

# APSA-COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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## Newsletter

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### Letter from the Editors

#### *Varieties of Authoritarianism*

by Mark Hallerberg and Mark Kayser

#### *Letter from the editors*

More than a decade ago Hall and Sosskice (2001) published their book entitled *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. The countries in their study were advanced industrialized economies, and they were all democracies. In this issue, we consider the increasingly nuanced literature on authoritarian regimes.

Two of the articles consider how to conceptualize and to measure the “varieties” that one finds.

Tom Pepinsky contrasts “institutional” and “logics” approaches to such regimes. He argues that they highlight different aspects of authoritarian rule. The institutional approach is good at generalizability and at cross-country comparisons. He argues that the “logics” approach also has value but is under-appreciated. It requires careful single case studies to identify and doc-

ument the “logics” as well as a scaling up to cross-national comparisons.

Joseph Wright revisits the Geddes (2003) trichotomy of autocracies, which categorize such regimes as either military, personalist, or party-based. He critiques the simple categorization and suggests instead a measure of autocracy that he creates from 25 variables along two principal components. This approach means that some concepts are not reduced only to simple dichotomies, one can measure the relative strength of some attributes of autocracies and not just whether a country fits in a certain box, and the data can vary within countries. He provides an example of the method from Communist China where the first component, party strength, was generally stronger than the second component, military strength, but also increased first in 1976 and again in 1987.

The second set of authors consider the outputs of autocracies.

Sarah J. Hummel argues that the level of uncertainty about mass preferences varies systematically across different

*Continued on page 2*

### Authoritarianism: Logics and Institutions

by Thomas B. Pepinsky

Non-democratic regimes are not all alike, but there are many ways of conceptualizing how they vary and why this might matter. In this essay I contrast two broad approaches to thinking about variation across authoritarian regimes. The institutions approach focuses on the observable institutional

structures that characterize the rulers of authoritarian regimes: whether they are military or non-military regimes, the existence of a legislature, the number of political parties, and others. The logics approach centers on the nature of political conflict within the regime and the dimensions along which it varies, which may include factors such as the distribution of power across groups or factions, cleavage structures, ideology,

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types of autocratic regimes. Regimes are willing to have more flexibility in policies they use to distribute rents when uncertainty is high. She illustrates this argument with the example of bi-lateral water management agreements in central Asia. Her empirics indicate that the same country signs different types of agreements depending upon the aggregate level of uncertainty for the autocracy.

Nathan M. Jensen, Edmund Malesky and Stephen Weymouth consider why more developed legislatures in autocracies seem to lead to more economic growth. They focus on one part of the story, namely investment, and they ask what role legislature may play providing investor protection in autocracies. They find that legislatures do not protect investors from the sitting government. They come to this conclusion through both a survey of investors as well as through an analysis of ratings. Legislatures still provide an important role, however- they help protect investors from expropriation from each other. They find that autocracies with multiple parties in their legislatures are more likely to have stronger investor protection laws.

Commercial interests are relevant in Alexandros Tokhi's article, although they play a different, non-economic role. He evaluates under what conditions autocracies comply under international security treaties. He argues that autocracies are more likely to comply the longer constraining structures have been in place. Moreover, competition among the veto players that do exist in an autocracy is also important, with the more commercial interests especially important. If business interests that profit from trade have some role in the autocracy, that government is more likely to stick to treaties that ban weapons of mass destruction. He tests this argument with a dataset he created of compliance under three WMD non-proliferation treaties in autocracies in

the Middle East.

Finally, we would like to conclude with an announcement. This is issue five of a six issue sequence that we have edited. After our Fall issue, the newsletter will move to the stewardship of Matt and Sona Golder at Penn State University. We are delighted they will succeed us. We plan some concluding thoughts in our last issue. Stay tuned.



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and the embeddedness of the regime in society and the economy. I argue that each approach has an affinity for a different type of research into authoritarian rule, which suggests that they are complementary endeavors. However, reconciling them into a coherent paradigm is far from straightforward, and this makes such reconciliation the most important theoretical problem for the maturing literature on comparative authoritarianism.

