

## Comments from Dr. Carl Henrik Knutsen

In this memo, I do not include the comments related to simple writing issues and describe how I plan to revise the paper in response to the comments from Dr. Knutsen (Hereafter CHK). CHK's comments are cited or summarized in *red italicized text*, and my responses are in black Roman text. I include expected revisions and excerpts from the revised manuscript in *blue*. Also, please see the detailed updates for the robustness checks.

### CHK's Comments

#### Abstract

**Before:** I examine data on authoritarian regimes and their welfare provisions from 1966-2011. I find that mass-based coalitions and strong mass party organizations lead to more universal welfare. Also, the effect of mass-based coalition diminishes when autocrats effectively manage information problems with a well-institutionalized mass party, reducing the need for universal welfare provisions.

*CHK: "explicitly tie party organization's to resolving the information problem?"*

I understand CHK's concern that the existing abstract does not clarify the logic behind why mass party organizations interact with mass-based coalitions for universal welfare provision as a testable hypothesis, despite the fact that I have described the broad arguments above. Thus, I intend to improve the abstract as follows:

**After:** I examine data on authoritarian regimes and their welfare provisions from 1966-2011. I find that mass-based coalitions and strong mass party organizations lead to more universal welfare. Also, the effect of mass-based coalition diminishes when autocrats effectively manage information problems through a well-institutionalized mass party. Strong mass party organizations play an important role in resolving information problems, enabling more efficient targeting, and reducing reliance on universal welfare provisions.

#### Introduction

##### First Paragraph on Page 2

**Before:** For example, China, a typical authoritarian regime, has a social assistance program providing unconditional cash transfers to protect minimum-income earners (Pan 2020).

*CHK: "what does 'typical' mean here? specify"*

How about removing the unnecessary description 'a typical authoritarian regime?':

**After:** For example, China has a social assistance program providing unconditional cash transfers to protect minimum-income earners (Pan 2020).

## Second Paragraph on Page 3

**Before:** Using time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) data from 87 to 98 autocratic states, this study investigates the relationship between the nature of the ruling coalition, the level of mass party organization, and the scope of welfare provision over time, ensuring rigorous analysis by including fixed effects for countries and years.

*CHK: "almost 100 or "up to 98""*

I would like to revise the manuscript based on the latter suggestion, but I'm not sure why CHK suggested changing this:

**After:** Using time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) data from up to 98 autocratic states, this study investigates the relationship between the nature of the ruling coalition, the level of mass party organization, and the scope of welfare provision over time, ensuring rigorous analysis by including fixed effects for countries and years.

**Before:** This paper tests theoretical arguments with data on authoritarian regimes and welfare provisions from 1966 to 2011, showing that authoritarian welfare provision is dependent on the ruling coalition in place, but the underlying rationale is based on mechanisms for resolving information problems. Using time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) data from up to 98 autocratic states, this study investigates the relationship between the nature of the ruling coalition, the level of mass party organization, and the scope of welfare provision over time, ensuring rigorous analysis by including fixed effects for countries and years. The findings show that while mass-based coalitions increase universal welfare, the effect diminishes when autocrats can effectively manage information problems, reducing the need for broad welfare provisions. It adds to our understanding of authoritarian regimes by emphasizing the role of institutionalization and coalition management in welfare distribution, providing insights into how autocratic leaders use institutions to consolidate power.

*CHK: "say something about the measures/proxies of information handling already here? Otherwise very nice and clear!"*

I provides a theoretical framework for understanding the problems autocrats face in obtaining accurate information, particularly in non-democratic settings where there are no established mechanisms for gathering information about the ruling coalition (or population autocrats should co-opt). Some authoritarian states try to mitigate these problems by establishing quasi-democratic institutions, such as political parties. Hence, as explained in the Research Design section, where I provide a brief introduction to empirical measures that I will use, I would like to revise the manuscript to highlight the significance of mass party organization as a crucial mechanism employed by autocrats to address information problems, akin to the suggested edits for the abstract:

**After:** This paper tests theoretical arguments with data on authoritarian regimes and welfare provisions from 1966 to 2011, showing that authoritarian welfare provision is dependent on the ruling coalition in place, but the underlying rationale is based on mechanisms for resolving information problems. I expect that strong mass party organizations have a significant impact on

addressing information problems, facilitating more effective targeting, and diminishing dependence on universal welfare provisions. Using time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) data from up to 98 autocratic states, this study investigates the relationship between the nature of the ruling coalition, the level of mass party organization, and the scope of welfare provision over time, with rigorous analysis including fixed effects for countries and years. The findings show that while mass-based coalitions increase universal welfare, the effect diminishes when autocrats can effectively manage information problems, reducing the need for broad welfare provisions. It adds to our understanding of authoritarian regimes by emphasizing the role of institutionalization and coalition management in welfare distribution, providing insights into how autocratic leaders use institutions to consolidate power.

## Theory

### Last Paragraph on Page 7

**Before:** Autocrats can mitigate elite threats by sharing power with them and establishing credible commitments that include granting elites opportunities to participate in formal institutions (Svolik 2012). When the ruling coalition with elites becomes institutionalize, it is more likely to have exclusive memberships, making their source of power immobile (Geddes, Wright and Frantz 2018). Such an institution-based coalition with elites encourages elite members to have a more convergent preference for specific social policies or selective welfare provisions, in the sense that they lose influence as soon as they leave the institution.

