

Why Do Authoritarian Regimes Provide Welfare?

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Abstract

This paper evaluates why authoritarian regimes design social policies to promote the welfare of citizens. Social welfare policies are coordinated outcomes that link the political and economic realms together. Despite a rich literature on this topic in industrialized democracies, little research has investigated the mechanisms in authoritarian regimes. I argue that the limited focus on welfare provision in democracies stems from several flawed assumptions about the ability of modern autocracies to create similar programs and the mechanisms behind it. Although autocrats are more autonomous decision makers than democratic leaders, they rarely rule alone. As such, social policies in authoritarian regimes are driven by the autocrats' need to create stable ruling coalitions. The welfare provided in authoritarian regimes should differ depending on the groups on which the autocrat depends for support. The ability to effectively commodify welfare and provide assistance should also vary based on regime characteristics and resource availability. I examine this using data on authoritarian regimes and social policies over the period 1917 to 2000, showing that authoritarian welfare provision depends on the ruling coalition in place.

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How successfully can we explain the variations of welfare provision among countries with the existing theories? Scholars have investigated the causes and consequences of welfare state variation for several decades, and it has become one of the major themes in comparative politics. Questions of the welfare state, however, have covered the variations of welfare within advanced industrial democracies (Pierson 1996, 2000). Despite a rich literature on this topic in industrialized democracies, little research has investigated the mechanisms in authoritarian regimes. Do authoritarian regimes provide welfare to their citizens? Research on the welfare of democracies expects that democracies would provide greater stability and more effective public policies for citizens to foster their quality of life (Gerring, Thacker and Alfaro 2012). Authoritarian regimes also design social policies and provide a set of welfare programs, but it is not clear for whom the policies and programs are targeting, unlike democracies. Then, what would be a key mechanism to explain the variation of welfare in the non-democratic world?¹

This paper evaluates why authoritarian regimes design social policies to promote the welfare of citizens. Social welfare policies are coordinated outcomes that link the political and economic realms together. Many theoretical studies have proposed that democracy is somehow related to higher levels of welfare provisions (Muller 1988; Sirowy and Inkeles 1990; Korpi and Palme 1998) with several key concepts; the logic of industrialism (Heclo 1974; Wilensky 1975; Przeworski, A. and Limongi 1993), inherent characteristics of democratic institutions (Muller 1988; Pierson 1996; Gerring, Thacker and Alfaro 2012), compensating for the specific social groups (Cameron 1978; Rodrik 1998; Burgoon 2001; Adserà and Boix 2002) and distribution of political resources across classes within a society (Korpi and Palme 1998; Esping-Andersen 1989, 1990). The central mechanism of conventional wisdom explains variations of welfare provision with social pressures for extensive welfare. Since a democratic government is more subject to demands from citizens, in theory, by promoting political equality, democracy provides various groups, such as interest groups, labor unions, and political parties, with open spaces of political competition to represent their interests and welfare. However, very few studies have attempted to explain the variation of welfare with the mechanisms in existing theories for authoritarian welfare states.

I argue that the limited focus on welfare provision in democracies stems from several flawed

1 The paper uses the terminologies of non-democracies, such as 'authoritarian regimes.' The authoritarian regime, dictatorship, and autocracy interchangeably.

assumptions about the ability of modern autocracies to create similar programs and the mechanisms behind it. Although autocrats are more autonomous decision-makers than democratic leaders, they rarely rule alone. As such, social policies in authoritarian regimes are driven by the autocrats' need to create stable ruling coalitions. The welfare provided in authoritarian regimes should differ depending on the groups on which the autocrat depends for support. The ability to effectively commodify welfare and provide assistance should also vary based on regime characteristics and resource availability. I examine this using data on authoritarian regimes and welfare programs, showing that authoritarian welfare provision depends on the ruling coalition in place.

I organize the remainder of the paper as follows. In the next two sections, I review the theoretical backgrounds of theories on the welfare state. From the previous explanations of the welfare state, I develop the theoretical framework of our analysis. The following sections describe the dataset and empirical models I have constructed to test the hypotheses generated by this framework. The subsequent sections present and discuss our empirical results, and we conclude by addressing issues for further inquiry.

Literature Reviews

Understanding Welfare Regimes

Studies of welfare state have mostly been conducted in democratic countries with comparable and available data ([Jessop 1984](#); [Esping-Andersen 1989, 1990](#); [Rudra and Haggard 2005](#); [Huber, Mustillo and Stephens 2008](#); [Hudson and Kühner 2009](#)). From the 19th century, as Western democracies expanded the universal franchise, the levels and coverage of social policies had expanded. Previous studies have provided empirical evidence that democracy has seen broader and deeper levels of welfare ([Acemoglu and Robinson 2000](#); [Lindert 2005](#)). They have made great efforts to find the regularity of social policies in democracies, and the strands of inquiry are so-called "Welfare state" studies.

The phrase welfare state was first used to describe Labour Britain after 1945, and the first usage of the phrase rarely defined what it is but just described it with democratic sentiments such as social rights ([Briggs 1961](#), 9-10). The label 'welfare state' incorporates not only Britain but also

all modern industrialized countries, defining “a state in which organized power is deliberately used to modify the play of market forces in at least three directions—first, by guaranteeing individuals and families a minimum income irrespective of the market value of their work or their property; second, by narrowing the extent of insecurity by enabling individuals and families to meet certain ‘social contingencies’ (for example, sickness, old age, and unemployment) which lead otherwise to individual and family crises; and third, by ensuring that all citizens without distinction of status or class are offered the best standards available in relation to a certain agreed range of social services” (Briggs 1961, 14). Based on the definition, several studies have investigated what makes differences in social expenditure across countries (Cameron 1978; Rodrik 1998; Adserà and Boix 2002).

However, the prominent study on welfare state, Esping-Andersen (1990) argues that we should not focus on particular social policy *per se*, but on how different countries arrive at their peculiar public-private sector mix (Esping-Andersen 1990, 2). According to Esping-Andersen (1990), tracing the development of a welfare state with the size of social expenditure (or public spending) may be ahistorical and overlook the process. Esping-Andersen (1990) focused on the two significant dimensions of welfare, decommodification, and stratification. On the one hand, decommodification is an indicator as to where the status of individuals in the market is. A state can intervene to secure the lost in the market through compensating for potential loss of job, income. Also, a state can provide general welfare for protecting citizens from sickness, injuries, unemployment. On the other hand, stratification is the status of individuals based on their class positions (Esping-Andersen 1990).