The institutions approach dates to Geddes (1999), and has proven to be among the most productive areas of research in comparative politics in the past fifteen years (Brownlee 2007; Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Geddes, Wright, and Frantz forthcoming 2014; Magaloni and Kricheli 2010; Wahman, Teorell, and Hadenius 2013;

***... and this makes such reconciliation the most important theoretical problem for the maturing literature on comparative authoritarianism.***

Wright 2008). Institutions of particular relevance to authoritarian rule include legislatures, parties (either single parties or hegemonic/dominant parties), militaries, and succession procedures. One obvious benefit of the institutional approach is that authoritarian institutions are observable: it is relatively straightforward to classify authoritarian regimes based on what sorts of institutions they have created to manage political opposition, share power, and structure succession. This need not mean that it is easy to classify regimes: as Geddes, Wright, and Frantz recently remind us, “many autocracies hide the de facto rules that shape and constrain political choices behind a façade of formal democratic institu-

tions” (forthcoming 2014: 5). However, institutional approaches begin with the assumption that institutions do capture something, and that something is both comparable and observable to the analyst—although perhaps with error—across cases.

The same is not true of the logics approach. Here, the point of departure is that political regimes that we observe are equilibria of strategic interactions among groups and/or individuals, and as a consequence, that the norms and formal and informal institutions that we do observe reflect those equilibria (Calvert 1995; Shepsle 2006). The structure of such political conflict can vary along countless dimensions, and there is no general reason to think that the axes of political conflict in one regime have analogues anywhere else. Two observations follow. First, the same institution (say, a legislature) will do very different things in different regimes. Second, generalizing about a single logic of authoritarian rule is difficult. Of course, there are some treatments of non-democratic rule in which generalizable logics are proposed. Friedrich and Brzezinski (1965) and Linz (2000) describe the basic logics of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Wintrobe (1998) provides a general treatment of non-democratic rule in which regimes vary by what they attempt to maximize (wealth or power) and the degree of mass incorporation (high or low) to yield a four-fold typology of regimes: tyrannies, tinpots, totalitarians, and timocracies. More recently, Acemoglu and coauthors have analyzed the problem of political order in the absence of credible commitments (Acemoglu, Egorov, and Sonin 2008, 2012; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Acemoglu, Ticchi, and Vindigni 2010).

We need not overstate the differences between institutions and logics perspectives. Indeed, Geddes’s foundational contribution held that authoritarian institutions either reflected the logics of political competition within different types of regimes, or independently affected how groups compete (it is not

exactly clear which; see Pepinsky forthcoming 2014). Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) begin with a spare model of conflict under authoritarian rule and derive predictions about the party institutions that emerge as a consequence. More broadly, institutional approaches to authoritarian politics must contain a logic of authoritarian rule that these institutions reflect or constrain in order to make predictions about how institutions matter. Still, the rapidly developing empirical literature on authoritarian institutions has conceived of institutions as either independent determinants of social, political, and economic outcomes, or as fully capturing whatever logics lie at the root of authoritarian rule, which obviates the need to study those logics (Pepinsky forthcoming 2014). And the works of Friedrich and Brzezinski, Linz, Wintrobe, and

***... it requires looking beyond the “surface structure” of everyday politics to uncover the “deep structure” of authoritarian rule, and then specifying the rules that transform deep conflicts to surface politics.***

Acemoglu and coauthors have not yet generated a research program that supports broad cross-national comparative statistical work on varieties of authoritarian rule. It is unclear how one might classify authoritarian regimes for comparative analysis following the logics approach.

Neither logics nor institutions are the “correct” approach to the study of authoritarianism. Instead, each is a framework that clarifies certain aspects of authoritarian rule, and as such, each has an affinity for a particular kind of research enterprise in the study of

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authoritarianism.

The value of the institutions perspective lies in its generalizability. Specifying the differences among types of authoritarian regimes has yielded a bounty of cross-national findings about the salutary benefits associated with having quasi-democratic institutions. The proliferation and refinement of regime classifications allows for ever more careful studies of the consequences of variation in authoritarian regimes as captured by observable institutions.

