

Undue Process

Why do autocrats hold political trials when outcomes are presumed known from the start? *Undue Process* examines how autocrats weaponize the judiciary to stay in control. Contrary to conventional wisdom that courts constrain arbitrary power, Fiona Feiang Shen-Bayh argues that judicial processes can instead be used to legitimize dictatorship and dissuade dissent when power is contested. Focusing on sub-Saharan Africa since independence, Shen-Bayh draws on fine-grained archival data on regime threats and state repression to explain why political trials are often political purges in disguise, providing legal cover for the persecution of regime rivals. This compelling analysis reveals how courts can be used to repress political challengers, institutionalize punishment, and undermine the rule of law. Engaging and illuminating, *Undue Process* provides new theoretical insights into autocratic judiciaries and will interest political scientists and scholars studying authoritarian regimes, African politics, and political control.

FIONA FEIANG SHEN-BAYH is an assistant professor of government at William & Mary.

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Undue Process

Persecution and Punishment in Autocratic Courts

FIONA FEIANG SHEN-BAYH

William & Mary



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For Baba.

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