Scholars have generally assumed that courts in authoritarian states are pawns of their regimes, upholding the interests of governing elites and frustrating the efforts of their opponents. As a result, nearly all studies in comparative judicial politics have focused on democratic and democratizing countries. This volume brings together leading scholars in comparative judicial politics to consider the causes and consequences of judicial empowerment in authoritarian states. It demonstrates the wide range of governance tasks that courts perform, as well as the way in which courts can serve as critical sites of contention both among the ruling elite and between regimes and their citizens. Drawing on empirical and theoretical insights from every major region of the world, this volume advances our understanding of judicial politics in authoritarian regimes.

Tom Ginsburg is Professor of Law and Political Science at the University of Illinois. He is the author of Judicial Review in New Democracies (Cambridge University Press, 2003), which won the C. Herman Pritchett Award from the American Political Science Association for the best book on law and courts in 2004. Ginsburg serves as co-director of the Comparative Constitutions Project at the University of Illinois and runs the Program in Asian Law, Politics and Society.

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Rule by Law: The Politics of Courts in Authoritarian Regimes

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I am therefore convinced that the prince who, in presence of an encroaching democracy, should endeavor to impair the judicial authority in his dominions, and to diminish the political influence of lawyers, would commit a great mistake: he would let slip the substance of authority to grasp the shadow. He would act more wisely in introducing lawyers into the government; and if he entrusted despotism to them under the form of violence, perhaps he would find it again in their hands under the external features of justice and law.

– Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Book I, Chapter 16
Contents

Contributors ix

Introduction: The Functions of Courts in Authoritarian Politics 1
Tamir Moustafa and Tom Ginsburg

1 Of Judges and Generals: Security Courts under Authoritarian
Regimes in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile 23
Anthony W. Pereira

2 Administrative Law and the Judicial Control of Agents in
Authoritarian Regimes 58
Tom Ginsburg

3 Singapore: The Exception That Proves Rules Matter 73
Gordon Silverstein

4 Agents of Anti-Politics: Courts in Pinochet’s Chile 102
Lisa Hilbink

5 Law and Resistance in Authoritarian States: The
Judicialization of Politics in Egypt 132
Tamir Moustafa

6 Courts Out of Context: Authoritarian Sources of Judicial
Failure in Chile (1973–1990) and Argentina (1976–1983) 156
Robert Barros

7 Enforcing the Autocratic Political Order and the Role of
Courts: The Case of Mexico 180
Beatriz Magaloni

8 The Institutional Diffusion of Courts in China: Evidence
from Survey Data 207
Pierre Landry
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Building Judicial Independence in Semi-Democracies: Uganda and Zimbabwe</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jennifer Widner with Daniel Scher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Judicial Power in Authoritarian States: The Russian Experience</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peter H. Solomon, Jr.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Courts in Semi-Democratic/Authoritarian Regimes: The Judicialization of Turkish (and Iranian) Politics</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hootan Shambayati</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Judicial Systems and Economic Development</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hilton L. Root and Karen May</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Courts in Authoritarian Regimes</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martin Shapiro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*References* 337  
*Index* 363
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