***This problem of reconciling theoretically the logics and institutions of authoritarian rule will occupy the best new research on how authoritarian regimes.***

The newest research explicitly recognizes the problem of causal identification in cross-national research (e.g. Miller 2013).

The value of the logics perspective is altogether different, and in my opinion, insufficiently recognized. Empirically, careful specification of the logic of political conflict under a given authoritarian regime has a natural affinity with close country studies. This is not a call for more descriptive analyses of the minutiae of authoritarian politics—precisely the opposite. To borrow from the language of generative grammar (Chomsky 1957), it requires looking beyond the “surface structure” of everyday politics to uncover the “deep structure” of authoritarian rule, and

then specifying the rules that transform deep conflicts to surface politics. The logics perspective also has a natural affinity with within-country research designs that carefully specify the observable implications of the logics of rule and test them using hard-to-find data. Theoretically, formal theoretical work in the vein of Acemoglu, Egorov, and Sonin (2008, 2012) has provided rigorous microfoundations for the stability of social orders in the absence of institutions that can make binding agreements. Mapping those theoretical findings to empirical claims can be challenging, but illustrative evidence from actual cases can be illuminating (see Acemoglu, Robinson, and Torvik 2013 for one example).

The drawback of the logics approach is that it sacrifices cross-national comparability, which is why this perspective has not generated a cross-national empirical literature to support it. Moreover, as any comparativist with extensive country knowledge knows, it is all too easy to overstate the uniqueness or peculiarity of a particular social or political formation. Only comparison can rule out empirically the incidental features of authoritarian politics, and here, the value of the institutional approach shines. But the drawback of the institutional approach is that it is uneasily wed to a theory of authoritarian politics that generates sharp predictions about how and why institutions should matter.

This problem of reconciling theoretically the logics and institutions of authoritarian rule will occupy the best new research on how authoritarian regimes vary (for a related argument, see Svobik 2013). Already there are recent contributions that push this theoretical literature on authoritarianism in the right

direction (e.g. Little 2012; Svobik 2012). Merging these insights with careful single-country studies of authoritarian politics, and then scaling up from the country studies to the cross-national comparisons, represents a frontier for a truly cumulative research program.



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# The Classification of Autocracies: A Principal Components Approach

by Joseph Wright

Research on autocracies in comparative politics and international relations has surged in the past decade. In an effort to understand not just how dictatorships differ from democracies but also to examine how dictatorships differ from one another, this research looks at variation in different forms of non-democratic rule. Studies of military conflict, civil war, trade, democratization, repression, and economic growth and investment demonstrate that variation within the group of countries categorized as non-democracies can provide substantial leverage on explaining many important outcomes. As this research grows, measures of many features of autocratic regimes – including typologies – have proliferated. This note discusses an alternative approach to structuring information about autocracies: we use recently coded historical data on 25 variables to construct measures of two dimensions of autocratic rule from an exploratory principle components analysis (PCA).

Scholars of dictatorships have offered several categorizations of autocratic regimes (Huntington 1968; Wintrobe 1990; Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Chehabi and Linz 1998; Geddes 1999; Hadenius and Teorell 2007; Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland 2010). Other studies, such as Gandhi (2008) and Svoboda (2012), focus on a specific attribute of autocratic rule to distinguish one group of autocracies from another or to assess the influence of a concept measured with ordinal values.

The initial data we use for the PCA build on the Geddes' typology (1999, 2003). This project first identifies particular autocratic regimes, which are defined as a set of formal and informal rules for choosing leaders and policies. The rule central to distinguish one regime from another in the same country

is the rule that identifies the group from which leaders can be chosen and determines who influences leadership choice and policy. Autocratic regimes, according to this definition, differ from autocratic spells (periods of uninterrupted non-democratic rule) and individual autocratic leaders.

The original classification uses questions theoretically relevant to understanding politics in autocracies. The questions are grouped into three categories to reflect three regime ideal types: military, personalist, and party. The original coding places regimes in an exclusive category based on whether there are a relatively high number of affirmative answers to questions within a particular category (Geddes 2003, 225). For example, if a regime receives a high number of 'Yes' answers to questions pertaining to personalist dictatorships but a low number on questions addressing military and party rule, then

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the regime is classified as a personalist. Hybrid regimes are those that score relatively highly in more than one category of questions.

