *status quo*. Through constructive criticism and policy advocacy, opposition parties stimulate public discourse, encourage experimentation with new ideas, and push for reforms that address the needs and aspirations of citizens. Inclusive political competition, where opposition parties have a meaningful opportunity to participate and compete for power, strengthens democratic institutions and fosters political stability. By providing peaceful channels for political dissent and expression, opposition parties mitigate the risk of political polarization, extremism, or authoritarian backsliding (Diani 1997).

In specific contexts marked by transitional democracies or countries undergoing political change, opposition movements often play a central role in challenging authoritarian regimes, mobilizing popular support for democratization, and advocating for political reforms. In post-authoritarian contexts, opposition parties contribute to **democratic consolidation** by promoting democratic norms, institutions, and practices. On the contrary, they are essential components of active and resilient democracies, contributing to pluralism, accountability, representation, and political innovation. While their relationship with ruling governments may be characterized by conflict and competition, their presence is a requisite for the healthy functioning and sustainability of democratic systems.

NEW FRONTIERS The study of opposition parties and movements is a dynamic field that continues to evolve with new theoretical perspectives, empirical research, and methodological approaches. With increasing globalization and interconnectedness, there is growing interest in understanding how opposition movements operate across national borders. Studies are examining the role of transnational networks, digital platforms, and global solidarity in shaping opposition movements and their impact on international politics. There is a growing recognition of the intersectionality of identity markers such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality within opposition movements. Research is exploring how diverse groups mobilize for political change, the challenges they face within broader opposition coalitions, and the strategies for building inclusive and intersectional movements.

The proliferation of social media platforms has transformed the landscape of opposition politics. Scholars are investigating the role of digital activism, online organizing, and social media campaigns in mobilizing support, disseminating information, and challenging authoritarian regimes. This includes studies on online mobilization tactics, the spread of misinformation, and the dynamics of online/offline activism. Especially after COVID-19, research has explored the strategies and tactics employed by authoritarian regimes to suppress opposition movements, as well as the resilience and adaptability of opposition actors in the face of repression. This includes studies on the impact of surveillance technologies, legal constraints on civil liberties, and the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance in challenging authoritarian rule (Chenoweth 2023).

Finally, the emergence of environmental and climate justice movements has brought new attention to the intersections between environmental activism and opposition politics. Scholars are examining how environmental degradation, climate change, and resource extraction fuel social unrest, as well as the role of grassroots movements in advocating for environmental protection and climate justice.

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Rebel Regimes

With rebellion, awareness is born
– Albert Camus

Rebel regimes emerge when insurgent groups aim and sometimes successfully overthrow an existing government and establish rule. These regimes are characterized by their unconventional governance structures, often formed in the aftermath of civil conflicts. Rebel regimes are politically motivated entities aiming to establish governance and engage in power-sharing to maintain stability. They may create new political institutions or co-opt existing ones to consolidate power and gain legitimacy. The dynamics of rebel regimes are influenced by factors such as state collapse, external interventions, and resource availability, which can also lead to transformations into or from warlordism.

DEFINITION At its most general, the term rebel regimes might be used to describe a situation where a group that initially rebelled against an existing government has successfully taken control and established its own rule. In such cases, the unconventional or insurgent nature of the governing authority is usually emphasized.

Rebel regimes and **warlords** differ fundamentally in their motivations and organizational structures. Rebel regimes are politically motivated entities that emerge from organized groups succeeding in civil conflicts, often seeking to establish governance and engage in power-sharing to maintain stability. In contrast, warlords are primarily driven by self-enrichment, thriving in regions where state authority has collapsed. They exert control through violence and patronage without aiming for state-building or providing public goods. While rebel regimes focus on political governance, warlords exploit chaos for personal gain, lacking a coherent political ideology.

The transformation between rebel regimes and warlords, and vice versa, is often driven by the dynamics of state collapse and the shifting political landscape. Rebel regimes can devolve into warlordism when they fail to consolidate power or maintain effective governance, leading to fragmentation and reliance on local strongmen for control. This occurs particularly in environments where central authority is weak or absent, allowing former rebels to operate independently as warlords, prioritizing personal enrichment over state-building. Conversely, warlords can evolve into quasi-state actors or rebel regimes if they manage to consolidate territorial control and gain **legitimacy**, either through formal integration into state structures or by establishing governance systems. This transition often involves forming alliances with other power brokers and leveraging external support to gain political legitimacy and expand influence. Such shifts are influenced by the broader geopolitical context, including external interventions and the availability of resources, which can either facilitate or hinder these transformations.

SEE ALSO As mentioned, rebel regimes are close but not identical to warlords, and both are associated with **state fragility & failure** and **resource curses**.



As a regime type, they are often classified under the umbrella of **military regimes** in comparative authoritarianism, like in the typology of **Hadenius & Teorell**, but this, of course, overlooks some of their finer nuances described here. From the perspective of a ruler's **background**, rebel origins are specific, but their exact influence on governing styles is still being researched.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE At the core of these regimes, political institutions, the bodies, and practices that rebels design and implement to interface with civilian communities may considerably vary, depending on the local contexts and needs. There are various strategies and approaches adopted by insurgent groups when it comes to governance and political organization. Some choose to create inclusive political structures that offer civilians a degree of participation in local governance. This can include mechanisms such as local councils, community assemblies, or participatory decision-making processes. On the other hand, some insurgent groups may opt for a more authoritarian approach, where they administer territories exclusively through their operatives, without involving civilians in decision-making processes. This approach prioritizes control and efficiency but may lead to resentment and opposition from the local population.

Some insurgent movements opt for radical transformation, aiming to replace existing political institutions with entirely new ones that align with their ideology or objectives. This approach seeks to uproot the established order and construct a new system from scratch, often reflecting the insurgents' vision for society. In other cases, groups may choose to co-opt existing governance structures instead of creating entirely new ones. By doing so, they can exploit the legitimacy and administrative capacities of pre-existing institutions. This strategy allows them to minimize disruption and maintain stability, which can be crucial for gaining public support and consolidating power (Kasfir 2015; Cunningham et al. 2021).

The variation in rebel political institutions represents a significant aspect of insurgent dynamics that merits deeper analysis. While **ideology** and strategic concerns have traditionally received considerable attention in studies of insurgencies, the examination of rebel governance structures adds another layer of complexity to the understanding of these conflicts (Mampilly & Stewart 2021).

The actions and attitudes of civilians are critical in shaping the trajectory of insurgent governance. Civilian behavior in conflict-affected areas can have a profound impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of rebel governance structures. Upon gaining control of territory, insurgent groups often face the immediate challenge of providing basic services to the local population. Failure to address civilian needs can lead to discontent and resistance, undermining the insurgents' legitimacy and stability. By delivering essential services such as food, healthcare, and security, insurgents can build goodwill and support among civilians, enhancing their control over the territory.

The provision of services can serve as a tool for **propaganda** and social control as insurgents seek to portray themselves as capable and legitimate governing entities. This can be particularly effective in areas where the state has been unable or unwilling to provide for the needs of the population (Mampilly 2017). While addressing immediate civilian needs is crucial for gaining support and legitimacy, the development of political institutions may occur more gradually and be influenced by a range of factors beyond immediate civilian demands. Insurgent leaders may initially focus on addressing immediate needs to gain support and legitimacy, but the establishment of formal political institutions tends to be a more gradual and complex process. A combination of strategic calculations, leadership dynamics, external influences, ideological considerations, and local dynamics often influences this process. As a result, the development of political institutions may reflect the preferences and interests of the insurgent command rather than immediate civilian demands alone.

ORIGIN The study of rebel regimes and institutions has gained increasing attention in recent years within the fields of International Peace and Conflict Studies and International Relations (IR). This growing interest reflects a broader recognition of the significant role that rebel groups play in exercising control and governance in territories where the authority of the nation-state is weakened or significantly limited (Teiner 2022).

The wide variation in the organizational capacity and institutionalization of insurgent groups highlights the need to examine the diverse strategies, structures, and motivations that shape rebel governance dynamics. Despite their shared ability to challenge state authority and engage in armed conflict, insurgent groups can vary significantly in their capacity to govern the territories they control and establish enduring institutions. Examining the variation in organizational capacity and institutionalization among insurgent groups, researchers can gain insights into the factors that shape rebel governance dynamics and their implications for conflict dynamics, state-building, and peace-building efforts (Huang 2016).

The growing frequency of publications in the field of 'Rebel Governance' (Arjona et al. 2015; Péclard & Mechoulan 2015; Albert 2022; Loyle et al. 2023; Pfeifer & Schwab 2023) reflects a broader recognition among scholars of the importance of understanding the dynamics of non-state actors, particularly in conflict settings. This surge in research activity has led to the development of a substantial body of literature that covers a wide range of rebel groups, ideologies, and strategies across different regions of the world. By examining the dynamics of non-state actors such as rebel groups, scholars are contributing to a more holistic understanding of conflict dynamics and informing more effective policy responses to address the root causes of conflict and promote sustainable peace.

The diversity of rebel groups studied in the field of rebel governance underscores the heterogeneous

nature of insurgency movements. These movements can vary significantly in terms of their goals, tactics, organizational structures, and levels of institutionalization. Scholars from the IR and Security Studies communities have examined rebel governance in a wide array of contexts, including civil wars, insurgencies, revolutionary movements, and secessionist conflicts, providing valuable insights into the complex interactions between rebel groups, state actors, and local populations (Loyle 2021).

LITERATURE The field of rebel governance benefits from a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Rather than being dominated by one approach over the other, scholars often employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of rebel governance dynamics. This integrative approach allows researchers to capitalize on the strengths of each method and to triangulate findings for more robust conclusions. Mampilly's (2017) focus on qualitative approaches, particularly through in-depth case studies, has provided valuable insights into the complexities of rebel governance. By conducting detailed examinations of specific cases, he was able to uncover nuanced dynamics and mechanisms that may not be captured through quantitative analyses alone. His comparative approach has also allowed for the development of generalizable hypotheses about the factors that impact the effectiveness of rebel governance across different contexts. Qualitative methods, such as case studies, interviews, and participant observation, are well-suited for capturing the intricacies of rebel governance, including the motivations of rebel leaders, the experiences of local populations, and the socio-political dynamics of conflict-affected areas.

Other scholars using qualitative methods focused on delving deep into the governance activities of certain rebel groups, such as the FARC and Taliban (Terpstra 2020), or certain dynamics in insurgents' governance behavior (Schoon 2017; Arjona 2014).

The development and functioning of political institutions within rebel governance represent a significant area of research within the broader study of insurgencies and conflict dynamics. Scholars have sought to understand the dynamics and implications of different organizational structures of insurgent groups, with a particular focus on political institutions. Research in this sub-field often aims to develop typologies of political institutions and organizational structures of insurgent groups, which can enhance our understanding of these phenomena and inform further research (Mampilly & Stewart 2020; Hoffmann & Verweijen 2018; Parkinson & Zaks 2018).

Many other studies centered around how political institutions and organizational structures influence the decision-making processes of rebel groups are crucial for understanding their behavior, military capacities, and overall effectiveness in governance. Studies in this area shed light on how the internal dynamics of rebel groups shape their strategies, tactics, and interactions with external actors (Stewart 2020).

Recent studies have focused on the analysis of Islamist rebel governance, such as the governance of the Islamic State and the Taliban, as well as smaller groups, such as *Boko Haram* (Keser & Fakhoury 2022). Scholars have analyzed Islamic regional administrative structure and political institutions (Al-Tamimi 2016).

Another strand of literature focuses on the regulations of economic activities in the regions by rebels. By controlling territory and resources, these groups can generate revenue through various means such as taxation, extortion, looting, and even involvement in illicit activities like drug trafficking and smuggling. This financial independence not only helps sustain their operations but also allows them to fund their military endeavors and exert control over the areas they govern (Kasfir 2015; Chojnacki & Branovic 2011).

Comprehensive tax collection is one way in which rebel groups can generate revenue by imposing taxes on local businesses, individuals, and economic activities within the territories they control. This literature intersects with **resource curses**.

Wickham-Crowley demonstrated how *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru offered protection from state repression in exchange for taxing local coca farmers (2015). Another example is the Taliban's involvement in protecting poppy farmers and heroin smugglers in Afghanistan. In regions under their control, the Taliban imposed taxes or fees on the cultivation and trafficking of opium poppy and heroin. This practice has been a significant source of income, allowing them to finance their insurgency and governance activities.

The relationship between rebel governance and diplomacy is a complex and multifaceted one. Rebel groups that establish governance structures often seek to leverage their control over territory and populations to enhance their credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of both domestic and international actors. By providing essential services, maintaining security, and exercising some form of authority over the areas they govern, rebel groups can present themselves as viable political entities worthy of recognition and engagement. This enhanced reputation can strengthen their bargaining position in negotiations with state governments or international actors as they demonstrate their ability to govern and their willingness to engage in diplomatic processes. Rebel groups may use their governance activities as bargaining chips to secure concessions, political recognition, or even power-sharing agreements in peace negotiations (Worrall 2017; Staniland 2021).

CLASSIFICATIONS & METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The informal nature of many rebel actions, including the establishment of ad hoc institutions, presents difficulties in systematic observation. These *ad hoc* institutions may operate discreetly to avoid detection or may dissolve after completing a specific task, making them challenging to identify and study. When mapping these, even discerning between ad hoc institutions that are consistently reconstituted for recurring tasks and those that are more temporary can be tricky.

Rebel political institutions are classified accord-



ing to different criteria and factors. Institutions can vary in form and function, often resembling traditional nation-state structures like parliaments and political **parties**. They may also appropriate existing sources of authority, such as chiefs or civilian councils, or depart from conventional institutional forms altogether. Political institutions can also be distinguished from other aspects of governance, such as social service provision. They primarily deal with agenda-setting, policy-making, and administration, while social service institutions focus on implementing policies decided within political institutions, and judicial institutions enforce and adjudicate these policies (Stewart 2018; Loyle 2021).

The choices that rebel groups make regarding their political institutions have significant implications both domestically and beyond the theater of conflict. At the domestic level, rebel political institutions often serve as vehicles for advancing the long-term political objectives of the group and are instrumental in articulating and implementing the rebel group's vision for governance, autonomy, or independence. They act as the primary interface between rebel organizations and civilians, as well as local elites such as traditional chiefs, businesspersons, religious leaders, and **civil society** organizations. Moreover, the distribution of resources and access to power within rebel-held territories is influenced as well, as institutions affect the dynamics of governance, including how public goods and services are provided to the population.

On an international level, external actors, including states, international organizations, and NGOs, often assess the **legitimacy** of rebel groups based on their political institutions and governance structures. Well-functioning political institutions can enhance a rebel group's credibility and standing in diplomatic negotiations, peace talks, and other international forums. Conversely, dysfunctional or illegitimate political institutions may undermine the rebel group's international reputation and support. Rebel political institutions also impact economic relations with multinational corporations and other business entities. The stability and transparency of governance structures can influence investment decisions and the willingness of corporations to engage in trade or business activities within rebel-held territories.

