Democracy and Autocracy

Vol. 18(2) June 2020

"Economic Shocks and Authoritarian Stability"

Democracy and Autocracy Section
American Political Science Association

Published by the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED), University of Michigan

IN THIS ISSUE

What Does Not Kill Us Makes Us Stronger: Will the Pandemic Economic Crisis Weaken or Strengthen Autocrats?

Guest Editor's Introduction

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The world is living through a unique challenge to its political and economic system. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken hundreds of thousands of lives across the world and cleaned the smog over its major cities. It has also tested the ability of governments and societies to deal with a sudden complex crisis that has left no country untouched and no person unaffected. Such crises may present opportunities for growth, but they first reveal social vulnerabilities and exacerbate political tensions.

How will the current economic crisis affect authoritarian regimes? Will being insulated from popular demands help them to navigate it? Or will the crisis weaken them because the autocrats' ability to buy loyalty and repress diminishes as their economic resources decline? In recent decades, social scientists have developed a nuanced understanding of the relationship between authoritarian regimes and the economy. Scholars have examined autocrats' failure and survival during various economic shocks, debated the effect of abundant natural resources on regime dynamics, and explored how economic redistribution has allowed some autocrats to secure their population's loyalty (see, for example, Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Wintrobe 1998; Magaloni 2006; Heydemann 2007; Haber and Menaldo 2011; Ross 2015; Albertus, Fenner, and Slater 2018).

This issue of the *Democracy and Autocracy* newsletter is an invitation to think about the possible effects of the current economic crisis on authoritarian regimes. The contributions are based on *Economic Shocks and Authoritarian Stability*, edited by Victor Shih and just published by the University of Michigan Press as part of the WCED Book Series. Its authors explore cases as diverse as Russia, Iran, Jordan, GDR, Bulgaria, and Cuba to consider the factors that conditioned the impact of past economic crises on authoritarian regimes and may affect the autocrats' response to the current crisis.

Victor Shih's introduction advances a common framework based on three factors—crisis duration, regime control over financial institutions and the institutions of the ruling party—whose interaction shaped the impact of economic crises on authoritarian regimes. Drawing on the book's case studies, he shows how different configurations of these factors alter the likelihood of subsequent regime outcomes: the maintenance of status quo, coalition change, or regime breakdown.

Other contributions examine how these and other factors worked together in individual cases. Martin Dimitrov emphasizes the importance of a population's expectations about the level of continued material provision for the collapse or survival of communist regimes. Sean Yom highlights the interaction of domestic and international factors, such as ethnic divisions and foreign aid, in ensuring the stability of Jordan's regime. Kevan Harris examines the ways in which state control over Iran's financial system allowed the regime to cushion the economic shock of foreign sanctions.

Three additional contributions in this newsletter discuss Russia and the historical record of Vladimir Putin's regime in dealing with economic crises. Natalia Lamberova and Daniel Treisman argue that Putin has been able to fare well during past crises due to the regime's initial high popularity and the country's large savings account filled by oil revenues in the 2000s, as well as the regime's increasing use of propaganda in domestic politics. Samuel A. Greene and Graeme Robertson then review Chris Miller's *Putinomics: Power and Money in Resurgent Russia*, and Miller reviews their *Putin v. The People: The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia*. These reviews are followed by authors' responses. The reviews and responses discuss how economic and socio-cultural factors intertwined to maintain the social basis of Putin's power.

For Vladimir Putin, the current crisis is a truly unique challenge. Consistent with the ideas of the contributors, my own research suggests that the character of social expectations plays a large role in Putin's ability to navigate crises. I studied state-society relations in Russian regions that differed with respect to their electoral support for Putin after the 2008-2009 financial crisis and, as I found out, in how people viewed the state. In regions where the regime's position was the strongest, the state was viewed as the only legitimate leader of collective action. People easily cooperated with various state-led initiatives and recognized its right to impose regulations on individuals for the sake of the collective good—but they also expected it to guarantee collective security.

This model fits well not only several Russian regions, but also broader trends in Russian history, in which state leadership has always played an important role (Tsygankov 2014). It also suggests that Putin's earlier successes were due not only to oil revenues and their strategic redistribution, but also to Russia's centuries-long statist tradition. Even when they were unhappy with the state's performance, Russians have often failed to organize against the state, as many of them viewed opposition politicians as driven by their private interests. The expectation of the state leader being the guarantor of collective security, featuring both economic and political elements, has provided Putin with a wide range of tools for navigating domestic and international politics. However, this same expectation may weaken the regime if Putin finds himself unable to pose as the successful defender of the nation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced exactly this danger. In contrast to other situations, the virus cannot easily be blamed on western countries' desire to harm Russia. Moreover, economic hardship imposed by the pandemic across all of the country's social groups and classes is much more severe than anything Vladimir Putin has had to deal with during his time in power. The image of the leader of the nation, which Putin worked so hard to create (Wengle and Evans 2018), now becomes a liability, and creates a window of opportunity for the political opposition. Alexey Navalny, the leader of this opposition, has already demanded massive economic relief measures, and this demand will likely resonate with different population groups as the crisis unfolds. In the view of the Russian public, Vladimir Putin has clearly failed to lead the nation's response to the crisis. Public opinion polls conducted in March 2020 show that, for the first time ever, his popular approval has fallen below the average approval of Russian governors, many of whom took the initiative in fighting the pandemic (Levada-Center, n.d.). Although I do not expect the pandemic crisis to cause a sudden regime breakdown, Putin's failure to live up to the population's expectations he himself nurtured will likely accelerate the political maturation of Russian society, which has already been ongoing over the past few years.

The Russian case also illustrates two broader lessons. First, as Victor Shih points out, scholars should not think about the outcomes for authoritarian regimes in a binary way (breakdown or survival); rather, economic crises may lead to changes within the regime that have important downstream consequences. Second, as Sam Greene and Graeme Robertson show, together with the strategies of autocrats, we should also pay attention to the changes that take place in society. Economic crises may stimulate the growth of new forms of civil society networks and mobilization, which will add to the challenge autocrats face.

We hope you enjoy the issue, and please, stay safe!

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The COVID-19 Shock and Authoritarian Stability

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As the COVID-19 epidemic ravages the global economy, the world's authoritarian regimes, which still govern over two billion people, are also undergoing the greatest crisis most have faced since at least the 2008 financial crisis. Even before this exogenous economic shock, economic hardship and societal changes have strained some well-established regimes. Syria has been mired in a bloody civil war since 2011, while Iran saw its first nation-wide protest in years in early 2018. Protests also became increasingly common in Russia with Putin's popular support declining. According to the IMF, COVID-19 will lead to negative economic growth for the vast majority of developing countries, especially states reliant on oil revenue (International Monetary Fund 2020). From May of 2019 to May 2020, Brent crude prices fell by 50% while an OPEC and Russia agreement in April 2020 led to a 10 million barrel per day cut in crude production among the signatories, many of which are authoritarian (Reed 2020). The price change and production cut together represent over 300 million USD in revenue contraction per day for oil states. If prices remain depressed, oil states collectively stand to lose 100 billion USD in oil revenue over the course of one year. How will authoritarian oil states such as Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, as well as regimes subsidized by oil states such as Cuba and Jordan, survive this economic shock? What about export-oriented authoritarian regimes dependent on healthy global demand?

The Role of Crisis Duration, Financial Control, and Political Institutionalization

During periods of hardship, authoritarian regimes face potential instability because members of the existing ruling coalition suffer (and anticipate further) welfare losses that force them to consider alternatives. Meanwhile, previously quiescent masses may consider collective uprisings a worthwhile gamble in the face of declining standard of living and possible elite splits (Acemoglu & Robinson 2006). In response to such stresses, the incumbent regimes will marshal existing institutions, both economic and political ones, to survive the period of hardship (Haggard & Kaufman 1995). In *Economic Shocks and Authoritarian Stability: Duration, Financial Control, and Institution*, published in the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED) series by the University of Michigan Press, contributors examine how eleven regimes either survived economic shocks or were ultimately overwhelmed by them (Shih 2020).[1]

Departing from the existing transition literature, *Economic Shocks* looks beyond the status quo/ authoritarian collapse dichotomy and adds a change in support coalition as a potential outcome to be able to capture the dynamics of regimes' reactions. Grappling with economic hardship, most rulers in the countries examined in the volume--Iraq, Bulgaria, East Germany, Russia, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, Jordan, and Iran—had to radically change their support coalitions or fell from power. By changing support coalitions, we mean that the ruling regime adjusts the flow of benefits and access to power of the existing winning coalitions, whose support is crucial to the survival of the regime (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). Formerly favored constituencies suddenly find themselves with substantially diminished benefits. Other members of ruling coalitions or even those formerly outside of them may obtain greater benefits even after the onset of economic downturns. By adjusting the flow of benefits and power to the support coalitions, authoritarian rulers hope to enhance their ability to survive economic shocks. Of course, if shocks were too severe or if adjusting the support coalition fails to galvanize sufficient support for the incumbents, the authoritarian leadership or the entire regime may fall from power still.

Having identified three important outcomes during economic shocks—no change to the status quo, a change in support coalition, and regime change—this volume departs from the existing literature's focus on static institutional features and hones in on the dynamic challenge of economic shocks and regime responses. When economic shocks put authoritarian regimes under duress, these cases suggest that the interaction among the duration of the shock, regime control over financial institutions, and institutions of the ruling party had an impact on whether these regimes maintained the status quo, changed their support coalitions, or fell from power.

As Table 1 reveals, ours is by no means a deterministic argument. Instead, our cases reveal that the presence or absence of these three crucial variables make certain outcomes more probable along a continuum. The three variables in question at times interacted to substantially increase or decrease the probability of a coalition change or regime collapse. For example, where the shock was a short one and the regime had both a strong party and strong control over the financial system, the status quo was the expected outcome. However, where the crisis persisted or where party institutionalization or control over the financial system was weaker, the likelihood of coalition change increased. To be sure, this volume omits cases of short shocks where the ruling party was weak, but an instructive case may be Russia in 1999, just after a relatively short-lived financial crisis. Although Russia was a weak democracy in the late 1990s, an increasingly ill Yeltsin felt that he needed a strong deputy to help him navigate the political maelstrom after the crisis. He thus nominated Putin, a man with well-known KGB ties, to the premiership in 1999, and in so doing fundamentally altered the internal balance of his support coalition (Gessen 2012). A leader governing a country with a stronger degree of institutionalization or greater financial resources may not have needed to appoint a shadowy subordinate.

Table 1: The Relationship among the Duration of Shock, Regime Control Over the Financial System, Party Institutionalization, and Regime Outcomes (Cases in Parenthesis)

	Strong Party/ Strong Control Over Finance	**Strong Party/ Weak Control Over Finance**	**Weak Party / Strong Control Over Finance**	**Weak Party /Weak Control Over Finance**
Short Shocks	Status quo (China 2008-9, Taiwan 1973, Malaysia 1998)	Coalition Change/ Regime Change (Indonesia 1998)	Status quo/ Coalition Change	Coalition Change / Regime Change
Prolonged Shocks	Status quo/ Coalition change (Iran 1980s, Iraq 1991-2003, Russia post-2014, China post-2015)	Coalition Change/ Regime Change (Eastern bloc states 1990, Malaysia post-2010)	Coalition Change (Iran post-2006)	Regime Change/ Coalition Change (Jordan 1990s)

When a regime with little control over its financial system and minimal mobilization capacity confronts a prolonged economic shock, it faces a high likelihood of regime change in the absence of substantial external aid (Table 1). To be sure, even at the extremes, our predictions are probabilistic rather than deterministic. For example, even facing prolonged periods of downturns in oil prices, Jordan, a monarchy without a ruling party, still survived with the help of external aid, as Yom points out. On the other end of the spectrum, regimes that directly controlled major financial

1 Contributors to the volume include Lisa Blaydes, Martin Dimitrov, Kevan Harris, Natalia Lamberova, Daniel Treisman, Tom Pepinsky, Dan Slater, Joseph Wong, Sean Yom, and Victor Shih.

institutions and engineered positive balance of payment stood a good chance of surviving most forms of economic shocks.

More institutionalized regimes are typically more robust. As much of the literature has pointed out, a strong ruling party or governing pact credibly distributed resources to core members of support coalitions, and the typically pyramidal structure of authoritarian parties provided incentive for party members to maintain the status quo even when short-term payoffs were reduced (Magaloni and Kricheli 2010; Brownlee 2007; Svolik 2012; Magaloni 2006; Nathan 2003; Geddes 1999; Slater 2010). Our cases on China, Taiwan, and Malaysia show that one-party states or dominant-party states possessed greater capacity to coordinate elite action during crises. More important, the institutionalization of the ruling party allowed regimes to distribute the pain associated with economic shocks without defection from these regimes due to expectation of future payoffs from promotions within the ruling parties. The case of the oil shock in Taiwan, written by Joseph Wong, demonstrates that the KMT was able to impose costs on state-owned enterprises without too much resistance, because senior managers of these SOEs were also party cadres. A strong one-party state often had tight media control, which allowed them to shape popular perception of a crisis via propaganda. The cases of China, Malaysia, and Russia shared this pattern.

Still, these institutional factors much more strongly shape outcomes in the cases of short economic shocks than prolonged ones. If core regime supporters cannot see an end to the sharp contraction in regime resources after one fiscal cycle, they may find it worthwhile to explore alternative ruling coalitions due to high discount rates on the future benefits of the status quo political system. The costs of governance also increase due to rising popular protests, which further discounts expected payoffs of key supporters of the regime. The leaders of regimes during prolonged crises likewise realize that they have to make some tough choices on reducing benefits to regime supporters, because the economic resources previously available to the regime have shrunken substantially, and no end is in sight. In order to maintain the solvency of the regime, benefits have to be cut, or the regime would need new sources of revenue. When confronted with the harsh reality of drastically reduced benefits and heightened risks of uprisings, some regimes, including Indonesia in 1998 and East Germany and Bulgaria in the late 1980s, just collapsed due to defection by core members of the support coalitions.

Finally, cases in our volume suggest that regimes' control over financing is a crucial variable in determining their robustness in the face of shocks. This control has two main facets: the regime's direct control over major financial institutions, and its reliance on external funds via external debt, aid, or commodities export. Direct control over major financial institutions meant that authoritarian leaders could order major financial institutions to enact policies detrimental to the interests of major social groups or even of key regime supporters in order to provide these regimes with additional financial resources during economic downturns. It is similar to the notion of insulated policy making often considered a key to economic reform (Nelson 1995; Haggard 2000a); here, though, changes enacted by authoritarian regimes often entailed even heavier state intervention in the financial markets.

Control over the financial sector allowed regimes to mitigate the negative impact of economic shocks in two ways. First, regimes can deploy financial resources toward fiscal expenditure to smooth consumption of elite insiders and even the population to minimize discontent. As the Shih chapter in the volume reveals, the Chinese Communist Party simply ordered the banks to lend trillions of RMB to investment projects in late 2008, which brought Chinese growth rates back to double digits by the end of 2009. The massive expenditure immediately ended expectations of "hard times," thus preserving the status quo even amidst a global economic recession. Wong's case on Taiwan and the Treisman and Lamberova case on Russia display similar patterns. Second, strict control over the financial system also prevented large-scale capital flight from occurring, which lessened the likelihood of external defaults, currency devaluation, and high inflation (Reinhart and Rogoff 2009). The Pepinsky contribution in this volume shows that Malaysia's ability to largely stifle capital flight allowed the ruling UMNO government to avoid the worst outcomes of the crisis. The ability to prevent large-scale capital flight likely increased regimes' ability to survive economic shocks. But again, the state's autonomous control over the financial sector harmed private sector interests, which no doubt would have preferred to move their wealth offshore to safe havens during global crises.

However, direct control of domestic financial institutions may not be sufficient if reliance on foreign funds was high on the eve of a shock. If, like East Germany described in the Dimitrov chapter or Jordan in the 1970s described in the Yom chapter, the regime relied on external credit for a large part of the state budget and consumption, the sudden withdrawal of such credit would cause a sharp contraction in fiscal expenditure, regardless of regime control of key financial institutions. The case of the GDR suggests that even where one-party dictatorships controlled all the major domestic institutions, financial stability was elusive. The Blaydes contribution on Iraq also demonstrates that although the government had firm control over financial institutions, US-imposed sanctions after the First Gulf War drastically reduced the inflow of foreign exchange, which Iraq heavily depended upon to import food. The reduction in oil revenue immediately necessitated severe rationing, which triggered political instability. In Jordan, as the Yom chapter details, weak control over the financial system due to high dependence on external funding forced the regime to reduce benefits to traditional stakeholders of the regime soon after the fall of oil prices.