*CHK: “see, e.g., Knutsen and Rasmussen 2018 for an argument on how major welfare programs (with large sunk costs and identifiable if taken away/scaled down) may function as credible commitment devices, sometimes even without institutional changes.”*

The rationale behind my revision was to integrate the findings of Knutsen and Rasmussen (2018) on the role of substantial sunk costs in welfare programs as reliable commitments. I intended to revise this part to support the argument that welfare provisions can be a tool to ensure the loyalty of the elite based on the comment from CHK:

**After:** Autocrats can mitigate threats from elites by sharing power and establishing credible commitments that include providing elites with opportunities to participate in formal institutions (Svolik 2012). When the ruling coalition with elites becomes institutionalize, it is more likely to have exclusive memberships, making their source of power immobile (Geddes, Wright and Frantz 2018). Such an institution-based coalition encourages elites to have a more convergent preference for specific social policies, including selective welfare provisions, because elites should bare significant sunk costs (Knutsen and Rasmussen 2018) and lose influence as soon as they leave the institution.

### Second Paragraph on Page 10

**Before:** This brings us to a critical intersection: mass-based coalition building and strategic use of mass party organizations. While mass-based coalitions necessitate some level of universal welfare to ensure widespread appeasement, mass party organizations offer away to refine the regime’s welfare provisions. The improved information flow allows for a more targeted welfare

strategy, potentially reducing universal welfare benefits. As a result, it suggests that welfare provisions should be strategically calibrated not just for broad appeasement, but also to maintain support for potentially less universal welfare provisions.

**Hypothesis 3:** *The amount of universal welfare an autocrat provides to mass-based coalition diminishes with greater mass party institutionalization.*

*CHK: "This H3 is a key hypotheses, so I think you may need to spell out and clarify the interaction logic even more. Exactly why is it that these are "substitutes" in resolving the info problem, and (discuss potential counter-arg such as:) why shouldn't mass based parties for example empower larger groups to make them have more effective demands on autocrats, and thus push up welfare provision?"*

*Want to have a chat with MCW:*

*After: Not yet.*

## **Research Design**

### **Third Paragraph on Page 10**

*CHK: "ok, but note that RoW gives a fairly high threshold for counting regimes as democracies, so likely to include regimes that many other measures consider democratic. Worth highlighting already here if you try out different measures for delineating sample in rob tests."*

### **Overview With Different Measurements of Regime**

I have examined the identical specifications (benchmark models and full models) using three distinct regime measures: [1], [2], and [3].

The results are consistent, except for the interaction terms, when I use the [3] model. *Want to have a chat with MCW:*

*After: Not yet.*

### **Second Paragraph on Page 11**

*CHK: "how robust are results to including such lags a few years back in time? The risk of omitting relates to confounding from similar trends or reverse causality (welfare in t-2 might affect both co-variates in t-1 and outcome in t). Think it is fair to stick with the specification you have, but some more discussion potential issues and if needed some extra tests might be good to convince skeptics."*

*Want to have a chat with MCW:*

*After: Not yet.*

### **First Paragraph on Page 13**

**Before:** In particular, mass-based coalitions mainly consist of working classes and includes several states; Bolivia, Vietnam, Argentina, Nicaragua, and Ukraine. Those autocracies with mass-based coalitions account for 2.4 percent of all coalition observations in the sample.

*CHK: "This is fairly low, since "most important group" sets a very high threshold for capturing group relevance. It could be worth also using different rules such as at least one mass based support group in the coalition (using  $x \geq 0.5$  on the multiple choice support group variables, capturing if half or more of experts think the group is part of coalition – this is the rule I typically apply myself in different papers (under review, most of them unfortunately, so not yet published)."*

Want to have a chat with MCW:

**After:** Not yet.

### First Paragraph on Page 16 and Third Paragraph on Page 17

**Before:** I control the ability of a regime to use repression possible influence of repression strategies using the standardized and reversed human rights protection score of (Schnakenberg and Fariss 2014; Fariss 2014), which shows that higher values indicate more state-led repression (Chin, Song and Wright 2023). ... I control two measures to show whether civil societies are associated with the welfare universality is controlled. One measures if civil society organizations (CSOs) routinely consults with policymakers, while another shows the extent of CSOs' participatory environment.

*CHK: "Repression could also be post treatment, if depends on opportunities/costs of co-optation, so should perhaps also check model w.o. repression as rob test." ... "this could be endogenous to party structures, so worth checking also specification without this one."*

The results are consistent when I exclude repression, civil war experience, CSO consults, CSO participation, or both from the full model specifications (additive and multiplicative). Want to have a chat with MCW:

**After:** Not yet.

### Empirical Analysis

#### Figure 2 on Page 20

*CHK:*

- "Ok so this line is without Vietnam? That suggests the finding is pretty sensitive. strange that one country matters so much, and that no other omission of countries gives similar lines, but then I guess it's important to do various rob tests on this sample excluding Vietnam to see if you can recover the relationship e.g. if you kick out control variables or make other alterations."*
- Again, given that results are so sensitive to Vietnam, I think it is extra important to show several other rob tests (different control strategies, different delineations of the sample using other mea-*

*asures that ROW, other measures of the main variables, etc) to see if it is robust for full sample/  
equally sensitive to Vietnam for other plausible specifications*

*Want to have a chat with MCW:*

*After: Not yet.*

## **Bibliography**

- [1] C. Boix, M. Miller, and S. Rosato, “A Complete Data Set of Political Regimes, 1800–2007”, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 46, no. 12, pp. 1523–1554, Dec. 2013, doi: 10.1177/0010414012463905.
- [2] S.-E. Skaaning, J. Gerring, and H. Bartusevičius, “A Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy”, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 48, no. 12, pp. 1491–1525, Oct. 2015, doi: 10.1177/0010414015581050.
- [3] B. Geddes, J. Wright, and E. Frantz, “Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set”, *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 313–331, Jun. 2014, doi: 10.1017/S1537592714000851.