The fundamental mechanism of the research is based on a class coalition. With qualitative research, Esping-Andersen (1990) suggests that the structure of class coalitions is vital, pressing the ruling government toward specific types of welfare states. Thus, it is essential which classes go to make a coalition and whether the coalition successfully takes the ruling initiative of the state. It implies that the attempt of Esping-Andersen (1990) to develop a typology of welfare states is based on power distribution in a society. He is, therefore, centrally concerned with how to explain the power structures underlying different welfare states (Kemeny 1995, 88). In other words, the three types of the welfare state in Esping-Andersen (1990)—Liberal, Conservative, and Social democracy represent macro-features of how a country forms the class coalition to design

and provides welfare (Scruggs and Allan 2008, 646).

Subsequent studies of Esping-Andersen (1990) continued to categorize the welfare state based on different characteristics (Arcanjo 2006, 14); coverage, citizenship right (Ferrera 1996), relative size of social expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic products (Bonoli 1997), or needs and contributions (Korpi and Palme 1998). The main argument of Esping-Andersen (1990) and following studies is that differential structuring of power relationships between classes is a political and policy-making process, making it possible to distinguish between different types of the welfare state. In other words, the thesis of Esping-Andersen (1990) is much more than a descriptive typology but is ultimately founded on power relationships between social classes (Kemeny 1995, 89).

Welfare Regimes in Autocracies

Some criticize that the *three worlds of welfare state* are only tested in limited democracies and not eligible to explain the variations of welfare states, which are on the boundary between the types. It is partially right. We cannot solve the puzzle of welfare state concerning authoritarian regimes with the existing theories on the welfare state since the previous arguments assume particular values of democratic institutions. When a state is an authoritarian regime, it does not guarantee compensation its citizens for the losses from the market. In authoritarian regimes, the power of the state is more likely personalized, and the rules are more likely to be established simply and efficiently using fiat and forces (Gerring, Thacker and Alfaro 2012, 4). However, the mechanism of Esping-Andersen (1990)'s three worlds are somehow related to power resource theory, and it may be the key to solve the puzzles in authoritarian regimes with 'class coalition.'

The argument of power resource suggests that democracies provide welfare to its citizens because they rely on broader coalitions. If so, on the one hand, the fundamental argument of power resource is nothing more than the Selectorate theory (Bueno De Mesquita et al. 1999; Bueno de Mesquita, Morrow and Smith 2003). The selectorate theory states that leaders, facing challengers who wish to depose them, maintain their coalitions of supporters by taxing and spending in ways that allocate mixtures of public and private goods. The theory assumes each member of the selectorate (S) who is responsible for making a leader has an equal probability

of being in a winning coalition. According to this logic, as the size of the winning coalition (W) becomes smaller or the size of the selectorate becomes larger, challenges are less likely to need or use the support of any particular individual when forming their winning coalition. It is riskier to defect when the size of W shrinks or the size of S grows.

On the other hand, studies on authoritarian regimes argue that we should consider the *varieties of authoritarian regimes*, which means not every authoritarian regime is the same (Geddes 1999; Geddes, Wright and Frantz 2014; Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland 2010; Wahman, Teorell and Hadenius 2013; Roller 2013; von Soest and Wahman 2015). In reality, we can observe authoritarian regimes have distinctive leadership groups such as dominant party, military, monarchy, or personalized factions (Geddes, Wright and Frantz 2014). Generally, studies have a consensus that the party based regime has a larger coalition compared to the personalist regime, which has a small coalition to remain in office (Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010; Gandhi and Lust-okar 2009). It is the point where the two lines of inquiry of selectorate theory and varieties of authoritarian regimes meet to explain the authoritarian welfare state.

The welfare state literature has revealed how democracies provide welfare to their citizens, and authoritarian regimes provide welfare programs (Tang 2000; Kwon 2005; Orenstein 2008; Bader 2015; Ong 2015; Morgenbesser 2017). Regardless of the regime types, political leaders seek to stay in office. It means that autocrats also have incentives to provide public goods to their citizens (Wintrobe 1998). The difference between democracies and non-democracies is that the leaders under non-democracies are less constrained to make decisions. In terms of providing a public good to stay in office, we would expect some non-democracies to be subject to smaller dynamics discussed in the literature of democratization on the welfare regime and democracies. Given the fact that authoritarian regimes can be seen as the diminished form of democracies and given the variations in authoritarian regimes, we can expect that some forms of authoritarian regimes are more likely to provide welfare. In other words, autocrats are more autonomous decision-makers than democratic leaders; However, they rarely rule alone. The needs of autocrats to secure their ruling coalition which is a coordinated social group to secure the political survival of autocrats and their stable ruling drive the social policies to promote welfare even in authoritarian regimes (Svolik 2012). Thus, with smaller coalitions, authoritarian regimes provide welfare because it is closely related to the credible commitment for cooptation.

Explanations of welfare provision in democracies have something in common. They argue that the social groups belonging to selectorate transform their needs into a sort of pressure to push towards particular sets of social policies. For example, a simple but essential analytical model, relating democratic institutions and welfare, comes from [Meltzer and Richard \(1981\)](#), who focus on the effects of electoral competition.² This model assumes that the median voter is the critical voter to determine the size of government, which is measured by the share of income redistributed. It implies that the size of the government depends on the relationship between mean income and median income. Here, the size of selectorate that depends on the regime types is important. Whereas democracy provides a universal franchise, which leads the median voter to have a below-average income in an unequal society, one of the poor who favors higher taxes and more welfare. In authoritarian regimes, the median voter who can affect the policy-making process would belong to a much smaller selectorate. It means that the median voter in an authoritarian regime is more likely to be one of the rich or the upper-class ([Yi and Woo 2014](#), 2).

The studies on *varieties of authoritarian regimes* have focused on which social groups matter and affect the decision of autocrats. From the [Geddes \(1999\)](#) and [Geddes, Wright and Frantz \(2014\)](#), scholars have attempted to uncover the decisive leadership group, which controls the policy-making process within the regime. However, when we connect the previous discussion of authoritarian welfare to class coalition—ruling coalition of autocracies, it becomes clear that we need to concern ourselves with how much autocrats consider the selectorate and how large the coalition size is because it shows the extent of welfare the autocrats should provide. It means that the welfare provided in authoritarian regimes should differ depending on the groups on which the autocrat depends for support.

Even though some autocrats use forces and coercions to rule the regime, not all do. Autocrats have two fundamental problems, which cannot be solved by a single strategy. One is the problem of power-sharing, which is about challenges from the elites. The other is the problem of control in which autocrats face threats from the masses they rule. The processes to resolve the problems in authoritarian regimes are not transparent and formal, contrary to in democracies. When an

2 [Boix \(2003\)](#) provide overviews of this issue

autocrat faces these two fundamental problems, she may have two strategies of coercion and cooptation. The autocratic welfare is closely related to the latter strategy. For instance, authoritarian regimes establish institutions to encourage regime stability for autocrat through signaling secured property rights and credible commitment ([Gandhi and Przeworski 2007](#); [Wright 2008](#)).