Regime control over financial institutions likely had differential impact under disparate types of crises. Control over financial institutions likely helped regimes during financial crises because such control could minimize the two biggest threats to financial stability, capital flight and a domestic credit crunch. Firm control of financial institutions likely increased the common expectation of a brief crisis, which already was common for financial crises (Reinhart & Rogoff 2009). In contrast, in a longer duration exogenous shock, such as a fundamental shift in oil prices or a determined economic sanction, elites may realize, after a while, that the state was increasingly indebted to foreign creditors or that the state would be plagued by persistent deficits and ballooning debt for some time to come. Such persistent shortfalls likely raised elite supporters' willingness to defect from the ruling coalition, which compelled the dictators to reduce the size of the winning coalition. Otherwise, elite defection may snowball into a collapse of the regime. In other words, firm control over financial institutions may matter less for long-lasting commodities shocks or determined economic sanctions. If the current crisis inaugurates a prolonged period of weaker commodities prices, the financial resources accumulated by authoritarian oil states may be depleted after a year or two, raising doubt on the longevity of some previously robust regimes.

The COVID-19 Shock

This inductive framework may help scholars and policy makers think about how authoritarian regimes may respond to the COVID-19 crisis. To begin, the duration of the accompanying economic shock likely will persist beyond 2020, making it a medium to long term shock. Given the duration of the shock, many, if not all, authoritarian regimes are confronting drastically reduced resources which force them to reduce the flow of benefits to core regime supporters. China, for example, is now only providing "basic salary" to grassroots level civil servants, although front-line medical and security workers have received pay bonuses (Xinhua 2020). Other regimes may try to convince external partners to help limit potential losses to their revenue. With the help of the US, Russia brokered an agreement with OPEC which helped stabilize global crude prices (Reed 2020). Although these adjustments to the composition of and expenditure on the support coalition help stave off the current insolvency, they may escalate political risks in the short term. The Blaydes chapter in this volume on Iraq after the First Gulf War reveals that welfare reduction instituted after the US-imposed sanctions led to an increase in assassination attempts against Saddam Hussein. For the opposition to some regimes, knowing that regime insiders are disgruntled about their reduced payoffs may make the gamble of an open confrontation against the regime a worthwhile one. These two dynamics may well introduce some degree of instability to oil-dependent authoritarian regimes.

The framework outlined above suggests that weakly institutionalized regimes without financial autonomy may well see destabilizing defection of core regime supporters from the status quo ruling coalition during the COVID-19 crisis. This is especially likely if external patrons of these regimes are themselves suffering from economic losses which force them to reduce financial aid to these regimes. The withdrawal of external aid may trigger sudden defection by core regime supporters which brings about the collapse of these regimes. Meanwhile, regime institutionalization likely provides some regimes such as China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba with additional capacity both to control the disease and to weather the economic fallouts.

Meanwhile, for a medium to long duration crisis, ownership of financial institutions may be less important, while the ability to maintain a positive balance of payments might be more important in regime survival. For authoritarian oil states, if the demand for oil and other commodities enters into a prolonged slump, the benefits flowing to regime supporters will be reduced, for some even precipitously, as the balance of payments in these countries deteriorates. For some of these supporters, becoming a part of the opposition may promise higher medium-term benefits, especially if doing so allows the new government to receive greater international financial aid.

For other authoritarian states, their greater capacity to export technology goods may prevent a precipitous fall in the balance of payments, but benefits flowing to regime insiders will still enter a prolonged slump. For these regimes, their ability to prevent sizable capital flight and internal policing capacity will make the difference between staying in power and losing power. For democracies also grappling with deep economic woes, they must resist the impulse to lash out blindly and guard against authoritarian influence activities which seek to make democracies witting and unwitting collaborators with authoritarian survival strategies.

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Economic Shocks and Communist Regime Survival and Collapse

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In a recently published essay (Dimitrov 2020), I argued that economic shocks can contribute to the collapse of communist regimes. My essay analyzed four countries that had experienced a sudden deterioration of preferential trade with the Soviet Union, which was their main trading partner during the Cold War. In two of the cases (the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria) this economic shock contributed to collapse, but in the other two (China and Cuba) it had no such effect.

Two factors explain the differential outcomes. First, because it had not established a welfare dictatorship, China was shielded from popular expectations for costly subsidies of goods and services that were financed through preferential trade with the Soviet Union. Second, high degrees of nationalism in Cuba created a powerful domestic source of regime support that was not directly related to economic performance. The present short piece first reviews the argument about the historical cases, and then turns to a pressing question: how might the economic shocks of the current COVID-19 pandemic impact regime stability in the two countries that proved resilient to losing their main trading partner during the Cold War?

Welfare Dictatorships

A standard interpretation is that communist regimes, which are understood as "shortage economies" (Kornai 1980), do not aim to satisfy the consumption preferences of the population (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1965), ruling instead by repressing the masses and rewarding members of the selectorate (Bueno de Mesquita 2003). This received wisdom was challenged by early scholarship that emphasized the decline in repression in post-Stalinist regimes (Dallin and Breslauer 1970), as well as by subsequent studies of the social contract, which argued that citizens would remain quiescent for as long as the regime provided them with stable access to jobs, housing, welfare benefits, and importantly, consumer goods (Cook 1993). The collapse of communist regimes led to an archival revolution that allowed scholars to assess the validity of arguments about centrally-planned economies that were developed without access to primary regime-generated sources. Recent archival studies have confirmed the insights of the earlier literature concerning the importance that communist regimes attached to satisfying the consumption preferences of the population (Betts 2010; Bren and Neuburger 2012). Research on welfare dictatorships has thus validated Václav Havel's astute observation that late socialism involved "the coming together of a dictatorship and a consumer society" (Havel 1979, 71).

Welfare dictatorship (*Fürsorgediktatur*) (Jarausch 1998) may stabilize communist governance in the short run, but it also carries long-term risks. The system eventually becomes so costly that it can bring regimes to the brink of bankruptcy. The capacity of single-party communist regimes of the 20th century to satisfy costly social spending commitments and economically debilitating subsidies aimed at maintaining consumer price stability depended on preferential trade with the Soviet Union, which was essential for making the system viable. The collapse of that trade, together with the inability to borrow money in international markets, have threatened the existence of these regimes. China survived the split with the Soviet Union in the late 1950s because the absence of a welfare dictatorship meant that there was no popular discontent as a result of frustrated expectations about social spending. In contrast, such expectations existed in Bulgaria and the GDR, where mass compliance was based entirely on performance legitimacy, thus leading to widespread discontent when welfare provision deteriorated. These two countries illustrate the importance of relative expectations: in Bulgaria, the impact of the crisis was more severe than in the GDR, but the Bulgarian protests were smaller than the German because of more modest relative expectations. Finally, the case of Cuba, where anti-American nationalism bolstered the Castro brothers in the 1990s, demonstrates that welfare dictatorships with a strong ideological foundation may survive a prolonged economic crisis, especially when they open the exit option by permitting emigration. Collectively, these four cases allow us to understand what variables condition the impact of external economic shocks on the survival of communist regimes with centrally-planned economies.

The German Democratic Republic (GDR)

In the aftermath of the June 1953 worker uprising, and especially after the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the East German population came to expect a growing set of entitlements and an expanding range of consumer goods. The seriousness with which the leadership took these expectations is highlighted by the fact that the East German Ministry of State Security (the Stasi) spent most of 1977, which was an otherwise "normal" year (Allinson 2009), trying to solve the "coffee shortage crisis" that had befallen the country (Bispinck 2012). The Stasi was also involved in securing the goods that were sold both in the Intershop/Genex chains (which operated with hard currency) and the Delikat/Exquisit shops, where one could use GDR-Marks to buy hard-to-find domestic and imported goods (Judt 2013).

The eventual inability of the regime to satisfy the consumption preferences of the public was closely connected to the decline in Soviet subsidies. The GDR had come to rely on access to cheap raw materials (primarily oil and gas) that were traded at sub-market Commonwealth for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) prices. Until 1980, two-thirds of East German trade was conducted with the Soviet Union and other COMECON countries. By 1989, the Soviet Union accounted for only 22% of GDR imports and 23.8% of its exports, while the EU had emerged as the main trading partner for the GDR. This reorientation of trade reflected a gradual reduction of Soviet oil shipments, which began in 1981 (Schürer 2014, 458-477). The decline was so severe that shipments in 1989 were equivalent to those of 1978, and this decreased oil supply deprived the East German regime of the means to satisfy the ever-increasing consumption expectations of the population.

As Soviet oil imports declined, the GDR's leadership turned to Western lenders to finance the expensive welfare state that it had created. Although the cumulative debt burden was relatively low (at 40 billion Deutschmarks, it was equivalent to only about 16% of East German GNP), as a top-secret report prepared by the Chairman of the State Planning Commission for the Politburo documented, the inability of the GDR to export to the West meant that by 1989 it could not secure any further foreign loans, and was unable to make payments on its existing foreign debt (Schürer 2014). In short, spending on welfare had brought East Germany to the brink of bankruptcy. This information was made available to regime insiders in September 1989 and informed their removal of the incumbent communist leader Erich Honecker on October 18, 1989 (Hertle and Stephan 2012, 103-133).

As a result of the government's inability to satisfy consumer demand, the latent discontent of the population was transformed into overt discontent, most obviously in the massive protests that engulfed East Germany in 1989. This discontent was also manifest in a change in the quantity and structure of citizen petitions, a well-developed mechanism of tracking discontent in East Germany and some other communist regimes. From the public's perspective, the regime had reneged on its commitments under the socialist social contract by failing to deliver the anticipated volume of benefits and consumer goods. As a result, the tenor of complaints became angrier and citizens began to withdraw from the system of citizen petitions. Despite the worsening economic crisis, the only category of petitions that saw a sizeable increase in the late 1980s was requests for permanent exit from the GDR and requests to visit West Germany. This showed that, having witnessed the failure of the regime to deliver on the socialist social contract, previously loyal citizens simply exited the system of citizen complaints and instead joined various opposition groups whose rapid growth in 1987-1989 helped pave the way for the eventual dissolution of the system.

Following the removal of Honecker, the new communist ruling coalition made a desperate attempt to secure Soviet economic assistance. Egon Krenz, the new General Secretary, went on an emergency trip to Moscow on November 1, 1989. Although Gorbachev promised to fulfill the existing Soviet oil shipment obligations, these had been drastically reduced when compared to their levels in the 1970s. Krenz left Moscow knowing that he could not rely on much-needed additional Soviet assistance and that Gorbachev was opposed to his plans to seek emergency aid from the IMF (Krenz 2014, 276). Facing an economic collapse, the entire East German Politburo resigned on December 1, 1989. The end of the welfare dictatorship was also the end of the East German regime.

Bulgaria

Far from being an isolated case, the GDR is paradigmatic of the conditions under which welfare dictatorships emerged, operated, and eventually failed in the Eastern Bloc. Bulgaria experienced similar challenges but more moderate protest activity than the GDR, reflecting differences in relative expectations of economic well-being between the two regimes: after all, East Germans compared their standard of living to that of West Germans; nothing of the kind occurred in Bulgaria, where such comparison would have been unrealistic. As elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc, the rolling out of expansive packages of social benefits in Bulgaria was consistent with citizen preferences, as expressed in complaints sent to the party (Dimitrov 2014). In the late 1960s, the government provided a generous expansion of maternity leaves, engaged in the rapid construction of new housing, and legally sanctioned the private construction and ownership of country homes. The response to complaints also featured a further increase of salaries; support for families (child supplements and subsidies for mothers); attempts to augment the variety of domestic and imported goods offered in stores; an increase in the volume and variety of services; and enhancements in healthcare and education. As the regime itself had promised, "the resolute improvement in the quality of all activities, production, and services is to become the main task in our future socioeconomic and cultural development" (BCP 1983, 13). The reasoning was powerful: "the fulfillment of this task has enormous political, ideological, economic, and social importance for every work unit, for every working man" (BCP 1983, 13). Attempts were also made to provide enough cars, and to thus satisfy the third leg of the socialist consumer dream: an apartment, a villa, and a car. Other concessions that resulted from persistent complaints included an increase in pensions and the attempt to alleviate consumer goods shortages by encouraging private activity.

In the 1980s, however, economic difficulties made the Bulgarian regime unable to answer citizen demands with redistributive concessions. The Information-Sociological Center of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party reported that by 1988, as few as 14.5 percent of all complaints received a favorable resolution, a threefold decline from the early 1980s. The result of this declining effectiveness is not surprising: citizens began to withhold their 'voice' from the system, as they did in the GDR. There was a 50 percent drop in complaints between 1984 and 1988, followed by a further substantial reduction in the volume of complaints in 1989, even at the height of the pre-collapse economic crisis. From the public's perspective, the regime was failing to maintain adequate social spending, and citizens were signaling their perception that the regime had reneged on its policy commitments.

As in the GDR, the collapse of the welfare dictatorship in Bulgaria had been prompted by a decline in Soviet subsidies. Bulgaria was even more dependent on Soviet aid than the GDR, as it conducted 80% of its trade with COMECON. Like the GDR, Bulgaria used Soviet oil to meet domestic demand and to secure foreign currency through re-export. The decline of Soviet oil shipments in the 1980s (these shipments were valued at $2 billion in world prices) led to a rapid accumulation of foreign debt. At $10 billion, the absolute value of the debt was low (about 20% of GNP, comparable to 16% of GNP in the GDR). However, according to a top-secret letter from the Central Bank that was circulated to Politburo members in July 1989, Bulgaria had no further export capacity, and could no longer secure any additional foreign loans or make payments on its existing obligations to the West. An additional letter from the Central Bank to the Politburo in October 1989 reiterated the gravity of the situation. Thus, when regime soft-liners removed the incumbent leader, they did so with the knowledge that the country was facing bankruptcy. To address the crisis, a new communist ruling coalition was installed. However, it could not prevent regime change, which occurred in June 1990 when competitive multi-party elections were held. As in the GDR, the demise of the welfare dictatorship was linked to regime collapse.

China

China presents an important case of a communist regime that, unlike the GDR and Bulgaria, survived the deterioration of trade relations with the Soviet Union, which occurred in the 1960s. The 1950s was a decade of extensive Soviet economic influence in China (Kaple 1994). Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Soviet Union quickly assumed the status of main trade partner. In 1950 it accounted for 29.8% of Chinese trade; just four years later, this share had increased to 56.9% (Lu 2008). The U.S. embargo that had been imposed in 1951 further elevated the importance of the relationship with the Soviet Union (Shu 2014, 21-96). The situation, however, changed in the 1960s. Soviet trade quickly collapsed, from 39.8% of trade volume in 1958, to 29.8% in 1961, and eventually to just one percent of all trade in 1970 (Lu 2008; Hu 2015, 88). The Sino-Soviet split, which occurred in the midst of the Great Leap Famine, had a considerable economic impact, raising the question of how China survived such a rapid deterioration of trade with its main trade partner.

In contrast to Eastern Europe, the absence of comprehensive nationwide social spending commitments meant that the regime was shielded from popular discontent in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split. Under Mao, the social contract covered only a portion of urban residents working for government offices and state-owned enterprises: for example, in Shanghai, the city with the most extensive coverage in China, only 51% of the workforce (21% of the population) received welfare coverage in 1960 (Dillon 2015, 264). Coverage was even lower in other urban areas, and did not extend to rural residents, who did not enjoy the package of labor insurance and cradle-to-grave welfare benefits that were accorded to privileged urban workers.

China survived the Sino-Soviet split because it had not made commitments to universal welfare provision, and could not be held accountable by the masses for a failure to sustain high levels of social spending. Neither the redistributive- nor the information-gathering institutions that are essential for the effective operation of a welfare dictatorship existed in China in the 1950s. What the Maoist regime focused on was the tracking and suppressing of politically motivated dissent (Dimitrov 2017, 122), not on collecting information about the consumer preferences of the masses by analyzing letters of complaint, as did the GDR and Bulgaria. The Chinese regime under Mao survived not by paying attention to citizen needs but by wielding repression. The institutions for assessing popular preferences were not established on a nationwide scale at any point prior to Tiananmen. Thus, it was only after the system-destabilizing anti-regime protests of 1989 that rulers became sensitized to the importance of monitoring latent discontent.