This approach to classifying autocracies, while useful for many purposes, faces three issues which stem from the fact that the classification of regimes into exclusive categories reduces potentially relevant information.<sup>1</sup>

First, using a relative cut-point on an 1 Hadenius and Teorell (2007), Svoboda (2012), and Wilson (2014) (among others) discuss these issues.

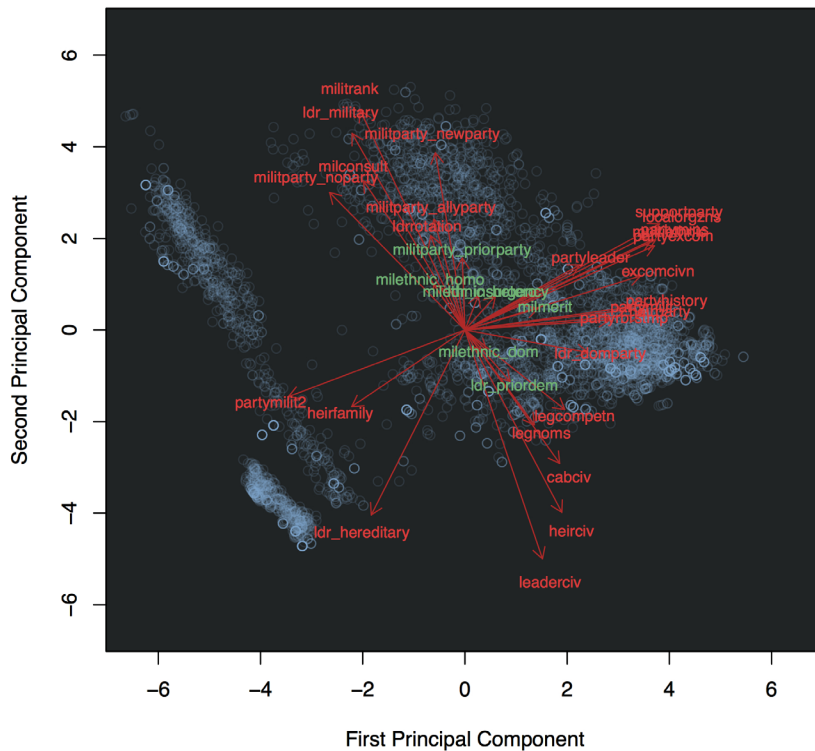
index to delineate whether an individual observation falls into a particular category means that some concepts, which may vary in degree across all dictatorships, are reduced to a binary categorization.

Second, this method of aggregating information does not allow researchers to pinpoint the concepts that are most important for classifying regimes. For example, if a dictatorship is coded as party-based we do not know whether this stems from factors related to the organizational structure of the support party or to rules regulating leader succession. The inability to distinguish different concepts may lead researchers to misapply the typology when testing a particular theory. For example, the typology has been used to measure leader constraints (Weeks 2008), the breadth and depth of the support coalition (Wright 2009), and the range of available coercive and co-opting strategies (Wilson and Piazza 2014). These studies argue that the relevant concept is captured in some of the original questions, but the exclusive categories may be measuring other concepts as well. The exclusive categories do not allow the researcher to pinpoint the relative weight of particular concepts used to place a regime in one category or another.

Finally, the typology places a specific regime in the same category throughout its entire duration. Some of the information used to classify regimes, however, varies over time within the same regime. For example, the answers to questions that assess the extent to which the cabinet is comprised of civilians or controlled by the party and whether the leader's family relatives occupy senior military or party positions, vary over time (in some cases) within the same regime.

Recently coded data from Geddes, Honaker and Wright (2013), combined with a PCA approach, addresses these issues by using information from numerous variables to structure the information into its principal components.

**Figure 1: Two principal components of autocratic rule  
All Data**



This approach does not use arbitrary cut-points in an index; it enables researchers to see which variables contribute the most information to each dimension; and it allows for information on multiple dimensions to vary over time within a particular regime.