Theory

The Primacy of Coalitions

In authoritarian regimes, we can expect the welfare might be the same as the means to co-opt the classes from selectorate of which the members are potential constituents for the ruling coalition. Given that authoritarian social policies are to effectively stabilize and sustain the system through co-opting the supports of selectorate, social policies should be more credible and reliable than private goods, which the autocrat can distribute at his discretion. [Knutsen and Rasmussen \(2018\)](#) emphasizes that pensions are a good example of institutionalized club goods for autocrats to use with particular target groups. They specify old-age pensions as a useful tool for autocrats to reduce the threats of revolt and to co-opt their opponents. They argue that especially old-age pensions affect a wide range of beneficiaries as the pensions do not depend on an unexpected event such as unemployment, sickness. The old-age pensions may be relatively universal to other types of welfare. In the authoritarian regime, as mentioned above, autocrats only have the incentive to provide old-age pension programs to secure targeted supporter groups ([Knutsen and Rasmussen 2018](#), 670). In conclusion, [Knutsen and Rasmussen \(2018](#), 688) argue that “major pension programs are not restricted to democracies . . . Autocrats use pensions to direct resources to critical supporting groups.” The critical supporting groups of authoritarian regimes are the groups, which establishes the ruling coalition of the regime.

How universal welfare programs are offered, and which ones to focus more on, depends on which class the regime should co-opt. This study understands that class exerts social pressure on decision-makers through different and distinctive interests or means of political mobilization. Therefore, it is necessary to examine which classes are politically significant and identifiable ([Bean and Papadakis 1998](#)). In this paper, I take the assumption of [Dahlum, Knutsen and Wig \(2019](#), 1495): individuals who belong to similar socioeconomic strata are more likely to have

converging preferences over social policies.

In Western Europe, agriculture was the dominant production structure of society until the industrial revolution between the late 18th and early 19th centuries emerged. The source of the political resources of the elite was based on agriculture. Although the landowners of the peasants and bourgeois expanded over time, the feudal manor lords occupied the land ownership steadily. The feudal lords—the agrarian elite has accumulated surplus labor or surplus products from the peasants or tenant farmers in the form of rents by lending common lands. [Ansell and Samuels \(2015\)](#) suggest that the ruling elite in the early stage can be divided into two groups. They call the two groups as the relative economic elites and the autocratic elite³. Also, [Ansell and Samuels \(2015\)](#) considers the autocratic elite as the incumbent elite who gains his resources from its local agricultural section.

A line of inquiry argues economic and class-based explanations to account for democratic transition, development ([Ziblatt 2017](#), 4-5), and welfare state ([Huber, Ragin and Stephens 1993](#); [Huber and Stephens 2001](#); [Korpi 2006](#)). The explanations usually classify classes that are important in a regime into two types, *middle class* and *working class*. On the one hand, the middle class is the group that has the economic capability. The middle class contributes to economic balance and, at the same time, serves as a buffer against political extremes. Socially, it also serves as a role model for low-income groups, while playing a role of social balance by having a specific collective identity that is distinct from the upper classes. For example, Some evaluate the middle class as the driving force for democratization historically ([Moore 1993](#)). In line with literature on democratization, we can expect that the middle class can be seen as an effective source of threatening the regime. It also makes the middle class important when I explore the influence of classes on welfare programs in authoritarian regimes.

The middle class can be identified as a politically significant social group to co-opt since whether to make a coalition with the middle class determine the costs of repression. Also, theories that find the cause of economic development in the distribution of political power also suggested that the middle-class influences market growth by contributing to the development of democracy and preventing dictatorship ([Easterly 2001](#)). Many studies suggest that middle-

3 This study defines the relative economic elites as groups of people who have industrial goods (economic power) without political power.

class supplies crucial support for the popular mobilizations ([Rosenfeld 2017](#); [Dahlum, Knutsen and Wig 2019](#)). Regarding incentives to co-opt, however, the middle class can be seen as a heterogeneous group. Remaining in office, authoritarian leaders should make a coalition with the group that might have motivation and capability for regime transition ([Dahlum, Knutsen and Wig 2019](#)). Thus, I expect that the middle class, in particular, the urban middle class, would have higher leverage for authoritarian leaders.

On the other hand, the working class can be an important factor in the development of redistributive social policy, partly through its effects on the partisan composition of government ([Huber and Stephens 2001](#), [Rasmussen and Pontusson 2018](#), 794). According to [Korpi \(2006, 175\)](#), the working class is a collectively mobilized group of employees who are dependent on the labor force. Mobilization of the working class is closely related to the development of the welfare state ([Shalev 1983](#)). The expectation that the working class will have a converging preference is based on the assumption that the group of workers has the same interest in ensuring security from the risk of the market. Although [Dahlum, Knutsen and Wig \(2019, 1495\)](#) argues that the urban working class (e.g., industrial workers) and the rural working class (peasants) show different levels of capabilities to organize nationwide or localize strikes for the regime transitions, it has different narratives in terms of co-optation. Since the rural working class can be influenced by urbanization or industrialization, the rural working class, and the urban class are not exclusive to each other. [Chandra \(2002, 1932\)](#) shows an example of the Russian revolution. The rural working class is understood as the transitional group between the remnants of feudal and the capitalist mode of production. The rural working class and the urban working class were co-opted because they were in a continuous line by looking at the production of rural working classes as the basis of capitalist development.

Besides the local agrarian elites, urban middle class, and working-class, groups based on specific institutions also matter with regards to the political survival of autocrats. [Geddes \(1999\)](#) and [Geddes, Wright and Frantz \(2014\)](#) proposes different types of leadership groups are able to make the most important decisions in the authoritarian regime. This group makes key policies, and autocrats must retain the support of its members to remain in power, even though autocrats may also have substantial ability to influence the group's membership. Institution-based class refers to additional coalition members, and it provides valuable alternative bluntly constructed

regime types. Specific institutions create a class of elites with distinct interests and incentives. For instance, parties are not the only way to mobilize the masses, but if created, it may offer goods to its leadership, party elites.

The military and party elites are the institution-based groups, which show close ties with authoritarian leaders. First, the military does not depend on military leaders' personal characteristics. Instead, the military is characterized by collegial forms meaning "rule by the military as institution" (Geddes, Frantz and Wright 2014; Kim 2017). I expect the military as the collegial group would have converging interests and capabilities over social policies. Secondly, when an authoritarian regime has party institutions, the party institution can serve interactive functions rather than one-way. It implies that party institution is not only the platform to mobilize the support from the masses (Gandhi and Przeworski 2006), but also the mechanisms making the party elite seek particular interests. Through the party institution, the party elite can shape his interests, which are different from the interests of other classes.