Cuba

Cuba represents another case of regime survival. Unlike China, though, it *did* make welfare commitments, but it was able to counteract reneging on them with nationalism and thus avoid regime collapse. Cuba began to build a welfare dictatorship in the 1960s when it guaranteed universal access to foodstuffs through the *libreta de abastecimientos* (supplies booklet) public distribution system. The trigger was an external shock in the form of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the imposition of sanctions by the United States. Welfare provision was understood as a mechanism for building popular support. It was expanded in the 1970s, following Cuba's entry into COMECON in 1972.

Similar to other communist countries, the Cuban regime relied on trade with the Soviet Union to finance its welfare dictatorship, and was threatened in the face of the collapse of that trade. By 1983, the Soviet Union accounted for 68.3% of Cuba's imports and 70% of its exports. Cuba exported sugar at a price that was above market, and imported Soviet oil at a price that was significantly below market. This model came to an abrupt end when Cuba suspended payments on its $10.9 billion debt to the Paris Club in 1986, and the Soviet Union announced that it would use market prices in trading with Cuba in 1990.

The collapse of trade with the Soviet Union (and, subsequently, with Russia) ushered in the *período especial* (Special Period), which saw a plummeting of industrial production and living standards for Cubans.

The regime, however, did not implode, for a few reasons. One was that it was able to maintain its ideological legitimacy due to the ongoing U.S. embargo – this stood in sharp contrast to the GDR and Bulgaria. Another was that it used *Granma* (the newspaper of record) to sensitize Cubans to the negative effects of the transition in Eastern Europe: widespread criminality; high unemployment; hyperinflation; and socially destabilizing protests. Cuba also took some pro-active measures, like the toleration of limited private activity and permitting emigration, which provided discontented citizens with an exit option. In addition, Cuba actively cultivated new trade partners – first Venezuela in the 1990s, then China in the 2000s, and Russia in the 2010s. Finally, even if food rations were reduced, other benefits like guaranteed employment, housing, and pensions were preserved. Enough of the welfare state survived to meet the relatively modest expectations of the Cuban population.

COVID-19 and Authoritarian Regime Survival

What relevance do these historical examples have for understanding an issue that presents itself with pressing force today, namely, the impact of COVID-19 on authoritarian durability? We will limit our reflections to China and Cuba, which are the two communist regimes that survived the deterioration of trade relations with the Soviet Union. Will COVID-19 undo them? This currently appears unlikely.

Although China has expanded various types of social protection over the last two decades, it has never developed a comprehensive East European-style welfare state. Currently, 95% of its citizens have access to rudimentary health insurance. Unemployment benefits and old-age pensions have also become much more widespread. However, in contrast to the classic socialist welfare dictatorships, the Chinese government does not subsidize consumer goods and utilities, thus freeing itself from a major burden in times of an economic downturn. The central state could potentially be blamed for a mangled response to COVID-19, but – in contrast to the delayed reaction to SARS in 2003 – the government has moved promptly and efficiently in mitigatng the current outbreak.

In Cuba, where commitments to some vestiges of the socialist welfare dictatorship persist, the state has used official media to send a message to all citizens that subsidized goods will continue to be provided through the public distribution system; that employment guarantees apply for those who are temporarily furloughed (*Granma*, April 16, 2020, p. 8 and April 18, 2020, p. 8); and that free, high-quality healthcare will continue to be provided. The last point – crucial in the time of COVID-19 – is also made in the form of citizen letters published in the very popular section entitled *Cartas a la Dirección* (Letters to the Editor) of *Granma*, the Central Committee's official newspaper. Whereas before the current health crisis, less than 2% of those letters focused on medical matters (Dimitrov 2019, 9), currently all published letters praise the valor of Cuban doctors fighting the virus (*Granma*, April 24, 2020, p. 2). The overall message is clear: the government cares for its citizens. Surviving this crisis is also a matter of national pride: Cuba has succeeded in defying numerous threats to its existence in the past; thus, the logic goes, it will survive this challenge as well.

Ultimately, in 1989 the GDR and Bulgaria had leaders who had reneged on their commitments to satisfy the redistributive needs of the population. This is not the case in China and Cuba today, where the communist party elite has thus far appeared to be adept at managing the crisis and concerned about the welfare of its citizens. This bodes well for the long-term capacity of both regimes to survive the shock of COVID-19.

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Monarchism, Fear, and Aid: The Curious Case of Jordan

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A pillar of wisdom within the comparative study of regimes holds that economic crises are the handmaiden of democratic transitions from authoritarian rule. The logic is intuitive: when times get tough, the preferences of citizens shift as the extant system of patronage, repression, and control begins to buckle under tightening resource constraints. Opposition becomes bolder, while within the ruling coalition, supporters splinter into hardliners and defectors, with the latter daring to gamble on the uncertainty of a new regime instead of suffering worsening payoffs in the crumbling one.

However, authoritarian regimes are not completely powerless during economic crises. As new work has shown, many autocracies can absorb intense financial duress if they retain control over economic institutions, and command robust hegemonic parties that can manage dissent through cooptation or repression, while rebalancing their promises to the ruling coalition (Shih 2020). This follows a larger literature that enshrines party organizations as the desiderata of durable dictatorships. Dominant parties can convey credible commitments that assuage restive elites, resolve conflicts among political actors, and redistribute patronage across the regime's base (Smith 2007; Magaloni and Krischeli 2010).

But what if there is no dominant party? So goes politics in the ruling monarchies, that rare subtype of authoritarianism found mostly within the Middle East. In the Arab monarchies, where a dynastic house and its institutional appendages tightly grip the coils of political, economic, and coercive power, kingships do not need to anchor their power in an official party designed to win plebiscitary exercises. Royal legitimacy in states like Jordan stems not from the ideological carapace or political performance of a mobilizing organization; it flows from inheritance and blood, which always trump ballots. These are, in essence, hereditary regimes. However, they are also not immune to the demands of coalitional politics, particularly the need to incorporate elite and mass supporters while suppressing opposition.

Consider the case of Jordan. Jordan's ruling Hashemite monarchy survived the fiscal crisis of the late 1980s, and subsequent IMF-backed neoliberal economic reforms, thanks to two factors. The first was the enduring support of its tribal base. The preference of this coalition for Hashemite rule was laid down in the colonial decades, as rural tribes became reliant upon the patronage distributed by the British-backed regime for survival. Over time, as the demography of the kingdom shifted towards a Palestinian majority, the basis of that loyalty evolved from material dependency to communal fear. For all its financial stumbles, even a flawed Jordanian monarchy presented a better choice of leadership than a democratic regime embodying the preferences of the Palestinian majority, under which the tribal minority would lose its historic status as the pillar of the state.

The second factor was constant Western support. External flows of aid and security support, particularly from the United States after the 1950s, have enabled the Hashemite monarchy to suppress domestic opposition and finance the political economy of its tribal demands. As Jordan supported the vision of regional order advanced by the US and its allies as a client state of Western power, the assistance and sponsorship garnered in return helped its leadership maintain its tribal-oriented strategy of political order at home. The swollen system of jobs, welfarism, and privileges that still secures tribal constituencies to the royal center today would be unsustainable without this external backing. Jordan's coalitional politics thus turns as much on geopolitical factors as it does on domestic determinants.

Tribalism and the State

The origins of coalitional politics in Jordan hark back to the formation of the state itself. From the 1920s onwards, the newly implanted Hashemite monarchy consolidated its rule by tethering the survival of its mostly tribal inhabitants – nomadic and agrarian communities that often faced perilous insecurity – to the provision of state largesse. What Albertus et al. call *enmeshment*, or coercive dependence, encapsulates this dynamic well (Albertus et al. 2018). Early on, the British-funded monarchy secured the support of indigenous mercantilist elites through trade allowances and other commercial concessions, but the tribal populace required a more complicated set of inducements.

Thus, during the 1930s and 1940s, an impressive system of patronage, such as food grants, land titles, tax relief, and public works, entered the most basic routines of tribal life (Tell, 2013, 84-101). Tribal residents not only became Jordanian in a sovereign sense, but their subsistence now depended upon the regime. Tribal leaders became integrated into political life, ensconced in symbolic consultative roles within the royal court or the budding bureaucracy. Even the nascent army, the coercive guardian of royal order, was deployed in this manner, as both its employment and welfarist services transformed the livelihoods of tribal groupings while impressing service to the monarchy.

British subsidies financed much of this new system, with pernicious consequences for state capacity. For instance, the regime never developed extractive capacity to levy adequate taxes, because British funding always alleviated its chronic overspending. Still, by World War Two, a stable coalitional basis for Hashemite rule had crystallized. The provision of patronage in return for political support – that is, bread for loyalty – should ring familiar to theorists of authoritarianism, as it confirmed the generic logic of coalitional transactions between asymmetric actors (Heydemann, 1999). One could zoom through the next 70 years of Jordanian history and generalize about the success of such early enmeshment. Few other regimes in the world can claim that the nucleus of their popular support today has not changed from since the era before television. Yet coalitions are not static, and Jordanian politics in succeeding decades would show how a new mechanism, fear, would further bind tribal preferences to the monarchy.

The personalistic system of monarchist rule constructed a century ago has not drastically changed since, insofar as hereditary succession combined with extreme centralization typifies the distribution of executive power in Jordan. Hashemite kings have always experimented with representative institutions that lacked meaningful authority but still allowed social movements and party organizations to compete (Masalha 1999). However, rare were moments when the king and his retinue drew upon elites representing those popular actors, or who ascended through legislative prominence. Elite recruitment into the bureaucracy, ministries, and royal court always occurred through neopatrimonial relationships, mediated by the political need to give symbolic voice to different supportive groups. As I have argued in a longer treatment, the absence of an overarching ideology or mobilizational infrastructure never impeded the ability of this regime to reach into the sinews of society, and either interpellate or repress the demands of tribal areas in a messy state-building process (Yom, 2020).

Fear and Aid

The redistributive arrangements tying tribalism to the Hashemite center shifted after the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. Among other effects, those conflicts transformed Jordan's demography by adding a new Palestinian majority arriving as refugees and citizens. While currents of dissent and activism had always existed even within tribal communities, this demographic shift amplified regnant political contestation. In the 1950s, for instance, old and new activism converged to produce a legendary wave of leftist party-based opposition (Anderson 2005, 117-146). In 1970, Palestinian militant organizations, which had relocated to Jordan as part of their national struggle, engaged in a costly civil war. During these crises and after, vectors of opposition – workers, activists, students, and ideologues – continued to mobilize for a political system that better enshrined their demands.

While the regime crushed all these challengers, resulting in brutal episodes of martial law, these social conflicts also turned the ruling coalition into an ethnocratic one. Thus, whereas the 1930s through 1940s featured the creation of monarchist tribal bastions fueled by patronage pacts, this period saw the tribal-state bargain harden around fear. That fear operated, much as Dan Slater has argued elsewhere (2010), as an emotive punch convincing many tribal Jordanians that their primary rival was never the state, but instead *other* Jordanians in the form of the Palestinian majority, whose rule would likely eviscerate their privileges and prerogatives. By the 1970s, the Hashemite coalition had morphed into a protection racket, one guided by mutual anxiety between tribe and monarchy about their fates in a Palestinian-run Jordan. As a result, the regime's outlook became highly exclusionary along communal lines, focused as much on excluding Palestinians as it was lavishing its tribal base (Abu Odeh 1999, 190-236).

During the 1970s, the regime embarked on a strategy of integrating tribal Jordanians so deeply into economic and political institutions that it would become almost impossible to imagine a state bereft of their manpower. The imperatives governing Hashemite engagement were stark: embed tribal elites into the regime's political organs; maintain a bloated public sector to employ tribal Jordanians; feed an ever-growing military, police, and intelligence apparatus staffed by those supporters; and preserve an inefficient system of subsidies and subventions to keep tribal communities afloat. Palestinians were second-class citizens, free to commercialize the tiny private sector but without access to any of these ruling political networks.

What facilitated this shift to ethnocracy was external support. Through all of the regime's crises, the US worked to ensure the monarchy's continuity, transferring resources that would not only bolster its confidence to repress but also finance its coalitional overhead. When the monarchy smashed its party-based opposition in April 1957, it did so in close coordination with the Eisenhower administration. As Jordan became a US client state at the height of the Cold War, the impact of American aid was colossal. From April through June 1957, the US delivered over $20 million in emergency cash grants to keep the regime afloat. This was a rounding error in Washington, but lifeblood to a Jordanian treasury that had just $2 million left in its reserves (Yom 2016, 165). Likewise, during Jordan's 1970 civil war, the Nixon administration nudged Israel to ward off Syrian interventions from the north, while transferring fiscal and military aid to replenish Jordan's depleted regime.

This encapsulated a broader pattern of aid dependency, one that continually disincentivized the creation of indigenous extractive capacity in favor of retooling resources received from abroad. In between these crises, profuse assistance from the US, international agencies like the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and like-minded Arab donors such as Saudi Arabia provided the resources necessary to operate Jordan's institutions and statist economy. Unsurprisingly, the overarching motive of all Jordanian foreign policy became aid-seeking (Brand 1995).

Fiscal Crisis

Driven by fear and lubricated by aid, the patronage-*cum*-protection logic underlying Jordanian authoritarianism was tested by the financial crash of the late 1980s, and its aftermath. Precipitated by regional events, economic crisis inaugurated IMF and World Bank interventions, resulting in new austerity measures. Following years of rising inflation and grinding privation, the withdrawal of fuel subsidies in 1989 sparked tribal riots in the worst outbreak of unrest since the 1970 civil war. Afterwards, a return to the statist economics of previous decades was impossible given massive indebtedness and further structural constraints, such as the return of nearly 300,000 Jordanians living in the Gulf kingdoms after the liberation of Kuwait – a punitive measure for King Hussein's surprising alignment with Iraq during that conflict. By the early 1990s, unemployment reached 30 percent and poverty swamped nearly a third of the populace (Le Troquer and Al-Oudat 1999, 40-42).

Tribal discontent would continue to simmer in consequent decades of neoliberal reforms. The effects of this radical shift to neoliberal economics cannot be understated. The hallowed benchmarks of neoliberalism – less public spending, more market competition – were incompatible with the political economy underpinning the tribal-state alliance. In the early 1990s, for instance, most tribal Jordanians were still dependent upon public employment and military service, and their salaries accounted for over half the government budget (Kanaan 1995, 24). However, under King Abdullah, who took power in 1999, the public sector stopped relentlessly absorbing tribal labor, while subsidy spending and other protective measures also began retreating. While Palestinians remained marginalized in politics, this economic reconfiguration deprived tribal supporters of longstanding redistributive entitlements (Baylouny 2008). The regime also narrowed its coalitional profile, tending less to its tribal supporters in favor of new capitalist elites enriched by recent privatization and market openings. While notables from tribal backgrounds continued to dominate the bureaucracy and cabinet, the new technocrats gained the king's ear, auguring a bevy of globalizing initiatives, like Jordan's accession to the WTO (Bank and Schlumberger 2004).

Given all this, it was little surprise that during the 2011-12 Arab Spring, tribal Jordanians – and not just the usual opposition suspects, like Islamists and civil society associations – led raucous demonstrations demanding economic justice and political openness. Many observers suggested that serious cracks had formed in the bedrock of tribal loyalty (Ryan 2018). Yet the political order did not change. This contradicts not only the dominant understanding of how financial meltdowns pummel dictatorships, but also conclusions that such crises are likeliest to orchestrate change within state-dominated economies, where it is easiest to blame rulers for their mistakes (Tang et al. 2017).

In Jordan, none of the warning signs of collapse invoked by alarmists has come to fruition, despite the creeping dislocation and shrinking patronage that have befallen tribal Jordanians. Tribal groupings have not joined forces with conventional opposition in any revolutionary cause; disgruntled military cliques have not conspired to overthrow the monarchy. Further, while the Hashemite regime has incorporated a new echelon of business elites and technocrats into its ranks, it has not broadened its support base to include new voices, such as the Palestinian middle classes that still constitute the single largest social force in the kingdom.

Instead, a coalitional equilibrium still reigns in a country barely a decade removed from the Arab Spring, which pierced the aura of invincibility that had long protected many other Arab autocrats. When tribal activists mount opposition today, the emphasis falls upon *how* they have been governed in terms of their redistributional preferences and expectations, not the urgency of replacing their incumbent regime. And much of the rest of society meanders on, either encaged by the threat of repression or made apathetic to promises of democracy that have never crystallized. All this transpires under an authoritarian monarchy that is perennially broke, governing a society suffering from one of the world's highest youth unemployment rates at 40 percent.