### Latent dimensions of autocratic rule

We use information from the time-varying coding of questions used to create the original Geddes' typology. The data used in the PCA contain information from 25 variables constructed from questions about the relationships between the autocratic regime leader, the political party that supports the regime (if there is one), and the military.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1 shows a two-dimensional space derived from constructing the principal components.<sup>3</sup> Each circle is a separate country-year observation. The arrows represent each variable. The direction of each arrow shows how it contributes

to the two principal components and the length of each arrow describes how much weight each variable contributes to the factor loading. Arrows that align in opposite directions (180 degrees)

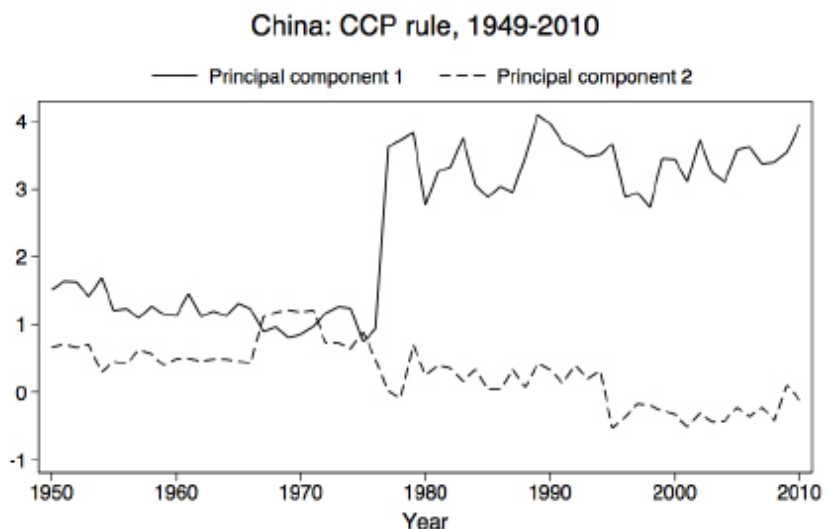
on the horizontal axis, is that it measures the extent to which the political party supporting the regime has power. While difficult to distinguish visually, the cluster of arrows pointing East contain information on this concept: whether a support party exists (suppartparty); whether the support party has local/regional/multi-ethnic representation (localorgs); and the extent to which the cabinet is comprised of party members (partymins).

An initial interpretation of the second principal component (PC2), on the vertical axis, is that it measures the extent to which the military – as an institution – has power. The variables that contribute the most information to this dimension relate to military power, for example whether the military selected the regime leader (ldr military) and whether there is a routine mechanism for the leader to consult the military in policy decisions (milconsult).

### An example

To illustrate the potential utility of the PCA, Figure 2 shows the changes in the two dimensions in China over six

**Figure 2: Two dimensions of autocratic rule in China**



contain similar information but point in different directions because of the (necessarily) arbitrary ordering of the information contained in the variable.

An initial interpretation of the first principal component (PC1), depicted

decades.<sup>4</sup> These changes in the measures reflect particular historical events

<sup>2</sup> We stress that coding of these variables is still in progress; we thus use a multiple imputation model that allows for patterns across time, in any variable within any regime, to construct a rectangular data set for use in PCA.

<sup>3</sup> For this discussion, we only examine the first two dimensions, which capture 42 percent of the variation.

<sup>4</sup> The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is coded as a dominant or one-party civilian regime during its entire time in power by standard autocratic typologies such as Geddes (1999), Hadenius and Teorell (2007), and Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010).

identified to code information in the raw variables, which was then used to construct the principal components.