With respect to **political regimes** and relations with locals, Mamphilli and Stewart (2021) offered an analysis based on four (A-D) different dimensions: The first one is *power-sharing* (A), whether rebels choose to enforce martial law or to share power to some degree with locals. While some rebel organizations exercise absolute military control over civilian life, others may opt for governance systems that involve power-sharing arrangements with civilian institutions and leaders, especially in more complex conflicts, whereas rebel groups make pacts with civilian leaders or factions. These agreements may involve the allocation of specific roles and responsibilities to different parties, with the aim of fostering cooperation and stability within rebel-held territories.

The second dimension (B) refers to *integration*, to the extent and nature of collaboration between rebels and civilians in the execution of governance and administration within a territory. This dimension can vary along a spectrum, from maximal integration to minimalist integration. At the maximal end of the integration spectrum, rebels and civilians collaborate extensively in governing a locality. This collaboration can cover a wide range of issue areas, including women's liberation, social regulation, and political reform. For example, rebel political cadres may work closely with preexisting traditional chiefs or form representative councils comprising various civilian constituencies to govern alongside the rebel group. The more issues on which rebels and civilians collaborate, the more integrated the rebel political arrangements are.

On the minimalist end of the integration spectrum, rebels may set strict behavioral parameters primarily related to security but otherwise allow civilians to operate freely in governance decisions. In this scenario, civilians have relative autonomy over governance matters but must adhere to rebel stipulations regarding security and other priority areas. While civilian governance is partially subject to rebel rules, it remains largely autonomous from direct rebel control.

The *innovation* dimension (C) in rebel governance focuses on the extent to which rebels transform preexisting political structures and practices within the territories they control. Unlike integration, which deals with power-sharing across governance issue areas, innovation pertains to the degree of transformation within political institutions themselves. Some rebel groups opt to maintain existing political institutions, either wholly or partially, with minor adjustments made for strategic or efficiency purposes. This approach may involve replacing or appointing supportive personnel within these institutions to align them with rebel political objectives. Alternatively, rebels may retain existing personnel with assurances that they will not oppose the rebellion's interests. This is often seen in situations where preexisting political institutions have been weakened by neglect or **systemic corruption** prior to the arrival of the rebels.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, others choose to transform the political institutions they encounter fundamentally. This can involve introducing entirely new institutions or revitalizing existing ones in ways that significantly depart from their previous functions. In such cases, rebels do not merely modify existing political structures for tactical reasons but seek to establish entirely new political arrangements from the ground up.

Lastly, the *inclusiveness* dimension (D) in rebel governance focuses on the extent to which rebel groups structure political institutions to facilitate civilian participation. This dimension encompasses various forms of participation, including voting in local elections, running political wings, and influencing the operation of political institutions. Inclusiveness can be understood in terms of the opportunities provided for different demographic groups, considering factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and religion.

Some rebel groups actively promote civilian participation by providing opportunities for various demographic groups, including those historically marginalized from power. This may involve establishing specific structures such as women's organizations, student groups, or labor unions to facilitate participation by women, youth, and religious or ethnic minorities.

On the less inclusive end of the spectrum, rebel groups may restrict participation to economic and political elites or representatives of privileged groups such as religious or traditional leaders. In such cases, governance and decision-making processes may involve only a small percentage of the overall population, excluding broader segments of society.

MEASUREMENT Older datasets gathered information about non-state actors in general (Cunningham et al. 2013), with the aim of gauging rebel groups' motivations and strategies (Fjelde & Nilsson 2012) or to assess why ethnic groups chose the rebel path using the *Ethnic Power Relations* (ERT) database (1946-2005) (Cederman et al. 2010).

Recently, new datasets have emerged, mapping rebel strength and rebel governance institutions, like the *Rebel Quasi-State Institutions dataset* (Stewart 2020), which covers 235 rebel groups and codes annually for 25 institutions during the entire existence of the group. Additionally, the *Foundations of Rebel Group Emergence* (FORGE) dataset (Braithwaite & Cunningham 2020) looks at the pre-existing 'parent' societal organizations that are merged or co-opted by rebel groups. FORGE thus studies the founding processes that gave rise to rebel groups active between 1946 and 2011 in intrastate conflicts. Lewis (2023) challenges the urban origins of most rebel movements and their reliance on previous organizations with her new dataset on rebel group formation in 47 African states (1997-2015).

New datasets further break open the black box of such movements: Lutmar and Terris (2019) look at leadership change within rebel groups; Haer & Böhmelt (2018) at girl soldiers; Walsh et al. (2023) at the illicit sources of funding; Pamp et al. (2024) track their military capabilities in the *Rebels' Armament Dataset* (RAD), and Schwartz (2024) the presence of foreign fighters in the *Rebel Foreign Fighter Dataset* (RFFD).

EXAMPLES Although the concept of 'rebel regimes' can vary based on perspective and context, some examples can be more visible than others.

The Taliban governed Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 after seizing control of most of the country. While they were ousted from power by the US-led invasion in 2001, they continued to operate as an insurgency and regained control over much of Afghanistan by 2021, overtaking the state.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla group that waged a long insurgency against the Colombian government. It aimed to overthrow the government and establish a communist state. After peace negotiations, FARC disarmed in 2017 and transformed into a political party.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is a Kurdish militant and political organization that has fought for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey since the 1980s. The Turkish government and several other countries consider it a terrorist organization due to its violent tactics, including bombings and **assassinations**.

During the Libyan civil war in 2011, the *National Transitional Council* (NTC) emerged as a rebel coalition opposed to the regime of Muammar al-Qaddafi, able to eventually overthrow Qaddafi's government and assumed control of Libya.

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) established control over significant portions of Sierra Leone during the civil war in the 1990s. The RUF engaged in widespread atrocities, including the use of child soldiers (Box 8.5) and brutal mutilations. The conflict eventually ended with the intervention of international peacekeepers. Examples illustrate the diverse nature of rebel regimes, which can range from Islamist extremist groups to nationalist movements seeking self-determination or regime change. Each case represents a unique context with its own political, social, and historical dynamics.

IMPACT ON POLICY The level of local support plays a crucial role in shaping rebel political arrangements. When rebels enjoy significant local support and share political leanings with civilians, they are more likely to collaborate with them to pursue common goals cooperatively. This collaboration can lead to the establishment of political institutions where civilians have a substantial role in governance decisions. However, in situations where rebels lack local support, they may resort to strategic **co-optation** of key civilian institutions with minimal direct involvement in civilian governance decisions. This approach allows rebels to maintain control and influence while minimizing resistance from the local population. This form of governance can be characterized by partial subjugation of civilian institutions to rebel authority.

The example of certain towns under the rule of *Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL, also referred to as ISIS, *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria*, cf. **Islamic states**) illustrates this dynamic. While some areas experienced forms of rule closer to martial law, others witnessed the strategic co-optation of key civilian institutions with limited direct involvement by ISIL in civilian governance decisions. This approach allowed ISIL to maintain control over these territories while exploiting existing structures for governance and administration. The approach described by Weiss & Hassan (2016) regarding ISIL's governance in certain captured areas reflects a strategy of decentralized administration, where local forces and their networks are entrusted with day-to-day administrative tasks. In these areas, ISIL aimed to minimize direct involvement in local affairs, allowing local actors to handle administrative responsibilities under the broader framework of ISIL control. For example, ISIL refrained from micromanaging towns and delegated day-to-day administrative affairs to local forces and their relatives, established a **police force** and security operation stations to maintain



law and order within the captured areas, and implemented a Shariah-based court system to adjudicate legal matters and enforce punishments according to its interpretation of Islamic law. Public punishments were often carried out in town squares to intimidate and control the local population (cf. terror in Box 3.13). This approach allowed rebels to focus their resources and attention on strategic objectives while relying on local collaborators to manage day-to-day affairs. However, it also led to variations in governance practices across different areas under ISIL control, depending on the capabilities and agendas of local actors.

NEW FRONTIERS As rebel governance has evolved as a discipline, a few strands of research have become increasingly interesting and promising in the long term. The first one is the analysis of social service provision. While rebel groups may initially prioritize military goals, such as securing territory or resources, they often find it necessary to engage in social service provision to gain support and legitimacy from local populations. However, the provision of social services does not necessarily equate to the establishment of robust political institutions. Rebel groups may deliver basic services as a means of control or coercion rather than as a genuine effort to govern effectively. The transition from addressing immediate military concerns to longer-term political objectives is influenced by various factors, including internal dynamics within the rebel group, external pressures from actors such as funders or supporters, and shifts in the broader conflict environment (Nexon & Wright 2007).

The methodological challenges mentioned higher underscore the complexities involved in accurately documenting and understanding the practices of rebel governance. Their informal nature, i.e., the difficulty in distinguishing between ad hoc institutions (consistently reconstituted) for recurring tasks and those that are more temporary inventions – and thus understanding why rebels choose to formalize certain political institutions while keeping others informal is essential for assessing their civilian governance patterns in light of their broader military struggle. Further scholarship should delve into the strategic, operational, and contextual factors that influence these decisions, providing insights into the dynamics of rebel governance and its implications for conflict dynamics and resolution.

Finally, the enduring impact of political mobilization and inclusive governance, once established during the conflict, is also an important area for future research. While rebel groups may initially mobilize communities for their own political goals, the relationships and structures formed during this process can persist beyond the end of the conflict. Understanding how these processes of political interaction shape postwar political behavior is crucial for comprehending the long-term consequences of conflict and for designing effective post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building efforts.

By investigating the continuity of political mobilization and governance practices from the conflict period into the postwar era, researchers can shed light on the mechanisms through which conflict legacies persist and shape post-conflict societies. This knowledge can inform interventions aimed at promoting reconciliation, democratic consolidation, and sustainable peace-building processes in societies transitioning from conflict to peace.

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Box 8.5 Child Soldiers

Being a child soldier was like being ripped from childhood and thrown into an adult world.
– Junior Nzita Nsuami, former child soldier from the DRC

Without a special nickname in Spanish, *Niños soldados* (child soldiers) are referred to as *Kadogo* or *Tchakatou* ('little ones' in Swahili or Lingala, respectively), *Talibé* in Mali (from Arabic/French – a pupil of (Islamic) schools) and *Doria* (in Kirundi – 'ear agent') as the latter was mostly used for intelligence gathering.

Child soldiers are usually defined as any child under 18 years of age who is involved in any irregular or regular armed force or armed group in any capacity (Bakaki & Hinkkainen 2016). Child soldiers do not have to be directly involved in armed conflict. They may serve as cooks, mail deliverers, or informants (Burgess 2009), while underage girls may usually serve as sex workers, causing their further stigmatization (Uppard 2003). Chapleau (2018: 241-242) identifies several reasons for the recruitment of child soldiers: (i) they represent a considerable human resource, (ii) they are inexpensive, (iii) versatile, and (iv) they can be easily controlled, particularly through brainwashing, threats, or drugs. Additionally, (v) child soldiers are often seen as amoral and (iv) can function as incapacitating weapons (rendering opponents unable to shoot at them). Tynes and Early (2015) further developed and tested a theory on the recruitment of child soldiers, arguing that they are used strategically by governments and rebel groups as tactical weapons. Contrary to much of the existing literature, they found that sociodemographic factors are not the primary drivers behind the recruitment of children into armed conflicts.

Children engage with military groups for the following reasons: (a) due to local values and traditions related to defending their kin, (b) for economic reasons, and (c) as a survival strategy (Hart 2006: 218-219). For them, the decision to join armed groups is often a consequence of economic, cultural, social, or political deprivation. Many child soldiers come from rural areas controlled by militias. Jason Hart (2006) explores the issue of child soldiers within the broader concept of childhood, addressing ethical dilemmas in how children are treated in wars. Jo de Berry (2001) argues that the use of child soldiers must be understood within the strategy of civil wars, where civilians are used to secure political control (cf. Kaldor et al. 1997), as well as within the context of state crises manifested in civil conflicts (de Berry 2001; cf. Richards 2008, for the case of Sierra Leone). The agency of children in their involvement in armed conflicts is also a topic of academic discussion. According to Singer (2005: 61), approximately two out of three child soldiers demonstrated some degree of initiative in their recruitment. Dawes (1990) examines children's involvement in armed conflict as stemming from the normalization of violence as an acceptable means of resolving political disputes. Sarah Uppard (2003) suggests that children may view their participation in armed groups as a survival strategy.

The issue of child soldiers in the context of humanitarian law is analyzed inter alia by G. Alex Sinha (2013) and David M. Rosen (2007). The use of child combatants in the fighting is against the provisions of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), adopted in 1989 and ratified by almost all members of the international community. The prevention of children's active participation in armed conflicts is anchored in Article 38 of the Convention, stating that *"Parties should take all feasible measure[s] to ensure that persons who have not attained the age of fifteen years do not take a direct part in hostilities"* (UN, 1989). The possibilities of implementing this article in the case of the Ugandan civil war are presented by de Berry (2001). Recruiting child soldiers is considered a violation of international law and is punishable as a war crime by the *International Criminal*



Court (ICC) (Bakaki & Hinkkainen 2016; Jørgensen 2012). Bakaki and Hinkkainen (2016) argue that the recruitment of child soldiers by conflict parties makes the perception of such conflicts more severe. Therefore, it is more likely for UN peacekeeping forces to be deployed. Samaila Oluwatope Adelaiye and Mehwish Sarwari (2023) found out that conflicts with the involvement of child soldiers are likely to receive more mediation from democratic states as the use of child soldiers is considered inhuman.

Child soldiers have been the focus of various UN bodies. The *UNSC* established the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in 2005 as a reaction to horrendous news about the scale of children's involvement in armed conflicts around the world (Østby et al., 2023). Besides that, child soldiers have been the focus of the *United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund* (UNICEF). The definition of child soldiers was provided in Cape Town Principles adopted in 1997, which set the legal age for being considered a child soldier to eighteen years (Chapleau 2018). In 2007, the UN member states adopted the *Paris Principles and Commitments on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups* to combat the unlawful recruitment of children in armed conflicts (UNICEF 2007). In 2017, The government of France and UNICEF, in collaboration with the Paris Principles Steering Group (PPSG), co-hosted the conference 'Protect Children from War.' Even though the recruitment of child soldiers by state actors has dropped significantly since the international ban on using children in armed conflict as an issue by the Cape Town Principles, the recruitment of children by non-state actors, especially **terrorist groups**, is still on the rise (Chapleau 2018). The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process is a rehabilitation program that typically begins after a peace agreement is signed. During this process, children and their families are supported in their transition and adaptation to civilian life (Uppard 2003). Former child soldiers often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and require assistance in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society (Hermenau et al. 2013; Kanagaratnam et al. 2005; Uppard 2003).

Considering the influence of child soldiers on the duration and severity of conflicts, Haer and Böhmelt (2017) argue that the involvement of child soldiers increases the strength of **rebel** organizations fighting against governments (see also Haer & Böhmelt 2016) and therefore, in fact, prolongs the civil wars. They provide evidence by the quantitative analysis of post-1989 civil conflicts. On the contrary, as suggested in Lasley & Thyne (2015), separatist rebellions do not usually use child soldiers as it would undermine their possibilities to achieve international recognition.