A Coalitional Theory of Welfare Provision in Autocracies

In a democracy, all constituent of classes has a right to vote, which a leftist party should be concerned to win the election. Also, citizens have freedom of association, which can make them aggregate class interests toward extensive welfare and form labor unions. The interaction of organized power resources (union) and leftist parties will lead to higher levels of social policies in terms of universalism. However, the theory does not hold in an authoritarian regime because autocrat does not guarantee the mechanism, which citizens can transform their political resources into social pressures. In an authoritarian regime, citizens rarely have the right to vote and have freedom of association. When the power resource theory explains the welfare provisions with the demand side, supply-side explanations are required to explain why autocrat provides welfare programs to his citizens. In other words, I emphasize the response of elites as decisive for illustrating authoritarian welfare states.

Previous literature has focused on the types of authoritarian regimes to explain their various performances (Charron and Lapuente 2011; Roller 2013; Cassani 2017; Yan, Lin and Em 2019). However, existing data sets of discrete authoritarian regime types are not free from the validity

issues (Wilson 2014). Roller (2013, 52) shows whether and how the choice of data sets impacts the empirical results on the determinants and consequences of authoritarian regimes. Also, most of the studies to examine performances of authoritarian regimes utilizes the method of residues of which we make all unidentified regime types as one type. It makes it challenging to state which authoritarian type is different from what.

A coalition theory I develop in this paper argues that different classes that autocrats need to co-opt have different influence on welfare provisions in authoritarian regimes. Although many pieces of literature on democratization emphasizes the threats of the middle class, I focus on the working class in terms of the preference for extensive welfare. The middle class does not only tend to resist the extension of the suffrage or support jingoistic foreign policies historically (Lipset 1959), but also cooperate with existing elites as becoming state officials, regional civil servants through state careers (Rosenfeld 2017). On the contrary, the working class is more sensitive to the change in the distribution of wealth and provisions of welfare than the middle class since it has the members as employees who depend primarily on the labor force (Korpi 2006).

After the period of the Russian Revolution, I expect autocrats should consider the working class as a necessary component of their ruling coalition to stay in power even rather than the middle class that is usually considered as an essential group for welfare extension and regime transition. The Russian Revolution was the first case that showed the possibility of the working class to be an effective group to overthrow existing elites. Thus, it is not difficult to anticipate that autocrats would consider co-opting the working class, especially when the working class is the important social group in the regime. After the Russian Revolution, the power of the working class might increase, and the more efforts of autocrats to buy their support should be required. Thus, I propose the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): *If all other conditions are the same, the working class's influence on universal welfare is greater than the middle class.*

Alternative Explanations

Recent works propose a potential alternative explanation for authoritarian welfare programs. Focusing the capacity of parties to provide public goods, Bizzarro et al. (2018) argue that highly

institutionalized parties can contribute to fostering economic performances. According to [Bizzarro et al. \(2018\)](#), parties are not only the platforms that make leaders and members be tied strongly, and also the mechanisms to have a relatively long time horizon through solving coordination problems. This piece of research implies that institutionalized parties can absorb the influence of classes on welfare programs. Furthermore, [Rasmussen and Knutsen \(2019\)](#) explains the variations of welfare universalism by focusing on party institutionalization, which means (1) how decisions in parties are based on clear, stable rules and (2) how the decisions are informed through the networks linking party elites with other broad constituencies of the party. The main argument of the article is on the same line with the class coalition and cooptation. As "institutionalized parties allow politicians to overcome coordination problems, avoid capture by special interests and form stable linkages with broad social groups, institutionalized parties enable and make political elites to pursue extensive welfare policies" even under an authoritarian regime. In other words, the more autocrats with institutionalized parties want to maintain power, the more likely they are to run universal social policies. On the contrary, if the authoritarian regime personalizes the power for the few (without or with less institutionalized parties), the more selective programs targeting the particular groups of supporters will be.

For example, [Orenstein \(2008\)](#) states that Communist governments provided much more social benefits such as full employment to their citizens than did other types of authoritarian regimes. Also, [Morgenbesser \(2017\)](#) shows that the ruling party of Singapore utilizes a diverse range of cooptation measures designed to elicit greater compliance amongst citizens, opposition members, and political elites. The strategy of cooptation includes social policies that subsidize education and primary medical care, but also comprehensive public housing. Nevertheless, an authoritarian regime does not fully rely on political parties. It shows that the existence of institutionalized parties can affect the social policies of welfare. Since Major General Park Chung-hee led a coup and captured power in 1961, the South Korean government was occupied by the previous or current members of the military. Although South Korea calls this era as the period under the military regime, effective but constrained, political parties and legislature worked. Even though the level of constraints was much less than other advanced democracies, the South Korean government should consider the parties and legislature to enact laws. The military regime used some appeasement measures to control the workers and to win popular support. It shows

the military regime's embodiment of welfare state ideals (Tang 2000, 90-93). For the same reason that the institutionalized party can help autocrats to distribute resources to their citizens, I establish the subsequent hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *If all other conditions are the same, the higher levels of party institutionalization increase the universality of welfare programs.*

Data and Empirical Specification

Sample Selection

Authoritarian Regimes

I utilize the lexical indices of the Skaaning's in the V-dem data set (*e_lexical_index*). The variable is a combined index of six binary indicators. Thus, only the scale of 6 shows universal suffrage with a competitive, party-free, fair election country. Since it covers from 1800-2017, I expect these criteria help to obtain sufficient size of the sample. Figure 1 shows that this binary classification of political regimes provides a relatively clear distinction between the two categories along with alternative continuous regime variable, electoral democracy index of V-dem.

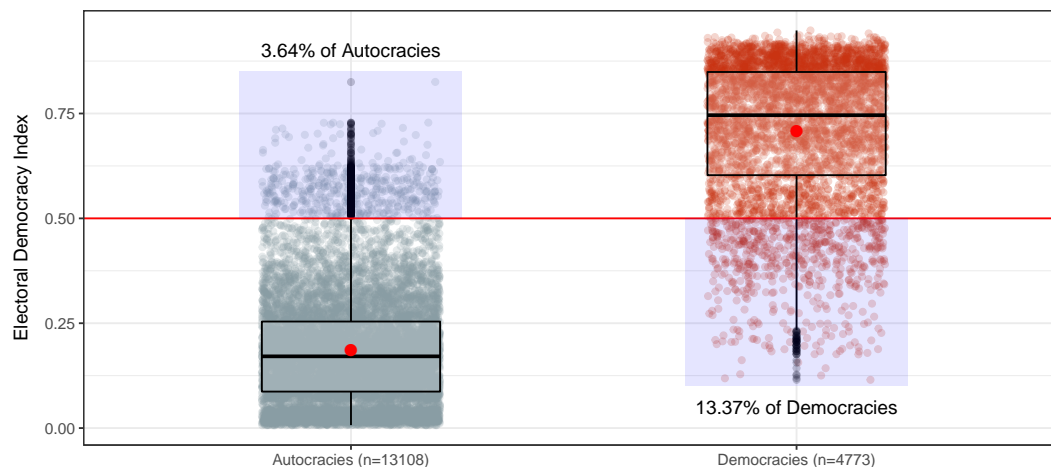


Figure 1: The distribution of Democracies and Autocracies

Temporal Coverage

Since autocrats do not rule with coercion alone, they need support. [Cassani \(2017\)](#) argues that autocrats attempt to invest considerable efforts and resources to buy ‘popular’ supports. It is necessary to understand the targets that autocrats want to co-opt. The popular supports, unlike democracies, can imply a different population of society because the autocrats would only want to obtain minimally necessary supports. For the autocrats, it is inefficient to consume resources to obtain unnecessary support. Then, how and when are the different classes organized and effective for autocrats?