This initial analysis suggests that throughout most of the period of CCP rule, the party has been stronger than the military, which is reflected in the higher value for the first principal component. The two largest increases in party strength occur in 1976 after the death of Mao and in 1987 when the composition of the party executive committee changes to include more civilians. The death of Mao is reflected in the first principal component by a change in two variables, partyexcom and ldr domparty. With Hua Guofeng succeeding Mao as the regime leader, the first variable picks up the fact that the regime leader no longer had power to unilaterally select members of the party executive committee, the Standing Committee of the Politburo (PSC) (Waller 1981, 79-81). Further, the new

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regime leader was selected from a position within the dominant party rather than as the leader of an insurgency, whereas Mao initially became leader of the CCP during the insurgency against the Nationalist government. The second largest change in party strength occurs in 1987 when the composition of the PSC changes to include fewer military officers and more civilians (Mackerras and Yorke 1990, 61). The decrease in military strength in 1994 reflects the transfer of defacto power from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin in 1994 as Deng grew ill. Jiang's succession

marked the first time a civilian (and non-revolutionary) was selected to lead the CCP.

## Conclusion

Our contribution to the study of “varieties of authoritarianism” departs from the existing practice of creating new categorical typologies of autocratic regimes. Rather, we attempt to structure information to understand the extent to which different variables – which may measure distinct concepts – capture variation in autocracies along distinct dimensions. While our initial analysis uses data from Geddes, Honaker and Wright (2013), this approach can incorporate information from multiple existing data sets – which potentially measure additional concepts along different dimensions – to examine the extent to which these measures overlap with the latent dimensions we construct or whether they capture new dimensions. With the number of existing measures of autocratic rule proliferating in the past decade, we believe a next step is to examine how the existing data can be most appropriately structured for use in applied research.



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## Domestic Uncertainty and Flexible Policy Formation in Authoritarian Regimes

by Sarah J. Hummel

Information scarcity is one of the distinguishing features of authoritarian regimes. Leaders of such countries are uncertain about citizen preferences and accordingly about the strength of potential challenges to their power. However, the level of uncertainty varies across different authoritarian contexts. This in turn has consequences for the degree of flexibility leaders prefer in their rent distribution policies: they place a greater value on flexible policies when uncertainty is high than they do when uncertainty is low. I illustrate this dynamic using the case of international water management in post-Soviet Central Asia, demonstrating that bilateral cooperation over this issue is more flexible when the involved countries have higher levels of domestic uncertainty.

Authoritarian leaders lack reliable information about potential challenges to their power because of their predilection for repression. Citizens of such countries are too afraid to express their true opinions about their leaders, engaging instead in widespread preference falsification (Kuran, 1991). Fear of repression also means that challenges necessarily germinate in secret. The result is the “dictator’s dilemma” (Wintrobe, 1998): leaders can never be sure whether the information they have about citizen preferences is correct and, consequently, are uncertain about where a challenge to their power may come from and how likely it is to resonate with the broader population.

One of the consequences of this uncertainty is that authoritarian leaders favor flexibility in the policies they use to distribute rents to subnational groups. By flexibility, I mean the capacity to turn rent flows off and on as necessary. For example, suppose a leader wants to

target rents to a water-scarce agricultural region. He can either invest in irrigation infrastructure or transport supplementary water to the region by truck. Investing in infrastructure is an inflexible rent-distribution policy because, once completed, the benefit of increased access to water cannot easily be removed. Trucking in water, on the other hand, is a flexible policy because the leader can halt deliveries at will and send the water elsewhere.

As the above example suggests, pursu-

*This in turn has consequences for the degree of flexibility leaders prefer in their rent distribution policies: they place a greater value on flexible policies when uncertainty is high than they do when uncertainty is low.*

ing more flexible policies can be costly because they are often economically less efficient than long-term, inflexible ones. However, flexibility has two related benefits. First, it conditions the receipt of benefits on the continuation of support, allowing leaders to act as perpetual gate-keepers to rents. Second, it enables leaders to respond dynamically - altering who receives rents and how much - as they receive additional information about the preferences of their citizens. In a world of perfect information, authoritarian leaders would know the most effective way to distribute rents in order to maximize the likelihood of staying in power. In reality, however, uncertainty about the origin and strength of challenges prevents them from knowing the ‘best’ allocation scheme. Flexibility allows them to alter their rent provision policies as new information about this surfaces.