Østby et al. (2023) claim, based on a statistical analysis of the data on child soldiers' recruitment, that the global share of children at risk of being recruited as a combatant has steadily increased over the past 30 years. Child soldiers as combatants in the conflicts have been identified, e.g., in Sierra Leone (Zack-Williams 2001; Richards 2008; Jørgensen 2012), the DRC (Hermenau et al. 2013; Mwandumba 2013), Uganda (De Berry 2001; Blattman & Annan 2010; Corbin 2008), Sri Lanka (Harendra De Silva 2013), and Colombia (Burgess 2009).

Burgess (2009) argues, based on participant observation and interviews with twelve at-risk children from marginalized communities in Colombia, that community-based psychosocial pedagogy is crucial in addressing the factors these children have to face. Besides that, he stresses the teacher's role within non-formal education programs and maintaining a relationship with children affected by violence. Blattman and Annan (2010) discuss the impact of military service on children in Uganda, particularly in relation to their involvement in the labor market and education. Joanne Corbin (2008) presents an explanatory qualitative study based on thematic analysis of narrative data that explores the return of child soldiers to their families gathered during fieldwork in Uganda. Alcinda Honwana (2006) offers a comprehensive study on the impact of civil wars in Mozambique and Angola, focusing not only on the direct involvement of children in armed groups but also on orphans and land mine victims affected by the wars.

Considering case studies of child soldier involvement in specific conflicts, *Children and War: A Historical Anthology*, edited by James Marten (2002), presents notable historical examples of the use of child soldiers in various wars. Zack-Williams (2001) analyzes the factors that led child soldiers to fight in Sierra Leone's civil war, arguing that social and economic factors, such as poverty among street children in urban areas and the provision of surrogate family relationships by militias, primarily drive recruitment. De Berry (2001) attributed the involvement of child soldiers in Uganda's civil war to the collapse of democratic state institutions and the transfer of power to ethnically-based armed groups. Murphy (2003) applied the concept of **neo-patrimonialism** to describe the role of children in conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, developing a clientelist model to explain their behavior. He examined patrimonial ties within **rebel regimes**, identifying relations of domination and reciprocity between child soldiers and military commanders. Youth **clientelism**, according to Murphy, emerged as a consequence of the 'shadow state' in Sierra Leone (see Reno 1995), where the state failed to provide security, forcing youth to rely on powerful figures or 'big men' for protection.

Haer (2019) highlighted that research on child soldiers has primarily been conducted by members of think tanks and civil society organizations rather than academics and that the literature on the subject remains relatively sparse. She identifies three underdeveloped areas within child soldier studies: (a) the involvement of girl soldiers in combat roles, (b) the distinction between forced and voluntary recruitment, and (c) the effectiveness of the international response. Østby et al. (2023) further emphasized the limitations in data collection on child soldiers at regional and local levels, stressing the need for more focused research on the recruitment process.

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Terrorist Groups & Autocracy

You cannot win a war against terrorism as long as people are willing to die for their beliefs.
– Edward Snowden

Fighting terrorism is like being a goalkeeper; you can make a hundred brilliant saves but the only shot that people remember is the one that gets past you.
– Paul Wilkinson

Whether terrorism is in any way connected to a regime type, particularly democracy or autocracy, is a question that has sparked major research in political science, comparative politics and International Relations (IR). The topic is part of a larger, age-old inquiry into the relationship between violence, terror (Box 3.13), and politics. In *The Republic*, Plato examined, among other themes, which political systems were least vulnerable to *stasis* (στάσις – civil strife) or civil war. Aristotle, too, noted how tyrants often depended on fear and terror to maintain control over their communities. In this sense, the question as to how particular types of regimes are liable to be subjected to **terrorism** reveals as much about their modernity as it does about the nature of regime types and violence. As the concept of sovereignty expanded across the globe and as states became ever more centralized, with growing economic and military capacities at their disposal, the means by which to overthrow any given regime were increas-



ingly reduced. Terrorism, as a form of asymmetric warfare, is thus deployed by actors who hold little or no means by which to overthrow a far more capacitated state-led actor. Nevertheless, even the matter of power asymmetries only says so much about the phenomenon of terror since state authorities have also historically deployed terror to achieve certain goals; see also Box 3.13 on terror.

That being said, the relationship between terrorist groups and regime type has often been broached on the basis of whether democracy facilitates or hinders the former. Research tends to be split on how to address that connection, including whether it exists, and other analyses have sought to problematize types of autocracies with a view to disentangling repression and political control from the use of terror. In this regard, the literature points to the nature of the political audience (Box 7.1), the type of regime, and how long it has been in place in order to unpack the different types of relations between terror and autocracy. It is also worth bearing in mind that these studies gained added impetus due to the global 'War on Terror' launched in the early twenty-first century. As al-Qaeda, a militant Islamist group, successfully attacked the United States (US) sovereign territory on 11 September 2001 (9/11), the US government proclaimed a global 'War on Terror.' In doing so, it sought to neutralize al-Qaeda and other groups that used or threatened to use methods as violent as those that had led to the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York City and which had damaged the Pentagon in Washington, DC (Andréani 2004). Were that not enough, democracy, as opposed to autocracy, was also cast by US authorities throughout that period as a potential remedy for terrorism and political violence broadly understood, a claim that came under ample scrutiny (Gause, III 2005).

SEE ALSO This entry is related to the phenomenon of **terrorism & regime promotion,** and these groups can embrace various **ideologies** ranging from **anarchism** and **ultra-nationalism** to fundamentalist **political Islam**. These groups often live in symbiosis with transnational crime organizations and may devolve into one once they abandon their political goals. They practice an asymmetric form of warfare different from guerrilla tactics but that may be combined with other forms.

DEFINITION A terrorist group encompasses an organization or network of people whose principal means of political struggle rely on terrorism. It is conceptually distinct from 'lone wolf' terrorism, whose operations are organized by a single individual as opposed to an organized group of actors. Furthermore, terrorism is a specific type of warfare that relies on the use of violence against civilian or non-civilian populations, mainly with the aim of causing fear as well as publicizing that fear across society at large. As a specific type of politically oriented violence, terrorism is usually applied throughout an asymmetric armed conflict, specifically when one group holds far fewer capacities and far less power than the opponent (English 2009; Wilkinson 2011). The aforementioned 11 September 2001 attacks are paradigmatic in that regard, as they were applied by a network of militant individuals against a more powerful adversary. They were also highly visible attacks against symbolic infrastructure in order to scare the adversary as well as to exaggerate al-Qaeda's overall capacities, an achievement for which it garnered international notoriety but also admiration among other militant groups.

In the words of Richard English: *"Terrorism involves heterogeneous violence use or threatened with political aim (…) it possesses an important psychological dimension, producing terror or fear among a directly threatened group (…) in the hope of maximizing political communication and achievement (…) it represents a subspecies of warfare, and as such it can form part of a wider campaign of violent and non-violent attempts at political leverage."* (English 2009: 24).

All in all, terrorism is less concerned with exhausting an adversary or destroying its combat capabilities – as is the case of guerrilla warfare, another type of asymmetric warfare – than spreading fear with a view to delivering a message (Roberts 2005; English 2009; Wilkinson 2011; Law 2016). Terrorist groups are subsequently those organizations, often sub-state or transnational entities, that apply such methods.

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The relationship between regime type and the potential for violence has remained a relevant research topic now explored in comparative authoritarianism. Some scholars have inquired about the capacities of established democracies to prevent or co-opt terrorist movements by virtue of being more inclusive and of providing alternative modes of political mobilization that need not resort to violence (Crenshaw 1981; Eubank & Weinberg 1994; Gaibulloev et al. 2017; Magen 2018). Others nevertheless indicate that **democracies** are by far more susceptible to terrorism when compared to autocracies (Eyerman 1998; Eubank & Weinberg 2001; Wilson & Piazza 2013). These findings have increasingly been discussed as scholars have unpacked the meanings and types of autocracies and the extent to which democracies are sufficiently well established or not (Aksoy et al. 2012; Conrad et al. 2014; Gaibulloev et al. 2017).

Some scholars suggest that instead of the regime type per se, it is the system of rule and its audience that shape the susceptibility to terrorism. Should the audience costs be too high, insofar as **incumbents** are to be held accountable, terrorists are more likely to act in those regimes (Conrad et al. 2014). This would suggest that **autocracies** whose rulers are increasingly visible and connected to a given audience are as likely as unsettled democracies to be subjected to terrorist attacks (Wilson & Piazza 2013; Magen 2018). In like manner, autocracies whose rulers are dependent on a larger base of support are more likely to suffer **coups**, even though those changes do not necessarily affect the overall system of autocratic rule (Aksoy et al. 2012).

The impact of terrorism on regime stability is multifaceted and largely depends on the type of regime targeted. While terrorism rarely causes outright regime change, it can destabilize regimes, espe-

cially electoral ones, and affect leadership survival. **Democracies** are generally more resilient to terrorism due to their ability to address grievances peacefully and project strength. They often experience a 'rally-around-the-flag' effect post-attacks, which can increase public support for the government. However, younger democracies are more vulnerable because they may struggle with political instability and projecting confidence in their governance. **Dictatorships**, on the other hand, are not uniform in their vulnerability to terrorism. Electoral authoritarian regimes, which hold **elections** without genuine competition, are particularly susceptible to destabilization. Terrorism can signal a leader's incompetence in providing security, leading to elite betrayal or increased repression, both of which can destabilize the regime.

In contrast, closed authoritarian regimes – with tighter control and fewer avenues for dissent – are more resilient. They can suppress **opposition** more effectively and are less prone to elite defections (Adam & Tsavou 2022; Aksoy et al. 2015; Magen 2018).

ORIGINS Though the use of violent methods for the sake of spreading fear is as old as warfare itself (Schelling 2008), the term was eventually invented throughout the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century (Law 2016). Likewise, as states became increasingly centralized and acquired more policing capacities, such as in the nineteenth-century Russian Empire, terrorism was gradually applied by specific groups for the sake of instilling fear among the governing elites and overthrowing incumbent regimes (e.g., through regicide, see **assassination**). Similar tactics were applied by some political groups in their struggle against decolonization in the mid-twentieth century, as well as by certain political factions in Europe, to depose or divide fragmented societies (Law 2016).

International law has progressively adapted to criminalize terrorism, addressing both traditional and emerging tactics. Early efforts, such as the 1970 *Hague Convention*, focused on specific acts like hijacking, reflecting the growing concern over aviation security. As terrorism evolved, so did international legal frameworks. The 1997 *Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings* expanded the scope by criminalizing bombings in public places, recognizing the increasing use of explosives in urban settings. This marked a shift towards addressing terrorism as a transnational threat rather than isolated incidents within national borders.

In response to the growing complexity of terrorist networks, the 1999 *International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism* was pivotal in targeting the financial infrastructure that sustains terrorist activities. This convention required states to criminalize the act of financing terrorism and cooperate in prosecuting or extraditing offenders, reflecting a broader understanding that cutting off funding is essential to countering terrorism effectively.

The events of 11 September 2001 further catalyzed international legal responses. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1373 (2001) mandated that all member states take concrete steps to prevent terrorism, including denying safe havens to terrorists and enhancing international cooperation in criminal investigations. This resolution underscored the global nature of terrorism and emphasized that no state should harbor individuals involved in terrorist activities.

Indeed, as the 'Global War on Terror' defined US aims, the UNSC passed resolution 1566 of 2004 in an effort to delimit the aims and scope of the practice: *"criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act, which constitute offenses within the scope of and as defined in the international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, are under no circumstances justifiable by considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other similar nature."* (UNSC 2004)

Overall, international law has evolved from addressing specific tactics like hijacking and bombings to a more comprehensive framework that includes financial crimes and transnational cooperation. These conventions reflect an ongoing effort to adapt legal tools to the innovative and evolving tactics used by terrorist organizations. A number of organizations, such as the *Association of South East Asian Nations* (ASEAN) and the *Non-Aligned Movement* (NAM) issued statements regarding the need to combat terrorism and terrorist groups in particular.

So important became the notion of terrorism that it was one of the constitutive principles of the *Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (SCO), supported by China. Thus, one of the SCO's main goals is to contain the 'three evils,' one of which is 'terrorism' (Allison 2018).

As terrorist groups acquired visibility throughout the twentieth century and became an even greater policy concern after the 11 September 2001 attacks on US soil, the relationship between regime type and terrorism came under increased scholarly scrutiny. It is also during this period that the spread of democracy, especially across the Middle East, was taken by some in the US government as a means by which to curtail terrorism, a measure that was viewed with skepticism by sundry scholars (Gause III 2005).

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES The notion of a 'terrorist group,' more so than a terrorist, is potentially difficult to apply in practice despite its apparent clear-cut definition. Since terrorism is mainly a practice or action, particularly a sub-category of warfare, it is more of a predicate than a substantive, which is to say it characterizes the actions of a group or individual instead of the group or individual itself. To that effect, groups or individuals who have applied terrorist methods at one point or another may also have deployed other tactics, such as guerrilla warfare and political negotiation, throughout their political struggle. This would suggest that, in some situations, the notion of a terrorist group potentially exaggerates the use of those methods over others. As a result,



the term 'terrorist group' is also a pejorative means by which to depict any type of armed struggle by specific groups against governing authorities. For all those reasons, the notion of a terrorist group, albeit regularly deployed by several state authorities, may be difficult to objectify. This is not to say, however, that there have not been some groups whose main – if not exclusive – means of fighting were based on terrorism. Al-Qaeda traditionally fits that definition, whereas other militant groups, such as ISIL, for instance, have deployed a mix of methods against their enemies.

In any case, since the distinction between different types of violence is often difficult to pin down, not least among sub-state actors who tend to defy the powers of the state, the notions of both terrorism and terrorist groups have frequently been appropriated by incumbent political elites to label and justify repression. Moreover, states too have sponsored terrorist groups, although that level of support has decreased substantially over the early twentieth century (Collins 2014). Partly because of great power pressure but also because of socioeconomic changes, contemporary terrorist groups are potentially less dependent on state support. Modern communications methods, independent financial support and relaxed border controls have allowed terrorist groups to become increasingly autonomous (Collins 2014). Be that as it may, the label 'terrorist group' warrants caution. **Opposition** groups in various illiberal regimes have sometimes been labeled terrorists – or have witnessed attacks being misleadingly attributed to them – in the effort to demonize or violently repress potential challengers (Horsman 2005; Aksoy et al. 2012; Lemon 2018; Edward 2019). Labeling groups as terrorists – as opposed to combatants – may also provide states or specific political authorities with ways in which to curtail their rights in such a way as to avoid international humanitarian law, specifically the *Geneva Conventions*. It is thus important to problematize the label, reflexively admitting its potential shortfalls, before applying it as an objective category for research.

