Review in Advance first posted online on March 11, 2015. (Changes may still occur before final publication online and in print.)

Power Tool or Dull Blade? Selectorate Theory for Autocracies

Mary Gallagher[1] and Jonathan Hanson[2]

[1]Department of Political Science, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109; email: metg@umich.edu

[2]Department of Political Science, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York 13244; email: johanson@syr.edu

Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci. 2015. 18:23.1–23.19

The *Annual Review of Political Science* is online at polisci.annualreviews.org

This article's doi: 10.1146/annurev-polisci-071213-041224

Keywords

authoritarianism, political survival, winning coalition, regime change, single-party regimes

Abstract

This article assesses the utility of selectorate theory as a tool for understanding authoritarian politics, focusing on four problematic aspects. First, selectorate theory's central concepts are murky in authoritarian political systems that lack formal institutions to structure political transitions. Second, the theory assumes that the selectorate is homogeneous in terms of the power and policy preferences of its members, making the size of the winning coalition its only relevant feature. Third, the theory unrealistically links public goods and political rights, ruling out by assumption policy options that combine carrots and sticks to deal with opposition to the ruler or the regime. Fourth, by failing to differentiate between different types of political survival, the theory underestimates the stability of some authoritarian regimes. We conclude that selectorate theory as articulated by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) is a blunt instrument for understanding authoritarian rule.

INTRODUCTION

The promise of selectorate theory, and thus its potential usefulness as a tool for understanding authoritarian politics, rests upon the claim that it captures the essential dimensions on which political regimes differ from each other. This parsimony offers a way to bring order to the burgeoning literature on authoritarian politics, which has produced a heterogeneous collection of categories and institutional arrangements to describe differences in the organization of authoritarian rule and the implications of these differences for a range of outcomes. Whether the selectorate theory framework serves as an effective guide for research or steers us in the wrong direction is a key question.

The concept of the selectorate was first applied to the study of authoritarian politics by experts on Soviet regimes attempting to capture the relationship between the leader and the Party bureaucracy in post-Stalin communism (Hodnett 1975, Sakwa & Crouch 1978, Stern 1978, Bunce 1979, Hauslohner 1981, Brown 1984). Defining the selectorate as the body with the power to select and remove policy makers, Roeder (1993) and Shirk (1993) extended the concept to include "reciprocal accountability" in which the "selectors" of the leadership are also dependent on the leadership for their own appointment. The concept was later generalized to apply across ruler selection mechanisms in all types of regimes in *The Logic of Political Survival* (LPS) by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), which adds the notion of the winning coalition as a subset of the selectorate sufficient in size for a ruler to attain power. From these two characteristics of the polity, Bueno de Mesquita et al. generate a wide-ranging set of predictions concerning the kinds of policies rulers pursue, their survival in office, and even the prospects for war or peace.[1] The broad scope of the theory has made it a point of reference in many areas of research.

This article assesses the utility of selectorate theory as a tool for understanding authoritarian politics by evaluating the key concepts of the selectorate, the winning coalition, and the unenfranchised as they apply in contexts that often do not have any institutionalized structure for leadership selection or transition. We examine the measurement of these concepts, assess the validity of key assumptions, and explore the implications of modifications to the theory. The analysis presented here focuses mainly on the selectorate theory developed in LPS (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003) and extended in subsequent work, but we also summarize the intellectual history of the term and its original application and meanings.

We conclude that, rather than a "power tool for explaining politics" (**http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/data/bdm2s2/Logic.htm**), selectorate theory as articulated by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) is a blunt instrument for understanding authoritarian rule. 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. Selectorate theory's most elegant innovation is to create a logic of accountability that links the policy outputs of rulers in all types of polities to the sizes of their winning coalitions, but the attempt to explain every political outcome in terms of winning coalition size requires conceptual stretching and logical leaps that render the theory increasingly incoherent with each iteration.

In particular, we focus on three problematic aspects of selectorate theory and its application to authoritarian politics. First, we assess the utility of the theory's key concepts of the selectorate and winning coalition in authoritarian political systems where formal institutions to structure political transitions are absent or inconsequential (because key decisions are made elsewhere). Lack of clarity about the locus of power is a distinguishing feature of authoritarian systems.

[1]Indeed, as Bueno de Mesquita & Smith (2011) note, their students refer to LPS as "The Theory of Everything." We find the name apt.

The focus on a selectorate, moreover, underestimates the role of the unenfranchised members of society—what others term the "ejectorate" (Zimmerman 2014). Second, the measurement of the sizes of the selectorate and winning coalition is problematic, calling into question the empirical findings in LPS, such as its central claims about the survival of rulers. Third, the assumptions in the LPS version of the theory are restrictive in ways that reduce the utility of the selectorate concept relative to earlier works. In particular, LPS assumes that all members of the selectorate are homogeneous, and it unrealistically links public goods and political rights. As a result, the only relevant feature of the winning coalition is its size, and the theory struggles to explain policy change in the authoritarian context and why dictators may combine carrots and sticks to deal with opposition.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. First, we summarize the evolution of the selectorate concept from its earliest usage in analysis of candidate selection in parliamentary democracies to its most recent iteration in selectorate theory. Second, we present a short synopsis of the version of selectorate theory set forth in LPS. Third, we discuss in greater detail the problematic aspects of selectorate theory listed above and the consequences of these shortcomings for explaining outcomes in the authoritarian context. We conclude by exploring how other research grapples with these problems more effectively and offers more promise for understanding authoritarian politics.

THE SELECTORATE

Paterson (1967) applied the term "selectorate" to the group of in-party elites in possession of the power to name candidates for electoral races in the British Parliament. The selectorate's vetting and approval of potential candidates naturally preceded the role of the electorate. Paterson was critical of the selectorate's role in British politics, calling for a more open, transparent, and democratic process. This may have been a commonly held opinion among the general public as well. In 1968, the head of the Liberal Party, Lord Beaumont, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times* of London defending new party rules for the selection of candidates. "Our proposals will take the choosing of candidates out of the hands of the selectorate and put them, I hope, firmly in the hands of the ordinary constituency member" (Beaumont of Whitley 1968).

In comparative work, Heclo (1973) similarly contrasts the primary system as instituted in the United States with the more closed system in Britain. He notes, however, that the practice of candidate selection is unavoidable in party systems no matter how democratic or open. "Election is thus a clearly delimited public act, defined procedurally by voting, while selection is a vaguer form of private choice that may be carried out by a variety of procedures" (Heclo 1973, p. 21). In more recent work, Rahat (2007) notes that, despite the importance of "the choice before the choice," candidate selection is woefully understudied in political science. There is interesting, and potentially important, variation between even the most developed democracies. With even the most competitive political systems possessing seats that are more or less safe from true competition, it is in many cases the candidate selection process that decides who will have a seat in the legislature (Rahat 2007, p. 159). As Heclo (1973, p. 21) notes, quoting a systems analyst, "If I can set the options, I don't care who makes the choice."