Although all authoritarian leaders

face uncertainty about the most effective way to distribute rents, flexibility is particularly important in countries where leaders have a strong incentive to act on any new information they receive. Marginally more information about who might support a challenge does not impact the incentives faced by leaders in firmly established regimes as much as it would in less established ones. Put differently, leaders who are confident in their ability to overcome a threat will only change rent distribution policies if new information about the origins and strength of challenges is significantly different to their prior beliefs. A leader’s preferences for flexibility are explained by the level of uncertainty he faces about whether he can overcome potential challenges. This is influenced - but not directly determined - by uncertainty about the challenges themselves.

It follows that authoritarian leaders who face higher uncertainty about their ability to overcome challenges will desire more flexibility in their rent distribution policies than others. In the remaining sections, I focus on the consequences of this for the selection of international policy, although the predictions are equally applicable to domestic ones. The decision to cooperate at the international level has consequences for domestic rent distribution if it creates subnational winners and losers. When this is true, the overall flexibility of the cooperative arrangement will be jointly determined by the uncertainty in each of the involved countries.

Water management in post-Soviet Central Asia is a good case to illustrate this theory for two reasons. First, the decision to cooperate over water resources has clear distributional consequences at the subnational level. There are two distinct water management regimes in Central Asia: cooperative and noncooperative. In each country, there are some subnational groups that benefit from cooperation and others that benefit from noncooperation. The leader’s preferred international policy will depend on which group - beneficiaries



from cooperation or beneficiaries of noncooperation - he wishes to target with rents. When domestic uncertainty in both countries is high, leaders will engage in a flexible form of cooperation that allows them to shift more frequently between cooperative and noncooperative regimes as the desired domestic targets change.

Second, the Central Asian countries are all authoritarian, but the degree of uncertainty over the leader's ability to overcome potential challenges differs. Turkmenistan faces the least uncertainty. Even after the death of President Niyazov at the end of 2006, this country comes the closest to being an 'established autocracy' (Svolik, 2012). Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan face an intermediate level of uncertainty. In Uzbekistan, the most overt challenge to the regime came in 2005 with the Andijan uprising. In Kazakhstan, President Nazerbayev has had to balance different powerful families, or clans, in order to retain power (Schatz, 2004). Although both have so far overcome these challenges, the fact that they occurred at all suggests there is more uncertainty in these countries than in Turkmenistan. Finally, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan face high domestic uncertainty. Kyrgyzstan experienced two 'irregular' and unexpected regime changes since independence, first in 2005 and again in 2010. Tajikistan succumbed to civil war in the

1990s and the current president continues to face challenges to his power from former combatants and rural drug lords.

Since international water management is a bilateral issue, the joint level of uncertainty must be characterized for each pair of countries. The configuration of the region's major rivers implies that there are six relevant dyads. Three of these involve a medium-uncertain-

*...higher uncertainty dyads [in Central Asia] do indeed engage in a more flexible form of international cooperation....the same countries act differently when interacting with different partners.*

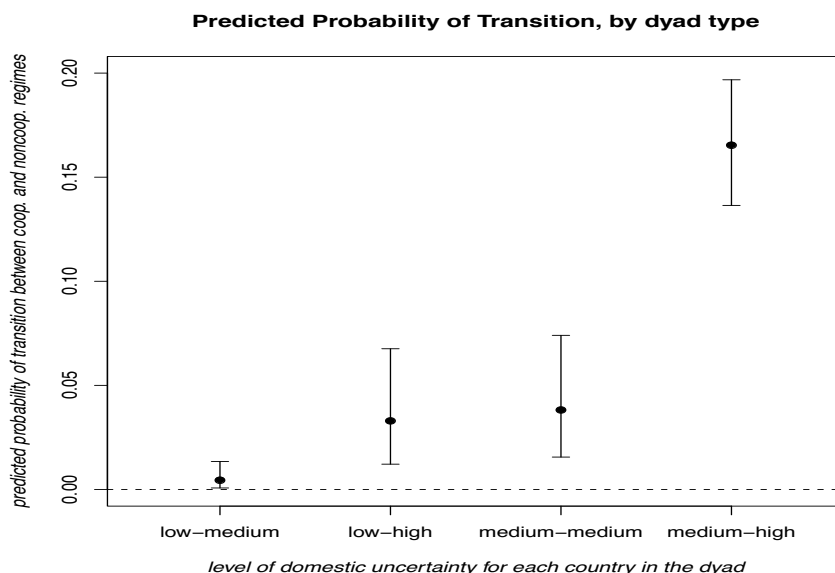
ty country and a high-uncertainty country (the Kazakh-Kyrgyz, Kyrgyz-Uzbek, and Tajik-Uzbek dyads). The other three dyads respectively involve two medium-uncertainty countries (Kazakh-Uzbek), a low-uncertainty and a high-uncertainty country (Tajik-Turkmen), and a low-uncertainty and a medium-uncertainty country (Turkmen-Uzbek). I expect dyads involving