As concerns the relationship between autocracy and terrorism, a variety of methodological issues need to be considered in order to detect relevant findings. A major issue has to do with the time frame of the analysis. Although some research has pointed to a positive relationship between democracy and terrorist group activity, it is worth bearing in mind that the historical context plays a role in substantiating that relationship. Some of the most noteworthy terrorist attacks after the middle of the twentieth century took place in European democracies precisely because they were aimed at overthrowing liberal and market-oriented regimes in those states (Magen 2018), as shown in **terrorism & regime promotion**.

Likewise, research has to bear in mind the variety of democracies, their degree of establishment, and whether they are polyarchic, liberal or direct in order to account for the likelihood of terrorist action. The same argument goes for studying the connection between terrorist groups and autocracy, as recent scholarship has increasingly unpacked the number and types of autocracies in order to detect distinct relations between terrorism and regime type (Piazza 2013; Wilson & Piazza 2013; Conradet al. 2014).

IMPACT ON POLICY The notion of terrorism, and terrorist groups in particular, has had a tremendous impact on policy. Most supranational organizations have routinely condemned particular groups as terrorist, and several states, such as those in the UNSC, have issued lists of groups deemed to be terrorist. By being labeled terrorist, those groups face the prospect of having their existence forbidden in certain states and, in some cases, being subject to sanctions and lawful killing (Scheipers 2015; Walzer 2015). Were that not enough, political elites have often propounded the existence of a relationship between regime type and democracy as a way of resisting current and future violence (Gause III 2005).

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Uncivil Society

Force, violence, pressure, or compulsion with a view to conformity, are both uncivilized and undemocratic
– Mahatma Gandhi

The concept of 'uncivil society' is a complex and debated topic within academic and political discourse, often seen as a counterpart to **civil society** that challenges traditional notions of civic engagement and democratic values. While some scholars argue for its clear definition, others highlight its inherent complexity and that it is context-dependent, suggesting that attempts to narrowly define it may oversimplify the diverse manifestations of non-state actors. The term encompasses a range of disruptive and unwelcome elements that emerge in the spaces between individuals and the state, including radicalism, extremism, and ideologies that threaten social cohesion and democratic principles.

This debate reflects broader discussions about the role of civil society in democratic governance, questioning whether all forms of civic engagement align with liberal democratic values. Critics also point out that the concept may be rooted in Western perspectives, potentially overlooking the diversity of non-state actors globally. The study of uncivil society invites a critical examination of how certain non-state actors may undermine or challenge democratic ideals, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding that recognizes both cooperative and contentious elements within civil society.

SEE ALSO This perspective exposes the non-democratic nature of civil society and the historical roots of societal (self-)organization that trace back long before the advent of **democracy** as a regime type. While the concept is not accepted unanimously, it does move beyond the Western democracy bias in the assessment of political systems.

DEFINITION The term uncivil society is a controversial and debated concept within academic and political discourse. It is often used interchangeably with 'uncivil civil society,' which refers to the non-state dimension characterized by negative and disruptive elements. It is a surprisingly under-theorized concept. The controversy surrounding this concept primarily revolves around whether it should be clearly defined or whether its ambiguity is more reflective of its nature. Whereas some scholars sustain that it should be discontinued, as there is a conceptual proliferation with very little analytic value (Bob 2011), others are remarkably hesitant to give a detailed definition. They contend that the concept is inherently complex and context-dependent, and attempts to define it too narrowly may oversimplify the diverse manifestations of non-state actors. From this perspective, the reluctance to provide a clear definition stems from an acknowledgment of the fluid and subjective nature of the term.

In the first group, Rumford's definition characterizes uncivil society as an inclusive term encompassing various disruptive, unwelcome, and threatening elements that emerge in the spaces between the individual and the state. Using uncivil society as a catch-all category may hinder common understanding, especially when trying to explain complex phenomena such as the motivation behind significant events like the 9/11 attacks (Rumford 2001). On the other hand, Kopecky and Mudde (2003), while using the term in their edited book, argue against the distinction between the civil and the uncivil. Their perspective challenges the binary categorization of society into civil and uncivil realms, suggesting that such a distinction is unhelpful. They argue for a more nuanced understanding that acknowledges the complexity and diversity of actors and movements that fall outside traditional notions of a 'civil' society.

The connection between the concept of 'uncivil society' and radicalism or extremism, both political and religious, introduces another layer of complexity to the ongoing debates in political science and sociology. Nationalist groups, as mentioned by Kaldor & Muro (2023), may exhibit characteristics that range from non-violent to violent, exclusivist, and fundamentalist. This suggests that within the spectrum of uncivil society, there are variations in the intensity of disruptive or threatening behaviors. Nationalist groups, when driven to violence and exclusivism, can pose significant challenges to societal harmony and stability. Similarly, politically extremist groups, such as extreme right-wing parties, may not necessarily engage in violent activities, but they can still be considered part of uncivil society due to their adherence to ideological concerns. These concerns may include **nationalism**, **racism**, anti-democracy, xenophobia, and a belief in the necessity of a strong state. The ideological nature of these concerns underscores the notion that uncivil society is not solely defined by physical violence but also by the potential for ideas and beliefs to disrupt social cohesion and challenge democratic principles (Pedahzur & Weinberg 2001).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE The debate around uncivil society highlights broader discussions within the study of **civil society**, non-state actors, and social movements. It raises questions about how various forms of civic engagement, dissent, or resistance that may not conform to traditional notions of a civil society are categorized and analyzed. In the academic literature and the general use, the term 'uncivil society' to describe manifestations of civil society that challenge liberal democratic values reflects the recognition that not all non-state actors or civic movements inherently align with principles of openness, inclusivity, and democratic governance. Violence is often singled out as a characteristic of uncivil society, but the concept extends beyond physical violence to encompass other disruptive elements. This may include extremist, exclusivist or dogmatic ideolo-



gies, predatory practices, and general rule-breaking. This broader understanding of uncivil society aligns with the ongoing discussions about the role of civil society in democratic governance. It highlights the need for societies to critically examine the motivation, goals, and methods of various non-state actors, recognizing that not all manifestations of civil society necessarily contribute to the advancement of liberal democratic values.

Critics argue that the concept of uncivil society may be rooted in Western perspectives and might not adequately capture the diversity of non-state actors and movements globally. The values and norms associated with civility and incivility may vary across different cultures, making it essential to question whether the concept is universally applicable or if it reflects a particular (Western) worldview.

Scholars also engage in discussions about the relationship between uncivil society and democracy. Some critiques challenge the notion put forth by scholars like Robert Putnam, who highlighted a mutually beneficial relationship between civil society and **democracy**. Skeptics argue that not all manifestations of civil society contribute positively to democratic ideals, and, in fact, some may undermine democratic values.

While less crystallized in the literature, there are reflections on the 'uncivil' aspect of civil society in relation to capitalism. This perspective explores how certain elements within civil society may challenge or exploit aspects of capitalism. This could involve critiquing the impact of certain economic practices on social inequality, labor rights, or environmental sustainability.

Another relevant factor to be considered is violence and the legitimization of the use of force. Non-state armed groups, even those with popular support in specific conflicts or self-determination causes, can be perceived as troublesome due to their potential to disrupt stability and challenge state authority.

ORIGIN To understand the origin of the concept, studies on the differences between civil and civility should be stressed. Enlightenment thinkers, such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and **Montesquieu**, often explored the nature of human society and the development of civilization as a process of moving away from a hypothetical state of nature, which was portrayed as a condition of primitive violence and disorder. Through the establishment of civil societies, humans could create a more organized and harmonious social order. Rousseau and Locke proposed the idea of a social contract, where individuals willingly give up some of their freedoms in exchange for the benefits of an organized society. This contract was seen to escape the chaos and conflict of the state of nature. A community is civilized if laws and institutions govern it. This was contrasted with what was considered more primitive or despotic societies where rule was arbitrary and based on force rather than reason. Scholars have critically argued how external actions, specifically war, often accompany the internal process of civilization and, in the case of European societies, external aggression (Keane 1998; Kaldor & Muro 2003: 151). Particularly from Napoleonic times onwards, colonialism was justified by the idea of 'civilizing' the native populations. It was also a moral justification for imperialism, even though the methods employed in the process of subjugation were seldom civil in their treatment of the colonized populations.

The term 'uncivil society' appears to have emerged in the political lexicon as a response or counterpart to the enthusiastic acclaim of civil society that was associated with the democratic revolutions in Latin America and Eastern Europe during the 1990s. The concept gained significant attention during the 1990s in the context of the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the struggles for **democratization** in Latin America. The introduction of the term uncivil society suggests a critical perspective or a recognition of challenges and complexities within the societal fabric that the term civil society might have idealized. It could imply a focus on aspects of social life that are disruptive, contentious, or deviate from the norms of civility and cooperation associated with the concept of civil society. Its usage and significance may reflect a growing awareness of social tensions, conflicts, or discontents that were not fully captured by the optimistic narratives surrounding the concept of civil society during the 1990s democratic revolutions (Stewart 1997).

LITERATURE The main academic debate surrounding the concept of uncivil society revolves around its inclusion or exclusion from the definition of civil society. This debate is not so much concerned with historical problems associated with the term or its application to society as a whole but rather with how it should be positioned in relation to the broader concept of civil society. The argument seems to hinge on whether uncivil society should be considered a part of, or distinct from, the traditional understanding of **civil society**. The inclusion vs. exclusion argument has dominated the first debates. At the core is the definition of 'civil society' itself, and, in particular, the question arises as to whether elements traditionally considered part of civil society – such as advocacy groups, NGOs, and community organizations – may exhibit behaviors or characteristics deemed 'uncivil' should still be classified under the umbrella of civil society. Advocates for inclusion might argue that civil society is diverse, encompassing both cooperative and contentious elements, while those favoring exclusion might emphasize a more normative understanding of civil society as a space characterized by cooperation, dialogue, and civic virtue (Shils 1992; Whitehead 1997; Kopecky & Mudde 2003).

Among the inclusivists, Bob (2011) argues that the different meanings of uncivil society are related to the three primary ways in which civil society is defined: associational life, the good society and the public sphere.

More recent literature has investigated uncivil society as a transnational phenomenon linked to globalization. Two main perspectives can be highlighted. According to the first one, uncivil society is connected to globalization through the proliferation and influence of NGOs as part of a neoliberal consensus aimed at reducing the role of the state. This also

reflects a critique of the neoliberal approach and its impact on the role of the state (Stewart 1997).

The second perspective, introduced after the events of 9/11, employs the term uncivil society to denote reactions to neoliberal globalization that are considered 'illiberal.' The example provided is the al-Qaeda network, which is seen as an expression of an 'uncivil' reaction to the globalized world order. The term is used here to characterize responses that deviate from the ideals of liberal democracy and market-driven globalization. However, the passage notes that there has been limited in-depth analysis of this usage.

In both cases, uncivil society is associated with phenomena that transcend national boundaries, suggesting that the term is applied to describe elements of societal organization, activism, or reaction that extend beyond traditional borders. The global context, particularly the dynamics of globalization and its impact on political, economic, and social structures, seems to be a key factor in these discussions (Rumford 2001; Kaldor & Muro 2003).

CLASSIFICATIONS & EXAMPLES Among the various negative attributes that are associated with uncivil society, the most common is violence. The post-Cold War era has seen a shift in the perception of global threats in Western contexts, with insurgencies, violent terrorist networks, and criminal organizations often identified as some of the most significant challenges. **Terrorist groups** have been defined not only by their ideological or political identities but also by their use of violence as a primary means of achieving their objectives. The emphasis is often on nonstate actors employing asymmetric tactics to instill fear and disrupt societal stability. The aim is to create widespread fear, gain attention for their cause, or influence political decision-making through violence. While not all terrorist groups are motivated by religious **ideologies**, there has been an increase in the prominence of religious extremism as a driving force.

Organized crime is commonly associated with engaging in illegal activities for financial gain. Unlike political or ideological motives, organized crime groups are primarily driven by the accumulation of money or valuable resources. Their activities often undermine legal economic systems and contribute to corruption. While profit is the primary goal, criminal groups may use violence and coercion to protect their interests, eliminate rivals, or maintain control over territories (Irrera 2023).

However, several scholars argue that there are additional elements beyond violence that can contribute to the characterization of a group or movement as potentially uncivil. Kaldor and Muro (2003) mention extremism, particularly of an ethnic or religious nature, and fundamentalism. Beyond physical violence, an uncivil society may exhibit intolerance toward diverse perspectives, beliefs, or identities. Exclusivity and the refusal to engage in constructive dialogue with differing opinions can contribute to an uncivil atmosphere.

A disregard for the rule of law and a tendency to operate outside established legal frameworks is a second one and may include actions such as vigilantism, extrajudicial measures, or defiance of legal institutions (Whitehead 1997). Other scholars also refer to those actions or ideologies that contribute to the erosion of social cohesion, community bonds, and trust, producing divisions along ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic lines and to the tendency to embrace authoritarian structures and practices that may result in the suppression of dissent and a lack of respect for individual rights (Kopecky & Mudde 2003; Fatton 1995).

IMPACT ON POLICY Investigations on the implications that uncivil society may have on policy necessarily deal with the consolidated idea that strengthening civil society contributes to **democratization**. According to this, a vibrant and active civil society is often seen as a crucial component of a democratic system. Civil society organizations can act as intermediaries between citizens and the state, providing a channel for citizen participation, advocacy, and the protection of rights. As a consequence, an uncivil society characterized by intolerance, violence, and disregard for democratic principles can undermine the foundations of a democratic system. It may contribute to a climate of fear, suppression of dissent, and erosion of democratic norms and values. If certain groups within society are excluded or marginalized by an uncivil society, it can result in heightened social polarization. This polarization can hinder inclusive political processes and contribute to the fragmentation of democratic societies.

Therefore, providing support for NGOs, advocacy groups, and community organizations should enhance their capacity to hold governments accountable, advocate for citizens' rights, and contribute to the development of democratic norms. Additionally, policies that encourage constructive discourse and collaboration can contribute to a more democratic and stable society.

However, not everyone agrees on these – apparently unattainable – assumptions. For example, Berman (1997) highlights a nuanced perspective on civil society, suggesting that the vibrancy of civil society alone may not guarantee a positive or 'civil' outcome. In the case he presents – Germans living in the Weimar Republic – he contends that a highly active civil society, characterized by dense associational networks, did not prevent the rise of **Nazism**. Instead, these networks were infiltrated and captured by Nazi organizers, contributing to the Nazis' seizure of power (Berman 1997).

Some religious or nationalist movements may emerge from a democratic base and garner support from the general population through democratic processes, but they do not necessarily uphold values that align with liberal principles, such as individual rights, pluralism, and a strong emphasis on personal freedoms. Segments of civil society that embrace liberal, 'Western' values may not always have a strong democratic **legitimacy** in the form of a grassroots base (Abdel Rahman 2002).