It is worth noting that the selectorate concept was first developed to study, arguably, the least democratic aspect of competitive political systems and was then quickly borrowed by experts on Soviet regimes in the 1970s who were dissatisfied with the totalitarian model's inability to capture the range of politics, contention, and interest articulation in Soviet states. As students of democracy noted the authoritarian and closed aspects of their systems, students of autocracy began to recognize signs of choice, deliberation, and participation in theirs. The extensive reach

and ambition of selectorate theory reflects the same impulse: to analyze what is universal about politics notwithstanding the labels that we attach to specific regime types.

Given the opacity of political transition and succession politics in Soviet-style regimes, however, the immediate goals of analysts employing the selectorate concept were much more limited. In most cases, they developed ways to study and measure the approximate size, composition, and preferences of the Communist Party elite that seemed to have a formal role in the selection or removal of top leaders, including the removal of Khrushchev in 1964, the subsequent selection and long tenure of Brezhnev, and the rise of Deng Xiaoping and Mikhail Gorbachev as reformist leaders. "When Communists rule, it is not the electorate but what may be called the 'selectorate' which counts, and any analysis of the political potential of particular leaders has to take into account the size, composition, and cohesion of the 'selectorate' and the factors influencing its decisions" (Stern 1978, p. 340). Selectorate analysis examined the generation, educational background, ethnicity, and professional career and network of Party leaders, often including elite members of the Party in the military and in regional positions, even those outside of the formal selectorate defined as the Central Committee of the Party Congress. This variant of elite analysis is alive and well in studies of Chinese politics (Li 2001, Shih et al. 2012; China Leadership Monitor, various years, **http://www.hoover.org/publications/china-leadership-monitor**).

Following the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s, two works on Soviet-style regimes refined and extended the concept of the selectorate within models designed to analyze policy making and elite dynamics in Communist authoritarian states. Roeder (1993) theorizes the reasons for "one of the twentieth century's most important authoritarian failures—the collapse of the constitution of Bolshevism" (p. 40). Shirk (1993) examines how Deng Xiaoping orchestrated a post-Mao reformist agenda that even in 1993 already appeared phenomenally successful compared to the collapse, chaos, and decline of China's European socialist brethren.

The claim that the degree of inclusiveness of the selectorate is a key factor for differentiating between political regimes is made by Roeder (1993), who precedes Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) in arguing that what distinguishes autocracies from democracies is the size of the selectorate relative to the size of the population. Roeder also develops the idea that the "nature of the selectors distinguishes alternative forms of authoritarianism" (p. 26). To whom are rulers accountable and what do these actors want? Some rulers (i.e., despots) are not accountable to others at all; others are accountable to a "restrictive group of social interests" (p. 26), and still others are accountable to a selectorate composed of members of the governing apparatus. Members of the selectorate, in other words, are not interchangeable. Investigating their differences is central to understanding authoritarian heterogeneity.

For both Shirk (1993) and Roeder (1993), the defining feature of modern authoritarianism is reciprocal accountability between the ruler and selectors.[2] "In the well-balanced ideal-type of reciprocal accountability, each policymaker becomes both principal and agent of selectors and vice versa; each is accountable to the other" (Roeder 1993, p. 28). Politics thus consists of maneuvering on the part of both rival policy makers and members of the selectorate as these coalitions are subject to reformation. Critically, policy outcomes change along with the balance of power between rivals, shifts in the composition of the selectorate, and the balance of power between rulers and selectors. Shirk (1993) describes this process in China, where support for economic reform was generated by the emergence of a reform coalition within the selectorate that grew in power as reforms were implemented. Earlier analysts of the Brezhnev era had also located its inertia and decline

[2] In democracies, accountability relationships are hierarchical. Voters are the sovereign authority and delegate power to policy makers. Policy makers do not have the power to change the composition of the selectorate.

in the lack of turnover of the Party elite (Mawdsley & White 1990). Entrenched interests in the bureaucracy contributed to the sclerotic nature of the polity and economic decline. Crucially, both Roeder in explaining decline and Shirk in explaining success focus on the composition of the selectorate, rather than its size. Shirk argues that Deng Xiaoping in the context of political deinstitutionalization of the late Cultural Revolution was able to bring provincial elites into the Central Committee while capitalizing on the purge of military and central bureaucratic elites tied to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Reform becomes possible in China because of a gradual but important shift in the composition of the selectorate.

Although Roeder and Shirk offer compelling and logical accounts of leadership and policy dynamics in the USSR and China, they are not able to demonstrate empirically two core claims: first, that the Central Committee actually maintained accountability over higher leaders in the politburo, its standing committee, and the coterie of retired "elders" (in China); and second, that the selectorate was located solely within this body given the importance of the military and other Party elites (Yang 1996). The make-up of a selectorate and how it morphs over time in size, composition, and preferences are crucial empirical issues; as Stern asks (1978, p. 343), "If the core of the 'selectorate' lies in the Party, how far up the Communist ladder does one have to go to find it?" Moreover, the problem in determining the identity of the selectorate is not merely academic, as uncertainty is a core characteristic of autocratic systems. For example, "[w]ith the levers of political, military, and economic power in diverse and often highly ambitious hands after Stalin's death, there was for a time considerable confusion as to the ultimate source of political patronage" (Stern 1978, p. 343).

Zimmerman's (2014) recent political history of Soviet and Russian politics traces the expansion and contraction of the Soviet selectorate over time, indicating both the amorphous boundaries of its membership and the difficulty in defining it when both selection and removal of leaders occur irregularly and without clearly defined electoral or even "selectoral" mechanisms. Zimmerman also points to a related problem in defining the role of the unenfranchised when votes are no longer the currency in which power is traded. Building on Schumpeter's insight that electorates in democracies have not only a "primary function" to produce a government but also "the function of evicting it" (Schumpeter 2003 [1943], p. 272), Soviet citizens constituted not the unenfranchised but the "ejectorate," the body of people who had the collective power to remove governments via extralegal means (Zimmerman 2014, p. 3).

In summary, the use of the concept of the selectorate prior to LPS raises a few main points. First, the composition of the selectorate was a critical factor for those seeking policy reforms in the USSR and China. The policy preferences of the members of the selectorate mattered, and rulers sought to shift the composition of the selectorate's membership in order to effect policy change. Second, the selectorate is not well defined even in these highly institutionalized authoritarian systems. Lack of clarity about the ultimate source of power is a distinctive feature of authoritarianism, and the utility of applying concepts from democracy is thus inherently limited, especially when reduced to size alone.[3] Third, focusing attention on elite political maneuvering leaves out the important role the unenfranchised can play. Student demonstrations in China in 1989 led not only to the rearrangement of the top leadership of the Communist Party but also to major economic policy shifts. Mass exodus from the Eastern bloc and subsequent protests began the unraveling of Soviet regimes across Europe in the same year. The importance of mass protests

[3]An important contribution of the selectorate concept to the study of democracies is that, even here, size of the electorate may matter less if candidate choice is severely restricted by small groups. The focus on size alone for nonelectoral or rigged electoral systems is even more problematic.

in toppling regimes was apparent during the "Color Revolutions" of the early 2000s and the Arab Spring.