Resilience Unpacked

What accounts for the persistence of tribal affinities to a monarchy that, by its own account, cannot restore the statist political economy that institutionalized its coalitional commitments in previous decades? One popular answer is political liberalization, often described as a survival strategy for many dictatorships. As Middle East specialists know well, the strategic relaxation of repression can help embattled autocrats manipulate disgruntled citizens by providing new spaces for venting dissent (Brumberg 2002). Starting in the 1990s, the Jordanian monarchy liberalized by ending martial law, legalizing opposition parties, and tolerating controlled elections. To some degree, the substitution of diminishing economic goods for political opportunities helped the regime reconnect with some tribal constituencies. Elections, for example, were orchestrated to systematically disempower Jordanians of Palestinian origin, both to ensure the continuing frailty of party organizations and to insert tribal elites into the legislature, where they could exploit new forms of patronage (Lust 2006).

Yet political liberalization here was not a credible survival strategy. Tribal groups never needed to win parliamentary elections or create civic associations to retain their privileges. Their monarchist support was predicated not on the promise of democratization, but rather on *halting* democracy due to fears that any state that properly represented the Palestinian majority would relegate them to the margins. Gone would be the economic arrangements, social entitlements, and political inputs that assured the central place of tribalism within Jordanian politics. Indeed, it would require redefining the fabric and identity of the state itself. For that reason, tribal Jordanians remain wedded to a regime that still requires their loyalty, despite vociferous grumbling about the unfairness of neoliberal economic reform.

Beyond this emotive bond, the regime has relied upon foreign aid. As a Western client state, Jordan has become intimately tied to American grand strategy in the Middle East since the 1990s. Forging peace with Israel in 1994, facilitating the Iraq War in 2003, and hosting international militaries in the campaign against the Islamic State after 2013 represent some of the geopolitical services rendered by a compliant monarchy. In return, it has reaped lucrative rewards. The IMF's otherwise harsh structural adjustment programs never reached full steam in Jordan, because forcing the regime to downsize its tribalized payrolls would have been catastrophic – an excuse accepted by multilateral donors (Harrigan et al., 2006).

Well-timed foreign aid has also consistently filled in the regime's budgetary gaps, ensuring that extant patronage and protection obligations would not collapse. Of the $25 billion in economic and military assistance given by the US since 1957, two-thirds has materialized in the last two decades alone. Jordan currently receives at least $1.5 billion in US foreign aid annually, a haul split mostly between materiel for its coercive apparatus and fiscal grants to sustain this low-taxing regime. It has eagerly accepted oft-generous aid offers from other donors, like Saudi Arabia; but the US remains the cornerstone of not only the regime's foreign policy, but of the coalitional structures that still gird its power.

Conclusions

For scholars studying the relationship between authoritarian regimes and economic crisis, the case of Jordan reveals how a relatively small ruling coalition, sufficiently supported by foreign patrons, can facilitate the persistence of autocratic rule during periods of financial difficulty. The absence of a dominant party organization did not impede this outcome. In other states, from large countries like China and Russia to smaller cases like Malaysia and Taiwan, ruling parties enabled rulers to redistribute the burdens of disgruntled supporters while drawing upon new constituencies during fiscal crises. In Jordan, however, the monarchy was able to maintain a base of coalitional support through different mechanisms. The first was a combination of enmeshment and fear, which historically tied tribal loyalties to the regime, and proved resilient even after Jordan shifted towards neoliberal economics. The second is foreign patronage. External support, primarily from the US, has enabled this regime to underwrite its coalitional obligations, so long as it also fulfills important strategic functions within American grand strategy. The politics of coalitional maintenance in Jordan has therefore hinged on both domestic and geopolitical dynamics.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has thrown new light onto this formula for authoritarian stability. Jordan's response to this health crisis has been conditioned by its past coalitional investments. During March and April, the Jordanian regime enacted one of the world's strictest lockdown policies, halting almost all public interactions and movement with astonishing swiftness. The imposition of martial law required the rapid national deployment of military and security forces, staffed by loyal tribal citizens who still identify themselves as sentinels of the monarchical state. The economic fallout, however, will present another challenge. Although the extent of the pandemic's financial damage has yet to be revealed, a fair assumption is that the regime's capacity to weather this storm and maintain its coalitional base will require ample foreign assistance from Western donors. Based upon historical trends, it is very likely such support will materialize, facilitating the persistence of Hashemite rule.

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Shock without Success: Effects and Effectiveness of Economic Sanctions on Iran

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Given the costs borne from US-led economic sanctions starting in 2011, the Islamic Republic of Iran mothballed what had arguably been the most expensive nuclear enrichment program in the world in 2015. Yet what did an economic shock in the form of externally-imposed sanctions actually accomplish? After the signing and ratification of Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the Iranian government and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany in July 2015, the discrete impact of US-led sanctions on Iran's decision-making process leading up to the JCPOA remained under debate, even by those involved in the negotiations. "Sanctions was always a conundrum," Germany's ambassador to the United States reflected. "Do the sanctions work, do they not work? We could never really tell" (Parsi 2017, 129-130).

As during the presidential administrations of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, the 2018 implementation of financial and commercial sanctions on Iran by the Trump Administration again rests on the presumption that sanctions can not only effect damage on another country's economic health but force a government to radically alter core policies. As Richard Nephew, the principal deputy coordinator for sanctions policy at the US State Department at the time and the subsequent author of *The Art of Sanctions*, recalled, "For a moment, I thought that October 2012 was the beginning of our Tunisia [in the 2011 Arab uprisings] . . . when we saw that [Iran's] currency lost about two-thirds of its value in a day. But then they regained control. In less than a day and a half . . . I was disappointed. Because I thought it was [going to] really lead to some real internal problems for Iran and force them to negotiate a way out of the sanctions" (Parsi 2017, 140).

Why did the expected relationship between economic shock and political shift not materialize as anticipated by the sanctions' architects? As Robert Jervis reflected shortly after the 2015 nuclear accord, any change in the external geopolitical environment "works its effects through domestic configurations" (Jervis 2015, 609). Connecting external economic shocks to observed political outcomes requires attention to intermediate processes that are more directly linked to—that is, hold greater explanatory power for—internal changes. Iran had gone through a dramatic election cycle in summer 2009, when claims of fraud against the incumbent president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, galvanized a cycle of social protest and mobilization from summer to fall known as the Green Movement (Harris 2017). Though the movement eventually fizzled, conservative allies of Ahmadinejad seemed even less amenable to any public form of negotiations with the United States. Yet the opposite occurred, and by 2013 the Iranian government again agreed to sustained negotiations over a nuclear accord, finally completed in 2015.

The debate over the impact of external sanctions on the actions of domestic political elites is difficult to resolve not simply because of the opacity of authoritarian state actors, but also because of a problem of concept operationalization. Asking how an economic shock filtered into Iran's political economy, both at the level of elite coalition and among broader networks of state and society, is a different question than whether sanctions had caused their intended policy effect. The case of Iran requires us to separate out the differences between the effect and the effectiveness of an economic shock. Authoritarian regimes are not all born of the same cloth, and the structure of elite institutions as well as the perceived type of shock can intertwine to produce a situation where sanctions can have a tremendous effect without being effective.

My explanation of the Iranian case is twofold. First, due to the lack of a single ruling political party, the porousness of elite factional boundaries, and the role of perceived threats in fostering elite cohesion, the Iranian political system looks quite different from the game-theoretical predictions of a minimum winning coalition of dictator-selected allies which may withdraw regime support in response to an external economic shock. This is the political system that was faced with an external shock in 2011–13.

Second, state control over the financial system in Iran helped to absorb the costs of lower government revenues and foreign exchange crises that tend to result from externally-imposed sanctions. Partly due to an uptick in nonoil exports, Iran maintained a positive balance of payments during the entire period from 2011–15. Though enacted before the brunt of sanctions hit, the government's concurrent policies of implementing universal cash transfers and injecting liquidity into the financial system cushioned the effects of state revenue decline on much of the population. While these policies were not necessarily advantageous for long-term macroeconomic stability, Iran's long postrevolutionary experience of currency controls and channeling finance broadly across economic sectors—including the private sector—provided an improvised tool kit that managed to cushion the economic shock. Foreign exchange distribution and export revenues were largely under the purview of the state. These controls helped to prevent the sort of rapid hyperinflation or massive capital flight which have been associated with abrupt political shifts in other cases of economic shock.

Iran's Political Order: Diffuse and Undisciplined

Among states in the Middle East, the Islamic Republic of Iran is considered a strange entity. With a constitution part republican (rule by popular sovereignty) and part hierocratic (rule by religious jurists), Iran's 1979 revolution produced a hybrid type of "semi-democratic" or "competitive authoritarian" regime well before these terms became common parlance among political scientists. For some comparative scholars, state control over oil extraction remains the key to understanding regimes in the region, no matter their historical origins or institutional makeup. Yet as Michael Herb has shown, even in the most extreme cases of rentier states in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, the political economy of state-society relations varies on nearly all matters which purportedly explain common outcomes of oil producing states (Herb 2014). More notably for Iran, if oil rents were the key to understanding the politics of the Islamic Republic we would not need to peer into the black box of the postrevolutionary order. Indeed, among some security analysts the 2015 JCPOA between the Islamic Republic and Western powers was lauded as proof that economic strictures on states can directly change their behavior. Yet other than macro-level correlations between oil prices, state revenues, and the timing of the JCPOA, little else has been demonstrated.

Rather than a modal form of hybrid regime or rentier state, the *origins* of the Islamic Republic turn out to impact the way in which economic shocks, when internally perceived as direct geopolitical attacks by hostile powers, affect the ruling political elite. Authoritarian states are not all alike partly because they are not born alike. Political coalitions and ruling parties that emerged during regime formation condition the subsequent effects of economic shocks. Comparative scholars have developed useful typologies to tease out which differences matter to the case of Iran.

The first difference is whether the regime was born in a social revolution, usually involving a violent struggle and mass participation, versus a top-down transformation, such as a coup or a relatively nonviolent transfer of power from colonial rule to independence. Nonrevolutionary parties emerging from top-down transformations tend to utilize patronage distribution and public spending to maintain an elite coalition—what Dan Slater calls "provision pacts" (Slater 2010). During ordinary periods of rule, patronage is often sufficient as a means to foster elite cohesion. During economic shocks or crises, however, the ruling party's capacity to maintain patronage is lessened or made uncertain. Shocks can disrupt patronage networks or the provision of public goods, leading to elite splits in nonrevolutionary regimes—Indonesia under Suharto after the 1997 economic crisis is an example.

In revolutionary states, however, ruling parties or coalitions that emerged out of violent struggle tend to develop cohesive institutions that link political elites and security apparatuses in near existential fashion. As Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way argue, revolutionary regimes tend to endure economic shocks far more reliably than nonrevolutionary ones, especially while the initial postrevolutionary generation of elites is still in power (Levitsky and Way 2015). These regimes tend to create ruling coalitions that leverage legitimate external or internal threats to bind elites together in "protection pacts," and are less reliant on patronage to maintain elite cohesion. Economic shocks are less likely to disrupt such regimes — Cuba under Castro after the collapse of Soviet Union is an example.

The second key difference is whether a state is governed by a centralized ruling party or a diffuse mix of ruling institutions. One-party states can more easily discipline wayward elites, coordinate the reproduction of power through electoral institutions, and make shifts in state policy despite elite dissension, such as in response to an economic shock—Mexico under the PRI after the 1982 debt crisis is an example. In most authoritarian states with electoral institutions, the capacity of rulers to dominate and control formal institutional arenas is crucial for ensuring that the ruling party stays in power. Discipline inside a single-party organization is a useful mechanism, both for mobilizing constituencies and for punishing outsiders or fence-sitters. Party splits can be dangerous for the reproduction of elite cohesion.

Iran is not such a polity. Instead, as Daniel Brumberg and Farideh Farhi have argued, the Islamic Republic exhibits a diffuse set of competitive-authoritarian institutions. Power and authority are "unevenly spread and concentrated through a myriad of both formal and informal mechanisms and arenas." The constitutional order does not provide an "agreed upon template of principles for the exercise of political or constitutional rights." These mutable institutional and legal mechanisms create a "feckless pluralism," as Thomas Carothers called it, one that "seems to be incoherent, disorganized and constantly improvised, but which in fact uses such suppleness to channel, contain or diffuse challenges to regime hegemony and elite unity" (Brumberg and Farhi 2016, 8). For major shifts in foreign policy such as the signing of the JCPOA, ruling elites in Iran operate through consensus. If an elite coalition in favor of a policy shift is too narrow, a veto by a holdout faction or adjacent power center is likely.

Coalitional Shifts and Types of Shock Perception

States with diffuse institutional rule tend to require a wider elite consensus to engage in major policy shifts with more elite buy-in required across the political establishment. This institutional context allows us to better understand Iran's lurching coalitional shifts before and during the economic shock of sanctions in 2011–15.

There have been four major coalitional shifts in the Islamic Republic's short history, partly driven by the lack of a revolutionary party to discipline and smooth out splits among the political elite. The first was the coalescing of a pro-Khomeini front by revolutionary participants in the initial years after the 1979 ouster of the shah, driving out other contenders for state power. The second shift came after the 1989 death of Khomeini and the end of the 1980s Iran-Iraq War, when President Hashemi-Rafsanjani and his economically liberal supporters allied with conservative political elites to neuter the radical wing of the Islamic Republic's battle-forged leadership. Many of these radicals went into the political wilderness and emerged a few years later, speaking a new vocabulary and self-identifying as reformists. The third shift occurred during the late 1990s and early 2000s under the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005). His circle of reformists increasingly sought common cause with Rafsanjani's technocratic-minded posse under a vague rubric of modernization.

Conservative members of the political elite, mostly housed in unelected state institutions or the security apparatus, petulantly rebelled. Legislation and reform were blocked by fiat from above, while fresh recruits were mobilized from below. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, an unknown engineer and war veteran, rapidly rose to the commanding heights of the state in this environment of self-perceived conservative crisis. Vertical patronage networks and clever machine politics lifted him up alongside a new generation of right-wing political entrepreneurs. Partly rehashing the radical rhetoric of the early 1980s and partly stealing the modernizing bromides of his opponents, President Ahmadinejad (2005–13) solidified support from conservatives while pushing the reformist-technocratic coalition almost completely out of the political order (Harris 2015).

The fourth coalitional shift began in 2009 with the wave of postelection popular unrest labeled by participants as the Green movement. This shift hastened from 2011 to 2013 under increased sanctions and the onset of economic downturn. Conservative solidarity fractured, and the reformist-technocratic coalition mobilized in the fissures. Another wave of electoral mobilization in 2013 propelled Hassan Rouhani to the presidency. Rouhani was a Rafsanjani confidant whose career up to that point had largely been restricted to backstage politicking. The key to Rouhani's subsequent success, whether in negotiations with Western powers or domestic policy battles, was keeping conservatives divided while inviting old-guard segments into his own coalition.

As a result of this last coalitional shift, what was unmentionable in Iranian conservative political discourse a decade prior—direct negotiations with the United States and the acceptance of strictures over a symbolically important but militarily insignificant nuclear enrichment program—was authorized and justified by Iran's top mandarins, including the leader and supreme jurist of the Islamic Republic, Ali Khamenei. Once Khamenei publicly backed the negotiations, high-ranking members of the security apparatus also came on board, widening the elite coalition which could potentially back a policy shift.

In a diffuse institutional order such as Iran's, segments of the political elite can alter positions without necessarily appearing as outright defectors from the ruling coalition. Intra-elite bargaining does not always map onto preexisting and formalized institutional cleavages. Indeed, this realignment of elite competition was in progress *before* the 2010 intensification of sanctions. This ongoing realignment prefigured and conditioned the response to the economic shock after

2010. Though there was no single party in existence to endorse the negotiations with Western powers, there were "veto" points across the diffuse and undisciplined political order that could have blocked the process.

If negotiation was eventually acceptable to all sides of Iran's political elite, then why did it occur only after so much protracted economic pain? In considering the effect of economic shocks on a state such as Iran's, we should consider not only the diffused institutional structure of the political order, but also how different types of shocks might lead to different elite responses. A generalized economic crisis affecting states across a region, such as the 1980s Latin American debt crisis or the 1997 Asian economic crisis, is arguably perceived differently by governing elites than a shock targeted by outside powerful states, telegraphed in advance to rulers, and implicated with the goal of regime collapse or overthrow. This latter form of shock, when directed at postrevolutionary states with ruling elites that identity the status quo international order as hostile, can foster elite cohesion by incentivizing survival rather than conciliation (Slater 2011).