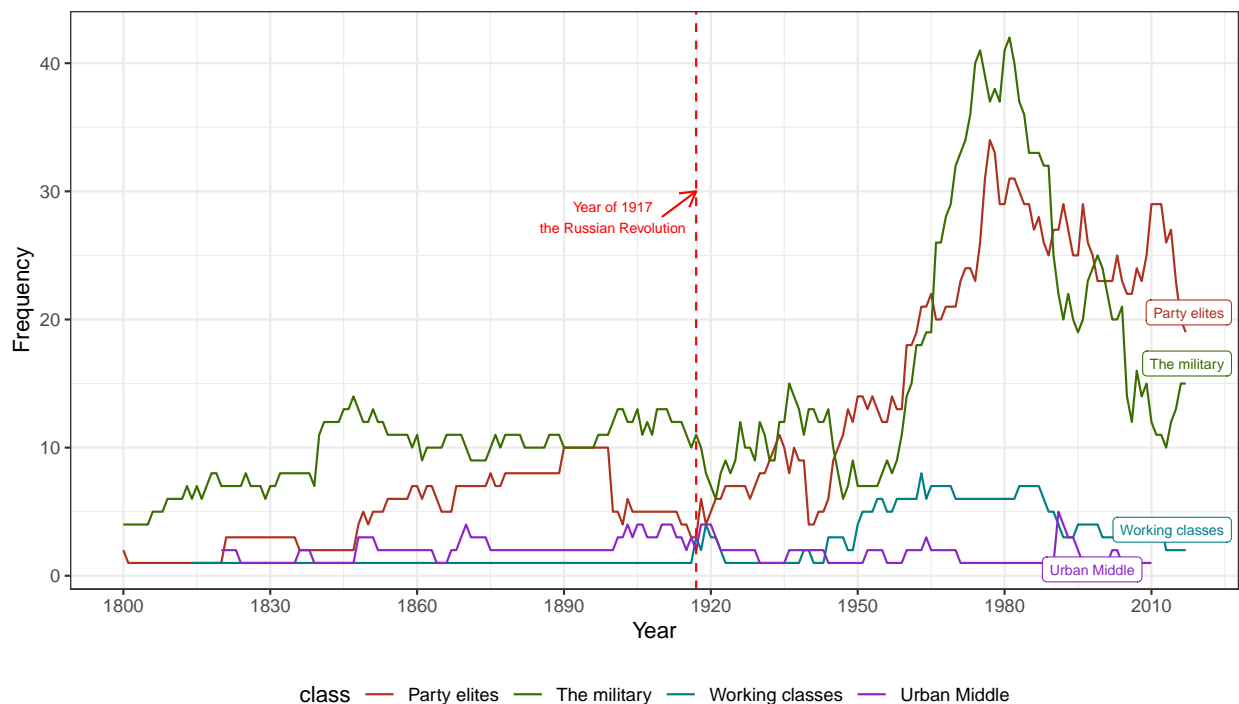


Figure 2: Time trends of the numbers of states by classes

Figure 2 shows how the numbers of classes that are considered to be co-opted to rule in authoritarian regimes vary over time. As mentioned above, the working class before the year of 1917, the Russian Revolution, is not politically significant and effective groups for ruling the regimes.⁴ Previous literature also stresses the temporal dynamics of classes on the welfare state. [Rasmussen and Pontusson \(2018\)](#) show that the working class mobilized their political power

⁴ Before the Russian Revolution (1917), the cases of the working class as important groups for the regime are Paraguay (1814-1840), Bolivia (1848-1857, 1871), Costa Rica (1882-1889), Mexico (1910-1916).

through unions in the late nineteenth century. Utilizing the cases of Ghent systems of unemployment insurance, they assert that the historical records of Western European states suggests that timing matters: the level of power resource institutionalization varies by periods ([Rasmussen and Pontusson 2018](#), 821-822). Because I expect the working class would build a coalition to foster welfare programs, it is reasonable to restrict the sample after the Russian Revolution, which is an event showing working classes matter.

Welfare Programs

A vital contribution of the analysis I develop is to clarify why authoritarian regimes design social policies to promote the welfare of citizens. I begin with exploring welfare programs in terms of the *Universalism*. The theoretical concept of the universalism of welfare can be traced back to [Titmuss \(1974\)](#). He approaches welfare programs qualitatively and normatively. He argues that social policy should be analyzed by its necessity, culture, tradition, and history. Universalism states society should carry the crucial responsibility of the failure of the individual citizens, and it is regarded as a sort of altruism with which everyone can be beneficiary of such needs.

[Esping-Andersen \(1990, 25\)](#) tries to clarify the concept referring “all citizens are endowed with similar rights, irrespective of class or market position.” and describes that socialist regime as universalism since it “exhibit[s] the lowest level of benefit differentials” ([Esping-Andersen 1990, 69](#)). Others manipulate the universalism from a different angle, rephrasing it as welfare generosity. They define welfare state generosity as the ratio of social transfers to government expense over the ratio of the non-working to the total population ([Iversen and Cusack 2000](#); [Rueda 2008](#); [Yi and Woo 2014](#)). However, the concept of welfare generosity is only able to capture the income-based effects of welfare, and it is only available for democracies. In this analysis, following [Knutsen and Rasmussen \(2018\)](#) and [Rasmussen and Knutsen \(2019\)](#), I measure universalism of authoritarian welfare state using alternative measurements to test the extended theoretical arguments.

First, I utilize the Social Policy around the World (SPaW) Database, which is developed by [Rasmussen \(2016\)](#). The *Universal Index* as formal rules in an authoritarian regime, meaning the extent to which groups in society would be included in the welfare programs and the extent to the degree to which all citizens are eligible for a benefit independent of their labor market status.

The *Universal Index*, of SPaW, asks “the degree to which all citizens are eligible for a benefit independent of their labor market status.” It is expected to capture which parts of the population are included on equal terms in the same program. For example, contribution-based or employment-based programs covering one major group are scored 2. Scores of 3 indicate that programs are contribution-based or employment-based and cover two major groups, and so on, up to 8- scores where seven groups are covered. Maximum 9-scores indicate all residents are automatically entitled to benefits, a fully universal system (Rasmussen 2016; Rasmussen and Knutsen 2019). Thus, the U.I. of SPaW shows the extent of universal coverage in welfare programs.