SELECTORATE THEORY

In LPS, Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) formalize and extend the concept of the selectorate. Like Roeder (1993), they treat the selectorate's size (*S*) relative to the population as a distinguishing feature of political regimes, but unlike Roeder, they do not regard the characteristics of the selectors as being relevant for understanding different types of authoritarian rule. The actors in the LPS model are a ruler, a challenger, and the members of the selectorate, which is the subset of the population "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" (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, p. 42). In the LPS model, citizens who are not in the selectorate, the unenfranchised, are largely irrelevant.[4] "When the selectorate is small, this means the policy preferences of the vast majority of residents can be ignored as a part of daily, routine politics. Only the preferences of the citizens in S need attention" (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, p. 70).

Selection requires gaining the support of a coalition of some minimum size (*W*). The size of this winning coalition and the size of the selectorate are the two fundamental features of the polity. According to LPS, any relevant differences between polities are explained by differences in the sizes of their selectorates and winning coalitions. Selectorate theory, it is claimed, thus supplants traditional means of classifying regimes. For its authors, the approach is superior because its "inherently continuous conceptualization of institutions allows comparisons across all regimes" (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith 2010, p. 937). It thus departs from the traditional practice in comparative politics of classifying authoritarian regimes with typologies (Geddes 1999, Levitsky & Way 2002, Hadenius & Teorell 2007, Cheibub et al. 2010, Weeks 2012).

Policies are defined in equally stark terms in the LPS model. The rivals vie for the support of members of the selectorate by offering some mixture of public and private goods. All members of the polity benefit from public goods, but private goods flow only to the members of the ruler's coalition. Members of the selectorate decide to support the ruler or the challenger based on which package of goods offers them greater welfare.

The key contribution of the model is its parsimonious representation of accountability across regimes of all types, using these two characteristics of selection institutions and their linkage to the mixture of public and private goods provided by the ruler. The core prediction that rulers produce greater public welfare as the size of the winning coalition increases is driven by three critical aspects of the model (Gallagher & Hanson 2013). First, it assumes that the members of the selectorate are interchangeable in the sense that all have equal power to form a winning coalition and share identical preferences with respect to public and private goods. Second, the cost of delivering private goods is assumed to be proportional to the size of the winning coalition. Rulers thus find private goods the least costly way to buy the support of small coalitions, but private goods become expensive relative to public goods as *W* increases, and rulers shift their allocation of goods accordingly. Third, LPS assumes that the unenfranchised do not enter into the ruler's survival calculations, so rulers need not worry about the threat of rebellion.

[4]We use "unenfranchised" in place of "disenfranchised" in LPS because it is neutral with respect to whether these members of the polity ever had a role in ruler selection. Bueno de Mesquita & Smith (2009) amend the model to permit the possibility of a revolutionary threat from the unenfranchised.

The worst outcome for society is when the winning coalition is small and the selectorate is large. In this scenario, the members of the winning coalition are easily replaced and heavily dependent on the survival of the ruler in order to maintain a privileged access to private goods. Their loyalty to the ruler is thus high, and rulers care little about public goods provision. By contrast, when *W* is large relative to *S*, members of the current ruling coalition are much more likely to become part of a new ruler's coalition. Loyalty to the ruler is much weaker, and the selection process is much more competitive. Rulers are thus induced to spend more resources to maintain their coalition.

In general, the idea that rulers who are accountable to broad constituencies in the polity have stronger incentives to perform well is appealing, and the application of this logic to democratic peace theory (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1999) has been valuable. The theory also links this logic of accountability to the perverse incentives for political survival. As LPS and *The Dictator's Handbook* (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith 2011) show, leaders who rely on a narrow base of support should be motivated to pursue bad policies, buying off a small group of supporters with private benefits while depriving the larger population of needed public goods, such as infrastructure, education, and rule of law. In systems with small *W* and large *S*, these supporters will be insecure about their prospects under a challenger, thus ensuring that a bad ruler can stay in power for a long time.

The elegant logic of the theory appears to explain the paradoxical longevity of beastly rulers from the Kim dynasty in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. "To maximize his tenure in office, a leader must allocate resources in a manner compatible with the institutional arrangements of the type of regime" (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2001, p. 64). The good intentions of benevolent leaders will go awry with the wrong political system; conversely, inept and corrupt politicians will be weeded out in systems with broad competition. For an initial stab at understanding differences across authoritarian regimes, it is thus helpful to follow LPS in thinking about the nature of accountability.

PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS OF SELECTORATE THEORY

The attention in LPS to the institutional arrangements of different regimes reflects the discipline's ambition to explain political outcomes systematically without reliance on more nebulous concepts such as political culture or the mostly random characteristics of individual leaders. The desire to move away from nominal regime categories to the continuous variables of *W* and *S* reflects the discipline's dissatisfaction with ideal types that are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. On the other hand, there is little gain from parsimony if the predictions generated by the theory lead us down the wrong path. In LPS, nearly everything important about politics is held to be a function of coalition size. We discuss three aspects of selectorate theory in which this simplification is problematic for understanding authoritarian politics.

Murkiness of Concepts in the Authoritarian Context

The concepts of the selectorate and winning coalition are easily understood in institutionalized, electoral democracies where suffrage and electoral rules are clearly defined. In the authoritarian context, however, the situation is much less clear. Autocrats rule in a condition of uncertainty with myriad threats, real or imagined, from multiple actors. Different actors wield different degrees of influence and possess qualitatively different kinds of power. One option is to control coercive forces; another may involve mobilizing political support from common citizens. Given the variety of means by which rulers gain and maintain power, there often is not a clear division between those who have the power to select the ruler and those who do not. We flesh out this argument in the form of two central challenges to applying selectorate theory as a tool for comparing authoritarian regimes.

First, leadership change in the authoritarian context typically does not occur in a manner that approximates democratic voting, making the "size" of the winning coalition a questionable factor for determining who rises to power. As Svolik (2012) finds, about two-thirds of authoritarian leadership transitions occur through nonconstitutional means, such as a coup, a popular uprising, regime change, assassination, and foreign intervention. What matters in such circumstances is the accumulation of power, and when selection is not determined by votes, power is not measured only by coalition size (Abdukadirov 2010). If the support of a key labor leader is critical for a ruler to win power because he or she delivers the support of an organization, do we include all the members of the organization as part of the winning coalition? If one claimant to power is supported by generals and another by clerics, are we to count generals and clerics? Qualitative differences in the membership of winning coalitions are just as important as differences in size.

Second, when formal institutions for regularized political competition and transition are absent, the theoretical importance of a selectorate, as opposed to any collection of citizens who can threaten the ruler's survival, becomes unclear. A leader in an established democracy knows that she may lose in a humiliating election, face term limits, or lose a vote of confidence by her party members. A dictator can imagine losing power in a much greater multitude of ways—a military coup, a mass uprising, a party insurrection, a violent "palace coup," or a quiet assassination. Under these conditions of authoritarian uncertainty, is it possible to make analytic distinctions between selectorate members and nonmembers? The means by which an autocrat is removed from office by a member of the elite might differ from a peasant uprising, but in effect, the dictator clearly has incentives to pay attention to the possibility of support from a plethora of elite and nonelite actors (Gallagher 2015). In other words, the greater the threat from the ejectorate, the more nebulous are the boundaries of the selectorate.