As a result, two arguments can be made for the Iranian case in assessing the effect of exogenous shocks on authoritarian rule. First, the diffuse character of ruling institutions made rapid shifts in government policy more difficult, as major changes required consensus across ruling elites to block the possibility of a veto being exercised even under exogenous duress. Second, the origins of the Iranian state in postrevolutionary struggle shaped the manner in which exogenous shocks were perceived. When shocks are seen as ideological challenges to the existing order targeted by external opponents, elite cohesion tends to be produced rather than elite dissension.

The implication of my argument is that state capacity to bear the burden of an exogenous shock needs to be contextualized. In the Iranian case, the state is strong (in the sense of reducing chances for internal collapse) because it is diffuse, while credible external threats strengthen, rather than weaken, the cohesion of ruling elites. Despite the institutionalized makeup of elite contention and competition incentivized by the lack of single-party rule, the nature of the economic shock matters. Since the shock faced by Iran stemmed not from a global/regional financial crisis or generalized commodity bust, but rather from direct geopolitical threats of war and encirclement, the effect was elite cohesion. It was only after the loosening of US demands on Iran's nuclear enrichment, signaled during negotiations in 2012-13, and not the ratcheting up of sanctions per se in 2010, that the impetus began to cascade across Iran's elite spectrum towards a settlement.

Institutional Buffers to an Economic Shock

Economic shocks on Iran during 2011–15 came through more than one channel, and were layered on top of existing sanctions periodically enforced since the 1990s. Over this period, oil production fell to a 20-year low, oil export revenues declined by more than half (about 15 percent of GDP), and Iran's currency lost 80 percent of its value in the parallel market. Two separate runs on Iran's currency in 2012 (January and September) put pressure on the rial, forcing the central bank of Iran (CBI) to conduct forex transactions via three tiers of exchange rates over the most volatile period.

However, Iran was no stranger to currency crises. During the 1980s Iran-Iraq War, the government implemented currency controls and a tiered set of exchange rates along with a regulated system of channeling cheaper foreign exchange to licensed importers. In 2002, after a decade of attempting to wean the system away from tiered rates, Iran converted the de jure exchange rate arrangement to a managed float against a basket of international currencies. During the 2012 currency run, the CBI returned to exchange tiers in order to channel forex into particular sectors with high demand, creating lists of prioritized imports to be valued at the official exchange rate, and limiting individual sales of domestic currency in exchange for dollars and euros. In a sense, then, the CBI returned to the stabilizing exchange arrangement that had prevailed for most of the postrevolutionary period. The speed of the devaluations certainly contributed to an inflationary shock over the next several years. The pain was eventually felt over time through stagflation, with inflation hitting 40 percent in 2014 amid a flat rate of economic growth. Yet a set of buffers existed in Iran, less understood at the time, that bear examining.

Some of these buffers can be seen at work in national accounts data. To the surprise of many, Iran's current account stayed positive during the entire period of economic shock (2011–14). There are four main reasons for the positive balance remaining under economic shock. First, oil prices stayed high during the latter period (partly due to global skittishness over the Iran crisis itself), so even with reduced volumes in oil exports, Iran still garnered a significant share of revenue from oil sales. Second, the currency devaluation contributed to an increase in nonoil exports, in goods such as petrochemicals, steel, cement, iron ore, agricultural products, and textiles. Third, and uncommon to oil-exporting countries when oil prices move higher, a fall in imports helped to offset the decline in oil exports, driven by the high transaction costs of doing business abroad and the depreciation in the Iranian currency. Fourth, Iranian markets were sufficiently connected to the world economy for some form of substitution to take place among export destinations and import sources. The sanctions did not manage to create an encompassing cordon sanitaire on all commercial transactions.

Another set of buffers can be observed in budget and capital account data. Unlike many Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon, Egypt, or Turkey, Iran's banking system was not reliant on foreign financing or domestic sources of private capital. Iran experienced a fiscal contraction in 2012–14, as revenue and spending declined as a share of GDP. Iran did not, however, experience a monetary contraction—far from it. Instead, Iran's Central Bank continued to expand credit to the banking system, including to semiprivate banks and smaller credit associations. Throughout the economic shocks, then, monetary policy acted as a quasi-fiscal liquidity pump to keep banks solvent, albeit at the cost of increasing nonperforming loans, lowered profitability, and close-to-negative real interest rates. The outcome was a dysfunctional banking sector wrought with corruption, leading to state bailouts of numerous credit institutions and an implicit guarantee of deposits for lenders. Overall, then, the expansion of liquidity into the financial system did prevent a credit crunch, albeit at a high cost that kicked the challenges of inflation, underinvestment, underperforming bank assets, and high unemployment down the road.

Conclusion

As the case of Iran in 2011–15 shows, when operationalizing interstate sanctions as a particular form of economic shock, the concept of the "effect" of sanctions should arguably be defined differently than the concept of "effectiveness." It is easy to document the first concept, but it often conflated with the second concept. Detailed accounts of the period suggest that US efforts at increasing sanctions on Iran during the Obama administration may have been more a process of holding off domestic hawkish opponents calling for outright war and corralling together a patchy international coalition, rather than crafting an assessable strategic lever on the calculations of the Iranian political elite. While painful for Iran, sanctions were performative for the US — a signaling and coordination device with other states. Even members of the US negotiating team, including Secretary of State John Kerry, were not fully convinced that there was a causal relationship between the degree of sanctions and the willingness of Iran to agree to particular conditions. "Sanctioning Iran until it capitulates makes for a powerful talking point and a pretty good political speech," Kerry stated at a press conference in July 2015, "but it's not achievable outside a world of fantasy" (Parsi 2017, 316).

The cost of sanctions to Iran was enormous in quantitative effect, but sanctions policy lacked its intended qualitative effectiveness. As a postrevolutionary state with political elites who still could recall the many attempts by the extant geopolitical order to attack and overthrow the Iranian state, the sanctions imposed in 2011–14 were not likely to have produced a capitulation even if continued for several more years. The idiosyncratically diffuse political institutions of the Islamic Republic meant that a wide swath of the political elite had to be convinced and corralled so that accepting restrictions on a nationalistic nuclear policy could be framed as prorevolutionary resistance rather than a capitulation to long-mistrusted enemies.

The recent Trump Administration policy to exert "maximum pressure" on the Iranian state via escalation of punitive economic sanctions has reproduced the dynamics highlighted above. The combination of renewed external strictures on the country's commodity exports and financial transactions, a domestic economic recession, rapid decline in state revenues, a series of currency devaluations, and a global pandemic which encompassed major cities in Iran has once again elicited predictions by US officials of the eventual acquiescence of the postrevolutionary state to US demands. Instead, the policy has produced massive distortions in the country's economy coupled with tightened elite cohesion across Iran's diffuse political spectrum.

Once again, the effects of US sanctions on Iran should be minimized, partly contributing to nothing more than a "lost decade" of economic stagnation and shambolic governance in a middle-income country. The effectiveness of this all-too-common US policy in achieving its stated goals seems no less chimerical than previous attempts.

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Confronting Economic Crisis: Putin's Approach

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Introduction

Economic downturns can be dangerous for authoritarian leaders. Poor economic performance casts doubt on the incumbent's competence, giving both the elite and the general public a motive to seek his overthrow (Haggard and Kaufman 1997; Brancati 2014). Unemployment and wage stagnation lower the opportunity cost for citizens to rebel (Acemoglu and Robinson 2001; Dagaev, Lamberova, and Sobolev 2019). Meanwhile, the sudden shock of an economic crisis may also create a focal point that helps discontented individuals or factions coordinate on the timing of an uprising (Acemoglu and Robinson 2005). Even as they increase the danger of challenges, economic crises weaken the ruler's capacity to fight back. They decrease his resources for co-opting critics and financing the apparatus of repression (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). A weak domestic economy may create dependence on foreign donors, who rarely value a dictator's survival as much as he does. Studies confirm that autocrats are more likely to be replaced in bad economic times (Londregan and Poole 1996; Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2010; Treisman 2015).

Yet dangerous as economic shocks are, they do not affect all dictators equally. Fidel Castro, Muammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, and Kim Jong-il all experienced years of severe depression without losing office. To some extent, the incumbent's resilience will depend on the initial conditions when crisis first strikes. Dictators with greater financial reserves, access to foreign aid, popularity, and repressive capacity may weather the storm better than others. The type of authoritarian regime and the strategy the ruler chooses will also matter (Bermeo 2000; Magaloni 2008; Geddes 1999).

In this essay, we examine the case of Vladimir Putin's leadership of Russia during the global financial crisis of 2008-9. This crisis, which began in the US market for mortgage-backed securities, hit Russia particularly hard. Its GDP plunged by almost 8 percent, the largest decrease of any G20 country (Guriev and Tsyvinski 2010). Although growth turned positive again in 2010, the rate soon dwindled, falling to 1.3 percent in 2013. A second wave of crisis broke out in late 2014, as oil prices crashed from $109 a barrel in 2013 to $52 in 2015 and Western sanctions, imposed after Russia's annexation of

Crimea, tightened access to credit. The ruble lost almost half its value against the dollar between mid-2014 and early 2015, and GDP fell by 3.7 percent in 2015. Clearly, the extended boom that had boosted President Putin's popularity from 2000 to 2008 was not returning.

Putin survived the economic difficulties of the 2010s, returning to the Kremlin in 2012 and winning reelection in 2018. We suggest that this reflected both his strong starting position and the strategies he chose. Putin's initial extremely high popularity and the large currency and fiscal reserves he had built up during the boom eased the transition to a politics suited to hard times. His strategy switched from co-opting the opposition elite to more repressive measures against it, along with more active manipulation of media messages to sustain support among the general public. We do not see the interventions in Ukraine and Syria as driven primarily by the wish to boost ratings; still, the annexation of Crimea certainly had that effect—and for far longer than experts expected at the time.

Authoritarian Responses to Economic Crisis: Theory

How do economic crises affect the survival strategies of authoritarian rulers? Scholars have suggested several answers regarding the influence of economic crisis on redistribution, information control, provision of symbolic goods, and corruption. Guriev and Treisman argue that economic crises make dictators change their tactics from coopting the opposition elite to censoring critical media and spending more on propaganda. The authors see modern dictators as focused on maintaining a reputation for competence (Guriev and Treisman 2015). They do this mostly by distorting information flows. In an economically interdependent, globalized, and media-rich world, manipulating information to boost their popularity is a less costly way of holding onto power than intimidating the public with violent repression. Dictators choose between buying the silence of those who observe their incompetence (cooptation) and blocking media messages that expose their failures (censorship). In Guriev and Treisman's model, large economic downturns increase the cost of cooptation and make dictators use censorship and propaganda on a larger scale.

Rozenas, also modeling the dictator's information control problem, reaches close to the opposite conclusion (Rozenas 2016). A dictator who is losing popularity because of economic crisis should commit less electoral fraud so that, when he receives a higher vote than some expect, citizens believe that he is genuinely popular. The same logic should apply to censorship in between elections. If citizens wrongly believe the dictator's popularity has nosedived because of hard economic times, he should permit more media freedom so the press can credibly counter this perception. The key difference from Guriev and Treisman's approach is that Rozenas assumes that the amount of manipulation can be observed, whereas Guriev and Treisman assume that at least some manipulation can be concealed. Based on Rozenas's argument, one might expect a dictator struck by economic crisis to reduce both censorship and propaganda.

Another common expectation is that, as its resources dwindle, an authoritarian regime should shift from trying to coopt the elite and population with material benefits to providing (at least relatively inexpensive) symbolic goods—in other words, less bread and more circuses. This can involve stirring up nationalism by invoking external threats and even provoking military conflicts. The Argentine junta's decision, amid economic crisis and human rights problems, to invade the Falkland Islands in 1982 is often seen in this light (Robben 2007).

The effect of economic downturns on corruption is unclear. On the one hand, if the crisis shortens the incumbent's time horizon, he might try to grab more wealth during what time remains (Olson 1993). Crisis might also motivate the autocrat to lavish greater largesse on members of his selectorate in order to offset their losses caused by economic deterioration and keep them loyal (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2011). On the other hand, the incumbent might cut expenses to compensate for falling revenues, which could mean a decline in corrupt self-enrichment by insiders.

Russia on the Eve of the Global Crisis

The global financial crisis that struck in 2008 caught Russia at the peak of a remarkable economic rebound. After the contraction of the 1990s, GDP per capita had been growing by 7 percent a year on average since 2000. For eight years, the state budget had been in surplus. The country had paid off most of its foreign public debt, while saving excess oil revenues in a fund that by early 2008 contained $157 billion. Living standards had grown even faster than output. The average wage rose by 14.7 percent a year during 2000–2007, adjusted for inflation, while the average pension increased by 11 percent a year. Surging incomes had fueled a consumer revolution, with retail trade and ownership of consumer durables soaring. Even among the relatively poor, both incomes and life satisfaction had risen substantially (Guriev and Zhuravskaya 2009).

The rapid growth of 2000–2007 had four main causes: (1) a recovery after the previous collapse, (2) increased competitiveness because of the 1998 devaluation, (3) market reforms introduced in the 1990s and early 2000s, and (4) rising prices of oil and gas. While the first three factors dominated in the early 2000s, their effects had been exhausted by 2005. From that year, growth owed much more to the soaring price of hydrocarbons and the stimulus effect of a huge foreign borrowing binge by mostly state-controlled companies. Between 2004 and 2008, the foreign debt of Russian banks and corporations ballooned from $80 billion to $425 billion.

The effects of higher oil prices and inflows of liquidity more than offset the effects of a simultaneous negative trend—the gradual decrease in the security of property rights. In the 1990s, property had been insecure because of the weakness of the state in the chaotic aftermath of Soviet disintegration. As the state strengthened from the late 1990s, confidence picked up, and Putin came to power promising precisely to restore law and order. Yet, from the mid-2000s, a different threat developed. In 2003-4, the authorities dismantled the leading oil company, Yukos, supposedly to pay tax debt. In subsequent years, many other companies were taken over with the help of judicial fraud and police threats or force. Meanwhile, certain old friends or associates of President Putin became extremely wealthy, acquiring control of major banks and other companies (Treisman 2007).

The dramatic improvement in living standards during this period made any political strategy almost superfluous. Putin's approval ratings spiked in late 1999, likely reflecting a rally behind his leadership in the initial phase of the second Chechen war. But as support for his policy on Chechnya waned, the president's ratings were sustained by the country's buoyant economic performance (Treisman 2011). Between January 2000 and December 2008, Putin's approval never fell below 60 percent, and it rose as high as 87 percent.

Putin's political strategists exploited their boss's popularity to concentrate power. Elections were increasingly manipulated by the authorities,[1] and the Duma was quickly rendered subservient. From 2005, regional governors became presidential appointees rather than elected officials. The main previously independent television station, NTV, was acquired by the state-controlled oil company Gazprom, and editorial policy became much more supportive of the president.

None of this dented Putin's popularity with the public; in fact, the claim that he was rebuilding the state, restoring law and order, and fighting corruption among governors and oligarchs added to his appeal. With ratings in the 70s and 80s, Putin was popular among almost all identifiable social groups. What opposition existed consisted of a very small liberal fringe and, at the other extreme, anti-market and anti-Western communists and nationalists.

Despite his moves against the most political oligarchs, and the growing pressures on other businessmen from new Kremlin-connected corporate raiders, those magnates who survived remained decisively in Putin's camp. It was under Putin that the number of Russian billionaires rose from zero in 2000 to 83 in 2008. Although a few were friends of the president, the vast majority were second-rank oligarchs of the Yeltsin era. For those that kept loyal, and were lucky enough to escape expropriation, the payoffs were enormous (Treisman 2016).

The Global Crisis and the Regime's Response

The global crisis of 2008 hit Russia harder than many other countries. As international investors fled emerging markets, corporations found it difficult to roll over their debt. After the US investment bank Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy in September, Russian financial markets froze. Between mid-May and late October 2008, the RTS share index fell by almost 80 percent, and the country's currency reserves soon dropped by $220 billion. By early 2009, the crisis had spread to the real economy. GDP decreased by almost 8 percent that year, and consolidated budget revenues fell from 40 to 35 percent of GDP.

