



Electoral institutions and repression in dictatorships[☆]

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ABSTRACT

We argue that the relationship between authoritarian elections and repression depends on the electoral system in use. Proportional representation (PR) systems co-opt more heterogeneous political groups to contest and receive seats in the legislature and thus, dictators are less likely to use broad-based repression. Under plurality rules, by contrast, the regime has more incentives to mobilize turnout and deter collective action. Examining electoral systems from 1990 to 2010, we find that elections only reduce broad-based repression under PR systems, which are less commonly used in non-democracies. Our results highlight the importance of formal institutions in shaping political outcomes even in dictatorships.