One important implication of these two challenges is that the sizes of the selectorate and winning coalition are often endogenous to the process by which a ruler attains power. As Sekeris (2011) argues, when members of the selectorate differ in power, the winning coalition's optimal size depends on the accumulated power of its members. Rulers thus have a wider set of cooptation strategies than is specified by LPS. They can choose to cultivate a small number of powerful subjects or a broader number of less powerful, and therefore "cheaper," coalition members. The latter approach is more likely to produce populist or other mass appeals, whereas the former leads to a more unequal distribution of income. Rather than serve as a determining factor, in other words, coalition size is a strategic choice marked with policy implications.

For example, Kosack (2013) argues that challengers to the ruler may have incentives to expand the scope of the conflict by organizing the poor, yielding dictators with propoor policies such as expansion of primary education. These political entrepreneurs do not limit themselves to the minimum winning coalition strategy, and their use of mass mobilization to attain power demonstrates that what constitutes the selectorate is unclear at best.

A second implication of these challenges is that measuring the sizes of the selectorate and winning coalition in the murky context of authoritarian politics is difficult or perhaps impossible. Given this difficulty, the measures employed in LPS deserve scrutiny, and that is where we turn our attention next.

Measurement Problems

As Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) state, "The two institutional variables on which we focus are theoretically much more finely calibrated than broad classifications such as democratic, autocratic, monarchic, and so on, and they encompass all nominal regime types" (p. 72). By the authors' own admission, the operationalization of these concepts does not reach this level of precision, and they refer to the preliminary measures as "crude" and "primitive" (p. 133). Nevertheless, they

make broad claims from the statistical analysis in LPS and continue to employ the measures in subsequent research. Because many other researchers have also adopted the LPS measures, too readily in our view, a detailed examination is warranted.[5]

The size of the selectorate, *S*, is measured by recoding data from Banks (2002) into whether a polity has an elective legislature (1), a nonelective legislature (0.5), or no legislature (0). As argued in LPS, "the selectorate theory is not focused on legislative selection per se, but the selection mechanism for the legislature seems to be a reasonable, albeit crude, indicator of the inclusiveness of the polity's selectorate" (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, p. 134). Yet, because approximately 81% of country-years have an elective legislature according to Banks, there is little variation in this indicator. Angola (except in 2002–2003), China, Denmark, France, Haiti, North Korea, Libya, Myanmar, Syria, the United States, and Uzbekistan all have the highest possible score of 1 throughout the 1990s and to the end of the dataset, but the idea that all these countries have selectorates of the same size is not tenable. The variable is essentially an indicator of the presence of a legislature, and even then it captures little about the nature of the legislature.

The role of legislatures as institutions for organizing authoritarian rule, moreover, is the subject of considerable research in its own right (Gandhi & Przeworski 2006, Gandhi 2008, Magaloni 2008a, Wright 2008, Svolik 2012, Boix & Svolik 2013). As we discuss below, legislatures are theorized to be venues for working out policy concessions, coopting rivals, and increasing transparency and improving commitment mechanisms between rulers and supporters. Treating *S* as a measure of the size of the population involved in selecting the ruler is problematic, given that it would capture these institutional effects of a legislature more proximately.

The size of the winning coalition (*W*) is measured as a 0–1 index of four equally weighted items. The first item, an indicator of regime type, comes from Banks (2002). Countries receive a quarter point on the *W* index if Banks codes the regime as a civilian regime rather than as a civilian–military hybrid, a pure military regime, or some other regime type, including all cases where an effective national government does not exist. The remaining three items come from the Polity IV dataset (Marshall & Jaggers 2002). Of these, the first is XRCOMP, a measure of the competitiveness of executive recruitment, which contributes a quarter point to *W* if the executive is chosen through competitive elections matching two or more major parties or candidates. The second is XROPEN, a measure of the extent to which, at least in theory, the entire politically active population has an opportunity to become the chief executive through a regularized process. The key differentiation sets apart systems that choose executives through heredity. A quarter point is allocated, therefore, if the executive is chosen either through competitive election or a system of elite designation. The third is PARCOMP, a measure of the competitiveness of participation. A quarter point is allocated if there are "relatively stable and enduring, secular political groups which regularly compete for political influence at the national level; ruling groups and coalitions regularly, voluntarily transfer central power to competing groups" (Marshall & Jaggers 2002, p. 26).[6]

Given this operationalization, *W* is most straightforwardly interpreted as an index of the extent to which regular and open political contestation is institutionalized in the form of elections. Even if this index is correlated roughly with larger coalition size, we risk serious errors of inference if we disregard its more direct relationship to political contestation. This remains a fundamental problem in the Morrow et al. (2008) response to the incisive empirical critique by Clarke & Stone

[5]We count nearly 20 published journal articles that use *W*, *S*, and *WIS* from the LPS dataset, often taking at face value the claim that they measure winning coalition size or selectorate size.

[6]Following a coup or some other unregulated seizure of power, the Polity dataset codes XRCOMP and XROPEN as 0 for every subsequent year until a leader is chosen through some regulated selection process.

(2008), who demonstrate that the core findings in LPS rely on use of residualization to assign all shared variation between *W* and key control variables to *W* alone.[7] Controlling for aspects of democracy related to constraints on rulers does not enable *W* to represent winning coalition size instead of political contestation, so the empirical shortcomings persist.

Additionally, although *W* is intended for more fine-grained measurement of relevant differences across authoritarian regimes than that provided by authoritarian typologies, such as that of Geddes et al. (2014), the Polity coding guidelines usually specify particular values for the typical categories. Military regimes will be 0.25 as long as the executive is chosen through elite designation, single-party regimes will be 0.5, and monarchies will be 0.25. Personalist regimes—which other scholars (Cheibub et al. 2010, Hadenius & Teorell 2007, Svolik 2012) do not treat as distinct category—will be 0.5 if the ruler is a civilian and 0.25 otherwise. In the LPS dataset, the actual means of *W* for regimes in these categories are 0.28, 0.50, 0.26, and 0.35, respectively. Deviations from the expected values in individual cases for the most part reflect coding discrepancies between Polity and other scholars rather than a difference in precision.

Attempts to explain differences in authoritarian regime types by making assumptions about their relative winning coalition and selectorate sizes have been idiosyncratic. According to Bueno de Mesquita & Siverson (1997), military juntas have the smallest winning coalitions, followed by single-party regimes and then monarchies. Wright (2009) agrees that military regimes have the smallest winning coalitions but contends that single-party regimes have the largest, with personalist regimes somewhere between the two. For Pickering & Kisangani (2010), personalist regimes have smaller winning coalitions than military regimes. Chang & Golden (2010), by contrast, argue that *W* is equally sized across the military, monarchy, personalist, and single-party regime types but that *S* varies. The danger, of course, is that orderings are chosen to be consistent with empirical findings.[8] Approaches that instead explore how the institutional differences between these authoritarian types, and the qualitative differences in their ruling coalitions, affect the phenomena of interest are likely to be more fruitful.