One can divide the Kremlin's response to the crisis into several phases. They unfolded as the regime came to understand that there would be no return to the boom years of 2000-08. The 2008-9 global crisis permanently shifted Russia's economy from a mode of dramatic expansion amid supportive global conditions to a "new normal" of lower growth and investor gloom as the world's financial markets struggled to pick up the pieces and move on.

The first phase (2009-11) focused on emergency management. With extensive currency and fiscal reserves, the Kremlin could afford to delay any decisions about more fundamental changes. At the same time, Putin's remarkable approval rating at the start of the crisis allowed him breathing room. The second

1 Electoral manipulations and fraud had also existed in the 1990s, but the scale clearly increased in the 2000s (see, e.g., Fish 2005).

phase began with Putin's return to the Kremlin in 2012, amid large anti-government demonstrations. It involved a shift from cooptation toward greater repression of the opposition. The third started with the covert invasion of Crimea in 2014. At this point manipulation of media and stigmatization of dissent were ramped up.

During the first phase, Putin concentrated on cooptation in the form of boosting public spending to reduce the economic pain felt by the population. He increased the minimum wage and state sector wages dramatically. Pensions rose by 11 percent in real terms in 2009 and another 24 percent in 2010. At the same time, the government allocated resources to bail out business interests. It issued about $40 billion in credits to banks and $50 billion to companies. Less successfully, the authorities wasted $5.3 billion trying to support share prices, but quickly abandoned the effort. These short run measures cost about 12 percent of GDP in 2009, according to Putin—a much larger stimulus in relative terms than the US's 5.5 percent of GDP. They prevented mass bank failures and industrial bankruptcies.

Meanwhile, the media showed Putin intervening heroically to combat the crisis. When workers rioted in the small town of Pikalyovo, Putin flew out, accompanied by television cameras, to broker a deal. He was also shown in supermarkets berating their managers for raising prices. To divert discontent, the Kremlin blamed the West for triggering the crisis.

By 2010, the economy had begun a fitful rebound. Both the stock market and growth rate recovered from their 2009 plunge. The authorities reined in the surging consolidated budget deficit, returning the budget to surplus in 2011. The oligarchs, who had seen much of their wealth evaporate in 2009, were almost all saved by the rebound and, in some cases, government bailouts. In fact, these years saw an amazing enrichment of the president's cronies. Four Russian businessmen—Gennady Timchenko, Yury Kovalchuk, and the brothers Arkady and Boris Rotenberg—are often reported to be old friends of Putin. Their combined net worth according to *Forbes* increased from $4.4-6.4 bn in 2008 to $22.4 bn in 2014.

This "emergency management" strategy deflected any major threat to the regime. But it did not prevent the demoralization of the previously upwardly mobile middle class. Consumer confidence never regained its pre-crisis levels. The strategy of blaming the West quickly lost effectiveness, and Putin became a target for economic dissatisfaction. In late 2010, even among those who thought the economy was in bad shape, 51 percent still approved of the president's performance. By late 2011, only 28 percent did (Treisman 2014).

As economic discontent and pessimism about Russia's post-crisis economy deepened, the second phase in Putin's political strategy began in early 2012. Putin's decision to return as president in 2012, castling with his protege Dmitri Medvedev, prompted grumbling from the capital's elites. After numerous observers documented fraud in the parliamentary vote of December 2011, tens of thousands took to the streets in Moscow demanding fair elections. Unlike the economic protests in Pikalyovo and other cities, the Moscow events were explicitly political, brought out up to 100,000 people in the country's capital, and attracted the most modern and globalized segment of the population.

The Kremlin's key objective in the second phase was to discredit the urban opposition. A vigorous propaganda campaign sought to portray the West as morally decadent, while asserting conservative Russian values. Already by early 2008, almost all the television channels broadcasting news had been brought under state control. But efforts to cow critical journalists from the print media continued, and now the Kremlin also turned its attention to the internet. Authorities announced a "blacklist" of web sites, supposedly to filter out child pornography and other information harmful to children. Soon it was broadened to cover sites that promoted "extremist" information or publicized unsanctioned protests.

To scare potential protesters off the streets, the Kremlin tightened relevant laws and increased the maximum fine for unauthorized protest by 1,000 times. The performance artists of Pussy Riot, several left-wing activists, and the opposition leader Alexei Navalny were all tried and sentenced to jail for different offenses, although Navalny was immediately released to house arrest. To deter ordinary citizens, 27 previously unknown Muscovites were prosecuted on dubious evidence for allegedly attacking policemen at a May 2012 rally and some were sentenced to labor camp terms. NGOs that received foreign funding and engaged in "political activity" were ordered to register as "foreign agents." Whether because of the effectiveness of the Kremlin's propaganda and repression or just because of the natural wavelike dynamic of protest movements, the opposition demonstrations in Moscow dwindled over the course of 2012.

Cooptation now targeted mostly core supporters—in particular, public sector workers. Between 2011 and 2013, wages rose nationwide by 12 percent in real terms. But the increases were larger for many state employees—including rises of 58 percent in public order and security, and 61 percent in management of jails. A more repressive policy required committed enforcers.

The third phase began with Russia's covert invasion of Crimea in February 2014. This proved extremely popular with the public. As the West responded with harsh criticism and economic sanctions, Putin's ratings shot up to 86 percent that June (Levada-Center 2015). Eighty-eight percent supported the annexation of Crimea (Levada-Center 2014). Putin then rolled the dice again, providing covert support to anti-Kiev rebels in the predominantly Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk and Lugansk.

Even before the Crimea annexation, Putin appeared to have given up on a revival of rapid growth. With the international economy slowing, depressing demand for oil, he largely abandoned cooptation and concentrated on blaming the West for the population's economic hardship, which he did less and less to alleviate. Indeed, Russia's open confrontation with the West made economic conditions worse. Western sanctions, by one estimate, had reduced GDP by 2.4 percentage points by 2017 (Gurvich and Prilepskiy 2015).

Propaganda was raised to an unprecedented pitch, focused now on military conflict more than traditional values. Controls over media and internet were tightened still more, less at this point to disrupt the protest movement, which had in any case died away, than to dominate public discourse. At the same time, propaganda operations on the internet were decentralized to hundreds of "trolls," who were hired to disrupt discussion with their comments and promote the government view (Sobolev 2018; Chen 2015). Simultaneously, control over the internet tightened. Preparing for possible new waves of protest, the authorities even tried simulating a complete cutoff of Russia from the global internet to be used in a crisis (Soldatov and Borogan 2015).

Despite the country's economic difficulties, Putin's administration continued to channel benefits to his close circle. The renewed economic crisis of 2014—and Western sanctions—hit Russia's billionaires hard, but especially those closest to Putin. The total wealth of Russia's ten richest men fell from $161 billion in 2014 to $137 billion in 2015. But that of the four "old Putin friends" on the *Forbes* list dropped from $22.4 billion to $12.1 - 14.1 billion, a much larger proportional decrease. This was despite remarkable efforts by the Kremlin to offset Western sanctions on these individuals by providing them with state-financed benefits (Meyer, Arkhipov, and Katz 2014). Analysis of the top recipients of Russian government contracts in 2010-15 shows that members of Putin's inner circle received about 142 times more money in such contracts than unconnected recipients (Lamberova and Sonin 2018b). The wealth of members of Putin's inner circle and their immediate contacts turns out to be particularly volatile and tied to hydrocarbon prices. Such Putin connections did far better than other major business people in years of high oil prices, but *worse* than others in years when prices were low (Lamberova and Sonin 2018a).

Conclusion

How do Putin's responses to the global crisis fit with the arguments we outlined? In line with the Guriev and Treisman (2015) argument, the Kremlin increasingly substituted censorship and propaganda for cooptation of the opposition elite. Putin's military interventions could be interpreted as a switch from bread to circuses. The motives for Russia's operations in Ukraine and Syria were certainly more complicated than just attempts to boost popularity. Still, a diversionary logic may have contributed—although the foreign actions did not follow the economic crisis immediately but materialized later. Also as suggested, initial conditions mattered. Putin's reserves of money and popularity allowed the regime to coast along for a while before making a more decisive adjustment.

Did the authorities respond to falling popularity by increasing media freedom and the honesty of elections in order to strengthen their credibility? We see little evidence of that in this case. In fact, the fall in the reputation of the pro-Putin United Russia party during 2011 was followed by a parliamentary election that was plausibly portrayed as one of the most fraudulent in post-communist history. Pressures on both the media and internet intensified.

We see no evidence here of a crisis-induced reduction in corrupt spending. As economic conditions worsened, Putin's close associates seem to have done better and better. Indeed, the Kremlin set out to compensate these businessmen for losses suffered when Western governments sanctioned them and froze their assets abroad. At first sight, this might look like an attempt by the autocrat to shore up support within Putin's selectorate (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2011). Yet, the favored individuals—who include two old judo partners of Putin's and a former physicist-turned-banker—have no political resources that could conceivably threaten his position. The special treatment might also reflect the Kremlin team's shortened time horizon—except that nothing suggested that Putin saw his time in office as limited.

As we write, a new economic crisis is unfolding in Russia and the rest of the world caused by the COVID-19 virus. Although it is too early to draw any conclusions, Putin's immediate response was not unlike that during the global financial crisis. The Kremlin's reaction in the first few weeks of the pandemic was slow—both with regard to medical steps and economic measures. Putin distanced himself, perhaps to protect his image, while transferring much operational responsibility to regional governors. Since then, Russia has seemed to imitate the public relations strategy of Xi Jinping's China—announcing shipments of medical equipment to hard-hit countries, ratcheting up propaganda that contrasts Russia's supposed effective response with the alleged failures of other countries, toughening punishments for "disinformation," and exploiting the opportunity offered by the virus to intensify surveillance of citizens.

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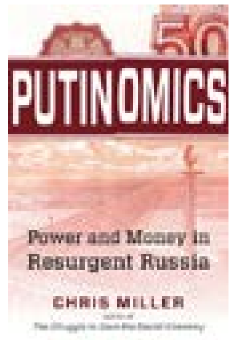
Author Exchange



Putinomics: Power and Money in Resurgent Russia. By Chris Miller. The University of North Carolina Press, 2018. 240p. $28 hardcover, $20 e-book.

Review by Samuel A. Greene, Reader in Russian Politics, King's College London & Graeme B. Robertson, Professor of Political Science, UNC Chapel Hill

There are many things wrong with reality from a social scientist's perspective. One of reality's most serious drawbacks is that it is the only thing we get to see (and even then, only through a glass, darkly).

Outside of the most well-controlled experiments, we do not get to see what did not happen. This clouds our judgment, making it hard to know how to evaluate the observable reality that remains. Such is the challenge that Chris Miller picks up in his excellent, *Putinomics: Power and Money in Resurgent Russia*.

Miller tells the story of the Russian economy, from Gorbachev, through Gaidar, Gerashchenko, Gref and Glazyev. In a twist that may surprise many readers, Miller assesses that with all its warts, failures and challenges, the headline story of economic management under Putin is one of more successes than failures. Russia, he argues, might not be Sweden, but it could easily have been Venezuela. Stability is not growth, but it is stability.

In positing the comparison with Venezuela, Miller reminds us of something that is too often forgotten. Outcomes in authoritarian politics (and the economy) are never the result of some inevitable historical process that leads from the past to the present, but rather are contingent and depend on political struggles and battles, sometimes happening in full public view, sometimes well behind the scenes. This is as much true for the economic policy that Miller analyzes, as it is for the way we think about Russian politics (not least because the two are often inseparable). One of the key strengths of Miller's account is that he does not only tell the story of the winners in the battles over policy, but he also maps the roads not taken, the alternatives that were promoted and by whom, and their ultimate fate. For example, in discussing the shape of Putin's liberal economic policies of the 2000s, Miller also focuses on battles to sideline statists, who would have taken the economy in a very different direction.

Miller takes the reader on an elegantly and economically written ride through developments in the late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian economy. He highlights the role of the great crises of the early 1990s and 1998 in shaping the economic system Putin inherited, and of 2009 and 2014 in shaping the system we have now, and the mindset of the policy makers who govern it. Great crises, it seems, are also major turning points that create new and previously unimagined paths forward. A point worth making today, of course.

As the title suggests, however, Miller argues that Russia has settled on a particular configuration of economic governance. 'Putinomics', in essence, comes down to three pillars: an instrumentalized, pragmatic view of free markets; a differentiated approach to corporate governance; and the political primacy of raising living standards. It is, he argues, an uneasy balance, but a balance nonetheless.

As many have noted, Putin himself has little love for state controlled economies and believes that markets produce better outcomes — except, of course, when competition and private ownership threaten key interests of the state. In those cases, competition gives way to manual control. The consequences of this worldview are mixed. For example, in asserting the primacy of state interests, Putin and his team found ways to force energy firms to pay taxes. This was a great achievement – but the personalism and the lack of regard for property rights and the rule of law with which this was done paradoxically made the task of reforming the energy sector harder, not easier. One set of corrupt leaders in the sector was largely replaced by another, while the forces of internationalization and competition were effectively tamed.

A second pillar of Putinomics is that there are two kinds of business in Russia. There are those enterprises, such as the railways or Gazprom, that are politically important, as well as inefficient and extremely corrupt – and these things are related. The purpose of these enterprises is less to turn a profit, and more to lubricate the distribution of rents throughout the political economy. Less politically important businesses include the many competitive and energetic firms that drive efficiency gains and attract investment, whether in software, retail, or even iron and steel. Both types of firms – those whose profits are political, and those whose profits are financial – coexist in a system of macroeconomic management that places a premium on sound money. Miller gives credit to the teams installed by Putin in the Finance Ministry and Central Bank. Focusing primarily on Aleksei Kudrin, German Gref and, most unlikely of all perhaps, Mikhail Kasyanov, Miller credits decisions made in the boom years of the 2000s to pay down Russian's external debt and save for the future as visionary decisions that are, in his view, largely responsible for the Putin regime's ability to survive the many hard years since. Again, Miller focuses on the battle of interests, but also the battle of ideas that lay behind key policy decisions. The outcome was not a foregone conclusion, but the result of political – and sometimes even ideological – conflict.

The third pillar of Putinomics is the higher living standards, with which the president has purchased a deep reserve of support and gratitude from the Russian people. This story is familiar in the commentary on Russia, and Miller makes a number of important points about the importance of the 2000s in shaping Putin's authority. He also points out that subsequent economic problems, even before COVID-19, have thrown into question the ability of the regime to maintain that support. It is here, perhaps, that Miller's story raises as many questions as it answers. Russia's economy has been stagnant for a decade. Real wage growth has been negative over that time. It is an unusual politician, indeed, who is able to hold on to support for all that time. Consequently, as we have argued in *Putin vs The People*, the standard economic story may not get us very far in understanding Putin's continuing popularity.

One implication of Miller's thought-provoking book, in fact, may be that Putin's political power stems in part from building an economy – forged through crisis and contention – that key players genuinely believe works in their favor, even when it fails to bring clear dividends. By understanding the compromises made and the roads not taken, we might even gain some purchase on the parts of reality that are harder to observe, including just how much economic decline Putin's power can really weather. Indeed, as the challenges and dilemmas of late Putinism are made more acute by the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, we are almost certainly living through one of those transformative forks in the road Miller so ably recounts.

Response from Chris Miller

Can Russian President Vladimir Putin survive COVID? In May, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and Putin's Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov both tested positive, adding to the list of close associates of Putin who have suffered from the virus. Statistically speaking, of course, a healthy (we think) 67-year-old ought to have a very good chance of beating the virus if he were to be infected. More difficult will be beating the economic crash that COVID has caused. For one of COVID's not-yet-diagnosed side effects will be to provide a test of the role of economic performance in keeping dictators in power.

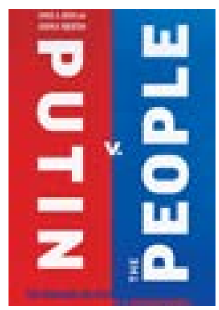
Consider the toxic cocktail that Putin faces. First, in early 2020, the price of oil slumped, as news emerged of China's lockdowns. Russia's leaders quickly banned flights from China and convinced themselves that they had inoculated their country from the virus. Two months later, in March, evidence emerged that Russia's testing apparatus drastically understated infection rates. Soon the country was locked down, causing the economy to freeze. So much, so normal. Every country is suffering from a COVID-induced economic meltdown, and it isn't immediately obvious that the Kremlin performed much worse than, say, the UK or U.S. The Kremlin is naturally trying to paint its COVID response as in line with the global trend.

