Dictators and Their Secret Police

How do dictators stay in power? When, and how, do they use repression to do so? Dictators and Their Secret Police explores the role of the coercive apparatus under authoritarian rule in Asia – how these secret organizations originated, how they operated, and how their violence affected ordinary citizens. Greitens argues that autocrats face a coercive dilemma: whether to create internal security forces designed to manage popular mobilization, or defend against a potential coup. Violence against civilians, she suggests, is a by-product of their attempt to resolve this dilemma.

Drawing on a wealth of new historical evidence, this book challenges the conventional wisdom on dictatorship: what autocrats are threatened by, how they respond, and how this affects the lives and security of the millions under their rule. It offers an unprecedented view into the use of surveillance, coercion, and violence, and sheds new light on the institutional and social foundations of authoritarian power.

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Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University

The Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute of Columbia University were inaugurated in 1962 to bring to a wider public the results of significant new research on modern and contemporary East Asia.
Dictators and Their Secret Police

Coercive Institutions and State Violence

SHEENA CHESTNUT GREITENS
To my parents,
Tim and Janet Chestnut
## Contents

**List of tables and figures**  
**A note on romanization**  
**Acknowledgments**

### PART I  THE PUZZLE AND THE ARGUMENT

1 Introduction  
2 A theory of coercive institutions and state violence

### PART II  THE ORIGINS OF COERCIVE INSTITUTIONS

3 Organizing coercion in Taiwan  
4 Organizing coercion in the Philippines  
5 Organizing coercion in South Korea

### PART III  COERCIVE INSTITUTIONS AND STATE VIOLENCE

6 Coercive institutions and repression in Taiwan  
7 Coercive institutions and repression in the Philippines  
8 Coercive institutions and repression in South Korea

### PART IV  EXTENSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

9 Extending the argument: coercion outside East Asia  
10 Conclusion

**Appendix: A note on sources**  
**Index**
Tables and figures

TABLES

1.1 Fragmentation in authoritarian coercive institutions  page 8
1.2 Ratio of authoritarian internal security personnel to population  9
1.3 Summary of cases  16
2.1 Predicted coercive institutional configuration based on threat type  30
3.1 Levels of Taiwanese representation in the ROC military  100
4.1 The “Rolex 12” in the Philippines  130
5.1 Regional origins of government vs. internal security officials under Park, pre-1972  154
5.2 Garrison and Emergency Decrees in South Korea under Yushin  161
5.3 Regional origins of government vs. internal security officials under Park, post-1972  164
5.4 Regional origins of government vs. internal security officials under Chun  171
8.1 State violence linked to Emergency Decrees in South Korea  249
10.1 Explanatory success of theory vs. alternatives: coercive institutional origins  295
10.2 Explanatory success of theory vs. alternatives: patterns of state violence  296
### List of tables and figures

#### Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Threat landscape for autocrats</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>How coercive institutions affect violence</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>The intelligence process and organizational requirements</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>The intelligence pathway</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>The incentives pathway</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Taiwan intelligence agencies’ social monitoring and reporting network</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Political cartoon: Ilocano “goon rule”</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Political cartoon: Marcos and reorganization of the coercive apparatus</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Individuals sentenced for political crimes in Taiwan (annual average)</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Annual number of executions for political crimes in Taiwan</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Surveillance documentation for Lei Chen</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Annual number of political arrests in the Philippines</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Annual number of disappearances and extrajudicial killings in the Philippines</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Political cartoon: protecting the children of “big shots”</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Political cartoon: the “lifting” of martial law</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Individuals indicted for political crimes in South Korea, 1972–86</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Probability of violent state response to protest, by region</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Decreasing state violence in Chile under Pinochet (1973–90)</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A note on romanization

Chinese-language names and terms have been romanized using the pinyin system. Korean-language names and terms have been romanized using the McCune-Reischauer system. Following Korean and Chinese custom, surnames precede given names unless otherwise stated.

Exceptions were made for authors who have published in English under alternate transliterations, and for names, places, and organizations with other official or standard English spellings that are more widely known and accepted (Chiang Kai-shek, Park Chung Hee, Seoul, etc.).
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