The measurement problems cut to the key theoretical and empirical finding in LPS that rulers with small winning coalitions tend to survive longer, especially when the size of the selectorate is large. The rationale is that members of the ruling coalition have a strong incentive to be loyal to the ruler under these conditions because they would likely lose access to private goods should another ruler come to power with the support of a new winning coalition. Rulers with the largest winning coalitions do the most for citizens but, ironically, are less able to maintain loyalty because they cannot offer packages of goods that differ significantly from those offered by challengers. Because *W* measures the extent to which regular and open political competition is institutionalized, the claim that leaders with large *W* have high hazard rates is simply stating the obvious. In fact, because the PARCOMP element of the *W* index codes for regular, voluntary transfers of power, *W* is correlated with leadership turnover by construction.[9] Likewise, the measurement of the loyalty norm (*W*/*S*) is correlated with *W* at 0.99, so the same concerns apply to that variable.[10]

[7] Specifically, Morrow et al. (2008, p. 396) respond by using the Polity measure of constraints on rulers (XCONST) to control for "the elements of democracy outside the size of the winning coalition." The more fundamental problem is that *W* does not represent winning coalition size to begin with.

[8] Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003, p. 73) warn against any simple mapping of *W* and *S* onto authoritarian regime types, arguing that there is too much variation inside such categories.

[9] Additionally, when PARCOMP contributes to higher W, it is nearly always the case that the other three elements of the W index also contribute to higher W. In fact, W equals its highest value of 1 more than 97% of the time when PARCOMP signifies a competitive political system (i.e., equals 5 in the Polity dataset).

[10] The problems we describe only become worse with the operationalization of "loyalty norm," the ratio of W/S. The formula for this variable is W/log[(S+1)*10/3], an uninterpretable muddle given the meaning of the two component parts.

This assessment is consistent with Kennedy (2009), who finds that the negative relationship between *W* and a leader's political survival exists only among electoral regimes, where the easy ability to change rulers makes survival more tenuous. Among nonelectoral regimes, he shows that *W* actually has a positive effect on survival, the opposite of what LPS predicts. Where nonelectoral regimes are more institutionalized, rulers survive longer. Likewise, Marcum & Brown (2014) show that the probability of a coup decreases as *W* increases. These findings are expected because *W* measures institutionalization of the selection process (i.e., when there is a coup, Polity codes the transfer of power as unregulated, making *W* small). Thus, whereas LPS treats ruler survival as being placed along a continuum, the effect of *W* as measured should be interpreted quite differently. In democracies, higher values of *W* create mechanisms for turnover and political change. In autocracies, they represent a more stable situation for dictators.

More than 10 years have passed since the publication of LPS, and there have been no improvements in the measures despite claims from the authors that a more nuanced operationalization is coming (Morrow et al. 2008, p. 399). We suspect that the difficulty in producing better measures of winning coalition size and selectorate size is directly tied to the conceptual problems described above. In authoritarian regimes, especially where rulers do not attain power through some institutionalized process, the concepts of selectorate size and minimum winning coalition size do not have a clear meaning. The measures capture the importance of institutionalized selection processes and, in particular, electoral competition in differentiating regimes, rather than *S* or *W*.

The Shaky Logic of Political Survival

In this section, we critique three components of the logic and assumptions of selectorate theory. First, we show how conflating rulers with regimes calls into question some of the key findings about political survival. Second, we argue that treating members of the selectorate as homogeneous renders the theory unable to explain policy change in authoritarian systems. Third, we find that the theory's assumption linking public goods and political rights constrains rulers' choices in unrealistic ways.

The survival of rulers and regimes. The analysis of political survival in LPS treats all leadership turnover as the same, defining political "death" as the loss of office by a single leader. The failure to differentiate between different types of leadership turnover creates two problems. First, neither LPS nor subsequent work (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith 2010) distinguishes regularized political competition, such as what occurs in democracies, from the irregular and often extralegal transitions that are the main path of political change in autocracies. Second, the failure to differentiate the varied types of leadership turnover within autocracies conflates institutionalized leadership succession with regime change. There are significant qualitative differences between electoral regimes and dictatorships that directly affect the degree of turnover. Democratic leaders leave office (i.e., "don't survive") regularly because the institutions around them facilitate this outcome, often through constitutional term limits. Leaders in autocratic systems, which typically lack open political competition and institutions that facilitate transfer of power to rivals, tend to stay in power longer, particularly if they survive the initial period of instability that often surrounds political transitions in autocracies.

The LPS definition of political survival actually underestimates regime stability considerably. As Magaloni (2008a, p. 740) argues, LPS fails to uncover the stability of party dictatorships because "it takes the dictator rather than the dictatorial regime as the unit of analysis." Geddes et al. (2014, p. 314) estimate that conflation of leader survival with regime survival underestimates authoritarian stability by 50%. Given the lack of formal institutions for political transition in autocracies, there

are many reasons why rulers leave office, including pre-emptive resignation, death from natural causes, coups, regime change, and assassination. There are significant qualitative differences in these types of turnover (Svolik 2012). According to the logic of LPS, for example, China's leaders did not survive in 1949, 1976, 1980, 2003, and 2013. LPS and its extensions code the first four dates as "nonsurvival," and the most recent transfer of power between Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders, in 2013, would be coded the same way. Chiang Kai-shek's exile to Taiwan, the death of Mao Zedong, and the more recent institutionalized transfers of power between political generations of the CCP all equate to nonsurvival. The more recent transfers of power, however, are indications of the greater institutionalization and resilience of the CCP as well as more successful power sharing between individual leaders (Nathan 2003, Svolik 2013).

As Kennedy (2009) argues, the *W* measure in LPS captures political institutionalization and is correlated with higher rates of political survival in nonelectoral regimes even though selectorate theory predicts the reverse. Although the crudeness of the *W* measure does not capture the political reforms that allow for routinized political succession among leaders in the ruling party, as achieved in China recently and Mexico under the PRI, the relationship between institutionalization and longevity is now a core topic in the study of autocracy. There may be a "sweet spot" along the continuum of political institutionalization that insulates resilient autocracies from the challenges of regime insiders and the ejectorate (Hanson & Gallagher 2015).

New research and data enable much more finely grained analysis of the varieties of authoritarian political change, including violent, unexpected events (e.g., revolution, democratization, coup, assassination) as well as the orderly, institutionalized, and nondemocratic leadership turnover that also occurs within some dictatorships (Svolik 2012, Geddes et al. 2014). This work also shows the theoretical importance of distinguishing between leader-focused analysis and regime-focused analysis for outcomes such as the initiation of war (Chiozza & Goemans 2011, Weeks 2012, Geddes et al. 2014).

The homogeneity of the selectorate. As noted above, LPS models all members of the selectorate as having identical preferences for public and private goods. The members of the selectorate are the "interchangeables," in the terms of Bueno de Mesquita & Smith (2011). The composition of the membership of the winning coalition thus has no bearing on the ruler's policy output, a significant difference from earlier works. With this assumption in place, the only factor that can differentiate one winning coalition from another is its size. Additionally, because the preferences of the unenfranchised do not matter for the ruler's survival, rulers with small winning coalitions have no incentive to improve public welfare other than "civic mindedness" (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith 2011, p. 156). By assuming away differences in policy preferences, LPS assumes away politics itself.[11]

Two key shortcomings result from this assumption. First, the model is unable to explain why some authoritarian systems experience economic growth and significant improvements in public welfare and does not account for scenarios in which dictators use provision of public goods to stave off public discontent. The burgeoning literature on authoritarian welfare states reveals substantial and interesting variation in social policy among dictatorships (Mares & Carnes 2009, Wibbels & Alquist 2011). Second, the model is unable to explain policy change unless *W* or *S* changes.