Finally, Avritzer (1997) observes that civil society can only be as civil as the circumstances allow. The emergence of uncivil society is more likely when the



state is weak (cf. **state fragility & failure**). A weak state may struggle to provide essential services, maintain law and order, or guarantee the physical and material security of its citizens. Referring, in particular to Latin American countries like Colombia or Peru, Avritzer's framework suggests that uncivil society reflects the challenges faced by societies in certain contexts where traditional structures and institutions may be inadequate or dysfunctional and that under such conditions, civil society may take on characteristics that deviate from the normative expectations of a vibrant and engaged civic sphere (Avritzer 1997).

NEW FRONTIERS Although uncivil society remains a concept that is extremely difficult to define, measure and investigate, potential new research trends have already emerged and may develop.

The transnational dimension in which many uncivil groups move and interact deserves greater attention. For example, Pedahzur and Weinberg (2001) discuss the 'internationalism' of extreme right-wing groups, stressing their presence in multiple countries and regions around the world. They may share common ideologies, symbols, and narratives that serve as unifying factors, but advances in communication and transportation technologies have facilitated the exchange of ideas, strategies, and even individuals among these groups, contributing to their global reach.

Religious and nationalist militants use the same advances to boost the transnational character of their actions. The insecurities generated by globalization play a significant role in the growth of these movements. The capture of state power is frequently cited as a strategy by these movements to achieve their goals. Once in power, they may implement policies aimed at reducing reliance on global institutions, restricting immigration, and promoting nationalist or ethnocentric agendas. The desire for religious or ethnic self-rule reflects a response to perceived threats to identity and autonomy in the face of globalization (Kaldor & Munro 2003).

Lastly, the outsourcing of military and security functions to private actors, such as Private Military Companies (PMCs), introduces a novel dimension. These companies operate outside traditional state military structures, and their involvement can have implications for state authority, democratic governance, and civil-military relations. The privatization of military functions may raise concerns about accountability, transparency, and adherence to **human rights** standards. The presence of private military actors challenges state authorities, potentially weakening the state's monopoly on the use of force. This erosion of state authority can have implications for democratic governance, as the traditional mechanisms for oversight and accountability may be less effective when military functions are outsourced to private entities. This can contribute to the consolidation of power in the hands of authoritarian leaders or regimes. Private actors may operate with less transparency and scrutiny, providing opportunities for authoritarian leaders to wield influence without the same checks and balances that apply to state-controlled military forces. This dynamic introduces new dimensions of incivility as it challenges established norms and practices in the management of force.

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Warlords

In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity
– Sun Tzu (孙子 – *Sūnzǐ*, 771-256 BCE), Chinese Strategist and Philosopher

War does not determine who is right – only who is left
– Attributed to Bertrand Russell, British philosopher

Warlords are leaders of armed groups that control local territory using force and patronage (Marten 2013). They have some military legitimacy but not political legitimacy (Giustozzi 2005). The phenomenon of warlords is a complex and multifaceted issue that arises in contexts where state authority is weak or has collapsed entirely (cf. **state fragility & failure**). Warlords are typically non-state actors who command armed groups, exerting control over territories through the use of force and intimidation.

Rebel regimes and warlords differ significantly in their motivations and structures. Rebel regimes are foremost politically motivated, seeking to replace or reform existing state structures, and they typically emerge from organized groups that have succeeded in civil conflicts. These regimes aim to establish governance and often engage in power-sharing to maintain stability. In contrast, warlords are primarily driven by self-enrichment rather than political ideology. Rebel regimes can become warlords if they abandon their political goes (and vice versa, as shown in the entry **rebel regimes**).

Warlords thrive in environments of chaos and insecurity, often emerging in post-conflict zones or regions where authoritarian regimes have fallen apart. As a phenomenon, this topic intersects security studies, peace and conflict studies and comparative authoritarianism. Understanding the dynamics of warlordism is crucial for addressing the broader implications on governance, security, and international relations in affected regions.

SEE ALSO Warlords historically overlapped with 'Big Men' when they possessed traces of tribal authority and were more synonymous with **rebel regimes**. They are sometimes called 'boss,' but the concepts of 'bossism' are different; *Caudillo* comes closer but is distinct, as shown in Box 1.10. **Mercenaries** are a different concept altogether, even though warlords can be bought too.

DEFINITION Warlords are non-state political-military actors who lead armed groups that control local territory while keeping a weak central authority at bay (Giustozzi 2005). They are motivated by greed and aim to acquire territory, money and resources through the use and threat of violence (Duffield 1998). They almost exclusively emerge in weak authoritarian regimes, which have seen their security institutions collapse and fall apart. Scholars have argued that when the state's power is fragmented, localized power may emerge (Hills 1997: 35; Freeman 2015). Sometimes, they originate from the military, with a faction leader defecting and setting up an alternative power base (Freeman 2015). The warlord often has some form of professional or paramilitary experience, but their militia is usually not very well trained or disciplined.

After the security institutions have fallen apart, warlords maximize their profits from state disorder and have an interest in sustaining state collapse. Compared to the states where they operate, warlords are very powerful. The state needs the warlord's compliance more than the warlord needs the state. Warlords also emerge in post-conflict zones, where power, law and civil order have disappeared (Hills 1997: 35; Freeman 2015).

Max **Weber** noted that warlords are permanent figures in a chronic state of conflict. He argued that the 'rulership' of warlords rests upon 'strictly personal **charisma**,' which is demonstrated through their successes in war. (Joose & Willey 2020) The warlord focuses on taking land that is outside of government control, such as unmonitored trade routes and mines.

Warlords appear to provide security, but they also manufacture insecurity to justify their existence. Warlords and their militias need insecurity in order to flourish. Those living in war zones fear constant attacks from armed looters. As physical security decreases and society breaks down, individuals need local protection in order to survive. This makes them more dependent on local warlords (Hills 1997). Thus, physical force is what provides limited stability instead of moral or legitimate authority.

Warlords prey on the population and recruit from the local community (MacKinlay 2000: 56). The warlord does not depend on any popular support and the only service he provides, if any, is security. Waging military campaigns may be necessary to maintain some legitimacy, but overall, they are not committed to a higher cause. They often target the population rather than protect it from harm.

Warlords do not have political motivations, though they sometimes may pretend to. Their main motivation is self-enrichment, not state-building or any sort of collective interest. Jean-Germain Gros writes that they have the "emotional immaturity of teenage fighters." (Gros 1996: 459). Other scholars concur that warlords are one-dimensional and mostly engage in indiscriminate violence against the population under their control (Lezhnev 2005). They are devoid of any ideology, and unlike leaders of insurgencies, they do not have to reinforce some sort of ideology constantly. In some incidents, Roger MacGinty (2010) notes, warlords exploit a shared identity of geography, tribe, clan, ethnicity or religion with their constituency.

Warlords may also pretend to helm some sort of political organization, such as Charles Taylor in Liberia, Joseph Kony in Uganda and Foday Sankoh



in Sierra Leone. They only aim to control territory and defy the state. The militia that works under their command may not operate under the assumption that they are fighting on behalf of a political movement, however. Nearly all warlords in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo and Liberia held high office at one point in time prior to emerging as warlords. In Somalia, Mohamed Aidid acted as defense minister (1979-1991) for Somali president Siad Barre. By holding this position, Aidid was able to acquire arms clandestinely prior to the civil war. Charles Taylor was able to do the same when he ran the state procurement agency under President Samuel Doe (1980-1990).

Warlords usually do not provide any sort of public good or service, and if they do, the recipients are carefully chosen. The most they usually offer as a public good are distributions of cash, gifts and arms to their supporters. Any goods that the warlord provides only cement their clientelistic networks (Giustozzi 2004). Their legitimacy is rooted in this charisma and **patronage** ties. They offer privatized security and exploit unregulated markets but have none of the burdens of the state.

Warlords operate at the top, exercising hierarchical and authoritarian forms of leadership. They have some trusted subordinates but generally do not rely on any formal structure. The rank structures within warlord armies are ambiguous (Thomas et al. 2005). For this reason, warlord systems do not survive the death or decline in power of the warlord. The entire system is based on one person, which leaves favored individuals in the lurch. The warlord's power relies on force, charisma and patronage, similar to **personalist rule** in dictatorships.

Because they have no political agenda, they do not have a politically sensitive path to navigate or need to adhere to an **ideology**. They do not need to persuade a constituency since threats of violence are enough to ensure compliance. They prey on civilians rather than attempt to represent them.

Warlords want to profit from state disorder, and their power is often dependent on their ability to govern the war economy (Le Billon 2001; 2021). They fund themselves through different forms of looting and predation. They can tax diamond diggers, miners, drug producers, traffickers and smugglers (cf. **resource curse**). When government is absent, they can tax goods in transit and set up checkpoints (Hill 1997). In some cases, warlords have even managed to engage in the logging, mining and oil trade. They sell local resources on the international market and trade with foreign firms, which brings in hard currency that they can use to buy more weapons or enrich themselves. Warlords also earn revenues by providing protection and manipulating scarcity. They can also make money by intercepting **foreign aid** and stealing from the local population. Their economic objectives drive them to avoid acquiring any kind of fixed economic asset. They rarely ever invest in the territory under their control because it entails great risk to their power. In general, warlords do not care if the territory that they control deteriorates.

Foreign states may opportunistically offer support for warlords. Border states can use warlords to challenge the domestic sovereignty of weak neighbors (Marten 2013). States bordering Afghanistan supported local warlords, such as Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan.

In rare cases, warlords are able to take control over not only large territories in the countries where they originate from but also neighboring weak countries as well. Charles Taylor was able to take control of the frontier zones of Guinea and the Ivory Coast, referred to as 'Taylorland,' and do what he saw fit. This was even with the complicity of the Ivorian army. Taylorland had currency, a banking system, TV and radio stations, an international airfield and a deep-water port (Reno 1997).

KEY SIGNIFICANCE Warlord systems emerge when the state is under stress and is on the verge of collapse, or at least pockets of territory are not under the state's control. Warlords serve as an example of how **power** is structured and how territory is controlled in the absence of effective security institutions and a democratic state. Power becomes diffused when the state collapses and later gets exerted through informal and incoherent means by local non-state actors and their groups (Ponzio 2011). Consult Malejacq (2016) for a typology on warlord vs. state power distribution.

Warlords almost always emerge in post-authoritarian settings or the aftermath of an authoritarian regime's collapse. Warlords are not a subset of authoritarian regimes, but they operate in an authoritarian manner. While the authoritarian regime uses the state to control the population and to ensure total security and control over its citizens, a warlord rules with an iron fist but in an environment of total insecurity. In many cases, the warlords are both a cause and a consequence of the insecurity.

ORIGIN Warlords are said to have originated centuries ago. Warlords were first recorded retaining power after the collapse of the Han dynasty in China in the third century and again with the collapse of the Tang dynasty in the tenth century (Roberts 1989). Warlords were also influential in Europe's Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), where they set up personal fiefdoms using force. More scholarship has focused on the role of warlords in early twentieth-century China, with the most notable period being from 1916-1928. This destructive period in Chinese history was in the aftermath of the collapse of the imperial system, as warlords emerged jockeying for power (Charlton & May 1989). Even though the classical era of warlordism in China ended in 1928, some warlords persisted and continued to survive.

There is some controversy over the use of the term 'warlord.' Past president of the Republic of China (Taiwan), Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), noted that the essential features of warlords were a lack of political principles, being able to occupy an area, an insatiable need for money and property, and love of his own skin (Charlton & May 1989). Some authors claim that the term is too pejorative and, in many instances, should be called a regional militarist (Wilbur 1968) or provincial militarist (Kapp 1973). In Chinese his-

tory, the term (軍閥 – *jūnfá*) is more benign – and designated to a man who was a lord and was able to wage war. The warlord was someone who could control a region with his military, and there was no higher authority than himself (Sheridan 1966).

In Europe, before the nation-states emerged there were autonomous regions that were governed by local rulers that had many different labels. Some may have referred to these local rulers as barons, dukes and/or warlords (Jackson 2003). Other authors claim that the term warlord should have been limited to characterize the leaders who emerged after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty (Mackinlay 2000; Sheridan 1983).

In English, the word 'warlord' obviously originated from the combination of 'war' and 'lord,' and its first recorded use dates back to 1856, to a critical essay by the American philosopher and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson discussing the aristocracy in England. *"Piracy and war gave place to trade, politics and letters, the war-lord to the law-lord; the law-lord to the merchant and the mill-owner, but the privilege was kept, whilst the means of obtaining it were changed."* (Emerson 1902: 98).

LITERATURE The literature on warlords has mostly looked at the reasons why they emerge, how they exercise power and what their impact is on the state, conflict resolution and democracy.

Warlords vary considerably in terms of how much power they hold. Warlords do not hold power in an institutionalized sense. Their position of power over society is *de facto* and directly tied to their possession of military force used to terrorize and coerce society. Although warlords can control territory and may establish primitive forms of local government, they are not a legitimate governing authority for society. Warlordism also differs from **neo-patrimonialism** and **clientelism** because they do not need to reward political loyalty through development projects, posts and privileges. They obtain loyalty from their subjects mostly by using or threatening to use force. This means that warlords do not even partly reinvest their revenues in the territory under their control.

As for the military force that they control, the warlord is only able to hold it together due to his own **charismatic rule** and ability to distribute **patronage** or promises of some future reward. Rather than being connected by a commitment to a political ideology or structure, individuals are drawn into the militia for transactional reasons. Troops can switch sides frequently depending on where the flow of patronage is coming from (Waldorf 2017).

Warlords are a sign of de-institutionalization and organizational decay of the government because they often rise in authoritarian settings when there has been a protracted civil war and when the state does not have a monopoly over the legitimate use of force. The end of the Cold War saw the rise of warlords again, as there was less aid coming from the two superpowers to prevent the collapse of states, especially in Africa.

Warlords capitalize on opportunities to assert power and influence but usually do not coordinate with one another. They mostly fight against other warlords and other violent non-state actors scrapping to control territory.

The literature mostly concurs that the chances of stability in post-conflict zones decrease when warlords emerge. Most warlords have an interest in maintaining state collapse and insecurity and care little about saving the infrastructure of the state since they will never control it. The warlord usually prefers to defy the centralized state rather than support it.

These groups also present a significant obstacle to the reconstruction of society. Warlord systems, in many cases, fostered the emergence of a 'Kalashnikov culture,' where political disputes are settled through the use of arms. This culture has been especially notable in the Pakistan and Afghanistan border areas, where citizens have gained access to automatic weapons and have ceased to use legal, institutional mechanisms to resolve disputes.

States with warlord-controlled areas are negatively affected by their operations economically as well. Warlords stunt economic growth. They disrupt free trade and make any sort of commerce and investment unpredictable and risky. They make economic transactions more inefficient, expensive and insecure. This leads to capital flight and low levels of other forms of investment. Because of the constant state of insecurity, people must focus on short-term profits while they can. The future can change rapidly with warlords, which makes it difficult to make long-term deals. To illustrate, in Tajikistan in November 1992, in the first phase of the civil war, the town of Kolkhozobod, the center of cotton production, changed hands six times due to infighting among warlord militias.