Secondly, I also use an alternative variable to measure the level of welfare universalism from the V-dem data set. The U.I. of V-dem relies on expert coding that asks “how many welfare programs are means-tested and how many benefits all (or virtually all) members of the polity.” The value of 0 means there are no, or extremely limited, welfare state policies. The maximum value of 5 states that almost all welfare state policies are universal. It is measured as ordinal and converted to the interval. Although this *Universal Programs* cannot tell the variations of different welfare programs, it is relatively advantageous to test the first hypothesis (H1) compared to other measurements such as a total sum of social expenditure. The U.I. of V-dem shows the compositions of welfare programs that a state has.

Class coalition

This paper focuses on the different influences of class coalitions on welfare programs since classes are expected to make social pressure on decision-makers based on their distinctive interests. It is assumed that individuals who belong to similar socioeconomic strata are more likely to have converging preferences over social policies Dahlum, Knutsen and Wig (2019, 1495), capturing which class is the critical supporters for autocrats to maintain in power. Following the previous relevant literature, I identify the classes that are expected to affect the levels of the authoritarian welfare state into four: *Working classes, Urban middle classes, Party elites, and the Military*.

I use the variable measuring regime’s most important support group (*v3regimpgroup*) of the V-dem data set. The variable is measured by asking, “which (one) group does the current political regime rely on most strongly in order to maintain power.” It contains categories of which, if

it were to retract its support to the regime, would most endanger the regime. Although *Class coalition* shows various classes that matter for the political survival of regimes, I manipulate the variables *v3regimpgroup* according to theoretical expectations. I combined the agrarian elites, including rich peasants and large landholders, with the local elites, including chiefs. Also, the urban working classes, including labor unions and rural working classes, including peasants, are merged into one class called *Working classes*.

Additionally, I define other three groups as *party elites* of the party or parties that control the executive, *the military*, and *the urban middle classes*. As I expect the interests between the urban classes and rural middle classes would be different (Dahlum, Knutsen and Wig 2019), the rural middle classes are excluded.

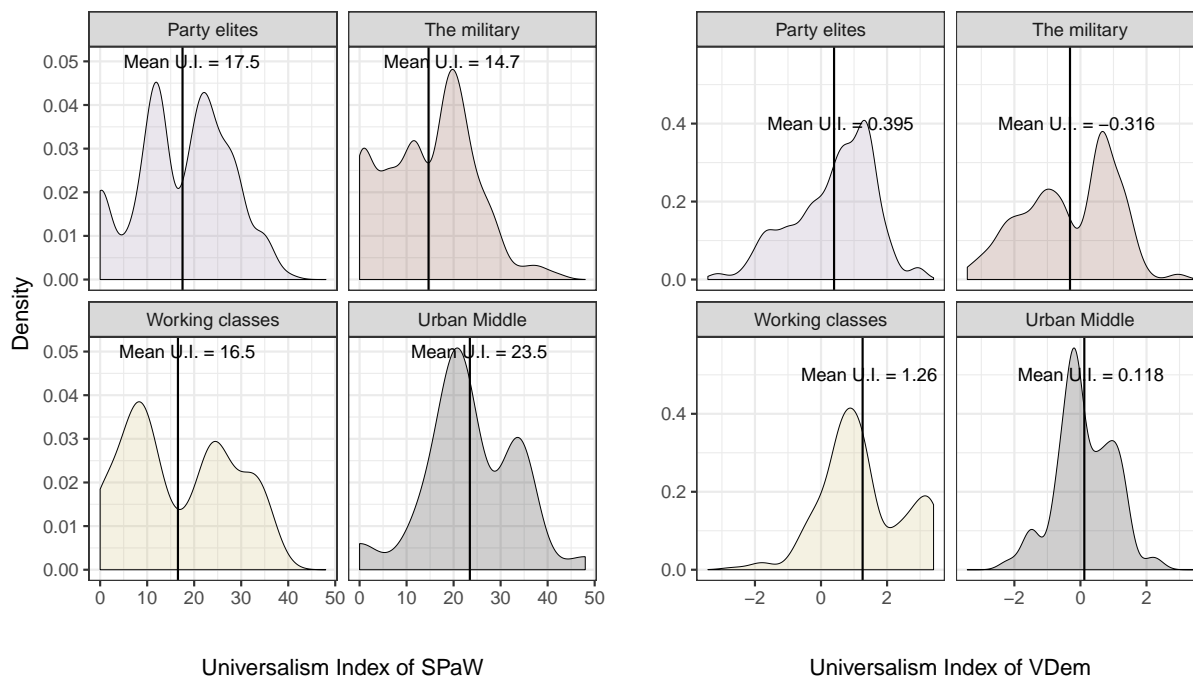


Figure 3: The Distribution of Universalism indices by Classes in Autocracies

Figure 3 is the distribution of universalism indices of the SPaW dataset and the V-Dem dataset by classes. The *Universal Index* of the left panel measures how many social groups each welfare program (old-age pension, mater, sick, unemployment, working accident, family) covers. In the left panel, the urban middle class shows the highest mean value of *Universal Index*. Party elites, working classes, and the military follow. Otherwise, when we use the *Universal Index* of Vdem,

the right panel indicates slightly different features that the working class to provide universal welfare than the urban middle class. The party elites show a lower level of universality than in the left panel but still has a positive value, which means some of the programs are cash-transfer programs. The military has the least universal welfare programs in both. Also, we can say that the military class provides significant portions of welfare programs as cash-benefits. The two different panels show different aspects of welfare universality. The left panel shows the welfare programs of the urban class-led autocracies provide the welfare programs covering various groups of societies than other classes. However, the way of delivery shows lower levels of universality than the working class. In sum, Figure 3 suggests a possibility that the working class-led autocracies provide welfare programs targeting specific social groups. At the same time, however, the programs benefit everyone who belongs to the groups.

Party Institutionalization

To show how autocrats co-opt the potential class coalition in selectorate, I include *party institutionalization index* (P.I.) that comes from the V-Dem data set. Political parties are the platforms to connect the elites and the masses. The P.I. is reviewed in [Bizzarro et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Rasmussen and Knutsen \(2019\)](#). P.I. consists of several indicators, which capture the various features⁵ of the main parties in a political system.

P.I. enlarges the comparability of party institutionalization for the broadest available set of countries and years from 1900 to the present from 170 countries ([Rasmussen and Knutsen 2019](#), 9). Therefore, this data set is more appropriate for extensive cross-sectional studies, especially for developing countries. In terms of welfare provisions, the institutionalized party can absorb the influence of class coalition on welfare programs since institutionalized parties can be used as a mean of cooptation.