[11] According to Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), rulers do distinguish between members of the selectorate in terms of "affinity" and construct their winning coalition from those for whom affinity is highest. The members of the selectorate are not perfectly interchangeable in that sense. Yet, affinity serves only as a modeling convenience and plays no role in the policy mix delivered by the ruler. It helps generate an equilibrium because members of the ruler's winning coalition know with certainty that they have the ruler's affinity but are uncertain about the challenger's affinity.

More flexible concepts from other scholarship, such as Haber's (2006) "launching organization," incorporate the fact that the size of the dictator's coalition is not its only relevant characteristic. Such alternative concepts impose no restrictions on the policies that rulers can employ. Once we acknowledge that members of the ruling coalition can differ in their preferences over policies, we have greater ability to explore differences across authoritarian regimes in terms of social welfare as well as the sources of policy change in authoritarian systems. Rulers can seek to mobilize political support for policy initiatives by forming coalitions with political actors that share like-minded preferences while disempowering others. Changing the size of the coalition is one option, but so is shifting the composition of its membership. The ability of rulers to take these actions may be limited when the core of their support comes from actors who support the status quo.

The insight that the composition of the coalition matters more than its size is apparent in the early application of the selectorate concept to Soviet-style regimes and has been developed further in extensions of selectorate theory in recent work, which we highlight below. Mawdsley & White (1990) show that Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika initiatives met with resistance from members of the Central Committee (CC), whose members came to power during the Brezhnev era. Enacting a radical change in the composition of the CC proved difficult until 1989, when Gorbachev orchestrated the mass retirement of very old CC members on the basis that they had already retired from the state and party posts. Gorbachev moved to replace central party-state bureaucrats with potential reform supporters from the regions and from the state enterprise system, including both workers and managers (Mawdsley & White 1990, p. 541).

Shirk's (1993) analysis of reform politics in China also highlights the importance of new blood in the CC, but not necessarily more bodies, in undermining the vested interests of the status quo leadership. "The solution for the leader who believes that policy innovation is necessary is to reconstitute the membership of the Central Committee and thereby bend the party line to a new direction" (Shirk 1993, p. 150). In both these cases, the size of the potential coalition was less important than the composition of the CC. Regional leaders were more supportive of reform than central leaders were because it granted greater autonomy and economic opportunities. Changes in the policy preferences of the CC were integral to the continuation of reform in China. For Gorbachev they proved destabilizing enough to bring down the regime.

Expansion of the size of the selectorate is not unimportant, however, as a means to dilute the proportional power of status quo members. For Roeder (1993), the collapse of the USSR under Gorbachev, following his changes to the CC, is an outcome of this game. "Each oligarch is tempted to expand the political game by including one's allies or partisans. . . . Owing to the constant temptation for oligarchs to defect, the oligarchs' dilemma contains a threat of authoritarian collapse" (Roeder 1993, p. 36). Malesky (2009) employs a similar logic to explain the success of economic reform in Vietnam despite resistance and obstruction from actors in the state sector who had benefitted from partial reform and stood to gain if further reform was aborted. In order to destabilize the "partial reform equilibrium" (Hellman 1998), reformers in Vietnam gerrymandered the political system by creating new provinces with reformist policy preferences. These new provincial voting members of the CC of the Vietnamese Communist Party diluted the influence of the state sector and hastened the passage of new reform edicts. Although the selectorate within the CC did expand through this redistricting, the more important effects were the relative changes in the composition of the Vietnamese leadership.

Although LPS ties its predictions to the size of the winning coalition and the proportion *W/S*, the importance of size is neither always easily discernible in empirical work using selectorate theory nor clearly separate from coalitional composition changes. For example, Milner & Kubota (2005) also explain the rapid expansion of trade liberalization among developing countries by the wave

of democratization that began in the 1980s. Their analysis, however, is consistent with an interest group or coalitional argument as well. Milner & Kubota present a larger selectorate as representing more diverse interests and thereby expanding policy options for leaders. Similarly, Malesky et al. (2011) show that the greater diversity of the governing coalition in Vietnam compared to that of China is an important factor in explaining the greater economic equality in Vietnam. The broader range of constituencies included in Vietnam's coalition induces a higher level of programmatic transfer spending.

Steinberg & Shih (2012) also build on selectorate theory to explain the exchange rate policies of the Chinese government. They argue that provincial and ministerial leaders compete for office via the top-down appointment system (*nomenclatura*). To be competitive, officials must boost the relative economic performance of their regions or sectors. They support and push for policies, such as an undervalued exchange rate, that are in the interests of their "constituents." The size or even proportion of the selectorate is completely irrelevant to Steinberg & Shih's (2012) argument. Instead, policy preferences matter. Many of the recent works that invoke this conceptualization of the selectorate are drawing on the more circumscribed versions of Shirk (1993) and Roeder (1993), which neither deny the importance of governing coalitions nor reduce them to interchangeable units without policy preferences or links to society.

Linkage of public goods and political rights. In LPS, public goods by definition include both "general" public goods, such as education and infrastructure, and "core" public goods, such as civil liberties and political rights. As Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003, p. 179) reason, "Whatever else is found in the basket of public goods provided by government, the benefits of civil liberties, political rights, transparency, peace and growing prosperity seem to be of universal desirability among residents of a state. Therefore, we treat civil liberties, political rights, transparency and peace as core public goods." No logic is given as to why rulers who choose to build roads, provide public health services, and expand education must also expand political rights. In the model, rulers supply both types of goods or neither.

It is common in the literature on authoritarian politics to argue that rulers use some combination of carrots and sticks to maintain their power (Wintrobe 1998, Gandhi 2008). Selectorate theory in LPS thus takes a different approach in stipulating that only particular combinations are possible. This artificial linkage leaves the theory unable to explain outcomes in which rulers simultaneously limit political freedoms and act to improve public welfare in other ways.

Even in the later extensions of the theory that analyze responses to revolutionary threats, leaders must choose between public goods and repression (see Gallagher & Hanson 2013 for detailed discussion). In this extended version of the model, Bueno de Mesquita & Smith (2009) incorporate the possibility of revolt by the unenfranchised. In theory, this might permit a result in which rulers with small winning coalitions supply greater public goods. Yet, even as amended, the model is still designed to produce a result in which small W is associated with policies that cater to the elite due to its assumption that public goods include political freedoms. Because it is impossible to provide carrots without putting away the sticks, rulers cannot seek to improve public welfare without simultaneously facilitating rebellion. Where W is small, accordingly, rulers restrict public goods in all their forms.