Warlords generate revenues in a parasitic manner. They extort and tax and create the need for protection (Thomas et al. 2005). They tap into the resources of the state and its people and siphon off what they want. In the case of Somalia where warlord rule has become the norm (see also 'piracy' in Box 7.8), very little investment has taken place. Business contracts could only be enforced through informal protection pacts, and business owners had to rely on warlord militias. Small business owners could not afford the costs of security which priced them out of the market.

Warlords not only cause irreparable damage to security, the economy and the state, but also to prospects for democracy. Warlords have no democratic mandate and usually have no interest in democracy. They also do not adhere to international and human rights laws (Robinson 2001). It was the frustration and disgust with warlords in Afghanistan that led to the emergence of the Taliban in the mid to late 1990s.

Some scholars, however, counter that warlords can play a positive role in democracy and state-building (Bermeo 2003; Giustozzi 2003). Warlords might eventually become a stationary bandit (Giustozzi 2003). In the case of Afghanistan, some influential warlords were incorporated into the state, and some of them became more responsible political actors. In cases where credible commitments can be made to the warlord, they may be willing to disarm their forces



(Mukhopadhyay 2009). Nevertheless, the incorporation of warlords in Afghanistan's democracy proved not to be enough. By 2021, the state had collapsed once again, and the Taliban had taken over.

Warlords also negatively affect peace processes. On the one hand, they do not have the power to make peace. On the other hand, they routinely disrupt and destroy peace. They have no interest in a settlement because it would diminish their power (Hansen 2003). A post-conflict situation is very complicated when warlords have gained power. They may agree to be incorporated into the state, but they thrive off an insecure environment and may serve a dual role of using their new position in the state to serve their own financial interests while also continuing to ensure that the country remains insecure to justify their provision of protection.

The civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997) led to the development of warlord militias, bands of vigilantes and other illegally armed formations. Once they became involved, these groups had an interest in protracting the conflict. There were several attempts at a ceasefire early into the conflict that warlords undermined. Warlords violated the truce due to their desire to maintain control over lucrative enterprises such as cotton plantations and oil refineries. Warlords can expand to such an extent that whole sub-regions become affected, such as in the Horn of Africa.

CLASSIFICATIONS There are two types of warlords. *Traditional warlords* are noted for mostly engaging in predatory behaviors, and *neo-warlords* offer some form of patronage and services to their subjects. Ismael Khan is sometimes referred to as a neo-warlord – or a warlord who provides some form of public good over the territory that is under his control. Often referred to as the 'Lion of Herat,' Khan is a prominent Afghan warlord and political figure who gained influence as a *mujahideen* commander during the Soviet-Afghan War. After the Soviet withdrawal, he became the governor of Herat Province, where he established a semi-autonomous rule characterized by tight security and economic control, leveraging border trade with Iran to sustain his power and influence in the region. Earning millions in revenues due to his control over trade that passed through his region, he was able to provide tight security and even some economic opportunities. The Afghan government tried to incorporate him into the state, and he served as the Minister of Water and Energy since 2005 though he has favored Herat at the expense of other regions. (During the second Taliban takeover in 2021, he was captured and later released. He now lives in Iran).

MEASUREMENT As mentioned before, the conceptualization of the term warlord is plagued by controversies. For Stanski (2009: 75), the term warlord is problematic because it is used to ratify stereotypes about developing countries. Any actor that has access to an army is referred to as a warlord in Afghanistan. The term is also used to describe a wide range of actors, whether it be the leader of a criminal gang or an organized criminal thug. It has, therefore, been very challenging to come up with a common definition of a warlord and to classify warlords properly. There is no large dataset of warlord actors, but there are plenty of rich case studies of notable warlords of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, also complicating matters is that it is very difficult to get a better understanding of warlords from primary field work. It is very challenging to gain access to warlords and to interview them to understand better how they behave. This helps explain why a clear conceptualization has not emerged.

EXAMPLES Warlords in Afghanistan have constantly threatened state sovereignty. The state has rarely exercised a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, giving ample room for non-state actors to take control over small territory and provide 'protection.' The power of warlords has been so potent that they even have been incorporated *into* the state. The Hamid Karzai (2001-2014) government placed warlords in key positions in the government regardless of their expertise or experience. According to a delegate at one point, *"in the Loya Jirga ['grand council' in Pashto, a traditional assembly distinct from the parliament], 85% of the elected were with the warlords or were warlords"* (Dietl 2004). This is not surprising given that the profits that some warlords were expected to make in the post-Taliban era were enough to compel many to transition and adapt to the new rules (MacGinty 2010).

Warlordism in Afghanistan became more notable after initial uprisings took place against the Soviet-backed state government in the late 1970s (and against the actual Soviet invasion in 1979). This instability led to the rise of independent commanders. After the war began, refugee camps spawned new insurgent groups. In regions where the insurgents successfully fought off the state and Soviet forces, their commanders planted opium poppies as a source of independent income and took control of transportation checkpoints to collect unofficial taxes from travelers. Many warlords emerged more powerful than ever after the conflict with the Soviet Union ended. As the state collapsed and the civil war of the 1990s developed, warlords engendered insecurity, but in some cases, they were the only actors capable of providing security, albeit in an arbitrary manner.

Warlords have undermined the capacity and legitimacy of the state in Afghanistan because they have usurped revenues that the government could collect. For example, all of the revenues from the transit trade in the region of Herat (one of the richest regions in the country) went directly to Khan, who emerged after being a prominent military commander in the war against the Soviets. Warlords also established fiefdoms on the margins of the state and exploited vulnerable populations and markets that were unable to rely on state protection. Warlords were also able to exploit multiple sources of income by extortion, levying taxes and duties, trading contraband, controlling entry points, particularly for the flow of drugs, and accessing support from foreign patrons. Many warlords also sought to benefit from limited peace in Afghanistan.

Attempts to incorporate other warlords into the

army have mostly backfired. Warlords have paid lip service to the Afghan government but have been able to exercise power more or less autonomously. The resurgence of the Taliban, the botched 'Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration' (DDR) program and the instability in the region meant that many warlords and militia commanders had continuing relevance (MacGinty 2010).

Scholars have looked to understand the nature of warlordism in the Afghan context, why they have emerged and how warlords should be defined. One explanation is that loyalties in Afghanistan have been more closely tied to one's tribe or village elders in contrast to the state-citizen relationship found in Western liberal democracies (Radnitz 2004: 513). However, some authors claim that the phenomenon of warlords is more a recent product of continuous warfare and has not been as culturally entrenched as compared to Europe's experience with warlordism (Marten 2006). For Barry Rubin (2002), warlordism in Afghanistan is a consequence of being forcefully integrated into the modern state system. Attempts to modernize and centralize the country led to revolts against the government and the rise of leaders of militias to defend their territory. Afghanistan has thousands of 'men of arms' that derive their power from controlling a single roadblock or small area, while other men may retain control over a much larger area. Whether or not these men can all be called warlords is up for dispute.

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APPENDIX

LEGAL TENDER, LOYAL SUBJECTS – THE POLITICS OF ORNAMENTAL CURRENCY



50-Ruble, Imperial Russia (1899, issued 1910-1914), depicting Tsar Nicholas I.



In the ancient world, the expansion of coinage as the preferred method of trading and paying taxes, resulted in the expanded use of featured images of gods and royal symbols. The earliest known depiction of a ruler's portrait on currency dates back to around 400 BCE, when Tissaphernes, a Persian satrap, minted coins bearing his image. This was considered a bold and potentially blasphemous move at the time

The use of ruler imagery on coins continued through the ages and the practice served to impress audiences with the regal power of the ruling body and legitimize their authority. (Hymans 2022) The tradition of depicting rulers' images on currency was applied to banknotes only in the eighteenth century, even though the invention of paper money took place much earlier. The oldest surviving banknote are those of the 'Great Ming Treasure Note' (大明宝钞 – *dà míng bǎo chāo*) first printed during the reign of the Hongwu Emperor (1368-1398) – probably no earlier than 1375. (And it is actually that currency's hyperinflation by the mid-fifteenth century that contributed to its survival. With people treating the notes as worthless, stuffing large piles of useless banknotes into jars, wooden boxes and later forgetting about them.) (Guinness world record, 2024; Metcalfe 2016)

King George II of Great Britain was the first ruler to appear on a banknote in 1727, when he instructed the Royal Bank of Scotland to issue a set of notes featuring his royal portrait. This marked a significant shift in currency design and set a precedent for future banknote imagery.

Strengthened by the rise of nationalism, currency design evolved to incorporate more complex narratives and symbols. Coins and banknotes began to feature national symbols, regalia, and important historical figures. This shift allowed regimes to express continuity, add historical weight to their origin stories, and showcase their national evolution. Banknotes, as 'Ur-artifacts of print capitalism,' played a significant role in forming and spreading national imaginaries. Unlike other images, banknotes had nearly universal viewership because their use was essential for participation in the monetary system. (Purtle 2009)

The inclusion of detailed pictures and illustrations on banknotes served a dual purpose: storytelling and anti-counterfeiting. Complex imagery made notes harder to copy and easier to verify, addressing the practical need for security in currency design. The stories banknotes aim to tell, however, can be very different.

The greenbacks, introduced under the Legal Tender Act of 25 February 1862, marked a major shift in US currency during the Civil War. Issued to finance the war and address gold and silver shortages, they were declared legal tender, accepted for debts as equivalent to specie despite being non-redeemable for coins. Between March 1862 and March 1863, denominations from $1 to $1,000 were issued, featuring historical vignettes like Columbus and Washington crossing the Delaware to educate the public about US history. The US Treasury explicitly stated that these designs aimed to *"teach the masses the prominent periods in our country's history"* (Helleiner 2003: 106; Cooper 2009: 5).

Currency design has often reflected broader cultural and political trends. For instance, some countries have used banknotes to showcase touristic highlights, effectively turning currency into miniature guidebooks. In 1910, the Qing government issued a new law to standardize currency (as presented here), making the notes of the Da-Qing Bank (大清銀行) the only legal tender paper money in China. As part



10 Dollar, Qing dynasty (1910), depicting Emperor Zaifeng, Prince Chun of the First Rank. (source: public domain)

of this initiative, they commissioned new banknote designs that incorporated significant cultural and architectural elements. (Theobald 2016) This tradition took root and even today, the current *Rénmínbì* notes feature sites like the Great Hall of the People (in Beijing), Potala Palace (in Lhasa, Tibet), and Li River (in Guilin, Guangxi Province). This approach highlights the wealth, conquests and national treasures of a country, making banknotes a form of cultural ambassadorship.

Revolutionary regimes (leftist and anti-colonial ones in particular) have also used banknotes to stress economic development and technological advancements. Scenes of industrial progress, hydroelectric dams, bountiful harvests, or generic images of the 'common folk,' often depicted in socialist realist style, have been used to convey messages of economic progress, welfare and modernization. This style has been copied, adapted, and reinvented in several world regions.

The recurrent use of certain imagery, such as the depiction of Simón Bolívar, the renowned South American liberator on Argentinean, Bolivian, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Peruvian and Venezuelan banknotes, aims to project a common origin and legacy. In Venezuela's turbulent history, his recent reappearance on banknotes served to underscore an image of national stability and boost faith in the strength of the currency.

The gender gap remains Grand Canyon-like, with less than ten percent of portraited notes featuring (non-anonymous) female images. The percentage drops closer to five percent if one excludes Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain. Elizabeth II's image graced the currencies of 33 different countries (as shown in the example from the Bahamas), spanning from Australia to various Caribbean nations. She held the distinction of being the most frequently depicted person on banknotes and coins worldwide through a combination of her unprecedented 70-year reign as the British monarch and head of the Commonwealth, boosted by her early appearances on currency (before her coronation). (Fiori 2024)

Regime changes often bring about significant alterations in banknote artwork. In democratic societies, the practice of depicting current rulers is often abandoned due to its association with authoritarian legacies. Instead, historical or mythical figures, cultural icons, inventors, social reformers, or even (rarely) central bank officials or finance ministers may be featured. After periods of political transition, countries may choose to return to historically significant or unifying symbols that are less controversial. This approach allows for a balance between honoring national heritage and avoiding political sensitivities.

The evolution of currency imagery from simple depictions of rulers to complex representations of national identity reflects broader historical, political, and cultural changes. As a medium that circulates widely among a population, currency serves not only as a means of economic exchange but also as a powerful tool for conveying messages about national values, achievements, and aspirations. The careful selection and design of currency imagery continue to play a significant role in shaping public perceptions and reinforcing national narratives. These can really evoke culture clashes.

For example, in 2016 the Obama administration announced plans to replace Andrew Jackson, a former president and slaveholder, with Harriet Tubman, the abolitionist and Underground Railroad leader, on the bill's front. The redesign was originally scheduled for unveiling in 2020. However, during Trump's first presidency, his administration delayed the process. US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin stated that the delay was due to the need for anti-counterfeiting measures and new printing technology, pushing the timeline to 2030. Critics argued that this explanation was a pretext to avoid implementing the change during Trump's tenure. Reports suggested that Mnuchin delayed the redesign to prevent Trump from halting it altogether, as Trump had publicly opposed replacing Jackson with Tubman, calling it "pure political correctness." He has expressed admiration for Jackson and resisted efforts to remove him from the bill. (Durkin 2019)

The images of banknotes depicted throughout the



50 Cents, The Bahamas (2019), depicting Queen Elizabeth II, wearing the Burmese Ruby Tiara.



Encyclopedia Tyrannica touch upon these themes. Sometimes a selected grouping of two to three banknotes brings together rulers with similar origins or representing specific regimes types; in other cases, there is a larger 'story' or anecdote to be told, which can be read below.

All banknotes are from the private collection of the co-editor (JVdB) unless listed otherwise.

Page XXX Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Assad family – Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad – in Syria are deeply intertwined with the history and evolution of the Arab Socialist Baʿath Party (cf. Box 4.5), shaping the political trajectories of their respective countries through authoritarian rule, party dominance, and the personalization of power.

In Iraq, Saddam Hussein rose through the ranks of Baʿath Party, which espoused Arab nationalism and socialism, eventually taking full control in 1979 after a series of purges and consolidating all major state and party positions under his authority. Under Saddam, the Baʿath Party became the backbone of a one-party state, using a mix of violent repression, pervasive surveillance, patronage, and a personality cult to maintain its grip on society and eliminate opposition. The party's ideology and apparatus were used to integrate, and often coerce, Iraqis into supporting the regime, making party membership essential for advancement in public life. Saddam's rule was marked by wars (notably with Iran and Kuwait), brutal suppression of internal dissent, and the transformation of the Ba'athist ideology into a vehicle for his personal power. After his overthrow in 2003, the Baʿath Ba'ath Party was banned, and its remnants played a role in later insurgencies.