5 The P.I. is the upper-level measurement, which is combined with five lower-level indicators of V-dem. The P.I. is "formed by adding the indicators for party organizations (*v2psorgs*), party branches (*v2psprbrch*), party linkages (*v2psprlnks*), distinct party platforms (*v2psplats*), and legislative party cohesion (*v2pscohesv*), after standardization." ([Bizzarro, Hicken and Self 2017](#), 2)

Control Variables and Benchmark Model

Alongside the critical predictors of interest, I include several variables for which I think there is a particularly strong theoretical rationale for considering as confounders, which are economic and demographic variables traditionally used in the welfare state. First, I control for the GDP (*lnGDP*), defined as the log of Gross Domestic Product per capita (in constant U.S. dollars, base 2011) to account for Wagner's Law. The *lnGDP* is taken from the Maddison Project ([Bolt and van Zanden 2014](#); [Rasmussen and Knutsen 2019](#), 14). Secondly, I include the variables of resource dependency and the log of population (*lnPop*) from [Miller \(2015\)](#) to control the effect of unearned income and the size of population on welfare programs.

I test the hypotheses with an unbalanced, pooled time-series cross-sectional (TSCS) data that cover 95 autocracies, respectively, during the period 1917–2000. TSCS data has the advantage of being able to track the correlation of various variables simultaneously with the differences across units and the longitudinal changes of individual units. However, TSCS data with OLS regression can lead to several problems such as heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation, which produce inefficient estimates.⁶ First, I estimate the models with panel-corrected standard errors to deal with heteroscedasticity problem. [Beck and Katz \(1995\)](#) introduces an econometric technique that uses ordinary least squares (OLS) regression with the lagged dependent variable, unit, and period dummies and calculates panel-corrected standard errors. Next, I include unit dummies (here, state dummies) to control unit-specific varying factors that are difficult to observe and quantify. Also, I manipulate three-period dummies to control exogenous global events that are expected to affect welfare programs such as World War I, II, and the Cold war period.

Possible autocorrelation is another problem to solve. [Beck and Katz \(1995\)](#) suggest to include a lagged dependent variable. However, when models take the lagged dependent variable, the models would estimate the change of the dependent variable, not the levels of the dependent variable. Since this study attempts to trace how the levels of welfare programs in terms of universality vary, I do not include the lagged dependent variable. Instead, following the suggestions of [Plumper, Troeger and Manow \(2005\)](#), I use the Prais–Winsten transformation to deal with

6 Prior to empirical analysis, I test the possible problems of panel-level heteroscedasticity with likelihood ratio tests and of autocorrelation with Wooldridge test. The two tests suggest that both panel-level heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation issues can exist.

the autocorrelation problem, assuming the first-order autocorrelation within panels. Lastly, all explanatory variables are lagged by three years to control for the potential exogenous effects of welfare programs.

Empirical Analysis

Table 1 shows the results of testing the first and the third research hypotheses. Model 1 on the *Universal Index* of *SPaW* data set shows that all classes cover more social groups within regimes compared to the middle class. The working class covers a broader range of social groups to cover with welfare programs than the urban middle class. Model 2 tests the second hypothesis of party institutionalization. When I use *Universal Index* of *SPaW*, party institutionalization does not have statistical significance.

Rasmussen and Knutsen (2019, 16) indicate that party institutionalization can foster universal welfare programs. However, when I test with authoritarian regimes, it is difficult to argue that institutionalized party increases universal welfare programs. Model 3 tests the competing two hypotheses of Model 1 and Model 2 with the dependent variable of *SPaW*. When I control the party institutionalization, the working class and the military have no statistical significance, which implies they are not distinctive from the urban middle class. Otherwise, party elites are still significant that they show broader universal coverage of welfare programs than the urban middle class.

From Model 4 to Model 6, I utilize the *Universal Index* of *V-Dem* as dependent variable. By the operationalized definition, the variable tells how much the delivery of welfare programs lean toward cash-benefits or universalism. If the *Universal Index* of *V-Dem* is greater than 0, then it means the regime has more universal welfare programs for everyone than cash-benefit programs targeting a particular group of people. In Model 4, all classes are not statistically significant compared to the urban middle class. It suggests that the ways to deliver welfare across class coalitions are not distinctive to each other.

As the P.I. show statistically significant regardless of the data sources in (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2019), I disaggregate the P.I. into several indicators to explore these dispersed results. Institutionalized parties under authoritarian rules may not be identical to parties under democ-

Table 1: Class Coalitions, Party Institutionalization and Welfare Universalism

	<i>SPaW</i>			<i>V-Dem</i>		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Party elites	0.956*** (0.218)		0.783*** (0.235)	0.037 (0.027)		0.017 (0.029)
The military	0.403* (0.205)		-0.049 (0.225)	0.019 (0.024)		0.001 (0.030)
Working class	1.042** (0.347)		0.728 (0.401)	-0.028 (0.052)		-0.033 (0.054)
Party Inst.		1.285 (0.882)	1.131 (0.817)		0.673*** (0.135)	0.672*** (0.136)
Ln.Pop.	1.283*** (0.289)	0.885** (0.342)	0.792* (0.325)	0.235*** (0.033)	0.251*** (0.037)	0.251*** (0.037)
Ln.GDPpc	8.196*** (0.579)	8.795*** (0.710)	8.573*** (0.700)	0.718*** (0.051)	0.707*** (0.060)	0.706*** (0.060)
Resource Dep.	-0.016** (0.006)	-0.019** (0.006)	-0.018** (0.006)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
Country Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
WWI Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
WWII Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cold War Dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2571	2174	2174	4146	3535	3535
R^2	0.928	0.929	0.940	0.640	0.706	0.698

Standard errors in parentheses

OLS with panel corrected standard errors. Panel-Corrected Standard Errors reported in parentheses.

Constant, period dummies and country dummies not displayed.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

racies. Figure 4 shows the association between disaggregated P.I. and *Universal Index of V-Dem* under authoritarian regimes when I control class coalitions and other covariates. Unlike the previous work of Rasmussen and Knutsen (2019), three indicators of P.I. show statistical insignificance—*linkage*, *organizations*, and *platforms*. The *branch* and *cohesion* indicators are significant. The last panel of Figure 4 means that authoritarian regimes deliver welfare in the universal way when they have more permanent local branches and more cohesive memberships.

The different findings of Table 1 do not confirm both hypotheses when I concern the influence of alternative explanation. When autocrats make coalitions with the working class, they provide welfare targeting broader social groups than the urban middle class coalitions. However, the institutionalized party, which is considered as an essential mechanism for resource distribution in existing studies, can affect the relationship between class coalitions and universal welfare programs. However, not all aspects of the institutionalized party enhance universal welfare programs. When the parties have more permanent local branches or have more cohesive memberships, authoritarian regimes are more likely to have welfare programs that benefit everyone.