In later work, Bueno de Mesquita & Smith (2011) modify the approach still further. Setting aside the restrictions of the model, they acknowledge that "dictators aren't bound to make life miserable" (p. 102). There are exceptions, they state, but the exceptions are said to reaffirm the general rule. Public goods in authoritarian contexts are merely a tool for rulers to make labor more productive so that rulers can enrich themselves. Thus, the interpretation of the ruler's purpose for providing public goods hinges on whether the winning coalition size is large or small.

"Public goods can be for the public's good. Yet they can also be a means of exploiting the public. In large-coalition environments, public goods overwhelmingly enhance public well-being. In small-coalition settings this is not true" (Bueno de Mesquita & Smith 2011, pp. 124–26).

In other words, rulers of small-coalition systems do not provide public goods, except when they do. And when they do, the benefit flows to themselves rather than the public. Logical circumlocutions of this kind are not necessary if we simply abandon the idea that coalition size determines everything. Policy preferences matter, and it is entirely possible that rulers with small coalitions pursue developmental objectives while repressing political rights.

CONCLUSION

The study of autocracy is in a growth stage, even as the number and proportion of authoritarian regimes has declined since the end of the Cold War (Svolik 2012). A growing body of literature explores the authoritarian functions of institutions usually associated with democracies, including elections, legislatures, and rule of law (Schedler 2006, Brownlee 2007, Gandhi & Przeworski 2007, Moustafa 2007, Gandhi 2008, Magaloni 2008b, Ginsburg & Moustafa 2008, Levitsky & Way 2010, Wang 2015). Work on the discourses of authoritarian rule explores how dictatorships justify their rule to their populations and how hard (repression) and soft (culture, cooptation) tools facilitate domination (Wedeen 1999, Slater 2010, Rajah 2012). There are inventive attempts to compare and contrast within autocracies, building new datasets that demonstrate both the degree of institutional heterogeneity and areas that yield to conceptual comparison (Svolik 2012, Weeks 2012, Geddes et al. 2014).

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. The productive scholarly debate in recent years over how these institutions operate in authoritarian contexts offers much more promise than trying to differentiate authoritarian regimes by the size of their winning coalitions and selectorates (but see Pepinsky 2014 for a critique of the institutional turn). For example, Gandhi & Przeworski (2007) argue that legislatures serve as a venue to coopt opposition to the regime by working out policy concessions, while Magaloni (2008a) instead sees political parties as solving problems of power sharing and leadership succession within the ruling elite. Svolik (2012) likewise argues that parties serve as vehicles for maintaining cooperation through cooptation, but he also emphasizes the role of regime parties in direct political control over society, serving as agents of mobilization and information gathering. As Lai & Slater (2006, p. 117) argue, single-party regimes "tend to exhibit greater institutional capacity to mobilize coercive and ideological resources on behalf of incumbent leaders," making them much less vulnerable to collapse than are military regimes.

Many of these approaches depart from the assumption that democracies and dictatorships should be analyzed along a continuum—either as measured by *WIS*, Polity, or Freedom House—that reduces authoritarianism to lesser or unrealized versions of democratic achievement. As Svolik (2012, p. 45) notes, the difference between autocracies and democracies is "first one of kind and only then one of degree." Recent works by Svolik and Weeks also depart from the traditional approach of defining authoritarian regimes by typology only, which has a long history in the study of modern authoritarianism since Arendt's work on totalitarianism. New studies examine the different institutional characteristics of autocracies along conceptual dimensions that allow for comparative research beyond the fitting of cases into ideal type categories. Building on Geddes' initial typology of authoritarian regimes, Weeks (2012) examines autocracies on two dimensions—military involvement in politics and the degree of personal power of the leader—to make predictions about the relative propensities of regimes to initiate international conflict. Although still utilizing earlier

classification typologies, her more precise measurement of the dimensions on which autocracies vary allow for differentiation beyond the ideal types. Svolik (2012) also advances analysis along four different conceptual dimensions: the level of military involvement in politics, restrictions on political parties, executive selection, and legislative selection. Such differentiation facilitates better comparison across autocracies by capturing the overlap of various characteristics in regimes that are not merely single-party but also personalistic or ruled with a hefty dose of military power.

The new literature on authoritarianism attests to the value of treating the differences between autocracies and democracies as more than just an arbitrary dividing point in the Polity index. Although many comparative questions require analysis of both types of regimes, the institutional variety within autocracies is still not well understood, both in terms of its causes and its effects. For example, although many studies now show the positive effects of a single party on authoritarian political survival (Geddes 1999, Magaloni & Kricheli 2010, Svolik 2012), we have much less understanding of how some single parties are hijacked by one leader while others build effective institutions of power sharing. Although selectorate theory's use of continuous measures is presented as an improvement over the existing studies, we find that much of the most innovative and exciting research on autocracies rejects the notion that autocracies can simply be analyzed as lesser democracies.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors are not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the following people for feedback on earlier versions of this essay: Yuen Yuen Ang, Martin Dimitrov, Anna Grzymala-Busse, Edmund Malesky, Susan Shirk, Milan Svolik, and Yuhua Wang. For research assistance, we thank Sunghee Cho, Pedram Maghsoud-Nia, and Qingjie Zeng.

LITERATURE CITED

Abdukadirov S. 2010. The problem of political calculation in autocracies. *Const. Polit. Econ.* 21(4):360–73

Banks AS. 2002. *Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive*. Binghamton, NY: Databanks Intl.

Beaumont of Whitley. 1968. New rules for liberals. Letter to the Editor. *The Times* (London), Jan. 16, p. 9

Boix C, Svolik MW. 2013. The foundations of limited authoritarian government: institutions, commitment, and power-sharing in dictatorships. *J. Polit.* 75(2):300–16

Brownlee J. 2007. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press

Bueno de Mesquita B, Morrow JD, Siverson RM, Smith A. 2001. Political competition and economic growth. *J. Democr.* 12(1):58–72

Bueno de Mesquita B, Morrow JD, Siverson RM, Smith A. 1999. An institutional explanation of the democratic peace. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 93(4):791–807

Bueno de Mesquita B, Siverson R. 1997. Nasty or nice? Political systems, endogenous norms, and the treatment of adversaries. *J. Confl. Resolut.* 41(1):175–99

Bueno de Mesquita B, Smith A. 2009. Political survival and endogenous institutional change. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 42(2):167–97

Bueno de Mesquita B, Smith A. 2010. Leader survival, revolutions, and the nature of government finance. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 54(4):936–50

Bueno de Mesquita B, Smith A. 2011. *The Dictator's Handbook: Why Bad Behavior is Almost Always Good Politics*. New York: PublicAffairs

Bueno de Mesquita B, Smith A, Siverson RM, Morrow JD. 2003. *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Bunce V. 1979. Leadership succession and policy innovation in the Soviet republics. *Comp. Polit.* 11(4):379–401

Brown A. 1984. The Soviet succession: from Andropov to Chernenko. *World Today* 40(4):134–41

Chang E, Golden MA. 2010. Sources of corruption in authoritarian regimes. *Soc. Sci. Q.* 91(1):1–20

Cheibub JA, Gandhi J, Vreeland JR. 2010. Democracy and dictatorship revisited. *Public Choice* 143(1):67–101

Chiozza G, Goemans HE. 2011. *Leaders and International Conflict*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press