In Syria, the Baʿath Party seized power in 1963 and, after internal purges and coups, Hafez al-Assad established his sole leadership in 1970, transforming the party into a tool for consolidating his family's control over the state. The Syrian Baʿath, while sharing ideological roots with its Iraqi counterpart, developed its own variant – 'Assadism' – marked by a strong personality cult, the dominance of the security apparatus, and tight intertwining of party and state institutions. The party became the central pillar of an authoritarian system, facilitating mass mobilization, patronage, and the exclusion of real political opposition. Bashar al-Assad inherited this system in 2000, maintaining its authoritarian structure and Baʿathist dominance despite initial hopes for reform. During the Syrian civil war, the party remained the regime's main organizational base, but its legitimacy and influence plummeted, culminating in its formal dissolution after Bashar's sudden ouster in 2024.

Both Saddam Hussein and the Assad rulers managed to usurp their historic Baʿath parties and transform them into vehicles for personalist rule: watering down their original pan-Arab socialist ideals in order to accommodate ultra-nationalist frames, their personality cults, and (in the latter case) dynastic succession.

Page 26 The three independence leaders of Namibia, Zambia, and Tanzania – Sam Nujoma, Kenneth Kaunda, and Julius Nyerere, respectively – are perceived as complex figures whose legacies blend elements of visionary leadership with authoritarian tendencies. Kaunda and Nyerere were educators by profession before they entered politics, Nujoma pursued higher education later in life. All three contributed to significant educational reforms in their states.

Sam Nujoma, Namibia's founding president, is celebrated as a liberation hero who led the country to independence in 1990 after decades of guerrilla warfare against South African Apartheid rule. His leadership fostered national unity and stability in a deeply divided society. However, his tenure was marked by autocratic tendencies, including intolerance for dissent within SWAPO during exile, accusations of torture in liberation camps, and controversies surrounding his third term in office.

Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia's first president, is remembered for his philosophy of 'Zambian Humanism,' which emphasized inclusivity and mutual aid. He achieved independence peacefully in 1964 and supported liberation movements across southern Africa. Despite his early idealism, Kaunda established a one-party state and faced criticism for economic mismanagement during his 27-year rule. His dignified departure from power in 1991 transformed him into a respected elder statesman.

Julius Nyerere (revered as *Mwalimu* – 'Teacher' in Kiswahili), Tanzania's first president, is revered for his intellectual leadership and commitment to African socialism through his *ujamaa* philosophy. He promoted egalitarianism and unity while supporting liberation movements across Africa. However, his policies of forced rural collectivization and nationalization faced resistance and economic hardship. Nyerere voluntarily retired in 1985 and supported multiparty reforms in 1992, reinforcing his reputation as a moral leader.

Their legacies are thus seen as a mix of transformative leadership and autocratic tendencies typical for liberation movements and single party regimes, shaped by the challenges of post-colonial state-building.

Page 244 This selection represents three archetypical strongmen (military personalist rulers) from Sub Saharan Africa. Mobutu Sese Seko, Idi Amin, and Yahya Jammeh each managed to stay in power beyond the average life spans of military regimes. Two of them for remarkably long periods: Mobutu for 32 years in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) and Jammeh for 22 years in The Gambia.

Joseph Mobutu (see also Box 1.7) consolidated his rule through a mix of brutal repression and co-optation. Early in his regime, he publicly executed rivals and coup plotters to instill fear and deter dissent, while later he skillfully used patronage, distribut-

ing state resources and positions to buy loyalty and neutralize opposition. Mobutu also exploited Cold War dynamics, securing substantial financial and military backing despite his regime's corruption and human rights abuses. After Mobutu was ousted in May 1997, the new rebel government of Laurent-Désiré Kabila quickly abandoned the name 'Zaire' and reverted the country's name to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The currency, which under Mobutu had been the *zaïre* (and, after 1993, the *nouveau zaïre*), was also replaced. The latter had suffered from hyperinflation and bore Mobutu's image on all denominations, but continued to circulate briefly during the tumultuous political transition. However, in July 1998, the Congolese franc was reintroduced as the official currency, replacing the *nouveau zaïre* at a rate of 1 to 100,000 new zaires.

There are persistent reports and some photographic evidence suggesting that, in certain areas and for a brief period during the transition, authorities or individuals attempted to deface these notes by punching out or cutting out Mobutu's face from the bills, particularly on high-denomination notes like the 20,000 *nouveau zaïre*, to symbolically distance the country from the former dictator. However, while the existence of such altered notes is supported by some circumstantial evidence, there is no definitive official documentation confirming this as a widespread or sanctioned practice

Idi Amin's rule in Uganda was rooted in his military background and his willingness to use extreme violence to eliminate real or perceived threats. After seizing power from Milton Obote in a coup, he ruled as a military dictator, relying on the army and secret police to enforce his authority and suppress opposition. Amin's regime was marked by arbitrary violence, ethnic persecution, and mass killings, creating a climate of fear that stifled dissent. He also manipulated ethnic divisions to maintain support among key groups in the military, while purging rivals and potential challengers. Amin's populist rhetoric and initial gestures to improve the lives of ordinary Ugandans helped him consolidate power, but his erratic governance and brutality ultimately isolated him domestically and internationally, leading to his overthrow by a Tanzanian-led force – a war he had started himself. After his rule, Ugandan presidents were no longer portrayed on banknotes.

Yahya Jammeh, who came to power in a 1994 military coup, maintained his grip on The Gambia through a combination of legal manipulation, repression, and divide-and-rule tactics. He engineered constitutional changes to remove term limits and lower barriers to re-election, while using the security services, including the notorious National Intelligence Agency, to intimidate, imprison, or eliminate opponents. Jammeh frequently reshuffled his cabinet and dismissed officials to prevent the emergence of rivals, and he manipulated the electoral process through intimidation, legal obstacles for opposition candidates, and control over the electoral commission. His regime was further bolstered by a fractured opposition and a climate of fear, with arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and attacks on the media commonplace. Ultimately, Jammeh's reliance on the military was crucial: he stayed in power as long as he retained the loyalty of the armed forces, and only fled into exile after the military refused to support him after his electoral defeat in 2016. (Still, a foreign invasion was needed to oust him.)

The earliest dalasi notes (1971-1994) featured the portrait of Jammeh's predecessor, (founding) president Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara and depicted scenes of everyday Gambian life. By 2015, Jammeh's image had been placed on all dalasi banknotes, a move widely criticized and the apex of his personality cult. In 2017, after his ouster, the Central Bank undertook a phased process to remove his portrait from the country's currency. The move away from depicting political leaders toward national symbols and wildlife reflects a broader effort to promote unity.

Page 320 Here are gathered the independence leaders (and first rulers) of the former Portuguese African colonies. The first note features a portrait of Amílcar Cabral, an older depiction of the revolutionary leader who played a pivotal role in the independence movements of Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau. Cabral was not only a political leader but also an intellectual who emphasized the importance of cultural identity and unity in the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule. The assassination of Cabral in January 1973 was a pivotal moment that exposed and deepened the tensions within the African *Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde* (PAIGC), ultimately leading to the split between Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. Cabral had sought to bridge ethnic and political divides, particularly between Cape Verdeans, who dominated the PAIGC leadership, and Bissau-Guineans, who formed the majority of its rank-and-file fighters. His murder, orchestrated by disgruntled Guinean members of the PAIGC with possible Portuguese complicity, highlighted these divisions. After his death, Luís Cabral, Amílcar's half-brother and a Cape Verdean, assumed leadership in Guinea-Bissau, but resentment over Cape Verdean dominance persisted. This culminated in a 1980 coup led by João Bernardo Vieira in Guinea-Bissau, which ousted Luís Cabral and severed ties with Cape Verde.

The 100 Meticais banknote from Mozambique, issued in 1989, reflects the country's post-independence identity and its struggle for liberation. The obverse of the note prominently features Eduardo Mondlane, the founding president of FRELIMO *(Front for the Liberation of Mozambique)* and a key figure in the liberation struggle. Alongside his portrait, the design includes an image of five FRELIMO soldiers raising the national flag on 25 June 1975, at Machava Stadium in Maputo, commemorating the day Mozambique gained independence. (The watermark reveals Samora Moisés Machel, the country's first president, but the main locus of power was FRELIMO.) Mozambique stands out as the only country in the world to feature a modern firearm, specifically an AK-47 with a bayonet, on its national flag, however other countries such as Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, and East Timor likewise incorporated AK-47s into their coats of arms to honor their struggles for sovereignty.



The 5 Kwanza banknote of Angola from 1999 features portraits of António Agostinho Neto and José Eduardo dos Santos. Neto, depicted in the foreground, was Angola's first president (1975-1979) and a key leader in the *Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola* (MPLA), which led the struggle for independence. He is also celebrated as a poet and symbol of national liberation. José Eduardo dos Santos, shown in the background, succeeded Neto as president and served from 1979 to 2017, playing a central role in Angola's post-independence political landscape and civil war. Dos Santos remains a divisive figure in Angola's history – praised as an 'architect of peace' by some while considered 'kleptocracy incarnated' by most. His eldest daughter, Isabel dos Santos (currently in exile in Dubai) became Africa's richest woman, amassing a fortune estimated at $3.5 billion through stakes in key industries like oil, telecommunications, and banking.

Page 428 These thematically selected banknote depictions of three (in)famous East Asian ideologues present the radically different self-legitimation strategies of their respective communist regimes.

The portrait of Mao Zedong appears on all denominations of the current (fifth) series of the Chinese *Rénmínbì* (People's currency), which began progressive introduction in 1999, approximately 23 years after his death in 1976. The portrait, created by artist Liu Wenxi, shows Mao facing slightly forward with a solemn expression. (Ti 2013) This posthumous representation differs significantly from the Vietnamese and North Korean approaches, as it came decades after Mao's death during China's reform period. The delayed introduction of Mao's universal portrait on currency suggests a deliberate decision to canonize his image as the eternal figurehead of Chinese communism even as the country was pursuing economic liberalization. This timing represents a careful balance between honoring the regime's founder while moving beyond the excesses of his rule. His universal presence across all values of currency ensures that every citizen, regardless of economic status, regularly interacts with Mao's image, symbolizing his position as the foundational figure of modern China, transcending economic stratification and touching every aspect of daily financial life.

In stark contrast to Mao, Ho Chi Minh's portrait appeared on Vietnamese banknotes already in 1946, when he had been President for only four months. This remarkably early introduction demonstrates the immediate effort to establish his authority and personality cult. Artists Nguyen Sang and Mai Van Hien created his portrait without ever meeting him in person as Ho spent much time underground. (Quoc 2021) Ho Chi Minh's image continued to appear on all denominations of Vietnamese currency after his death in 1969 and remains there today. The early and continued use of his portrait reflects both the rapid canonization of his leadership and the enduring power of his image as a unifying national symbol for Vietnam. His ubiquitous portrayal emphasizes his role as *Bác Hồ* ('Uncle Ho'), a familiar, familial figure who sacrificed his personal happiness for the nation. In a letter allegedly written in 1948, Ho stated, *'I do not have a family, and do not have children either. Vietnam is the great family of mine.'* (Linh 2021)

Kim Il-Sung's portrait first appeared on North Korean currency in 1979 on the 100-won note, which was then the highest denomination bill. This occurred during his lifetime, as he died in 1994. He is the only real person who appears on the country's bills, other people's images are generic representations of working classes (a farmer, laborer, intellectual). (The second currency reform in 1959 started depicting women as well, although for similar ideological purposes.) In the original (1979, 100-won) edition, Kim appeared wearing a traditional Mao suit with a solemn expression. By the 1992 currency reform, (on the 1000- and 5000-won note (presented here), issued 2002-2006) his image had changed to show him in a Western suit and necktie, against a backdrop of North Korea's national flower. After the fifth currency reform, the 2008 depiction on the 5000-won note showed a widely smiling Kim Il-Sung, benevolently looking out for his people after his death. (KBS 2001)

While his portrayal on currency evolved significantly over time, reflecting changing political needs and symbolism, the regime deliberately restricted Kim's image to high-value notes to enhance reverence and scarcity, unlike the more democratic approach of universal representation used in China and Vietnam. *"Workers and farmers seldom see large bills. Even if they may get one somehow, they don't put it into their pockets or crumple it. Instead, they hold on to the precious note. I think that's why the portrait of Kim Il-sung is printed on the highest bill."* (KBS 2001) Most remarkably, after Kim Jong-un came to power, a new bill issued in 2014 removed Kim Il-Sung's portrait entirely, replacing it with an image of his birthplace at Mangyeongdae (BBC 2014), indicating that the founder's personality cult brings with shoes too big to fill for the grandson and current ruler.

Page 518 These three banknotes proverbially embody 'the good, the bad and the ugly' when it comes to transitions of absolute monarchy, when considering the evolution of this regime type in South(east) Asia.

Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the current King of Bhutan, ascended the throne in 2006 and was formally crowned in 2008. His reign marks the start of a new political era and the transition to democratic rule. His father, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck reformed Bhutan and introduced constitutional monarchy in 2008 – himself abdicating in 2006 in favor of his son – because he believed that decentralizing power and preemptively transitioning to democracy would ensure long-term stability and empower the Bhutanese people (while preventing a revolution in the long run).

In contrast, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, remains the last absolute monarch of the Indo-Pacific, holding the positions of Sultan, Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Minister of Defense, Commander of the Armed Forces, Chief of Police, and Supreme Leader of Islam, among others. He never needed to reform Brunei's political regime primarily because of the country's immense natural resource wealth, par-

ticularly oil and gas, which has enabled him to maintain an unchallenged grip on power and effectively neutralize potential sources of domestic discontent. Such rents have allowed the Sultan to provide extensive welfare programs, high standards of living, and generous state benefits to the population, which in turn has reduced public pressure for political liberalization or reform. The Sultan has also demonstrated adaptability in consolidating his rule. For example, the introduction of Sharia law in recent years has served a dual purpose: it both strengthens domestic control – particularly over youth and restless groups excluded from government employment – and aligns Brunei more closely with wealthy Gulf states, potentially attracting investment and further bolstering the regime's financial base.

Birendra Bir Bikram, with the royal (sur-)name of 'Shah Dev' was King of Nepal from 1972 until he met an ugly end (assassination) in 2001. His long reign marked a significant period in Nepalese history, encompassing the transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy (in response to mass pro-democracy protests and civil unrest) as well as a time of major political, social, and economic reforms.

During his nearly three-decade rule King Birendra became notable in the numismatic world for his depiction on Nepalese banknotes, which underwent distinct stylistic and thematic changes over time. This 1-Rupee note (presented here) shows him in dress uniform and cap, the Pashupatinath Temple, and a watermark window. The 2-Rupee note, in contrast, features his likeness in the traditional Nepalese crown, decorated with feathers of the bird of paradise.

Alas, during the event now known as the 'Nepalese royal massacre' at the Narayanhiti Palace in Kathmandu, Crown Prince Dipendra, Birendra's son, opened fire on his family during a private gathering killing King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya, and seven other members of the royal family before turning the gun on himself. His motivations behind this attack remain unclear to this day. Dipendra fell into a coma after shooting himself and was declared king while unconscious, but he died three days later without regaining consciousness. After the deaths, King Birendra's brother Gyanendra ascended the throne, but the monarchy's legitimacy was severely undermined, ultimately contributing to its abolition in 2008 ending the 240-year Shah dynasty (1768-2008).