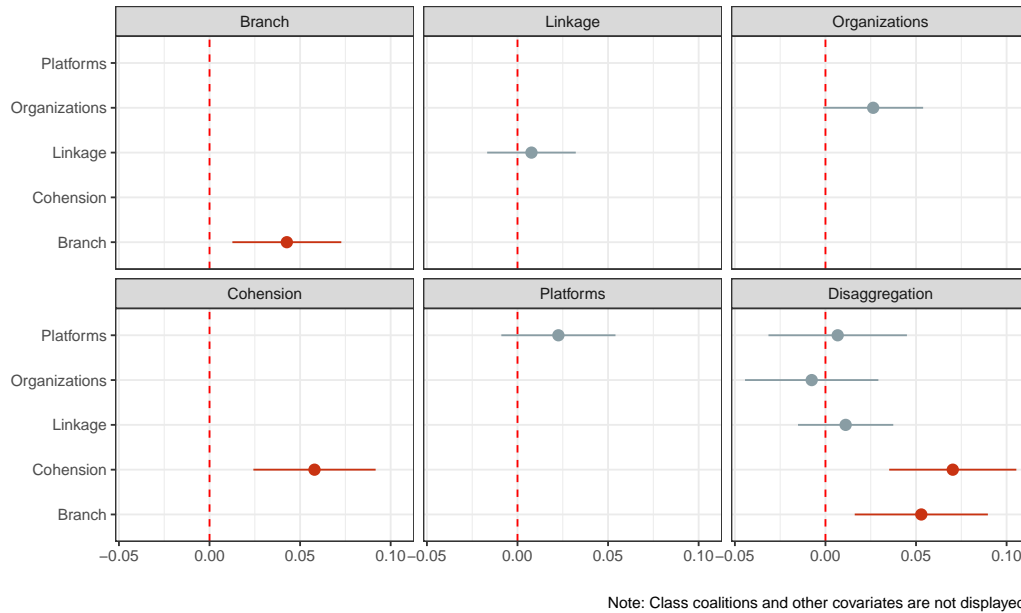


Figure 4: Disaggregated Party Institutionalization and Welfare Universalism (95% C.I.)

To understand the dynamics between the effects of working class coalitions and institutionalized parties in authoritarian regime, I estimate the interaction between working class and party

institutionalization. Figure 5 indicates the effect of working class coalitions are mediated by the levels of party institutionalization. As parties are more institutionalized, an authoritarian regime which builds coalition with working class provides universal welfare when it has more institutionalized parties.

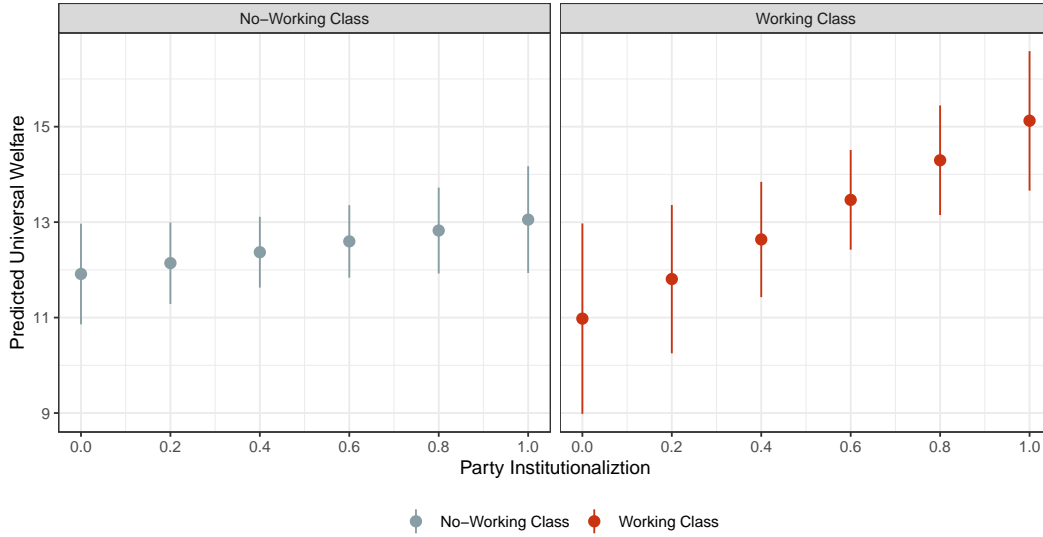


Figure 5: Predicted Universal Welfare of Working Class by Party Institutionalization

Conclusion

This study argues that how universal welfare programs depend on the groups with which autocrats want to make a coalition. The first hypothesis states that the working class drives welfare programs compared to the urban middle class considered as a prominent class affecting the size of the welfare state. Table 1 shows that the first hypothesis is partially confirmed in terms of welfare coverage meaning how many social groups get benefits from the welfare programs. However, the relationship between class coalitions without party elites and welfare universality disappears when I control the party institutionalization. Autocrats consider who to co-opt because it is possible to stay in office through successfully embracing the essential class, but it may matter whether they do so through a party institution.

Class coalitions matter when each class recognizes its distinctive interests and has incentives to achieve the interests. If so, the class, which autocrats should co-opt, can affect the decision-

making of autocrats for resource allocation. The working class, which is relatively poor and large in society, would require autocrats to provide universal welfare programs to foster its condition (Model 1).

However, Figure 5 shows that autocrats can mitigate the threats from classes through specific institutions—*political parties*. Some studies explore the influence of authoritarian legislatures (Jensen, Malesky and Weymouth 2014; Truex 2012) and suggest that autocrats may establish such institutions for controlling and managing potential or possible oppositions in the elites through the institutional way. According to Magaloni (2006), however, institutionalized parties are also utilized for similar purposes. In authoritarian regimes, political parties are not only the machine to mobilize the support of the masses. Political parties can control the flow of information and identify the potential rivals. Hence, when political parties are the platforms that are more closely related to the masses than the legislature in authoritarian regimes, the institutional functions of parties can be applied to the masses. Thus, the influence of the working class, relative to the middle class, may depend on party strength.

Figure 4 shows that not all aspects of institutionalized parties contribute to improving universal welfare programs. They do if they have permanent local branches and have cohesive memberships. It implies that autocrats can reshape the relationship between the supporters and themselves using institution—parties. Rasmussen and Knutsen (2019) presume that institutionalized parties will lead states to establish extensive welfare states, but it is not necessary.

This study has several limitations in terms of measurements and unobservable factors of authoritarian regimes. However, most of the studies on authoritarian regimes face the issue of data availability. Under the limitations, this preliminary analysis provides several implications. First, it requires us to revisit what constraints the choices of autocrats, and how autocrats try to overcome it. Second, it should be cautious that setting a single continuum to evaluate both democracy and authoritarian regimes can overlook significant variations within it.

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