Yet Russia diverges from the global trend in one key aspect—COVID is just the latest shock to a system that has produced a decade of economic pain. According to government data, Russians' disposable incomes are lower today than they were in 2012, adjusting for inflation. Since 2008, Russians' living standards have stagnated, lagging behind not only Central European peers, but also behind Ukraine, a country that many Russians mock as a failed state. Despite invading Ukraine and plunging that country into a deep economic crisis, the Kremlin has nevertheless produced worse economic results than Kyiv.

Russia therefore entered the COVID crash with a dire track record, the likes of which would discredit most democratic regimes. Yet Putin's popularity remains strong, though it has fallen somewhat. The next several years will therefore provide an important test of Russian politics. Is Putin's support explained by "the economy, stupid," just with a time lag? Or does his hold on power rest ultimately on non-economic factors?

In *Putinomics* I posited that an economic logic underlay Putin's longevity. In his first decade in power, almost all Russians experienced rapid wage increases, so popularity was easy. In the 2010s, the Kremlin shifted toward a new social contract with a different economic logic that benefitted a more conservative political coalition. The social contract of the 2010s focused less on increasing aggregate living standards, and more on protecting Putin's key supporters, including the political elite, industrial workers, and pensioners.

In the last two years, however, the social contract of the 2010s has come undone. First, the government hiked the retirement age, causing much grumbling among pensioners, though few substantive protests. Now, COVID and low oil prices will cause broad-based pain. But because of its expansive foreign policy agenda and the risk of new Western sanctions, the Kremlin has only limited resources with which to respond. Putin's popularity is visibly fraying. Independent pollsters at the Levada Center have found that most Russians want age limits imposed on the presidency—not good news for a president near pensionable age. The Kremlin is betting that further tightening of the screws on political activity can hold things together as Russia's leaders cast about for a new social contract. But it is hard to envision what social groups this new coalition will consist of. It is easier than ever to visualize the many ways in which the Putin system could finally begin to unravel.



Putin v. the People: The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia. By Samuel A. Greene and Graeme B. Robertson. Yale University Press, 2019. 296 p. $30 hardcover

Review by Chris Miller, Assistant Professor of International History, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University

How can a prince maintain power? "It is much safer to be feared than loved, if one has to do without one of the two," advised Machiavelli, "for the following may be said generally about men: that they are ungrateful, changeable, pretenders and dissemblers, avoiders of dangers, and desirous of gain." Yet the threat of violence alone is insufficient, the Florentine philosopher warned. "The prince must make himself feared in such a way that, although he does not acquire love, he avoids hatred. For being feared and being not hated may exist together very well" (Machiavelli 2005, 90–93).

Being "not hated" is a low bar in human relations, where we usually aim slightly higher. It is a tremendous feat in politics, where the norm is to leave politics detested by at least a third of the populace, if not more. Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and Emmanuel Macron would all very much like to be hated less, for example. Angela Merkel, in power since 2005, has managed to avoid being hated by a substantial share of her populous, mainly by being too boring to have strong emotions about. But 'love' is a not a feeling that she commonly evokes.

What about Prince Putin? Russia's ruler marked two decades in power this year, during which he has survived boom and bust, peace and war, even—so far—a deadly pestilence. In the West, the Russian President is both feared and hated, accused of threatening Europe's postwar peace and masterminding Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. There is room to question whether we in the West fear him too much and give him credit for foreign successes that resulted from luck rather than from Machiavellian *virtù*. But at home, where he has navigated the treacherous waters of Russian politics with seeming ease, there is no doubting his success. But how to explain it?

This is the question taken up in *Putin v. The People: The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia* by Samuel Greene and Graeme Robertson. The title illustrates the dilemmas in understanding how Putin has held power for so long. Is it really Putin against the people, as many Western analysts put it, describing Putin as a dictator who oppresses a victimized populace? Or, Greene and Robertson ask, are the Russian people equal partners in the construction of authoritarian politics? Most analysts want to focus on the person of Putin, ideally shirtless, with reference to his background as a KGB spy. Greene and Robertson consider instead whether the preferences of the Russian people are as politically impactful as their photogenic Prince.

Machiavelli posited two options for a would-be prince: to be feared or to be loved. Analysts of Russian politics have put forth three explanations for the durability of the Putin system: that he and his security services wield fearsome sticks; that with the profits of oil and gas exports, he has skillfully used carrots to buy support; and that he is popular even apart from carrots and sticks thanks to the preexisting preferences of the Russian populace. Greene and Robertson are too sophisticated as analysts to posit a simple choice between these factors. They acknowledge that carrots and sticks matter. But they focus their attention on the sources of Putin's popularity, which they locate deeper in what I would call Russia's political culture.

The key to Russian politics, they argue, is to understand "authoritarian politics in Russia not only from the top down, but also from the bottom up" (Greene and Robertson 2019, 6–7). Greene and Robertson see bottom-up construction as crucial to the maintenance of the Putin system, and perhaps even its primary driver. In their view, Putin is as much a follower of political trends as a creator of them. He follows the polls as much as any spineless Western politician, for example. "Putin takes his approval ratings very seriously and is an avid reader of opinion polls," they note, pointing out that popularity makes governing easier by reducing the need for repression and simplifying "the coercive calculus" (Greene and Robertson 2019, 7–8).

There is coercion in the Putin system. Violence polices the boundaries of acceptable politics. The slaying of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov right outside the Kremlin's gates had an effect like Cesare Borgia's execution of his lieutenant Remirro, who "one morning…[was] placed in two pieces in the two-square, with a piece of wood and a bloody knife at his side," leaving, Machiavelli reported, the "people at once satisfied and stupefied" (Machiavelli 2005, 62).

Russians have not been stupefied, however. The number of political killings has been too small to explain Putin's hold on power. Brutal assassinations are often followed by protests in which thousands take to Moscow's streets, demanding "Russia without Putin." The opposition fears the state, but they do not fear it so much that they stop demanding free elections.

Putin keeps power in part because he is loved. One explanation for this, which I explored in my book *Putinomics: Power and Money in Resurgent Russia*, is that a social contract has undergirded the Putin system. Pensioners are provided for, unemployment is kept low, state-owned firms are subsidized, key elites prospered. In the 2000s, when oil prices surged, it was easy to be loved. In the 2010s, which saw volatile oil prices, limited investment, and Western sanctions, the social contract was refocused away from making everyone rich toward providing targeted benefits to important social groups, while leaning more heavily on patriotism.

Yet even this has become hard to sustain, amid deep-set economic stagnation. Hence the importance of Greene and Robertson's focus on the third factor in Putin's popularity: that the populace has created a system that demands a Putin. How could this be? Greene and Robertson argue that Russia's polity is different: "Russia—fairly obviously—is not the West" (Greene and Robertson 2019, 148). They report survey data that finds "enormous unity on questions related to nationalism and identity," for example (Greene and Robertson 2019, 144). On the tradeoff between order versus freedom, their surveys find a strong preference for order. "Nearly 60 percent of Muscovites in 2016 thought that radical groups should not be allowed to protest…double the proportion of New Yorkers" (Greene and Robertson 2019, 220). Russian politics, moreover, is not a "contest between conservatism and change," as in the West, but is "about conforming to socially accepted standards of opinions and attitudes" (Greene and Robertson 2019, 152).

There is, of course, a danger in asserting that Russia's government is authoritarian because Russians prefer authoritarianism. Greene and Robertson warn against sliding toward baseless Russophobic tropes. There is also a risk of providing justification for Russia's elites, who themselves deploy tropes as they declare their populace unready for Western democracy. There is nothing inherently autocratic in Russian people. But political culture can prove durable over time, especially when buttressed by institutions (Greene and Robertson 2019, 12). Russia's security services are practically unreformed since the Soviet days and dominate key state institutions, for example. Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Duma's Education Committee is the grandson of Stalin's Foreign Minister, Viacheslav Molotov. If the heir to J. Edgar Hoover controlled America's educational system, high schoolers would probably be taught a rather different narrative about Martin Luther King, Jr.

Putin inherited a political culture, in other words, that was open to Putinesque politics. As Greene and Robertson note, "Fake news is only as powerful as the willingness of people to believe it." The Russian polity has, in general, enthusiastically endorsed the narrative that Russia is surrounded by enemies and that political dissent could plunge the country into chaos (Greene and Robertson 2019, 10). Putin has also benefited from "millions of private citizens willingly acting as unprompted enforcers of Putin's power in society," who operate by imposing social pressure on those who dissent (Greene and Robertson 2019, 11).

Greene and Robertson's thesis that Putinism was created by the people as much as by the Prince should make us skeptical about the scope for political change. If Putin was more feared than loved, his person might be crucial. Were he felled by COVID or ousted in a palace coup, the system could crumble. But if 'the system' is actually the Russian polity, then the identity of the Prince himself matters less. Perhaps Machiavelli's teaching that "it is safer to be feared than loved," applies only to the political culture of Florence. For surely it is safer still to have a populace that is inclined to love you, even when you govern in ways that ought to make you hated.

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Response from Samuel A. Greene and Graeme Robertson

It is, we suppose, a particular honor when a review of your book begins with a quotation from Machiavelli. It is humbling, too, to be reminded of a book that still shapes debates 488 years after it was published, while we see how much Russian politics have changed only a year after our own print date.

Putin v the People was, of course, written in large measure to push back against the idea that Vladimir Putin's most important trait is his Machiavellianism. As Chris Miller rightly notes in his thoughtful and generous review, our book is not, in fact, about an adversarial relationship between ruler and ruled in Russia. Rather, in arguing for the 'co-construction' of authoritarian power in Russia, we are interested in the ways that ordinary Russian citizens have become the sources of Putin's control, and not simply the objects.

The long-term sustainability of this argument rests on two questions that Miller raises, and which the book does not entirely answer. The first is whether another Russian politics is possible.

"Putin," Miller writes, "inherited a political culture ... that was open to Putinesque politics." That, certainly, is true, but does it mean that the culture is closed to another kind of politics? When it comes to Russia's future, we are in the unfortunate – and unfortunately common – position of having to wait and see.

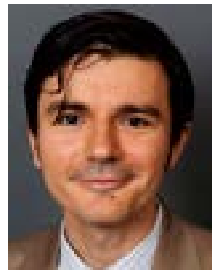
And yet Miller himself suggests our answer, when he wonders what Americans might think these days of Martin Luther King Jr., "if the heir to J. Edgar Hoover controlled America's educational system." In fact, in certain parts of the United States, the educational system is controlled by the heirs to George Wallace, and yet progress has proven to be possible, if fitful. Our expectation for Russia would be no different.

The second question is whether basing Putin's power on love, rather than fear, will turn out to be sustainable if his luck turns and his rule becomes an even greater drag on his people's prosperity than it already is. In fairness, we are not arguing that Putin's power has no basis in fear. Rather, we suggest that fear does play an important role in structuring and mobilizing genuine support, but that it is the fear of falling out of touch with other Russians, rather than the fear of coercion by the state, that does the work for the Kremlin.

The question, then, is when and how this relationship that Russians have with one another might stop working in Putin's favor. Thus far, we have seen it survive nearly six years of declining real incomes, but we have also seen Putin's approval ratings decline in the face of what feels to many like an unending recession, an unpopular position taken on pension reform and, more recently, on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

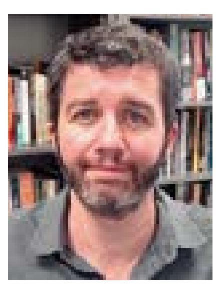
Miller's reference to Macchiavelli, however, provocatively shifts the emphasis back onto the regime itself: How confident is it in the ability of virtù to sustain Putin's rule? Judging by the unprecedented (for post-Soviet Russia) violence with which the Kremlin met last summer's protest wave, and the evident ambivalence around the non-referendum for Putin's constitutional reforms, that confidence may be waning. If that's true, the immediate future of Russian politics may be shaped less by what Russians think of their leader, than by what their leader thinks of them.

Meet the Authors

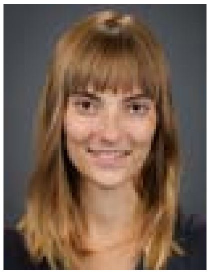


Martin K. Dimitrov is Professor of Political Science at Tulane University. His books include *Piracy and the State: The Politics of Intellectual Property Rights in China* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); *Why Communism Did Not Collapse: Understanding Authoritarian Regime Resilience in Asia and Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); and *The Political Logic of Socialist Consumption* (published in Bulgarian by Ciela Publishers, 2018). He has held residential fellowships at Harvard, Princeton, Notre Dame, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the American Academy in Berlin, and the Aleksanteri Institute at the University of Helsinki. He is currently completing a book entitled *Dictatorship and Information: Autocratic Regime Resilience in Communist Europe and China.* He has conducted fieldwork in China, Taiwan, France, the Czech Republic, Germany, Russia, Bulgaria, and Cuba.

Samuel A. Greene is Reader in Russian politics and Director of the Russia Institute at King's College London. His research focuses on the relationships between citizens and the state in Russia, and in societies experiencing social, economic and political transformation more broadly. He is co-author with Graeme Robertson of *Putin v the People: The Perilous Politics of a Divided Russia*, published by Yale University Press in 2019. His first book, *Moscow in Movement: Power and Opposition in Putin's Russia*, was published by Stanford University Press in 2014. Sam also serves as Associate Fellow in the Russian and Eurasian Programme of the International Institute for Security Studies and a Visiting Professor at the UK Defence Academy.



Kevan Harris is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of California-Los Angeles. His research focuses on social policy and development in the Middle East. He is the author of *A Social Revolution: Politics and the Welfare State in Iran* (2017, University of California Press). Harris is the lead project manager on the Iran Social Survey, a nationally-representative poll held every four years inside Iran which measures social and economic indicators.



Natalia Lamberova is a PhD Candidate in Political Science and MSc in Statistics at University of California, Los Angeles. Her research applies a mixture of game-theoretic modeling, causal inference, and natural and survey experiments data to study the political determinants of government policy choice with regards to Research and Development. Her research interests include the impact of new technology on collective action and the value of political connections. Her research was published in *European Journal of Political Economy*, *Economics of Transition*, Brookings Institution Press and University of Michigan Press.

Chris Miller is Assistant Professor of international history at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and co-director of the school's Russia and Eurasia Program. He is author of *Putinomics: Power and Money in Resurgent Russia* (2018) and *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy* (2016). He has previously served as the associate director of the Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy at Yale, a lecturer at the New Economic School in Moscow, a visiting researcher at the Carnegie Moscow Center, a research associate at the Brookings Institution, and as a fellow at the German Marshall Fund's Transatlantic Academy. He received his Ph.D. and M.A. from Yale University and his B.A. in history from Harvard University.

Graeme Robertson is Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Director of the Center for Slavic, Eurasian and East European Studies. His work focuses on authoritarian regimes. He has published two books and articles in many academic journals including the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, *The Journal of Politics* and the *British Journal of Political Science*, as well as contributing regularly to the media on Russia and Ukraine. Graeme is currently the Associate Editor for Comparative Politics for the *American Journal of Political Science*.

Victor C. Shih is Ho Miu Lam Chair Associate Professor in China and Pacific Relations at the University of California at San Diego. He is the author of a book published by the Cambridge University Press entitled *Factions and Finance in China: Elite Conflict and Inflation*. His second book, *Economic Shocks and Authoritarian Stability*, was published by the University of Michigan Press. He is further the author of numerous articles appearing in academic and business journals, including *The American Political Science Review*, *The China Quarterly*, *Journal of Politics*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, and frequent adviser to the financial community.

Daniel Treisman is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles and a research associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research. A graduate of Oxford University (B.A. Hons.) and Harvard University (Ph.D. 1995), he has published four books and many articles in political science and economics journals including *The American Political Science Review* and *The American Economic Review*, as well as in public affairs journals such as *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy*. His research focuses on Russian politics and economics as well as comparative political economy, including the analysis of democratization, the politics of authoritarian states, political decentralization, and corruption.

Sean Yom is Associate Professor of Political Science at Temple University and Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Research Institute. He specializes in the study of regimes and governance in the Middle East, especially in Arab monarchies like Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco, as well as implications for US foreign policy. His work includes *From Resilience to Revolution: How Foreign Interventions Destabilize the Middle East* (Columbia University Press, 2016), several textbooks on the Middle East, and articles in print journals like *Comparative Political Studies*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *Global Policy Journal*, and *Journal of Democracy*. Education: A.B. (Hon.), Brown University; Ph.D., Harvard University.

