



Life after dictatorship: Authoritarian successor parties worldwide

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admissions. One need not categorically condemn disengagement policies to conclude that, combined together into one grand strategy, such measures appear to embody what Schmidt describes as the “prince who believes that walls can make him secure against invading foreigners.”

From a careful analysis of a classic texts, *Reading Politics with Machiavelli* derives thought-provoking ideas that destabilize our conception of democratic politics. It is recommended for readers seeking a deeper understanding of Machiavelli, as well as those interested in U.S. politics generally. Schmidt places his own analysis of Machiavelli’s words in the broader academic discourse by referencing the interpretations of other outstanding scholars such as Hanna Pitkin and Louis Althusser. It is also an excellent aid to contemplation of issues in U.S. politics ranging from neo-liberalism, to money and politics, to the war on terror to racial injustice, offering an alternative perspective in a time when intellectual discourse is more dominated by quantitative social science than the works of the great political philosophers.

Notes

1. Roland J. Schmidt, Jr., *Reading Politics with Machiavelli* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 35.
2. *Ibid.*, 50.
3. *Ibid.*, 104.

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Life after dictatorship: Authoritarian successor parties worldwide, edited by James Loxton and Scott Mainwaring, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018, 430 pp.

It could be intuitively posited that a newly democratic state would be highly motivated to shed all vestiges of its authoritarian past in order to demonstrate its change in nature. However, as noted by James Loxton, Scott Mainwaring, and a list of area-specialist writers in their outstanding *Life after Dictatorship: Authoritarian Successor Parties Worldwide*, this is not the case. Rather, traces of authoritarian pasts often live on in democratic states through the presence of “authoritarian successor parties”—parties that emerge from authoritarian regimes but operate after a transition to democracy. While it may be tempting to cast off an authoritarian successor party holding power as a simple democratic deficit, this volume paints a much more nuanced picture. Rather than representing odd outliers, authoritarian successor parties have been prominent in three quarters of third-wave democracies and returned to power through democratic means in over half of all third-wave democracies. Thus, they are an integral part of the modern, global democratic landscape.

Much research and work has been devoted to analyzing individual authoritarian successor parties by area experts. But the links that bind these parties together have been mostly overlooked. While authoritarian successor parties have been analyzed in detail, the global phenomena of “authoritarian successor parties” has not. Therefore, this work breaks new ground in furthering a dialogue on this often-ignored aspect of democracies across the globe. In doing so, it introduces a valuable lexicon that will continue to shape this conversation for years to come, such as *authoritarian inheritance*, *authoritarian baggage*, and *double-edged*.

Life after Dictatorship begins with a discussion on why authoritarian successor parties often achieve electoral success within a democratic system. It attributes these parties’ successes to inheriting useful attributes from their authoritarian forbearers, a process that Loxton and Mainwaring have termed authoritarian inheritance—specifically well-known party brands, established territorial organizations, existing clientelist networks, reliable sources of finance, and an inherent sense of party cohesion. However, while some parties receive these positive authoritarian inheritances, others possess negative associations with the past, termed by Loxton and Mainwaring as *authoritarian baggage*. The amount of authoritarian inheritance versus authoritarian baggage assumed by any given party can typically be determined by the performance and nature of the prior authoritarian regime, the performance of the new democracy, the nature of the democratic transition, the strength of electoral institutions, and the competitive environment in which the authoritarian successor party operates.

Parties that possess high levels of authoritarian baggage must properly manage their relationship with history in order to maintain relevance and achieve success. And even authoritarian successor parties that possess more inheritance than baggage are almost always forced to address issues pertaining to past regime abuses. To this end, authoritarian successor parties have employed a variety of strategies for dealing with unpleasant aspects of their pasts, including contrition, obfuscation, scapegoating, embracing the past, or a combination of these tactics. How these parties react to their pasts, and the presence of these parties more generally, has a major impact on the democratic development of their societies. Loxton and Mainwaring have described this impact being double-edged, as it can either strengthen or weaken democracy. It can be detrimental to democracy by hindering processes of transitional justice, propping up vestiges of authoritarian rule, or triggering an authoritarian regression. However, it also has the potential to strengthen democracy by promoting party-system institutionalization, incorporating potential spoilers into the democratic system, and encouraging transitions to democracy in neighboring countries by demonstrating to authoritarian elites that they can play a role in their countries’ democratic future.

Life after Dictatorships: Authoritarian Successor Parties Worldwide is an insightful and engaging book whose impact will continue to be felt for years to come. By approaching the study of authoritarian successor parties as a global phenomenon, rather than focusing on an isolated case, this work makes significant progress in constructing a useful framework for analyzing democratic transitions and the societies emerging from them. The depth and detail of this book’s analysis on such a wide-ranging topic could only be achieved by a team of superb scholars, each possessing a unique specialty in one region of the world. Together, they have produced a volume of tremendous value.

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