Clarke KA, Stone RW. 2008. Democracy and the logic of political survival. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 102(3):387–92

Gallagher ME. 2015. *Authoritarian Legality: Law, Workers, and the State in China*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univ. Press

Gallagher M, Hanson JK. 2013. Authoritarian survival, resilience, and the selectorate theory. In *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe*, ed. M Dimitrov, pp. 185–204. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press

Gandhi J. 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press

Gandhi J, Przeworski A. 2006. Cooperation, cooptation, and rebellion under dictatorships. *Econ. Polit.* 18(1):1–26

Gandhi J, Przeworski A. 2007. Authoritarian institutions and the survival of autocrats. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 40(11):1279–301

Geddes B. 1999. What do we know about democratization after twenty years? *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 2:114–44

Geddes B, Wright J, Frantz E. 2014. Autocratic breakdown and regime transitions: a new data set. *Perspect. Polit.* 12(2):313–31

Ginsburg T, Moustafa T. 2008. *Rule by Law: The Politics of Courts in Authoritarian Regimes*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press

Haber S. 2006. Authoritarian government. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, ed. BR Weingast, DA Wittman, pp. 693–707. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press

Hadenius A, Teorell J. 2007. Pathways from authoritarianism. *J. Democr.* 18(1):143–56

Hauslohner P. 1981. Prefects as senators: Soviet regional politicians look to foreign policy. *World Polit.* 33(2):197–233

Hanson JK, Gallagher ME. 2015. *Long live the king! ruler turnover in democracies and autocracies*. Unpublished manuscript

Heclo H. 1973. Presidential and prime ministerial selection. In *Perspectives on Presidential Selection*, ed. DR Matthews, pp. 19–48. Washington, DC: Brookings Inst.

Hellman J. 1998. Winners take all: the politics of partial reform in postcommunist transitions. *World Polit.* 50(2):203–34

Hodnett G. 1975. Succession contingencies in the Soviet Union. *Probl. Communism* XXIV:1–21

Kennedy R. 2009. Survival and accountability: an analysis of the empirical support for selectorate theory. *Int. Stud. Q.* 53(3):695–714

Kosack S. 2013. The logic of pro-poor policymaking: political entrepreneurship and mass education. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 44(2):409–44

Lai B, Slater D. 2006. Institutions of the offensive: domestic sources of dispute initiation in authoritarian regimes, 1950–1992. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 50(1):113–26

Levitsky S, Way LA. 2002. The rise of competitive authoritarianism. *J. Democr.* 13(2):51–65

Levitsky S, Way LA. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univ. Press

Li C. 2001. *China's Leaders: The New Generation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield

Magaloni B. 2008a. Credible power-sharing and the longevity of authoritarian rule. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 41(4/5):715–41

Magaloni B. 2008b. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univ. Press

Magaloni B, Kricheli R. 2010. Political order and one-party rule. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 13:123–43

Malesky E. 2009. Gerrymandering—Vietnamese style: escaping the partial reform equilibrium in a nondemocratic regime. *J. Polit.* 71(1):132–59

Malesky E, Abrami R, Zheng Y. 2011. Institutions and inequality in single-party regimes: a comparative analysis of Vietnam and China. *Comp. Polit.* 43(4):401–19

Marcum AS, Brown JN. 2014. Overthrowing the "loyalty norm": the prevalence and success of coups in small-coalition systems, 1950 to 1999. *J. Confl. Resolut.* doi: 10.1177/0022002714540469

Marshall MG, Jaggers K. 2002. *Polity IV Project: Dataset Users' Manual*. Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR) Program, Cent. Int.l. Dev. Confl. Manage. (CIDCM). Univ. Maryland, College Park

Mares I, Carnes ME. 2009. Social policy in developing countries. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 12:93–113

Mawdsley E, White S. 1990. Renewal and dead souls: the changing Soviet Central Committee. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 20(4):537–42

Milner H, Kubota K. 2005. Why the move to free trade? Democracy and trade policy in the developing countries. *Int. Organ.* 59(1):107–43

Morrow JD, Bueno de Mesquita B, Siverson RM, Smith A. 2008. Retesting selectorate theory: separating the effects of *W* from other elements of democracy. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 102(3):393–400

Moustafa T. 2007. *The Struggle for Constitutional Power: Law, Politics, and Economic Development in Egypt*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press

Nathan AJ. 2003. Authoritarian resilience. *J. Democr.* 14(1):6–17

Paterson P. 1967. *The Selectorate: The Case for Primary Elections on Britain*. London: MacGibbon & Kee

Pepinsky T. 2014. The institutional turn in comparative authoritarianism. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 44(3):631–53

Pickering J, Kisangani EF. 2010. Diversionary despots? Comparing autocracies' propensities to use and to benefit from military force. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 54(2):477–93

Rahat G. 2007. Candidate selection: the choice before the choice. *J. Democr.* 18(1):157–70

Rajah J. 2012. *Authoritarian Rule of Law: Legislation, Discourse, and Legitimacy in Singapore*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press

Roeder PG. 1993. *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press

Sakwa G, Crouch M. 1978. Sejm elections in Communist Poland: an overview and a reappraisal. *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 8(4):403–24

Schedler A, ed. 2006. *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner

Schumpeter JA. 2003 (1943). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, **digamo.free.fr/capisoc.pdf**

Sekeris PG. 2011. Endogenous elites: power structure and patron-client relationships. *Econ. Gov.* 12(3):237–58

Shih V, Adolph C, Liu M. 2012. Getting ahead in the Communist Party: explaining the advancement of Central Committee members in China. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 106(1):166–87

Shirk SL. 1993. *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. Calif. Press

Slater D. 2010. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press

Steinberg DA, Shih VC. 2012. Interest group influence in authoritarian states: the political determinants of Chinese exchange rate policy. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 45(11):1405–34

Stern G. 1978. Brezhnev and the future: leadership and the problems of succession in the Soviet Union. *Round Table: Commonwealth J. Int. Aff.* 68(272):340–47

Svolik MW. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press

Svolik MW. 2013. Incentives, institutions, and the challenges to research on authoritarian politics. *APSA-Comp. Democratization Newsl.* 11(2):1, 7–11

Wang Y. 2015. *Tying the Autocrat's Hands: The Rise of the Rule of Law in China*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univ. Press

Wedeen L. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press

Weeks JL. 2012. Strongmen and straw men: authoritarian regimes and the initiation of international conflict. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 106(2):326–47

Wibbels E, Alquist JS. 2011. Development, trade, and social insurance. *Int. Stud. Q.* 55:125–49

Wintrobe R. 1998. *The Political Economy of Dictatorship*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press

Wright J. 2008. Do authoritarian institutions constrain? How legislatures affect economic growth and investment. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 52(2):322–43

Wright J. 2009. How foreign aid can foster democratization in authoritarian regimes. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 53(3):552–71

Yang DL. 1996. Review article: governing China's transition to the market: institutional incentives, politician's choices, and unintended outcomes. *World Polit.* 48(3):424–52

Zimmerman W. 2014. *Ruling Russia: Authoritarianism from the Revolution to Putin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press