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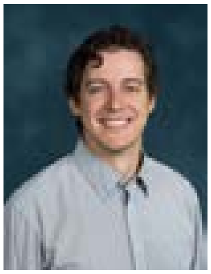
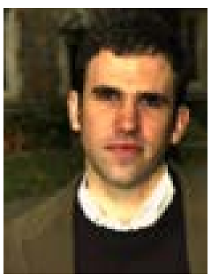
Executive Editors



Dan Slater specializes in the politics and history of enduring dictatorships and emerging democracies, with a regional focus on Southeast Asia. At the University of Michigan, he serves as the Ronald and Eileen Weiser Professor of Emerging Democracies, the Director of the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies, and Professor of Political Science. Previously, he served for 12 years on the faculty at the University of Chicago, where he was the Director of the Center for International Social Science Research, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, and associate member in the Department of Sociology.



Rob Mickey is Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of Graduate Studies at the University of Michigan. His research focuses on U.S. politics in historical perspective. He is interested in American political development, political parties, racial politics, and policy responses to inequality.

Guest Editor

Natalia Forrat is a WCED Postdoctoral Fellow. She received her PhD in Sociology from Northwestern University in 2017. Previously, she was pre-doctoral fellow at the Center for Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law at Stanford University and postdoctoral fellow at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame. Her research is focused on the social basis of authoritarian power, the political economy of authoritarian regimes, and post-communist countries.

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Derek Groom is an Academic Program Specialist with the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies. In this role, he manages the programming, administration, and research/outreach activities of WCED. Before coming to U-M, Derek worked in Washington, DC at American Councils for International Education, administering the Overseas Flagship Programs and Flagship Language Initiatives in Eurasia and Africa. In 2013, Derek completed the Russian Overseas Flagship Program in St. Petersburg, Russia as a Boren Scholar.

About *Democracy and Autocracy*

Democracy and Autocracy is the official newsletter of the American Political Science Association's Democracy and Autocracy section (formerly known as the Comparative Democratization section). First known as *CompDem*, it has been published three times a year since 2003. In October 2010, the newsletter was renamed *APSA-CD* and expanded to include substantive articles on democracy, as well as news and notes on the latest developments in the field. In September 2018, it was renamed the *Annals of Comparative Democratization* to reflect the increasingly high academic content and recognition of the symposia.

About WCED

Housed in the International Institute at the University of Michigan, the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED) began operation in September 2008. Named in honor of Ronald and Eileen Weiser and inspired by their time in Slovakia during Ambassador Weiser's service as U.S. Ambassador from 2001-04, WCED promotes scholarship to better understand the conditions and policies that foster the transition from autocratic rule to democratic governance, past and present.

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Section News

Call for Applications – Council on Foreign Relations' International Affairs Fellowship for Tenured International Relations Scholars (IAF-TIRS).

The fellowship provides support for faculty members during a sabbatical year to gain hands on experience in the foreign policy process working in a U.S. government agency, on Capitol Hill, or at an international organization. The IAF-TIRS helps close the gap between research and practice, enriching teaching and scholarship by enabling fellows to become practitioners. The program also benefits policymakers by exposing them to critical scholarly research relevant to the foreign policy and national security issues facing the United States and the world. More information is available here.

Michael Albertus *(Associate Professorof Political Science, University of Chicago)* published the following articles and op-eds:

Michael Albertus. "Land Reform and Civil Conflict: Theory and Evidence from Peru." 2020. *American Journal of Political Science* 64(2): 256-274.

Michael Albertus. "The Fate of Former Authoritarian Elites under Democracy." 2019. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63(3): 727-759.

Op-ed article, "The Coronavirus Will Cause New Crises in Latin America." *Foreign Policy* (April 2020)

Op-ed article, "The Coronavirus Is Coming for Dictators." *Washington Post/The Monkey Cage* (April 2020)

Archie Brown *(Emeritus Professor of Politics, University of Oxford)* published the following book:

Archie Brown. 2020. *The Human Factor: Gorbachev, Reagan, and Thatcher, and the End of the Cold War.* Oxford University Press.

Lenka Bustikova *(Associate Professor of Political Science, Arizona State University)* published the following book:

Lenka Bustikova. 2019. *Extreme Reactions: Radical Right Mobilization in Eastern Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Melani Cammett *(Clarence Dillon Professor of Internatonal Affairs, Department of Government, Harvard University)* recently co-authored the following article:

Melani Cammett, Ishac Diwan and Irina Vartanova. "Insecurity and Political Values in the Arab World." *Democratization*, February 2020.

Paula Clerici *(Professor, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella and Universidad de Buenos Aires)* had the following article recently published:

Paula Clerici (2020) "Minorities at the Gate: the Legislative Contribution of Opposition Minorities and the Committee System. Evidence from Argentina," *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/13572334.2020.1741759

Agnes Cornell *(Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg)*, **Jørgen Møller** *(Professor, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University)*, **and Svend-Erik Skaaning,** *(Professor, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University)* co-authored the following book:

Cornell, Agnes; Møller, Jørgen; Skaaning, Svend-Erik. *Democratic Stability in an Age of Crisis : Reassessing the Interwar Period*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2020. 256 p. (Comparative Politics).

Cornell also published the following article with **Carl Henrik Knutsen** *(Professor of Political Science, University of Oslo)* and **Jan Teorell** *(Professor of Political Science, Lund University)*:

Cornell, Agnes, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Jan Teorell. April 2020. "Bureaucracy and Growth." *Comparative Political Studies* 00(0): 1-37.

Sirianne Dahlum *(Senior Researcher, Peace Research Institute Oslo)*, **Carl Henrik Knutsen** *(Professor of Political Science, University of Oslo)*, and **Tore Wig** *(Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Oslo)* recently published the following article:

Dahlum, Sirianne, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Tore Wig. 2019. "Who Revolts? Empirically Revisiting the Social Origins of Democracy." *The Journal of Politics* 81 (4).

Vilde Lunnan Djuve *(Ph.D. Student, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University)*, **Carl Henrik Knutsen**, and **Tore Wig** co-authored the following article:

Djuve, Vilde Lunnan, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Tore

Wig. 2019. "Patterns of Regime Breakdown Since the French Revolution." *Comparative Political Studies* 53:6, 923-958. Note: this is an updated version of Working Paper No. 69. (First published Oct 2019).

Alexander Taaning Grundholm *(Ph.D. Research Fellow, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University)* recently published the following article:

Grundholm, Alexander Taaning. March 2020. "Taking it Personal? Investigating Regime Personalization as an Autocratic Survival Strategy." *Democratization* 27:5, 797-815.

Sebnem Gumuscu *(Assistant Professor of Political Science, Middlebury College)* and **Berk Esen** *(Assistant Professor of International Relations, Bilkent University)* recently published the following article:

Esen, B., & Gumuscu, S. (2020). "Why did Turkish democracy collapse? A political economy account of AKP's authoritarianism." *Party Politics*.

Catherine Elizabeth Herrold *(Assistant Professor, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy)* will be promoted to Associate Professor on July 1 at Indiana University, with tenure to follow in 2021. Her book, *Delta Democracy: Pathways to Incremental Civic Revolution in Egypt and Beyond*, was published in March by Oxford University Press, Bridging the Gap Series. The book analyzes how Egyptian civil society organizations have promoted democracy since the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings and offers recommendations for the reform of US aid for democracy and development.

Calla Hummel *(Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Miami)*, **John Gerring** *(Professor of Government, University of Texas at Austin)*, and **Thomas Burt** *(Graduate Student, Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin)* recently published the following article:

Hummel, Calla, John Gerring, and Thomas Burt. 2019. "Do Political Finance Reforms Reduce Corruption?" *The British Journal of Political Science* 1-21.

Amaney A. Jamal *(Edwards S. Sanford Professor of Politics, Princeton University)* was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Maiah Jaskoski *(Associate Professor, Department of Politics and International Affairs, Northern Arizona University)* has an upcoming article:

Jaskoski, Maiah. Forthcoming 2020. "Participatory Institutions as a Focal Point for Mobilizing: Prior Consultation and Indigenous Conflict in Colombia's Extractive Industries." *Comparative Politics* (July). Published online January 2020.

Katrin Kinzelbach *(Non-Resident Fellow, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) and Professor, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)*, **Ilyas Saliba** *(Research Associate, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi))*, **Janika Spannagel** *(Research Fellow, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi))*, and **Robert Quinn** *(Founding Executive Director, Scholars at Risk Network)*, recently published the following report:

Kinzelbach, Katrin, Ilyas Saliba, Janika Spannagel, Robert Quinn. March 2020. "Putting the Academic Freedom Index Into Action." *Global Public Policy Institute*.

Petia Kostadinova *(Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Illinois at Chicago)* is delighted to announce that her book *Bulgaria's Democratic Institutions at Thirty: A Balance Sheet* is available for pre-order.

Didi Kuo *(Associate Director for Research and Senior Research Scholar, Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Stanford University)* recently published the folllowing article:

Kuo, Didi. 2020. "Democratization and the Franchise." *Comparative Politics* 52(3): 515-532

Armand Leroi *(Professor of Evolutionary Developmental Biology, Imperial College London)*, **Ben Lambert** *(Research Associate, Imperial College London)*, **Matthias Mauch** *(Visiting Academic, Queen Mary University of London)*, **Marina Papadopoulou** *(Ph.D. Student, Groningen Institute of Evolutionary Life Sciences of RuG)*, **Sophia Ananiadou** *(Professor, School of Computer Science, University of Manchester)*, **Staffan Lindberg** *Director, V-Dem Institute, Gothenburg University)*, and **Patrik Lindenfors** *(Researcher, Institute for Future Studies, Stockholm)* recently published the following article.

Leroi, Armand M., Ben Lambert, Matthias Mauch, Marina Papadopoulou, Sophia Ananiadou, Staffan I. Lindberg and Patrik Lindenfors. 2020. "On Revolutions." *Palgrave Communications* 6(4). Note: V-Dem Working Paper No. 63.

Anna Lührmann *(Assistant Professor of Political Science, Deputy Director of V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg)*, **Kyle Marquardt** *(Assistant Professor of Politics *and Governance, National Research University Higher School of Economics)*, and **Valeriya Mechkova** *(Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg)* have the following forthcoming article.

Lührmann, Anna, Kyle Marquardt and Valeriya Mechkova. Forthcoming. "Constraining Governments: New Indices of Vertical, Horizontal and Diagonal Accountability." *American Political Science Review.* Note: V-Dem Working Paper 46

Lührmann also has a forthcoming article co-authored with **Bryan Rooney** *(Associate Political Scientist, RAND Corporation)***:**

Lührmann, Anna and Bryan Rooney. Forthcoming. "Autocratization by Decree: States of Emergency and Democratic Decline." *Comparative Politics.*

Additionally, **Lührmann** recently published the following article with **Sebastian Hellmeier** *(Postdoctoral Research Fellow, V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg):*

Lührmann, Anna and Sebastian Hellmeier. February 2020. "Populism, Nationalism and Illiberalism: A Challenge for Democracy and Civil Society." *Heinrich Böll Sitftung.*

Ellen Lust *(Professor of Political Science, Founding Director of the Programs on Governance and Local Development, University of Gothenburg)*, **Jannis Grimm** *(Research Associate at the Institute for Protest and Social Movement Studies in Berlin (ipb))*, **Kevin Koehler** *(Institute of Political Science, Leiden University)*, **Ilyas Saliba** *(Research Associate, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi))*, and **Isabell Schierenbeck** *(Professor of Political Science, Gothenburg University)* are pleased to announce the publication of their new book *Safer Field Research in the Social Sciences: A Guide to Human and Digital Security in Hostile Environments*, which will be published by SAGE in early May. The book explores the challenges and risks of social science fieldwork, sharing best practices for conducting research in hostile environments. Grounded in real-world examples, the book provides practical guidance on: choosing research questions in sensitive contexts; data and digital security to minimize fieldwork risk; and tools and templates to develop a tailored security framework.

David K. Ma *(Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)* has the following forthcoming article:

Ma, David K. 2020. "Explaining Judicial Authority in Dominant-Party Democracies: The Case of the Constitutional Court of South Africa." *Comparative Politics* 52:4. (Forthcoming)

Seraphine Maerz *(Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Gothenburg)* recently published the following article:

Maerz, F, Seraphine. 2020. "The Many Faces of Authoritarian Persistence: A Set-Theory Perspective on the Survival Strategies of Authoritarian Regimes," *Government and Opposition*, 55: 64-87. (Accepted August 02, 2018)

Maerz also co-authored the following article with **Anna Lührmann**, **Sandra Grahn** *(Associate Researcher, V-Dem Institute, University of Gothenburg)*, **Sebastian Hellmeier**, and **Staffan Lindberg**:

Maerz, Seraphine, Lührmann, Anna, Sandra Grahn, Sebastian Hellmeier, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2020. "State of the World 2019: Autocratization Surges, Resistance Grows." Feature article, *Democratization*, 27.

Kyle Marquardt, **Daniel Pemstein** *(Associate Professor of Political Science, North Dakota State University)*, **Brigitte Seim** *(Assistant Professor of Public Policy, University of North Carolina-Chapel HIll)*, and **Yi-ting Wang** *(Assistant Professor of Political Science, National Cheng Kung University)* co-authored the following article:

Marquardt, Kyle L., Daniel Pemstein, Brigitte Seim, and Yi-ting Wang. 2019 "What Makes Experts Reliable? Expert Reliability and the Estimation of Latent Traits." *Research & Politics*. Note: this is an updated version of Working Paper No. 68

Kelly McMann *(Professor of Political Science, Case Western Reserve University)*, **Michael Coppedge** *(Professor of Political Science, Notre Dame University)*, **John Gerring**, **Matthew Maguire** *(Assistant Professor, Lucas College and Graduate School of Business, San José State University)*, and **Staffan Lindberg** have the following forthcoming article:

Kelly McMann, Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, Matthew Maguire, and Staffan I. Lindberg. "Explaining Subnational Regime Variation: Country-Level Factors." *Comparative Politics*, forthcoming online in 2020, in print July 2021. Note: V-Dem Working Paper 28.

Lee Morgenbesser *(Senior Lecturer, School of Government and International Relations, Griffith University)* published a new monograph entitled *The Rise of Sophisticated Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press). He also published "The Menu of Autocratic Innovation" in *Democratization*.

Olena Nikolayenko *(Associate Professor of Political Science, Fordham University)* published the following article:

Olena Nikolayenko. 2020. "Invisible Revolutionaries: Women's Participation in the Revolution of Dignity." *Comparative Politics* 52:3, 451-472.

Marina Povitkina *(Postdoctoral Researcher, Centre for Collective Action Research, University of Gothenburg)* and **Ketevan Bolkvadze** *(Assistant Professor of Political Science, Lund University) have the following forthcoming article:*

Povitkina, Marina and Ketevan Bolkvadze. Forthcoming. "Fresh Pipes with Dirty Water: How Quality of Government Shapes the Provision of Public Goods in Democracies." *European Journal of Political Research*. Note: V-Dem Working Papers Series No. 62.

Rachel Sigman *(Assistant Professor of Political Science, Naval Postgraduate School)* and **Staffan Lindberg** have the following forthcoming article:

Sigman, Rachel and Staffan I. Lindberg. Forthcoming. "Neopatrimonialism and Democracy: An Empirical Investigation of Africa's Political Regimes," in Von Doepp, Peter and Gabrielle Lynch (eds.) *Handbook of Democratization in Africa*, London: Routledge.

Ursula Van Beek *(Professor, Department of Political Science, Director of the Transformation Research Unit (TRU), Stellenbosch University)* is delighted to announce that the Transformation Research Unit (TRU) at Stellenbosch University in South Africa has recently published its latest book in a series focused on democracy in a cross-cultural comparative perspective. Taking legitimacy as the key concept and distinguishing between its objective and subjective forms, the volume reviews the multiple challenges democracy faces in today's world. More information about the book, its background, and TRU's current project can be found here.

Ursula van Beek, ed. *Democracy under Threat: A Crisis of Legitimacy?* Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019. Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century

Jong-sung You *(Professor, Graduate School of Social Policy, Gachon University, South Korea)* has published the following articles:

You, Jong-sung. 2020. "The Changing Dynamics of State-Business Relations and the Politics of Reform and Capture in South Korea." *Review of International Political Economy*. (Online published 9 March 2020).

with Yoonkyung Lee (University of Toronto). 2019. "Is Class-Voting Emergent in Korea?" *Journal of East Asian Studies* 19(2): 197-213.