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## The Politics of Authoritarian Rule

What drives politics in dictatorships? Milan W. Svobik argues that all authoritarian regimes must resolve two fundamental conflicts. First, dictators face threats from the masses over which they rule – this is the *problem of authoritarian control*. A second, separate, challenge arises from the elites with whom dictators rule – this is the *problem of authoritarian power-sharing*. Crucially, whether and how dictators resolve these two problems are shaped by the dismal environment in which authoritarian politics takes place: in a dictatorship, no independent authority has the power to enforce agreements among key actors and violence is the ultimate arbiter of conflicts. Using the tools of game theory, Svobik explains why some dictators, like Saddam Hussein, establish personal autocracy and stay in power for decades; why leadership changes elsewhere are regular and institutionalized, as in contemporary China; why some authoritarian regimes are ruled by soldiers, as Uganda was under Idi Amin; why many dictatorships, like PRI-era Mexico, maintain regime-sanctioned political parties; and why a country's authoritarian past casts a long shadow over its prospects for democracy, as the unfolding events of the Arab Spring reveal. When assessing his arguments, Svobik complements these and other historical case studies with the statistical analysis of comprehensive original data on institutions, leaders, and ruling coalitions across all dictatorships from 1946 to 2008.

Milan W. Svobik is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Chicago. Svobik's articles on authoritarian politics, transitions to democracy, and democratic consolidation have appeared in leading political science journals, including the *American Political Science Review* and the *American Journal of Political Science*. His research interests include comparative politics, political economy, and formal political theory.

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MILAN W. SVOLIK

*University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*



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