Page 634 Communist and socialist regimes have historically demonstrated a strong preference for depicting agricultural and technological progress on their banknotes. This imagery directly connects to core ideological principles and policy priorities within these systems. Communist regimes in the twentieth century deployed a common visual language through banknote imagery, creating narratives that aligned with their political and economic objectives. Farming imagery, in particular, came to dominate banknote design across the communist world. This prevalence is not coincidental. All communist regimes pursued extensive agricultural reform, fundamentally altering both land ownership structures and farming practices. Banknotes served as portable propaganda, reinforcing these transformative policies. The visual representation of agricultural collectivization, industrial development, and technological advancement legitimized regime priorities while presenting an idealized version of the 'socialist reality' these governments sought to create. (Hockenhull 2020)

The 500 Lao Kip banknote issued in 1988 is a classic example of communist iconography. The reverse (shown here) portrays workers harvesting coffee beans in the Bolaven Plateau. This imagery highlights a key export crop, connecting domestic agriculture to international trade while celebrating the labor of agricultural workers. The 2002 North Korean 5-won-note prominently features technological progress through its focus on hydroelectric power. The obverse includes the state emblem depicting a hydroelectric power station, along with symbols of nuclear power and 'two partisan men.' The reverse, shown here, depicts the Hwanggang hydroelectric dam and power station. The 100 Guinea franc banknote continues to mimic these trends with the depiction of collective agricultural labor and cash crop production (on the reverse side, presented here).

Page 704 The Zimbabwe hyperinflation crisis, peaking at 79.6 billion percent monthly inflation in November 2008, led to an overall loss of 99.9% of its value within one year. It was a man-made financial disaster and the confluent result of systemic policy failures and economic mismanagement. The 100 billion-dollar notes emerged as both a symptom and symbol of this collapse by July 2008 (roughly equating the price of three eggs). The printing of the 10-billion-dollar banknote (presented here) alongside several 'lower' denominations (1-, 10-, 100-, 200-, 500-million-dollar and 1-, 5-billion-dollar notes) reflected the currency's ongoing catastrophic devaluation months later. They were all issued by 19 December 2008 and were supplanted a few weeks later (on 16 January 2009) by the even more ridiculous 100-trillion-dollar note. In February 2009 a new (the fourth) Zimbabwean currency was introduced, removing 12 zeros from all old bills, but universal loss of confidence in the national money, led people to shift to South African rand and US dollars instead. (Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, 2011)

The hyperinflation crisis was primarily caused by a combination of disastrous land reform policies – forcibly redistributed farmland from white commercial farmers to black Zimbabweans, often without compensation or support – that decimated agricultural output by 80%, excessive money printing by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to finance government deficits and political patronage, and the subsequent collapse of confidence in the national currency. These factors were compounded by international isolation due to sanctions, widespread corruption, and the imposition of price controls, which led to severe shortages and the emergence of black markets. As the economy spiraled, the government repeatedly issued ever-larger denominations, such as the iconic billion-dollar bills, in a futile attempt to keep pace with skyrocketing prices, ultimately



rendering the currency worthless and forcing the country to abandon it in favor of foreign currencies. (Bushu & Kufakurinani 2024)

Page 792 This page presents two interesting banknotes from Burma (now Myanmar). The issuance of the 35-kyat banknote by Ne Win, Burma's military dictator from 1962 to 1988, reflects the eccentric intersection of superstition, authoritarian control, and economic mismanagement that characterized his regime. Ne Win's decision to introduce this unusual denomination was reportedly influenced by his belief in numerology and astrology, which played a significant role in his leadership style and policy-making. (Wynalda 2015)

Ne Win was deeply superstitious and relied heavily on astrologers to guide his decisions. The issuance of the 35-kyat note in 1986 was part of a broader series of odd denominations, including 15-, 75-, 45- and 90-kyat notes. These denominations deviated from conventional monetary systems, which typically use multiples of five or ten for ease of transactions. The choice of the 35-kyat denomination was allegedly based on advice from Ne Win's numerologist, who deemed it luckier than the previously issued 50-kyat note. This belief in the auspiciousness of certain numbers extended to later denominations divisible by nine, such as the 45- and 90-kyat notes issued in 1987. (Wynalda 2015)

These unconventional banknotes were emblematic of Ne Win's erratic economic policies. His government pursued autarky – economic self-sufficiency – and nationalized industries, leading to widespread poverty and reliance on black markets. The introduction of these odd denominations compounded economic instability. In a drastic move in September 1987, Ne Win demonetized several large denominations, including the 35-kyat note, rendering approximately 75% of the nation's currency worthless overnight without compensation. This decision wiped out savings across Burma, exacerbated financial hardship, and triggered widespread protests that culminated in the '8888 uprising' against his regime. (Wakeman & San San Tin 2009)

The story of the 1-kyat banknote in Burma is tied to a compelling anecdote that illustrates the interplay between political symbolism, resistance, and authoritarian control. This tale encapsulates how mundane objects, like currency, can be converted into potent tools of dissent and political expression under oppressive regimes.

Burma's post-independence history is marked by prolonged civil conflict and authoritarian rule, beginning with General Aung San's assassination in 1947. Aung San, a national hero and architect of Burma's independence, became a symbol of hope and resistance. His daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, later inherited his legacy, leading a nonviolent movement for democracy inspired by figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. However, the military junta that seized power in 1988 suppressed her efforts through arrests and house arrests, even criminalizing the mere display of her image.

In this context, the 1-kyat banknote emerged as a subtle yet powerful form of resistance. Issued by the junta in 1989 to honor General Aung San, the note bore his portrait. However, an unknown engraver altered the watermark to resemble Aung San Suu Kyi's likeness – an act of defiance against the regime's suppression of her image. For months before its withdrawal, citizens could hold their currency to the light and see their democratic leader symbolically embedded within the state's apparatus of control. The banknote also contained other covert messages referencing the 1988 pro-democracy protests (the '8888 Uprising'), such as concentric rings around an eight-petalled flower – a subtle nod to the movement's date. (Wynalda 2015; Goodman, no date)

Page 910 The 50-ruble banknote issued by the Russian Empire in 1899 prominently features a portrait of Tsar Nicholas I, not Nicholas II, despite the latter being the reigning emperor at the time of the note's issue. Tsar Nicholas I reigned from 1825 to 1855 and became synonymous with autocracy, militarism, and bureaucratic centralization. Nicholas I ascended the throne after his father was assassinated, suppressing the Decembrist revolt, and his rule was marked by the expansion of Russian territory in the Caucasus, the defeat of uprisings in Poland and Hungary, and a rigid, reactionary domestic policy that earned him the reputation of the 'Gendarme of Europe' due to his relentless suppression of dissent and revolutionary movements. Despite initial military successes, his reign ended in the humiliation of the Crimean War, exposing the empire's administrative and military weaknesses.

This 1899 50-ruble banknote series is recognized for its high-quality design and craftsmanship, typical of late imperial Russian paper money. It was part of a series of state credit notes issued in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at a time when the Russian ruble was considered a strong and stable currency due to its standardized gold backing. The text on the front states that the State Bank exchanges these credit notes for gold coins without restriction, specifying the gold content per ruble, reflecting the note's backing by gold reserves at the time. (One ruble was to contain 17.424 grains of pure gold, which is equivalent to approximately 0.774 grams of gold per ruble.)

The example presented is one of the rarer variations left (with a signature of the state bank director Aleksey Vladimirovich Konshin, who held the position from 1910 to 1914 and was succeeded by Pyotr Lvovich Shipov (in office: 1914-1917), whose signature most commonly features on this banknote series).

Page 920 Only these two historical figures – Damdin Sükhbaatar and Chinggis Khan – have been depicted as primary portrait subjects on Mongolian banknotes in regular circulation, dominating national numismatic imaginary in the last 100 hundred years.

The transition from Damdin Sükhbaatar to Chinggis Khan as the primary figures on Mongolian banknotes reflects a profound ideological shift from Soviet-aligned communism to a post-socialist reaffirmation of Mongolia's imperial heritage and national identity after the 1990 democratic revolution, serv-

ing as a visual manifesto of ideological reorientation.

Damdin Sükhbaatar, the revolutionary leader who spearheaded Mongolia's 1921 independence from China and established the Mongolian People's Republic, became the face of Mongolian currency during the socialist era. His portrait first appeared on all banknotes in 1939 and remained dominant for over 50 years. As the 'Mongolian Lenin,' Sükhbaatar symbolized the Soviet-aligned communist regime's ideals-revolutionary struggle, proletarian unity, and anti-imperialism. Smaller denominations (e.g., 10-100 Tögrög) retained his image even after 1993 (but in national dress, not Soviet attire), preserving a link to Mongolia's modern statehood while diminishing his ideological prominence.

The 1993 currency reform marked a decisive break. Chinggis Khan, founder of the Mongol Empire, replaced Sükhbaatar on high-value notes (500-20,000 Tögrög), a move coinciding with Mongolia's democratic transition and ideological juncture to reclaim its pre-Soviet identity and nationalist revival.

Page 944 As of 2025, Turkmenistan is the only post-Soviet Central Asian country that has depicted a contemporary ruler on its banknotes (in stark contrast to the prevalence of these rulers' images everywhere else). Turkmenistan's currency history reflects the evolution of its political personality cults. Under President Saparmurat Niyazov, known as *Türkmenbaşy* or 'Father of all Turkmens,' early banknotes (1993-2000) included cultural imagery alongside his portraits. By 2005, Niyazov's image dominated all denominations including coins (save the lowly 1- and 5-manat notes), showcasing the deepening personality cult during his rule. His sudden death in 2006 marked a shift under successor Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, who dismantled the extreme cult of Niyazov. In 2009, new banknotes featured Niyazov on only one of six denominations (just the 500-manat note, never released), signaling a radical departure from his pervasive influence. (Cooper 2009: 26; Litvak 2009) At the same time, he began cultivating his own personality cult, with his portraits replacing Niyazov's in public spaces and vanity projects like golden statues of himself.

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INDEX





1 Tögrög, Mongolian People's Republic (1955), depicting Damdin Sükhbaatar, founding member of the Mongolian People's Party and revolutionary hero.

1000 Tögrög, Mongolia (2013), depicting Chinggis Khan, founding emperor of the Mongol Empire.



Entering a palace through the privy
– Dennis Duncan (paraphrasing J. Swift), *Index, A History of the: A Bookish Adventure from Medieval Manuscripts to the Digital Age*, 2022.

This Index has been compiled to serve as a detailed navigational tool for readers seeking both established and lesser-known concepts, terms, and figures relevant to the study of political regimes, especially within the context of authoritarianism. It includes background information on a wide range of regimes – historical and contemporary – but does not provide entries for broad historical periods (such as the Renaissance, Enlightenment or the Cold War) in connection with specific regimes or countries. Instead, users should consult entries by country or regime name to locate information pertaining to those eras.

To guide readers faster to the most relevant information, pages numbers are formatted in bold, normal or cursive. **Bold** page numbers direct to the most important and comprehensive information; 'normal' typeset to relevant aspects, and *cursive* points to indirectly related topics.

Regimes These are indexed either by the name of their supreme power holder (dictator, monarch, president) or, in the case of collegial or party-based rule, by the acronym or name of the leading political party or ruling institution (e.g., FRELIMO, KANU, PRI, ZAPU, ...); especially if the focus is on the ruling institution itself, or a single clear leader is not identified for a regime.

Polities (countries and territories) These are included only when the respective page contains substantive information about their political history or authoritarian legacies. Other place names have routinely been omitted.

Names The index comprehensively covers authors and political thinkers up to 1950; after this date, only those whose works represent theoretical contributions (that are covered in detail) are included, to avoid overburdening the Index with less consequential references and to maintain its focus and usability. These editorial choices ensure that users can efficiently locate substantial and relevant information, while the structure of the Index reflects an emphasis on clarity, conciseness, and scholarly utility.

Concept Lesser-known concepts or 'would-be entries' that did not merit their own dedicated entry can be found in the Index. The same goes for theoretical frames adjacent to the study of authoritarianism and etymological/onomastic references.

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ABOUT THE M.O.R.D.O.R. PROJECT



1000 Manat, Turkmenistan (2005), depicting Saparmurat Niyazov, founding president and former first secretary of the Turkmen Communist Party.



M.O.R.D.O.R. existed as an international consortium of higher education institutions and think tanks between 2021 and 2024 with associated partners on all continents. As an Erasmus+ project co-funded by the EU, we have embarked on a mission to illustrate the importance of collaboration between the fields of Area Studies, Political Science, and Policy Analysts and prove their practical (combined) benefits for improving education and policy recommendations.

M.O.R.D.O.R stands for *Mapping & Organizing Research on Dictatorships – Open Access Repository* and plans to integrate current knowledge on democracy support and comparative authoritarianism, organize this knowledge and channel new insights into two main outputs:

The first main project output is this *Encyclopedia Tyrannica* – a compendium of relevant research presenting a full review of the existing literature on comparative authoritarianism from the last five decades, but supplemented with a pedagogic and methodological dimension so that this work can be used by educators, students and scholars alike to foster change and innovation in how these groups teach, learn and engage in research.

The didactic companion 'Navigating Dictatorship and Democratization in the Classroom' can be downloaded on the right.



Didactic Companion

The second main project output is a Policy Paper on EU Democracy Support, which is tailored for EU foreign policy specialists and practitioners. These recommendations for stakeholders present a long-needed new approach, assessing the multi-vector EU democratization policy from the point of view of EU priorities, norms, capabilities and interests, and well as from the perspective of authoritarian contexts. The policy paper reevaluates the EU position and roles amid a fluid international system, currently challenged by a new wave of authoritarianism.

The policy paper, titled: 'Harnessing the democratising potential of the EU's foreign policy agenda' is available on the right.



Policy Paper on EU Democracy Support

In addition, the M.O.R.D.O.R. project organized various events related for students (Master Classes) and several conferences and seminars for scholars, researchers and stakeholders. All details and outputs can be found in open access format on the official EU project platform and project website: www.mordorproject.eu



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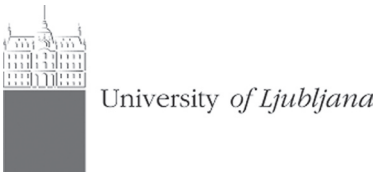

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"This Encyclopedia is the outcome of an ambitious and massive endeavour. The entries offer not only conceptual clarity and theoretical discussion, but also information on measurement and methodological implications. Such approach represents a great innovation making this work a comprehensive and valuable source of information for anyone interested in autocratic politics."

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The ***Encyclopedia Tyrannica*** transcends the conventional boundaries of an encyclopedia, serving as a comprehensive research guide for scholars, students, and experts in the fields of authoritarianism and democratization. It delves deep into the historical, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings of key concepts while providing exhaustive literature reviews and exploring their varied applications across different world regions. Recognizing the challenges posed by the expanding landscape of authoritarian studies, over thirty experts collaborated to navigate the vast literature, mapping blind spots and accounting for nuances.

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