countries with greater domestic uncertainty to exhibit a more flexible form of cooperation.

The figure below demonstrates that the higher uncertainty dyads do indeed engage in a more flexible form of international cooperation. Using original data on movement between cooperative and noncooperative resource management regimes at the dyad-month level for 2000-2010, I model the probability that transitions between these regimes occur for each type of dyad. This probability is an appropriate measure of flexibility because it captures the frequency with which pairs of countries break and renegotiate their agreements. As the figure shows, the flexibility of cooperation is higher when the relevant countries have greater domestic uncertainty. Specifically, the medium-medium dyad exhibits a more flexible form of cooperation than the low-medium dyad, and the medium-high dyads exhibit a much more flexible form than the medium-medium dyads. There is no difference between the low-high dyad and the medium-medium dyad, suggesting that the level of flexibility selected by a low uncertainty and high uncertainty country is roughly equivalent to that of two medium uncertainty countries.

In sum, while all authoritarian leaders face uncertainty about the preferences of their citizens, those who are more uncertain about their ability to overcome challenges place a higher value on flexibility. The result is not just variation between authoritarian and democratic regimes, but also among different authoritarian ones. This observation helps explain patterns of cooperation over water resource management among the Central Asian countries. Higher levels of uncertainty in the involved countries is statistically related to a more flexible form of cooperation. Defection and renegotiation was most common among dyads involving medium-uncertainty and high-uncertainty countries and least likely among those with a low-medium uncertainty

**Figure 1: Predicted Probability of Transition**



combination. Additionally, the same countries act differently when interacting with different partners. For example, countries with high uncertainty act more flexibly in combination with a medium uncertainty country than they do with a low uncertainty partner. This underlines the importance of looking at international policy formation in a dyadic fashion. Finally, the high probability of transition between management regimes in medium-high dyads should not be considered a 'failure' of cooperation. It simply represents a different, more flexible form of coordination among authoritarian countries facing higher levels of domestic uncertainty.



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## Do Investors Know About or Care About Legislatures in Authoritarian Countries? Authoritarian Institutions and Economic Growth

*by Nathan M. Jensen, Edmund Malesky and Stephen Weymouth*

An exciting area of comparative politics is the increased attention to the rich variation in authoritarian regimes. These studies are much more than descriptive accounts of the varieties of authoritarianism. Many of these studies have constructed rigorous theoretical arguments on how these institutions emerge, survive, and ultimately affect political or economic outcomes. One of the most striking findings from this literature is the strong empirical relationship between legislatures in authoritarian regimes and higher levels of investment and economic growth.<sup>1</sup>

Our recent article in the *British Journal of Political Science* addresses this question.<sup>2</sup> We started by replicating the work of Wright (2008) and Gandhi (2008), confirming the strong relationship between authoritarian legislatures and economic growth.<sup>3</sup>

But why does this correlation exist? We address the many theoretical links between authoritarian legislatures and economic performance in Section 2, but our focus is precisely on how these institutions potentially shape investor decisions by reducing political risks.

A compelling theory derived from existing work on authoritarian legislatures is that leaders may tie their own hands, limiting the leadership's ability to expropriate property from investors.

But is this hand tying effective? And is there really enough motivation for

<sup>1</sup> See Boix (2003), Wright (2008), Gandhi (2009), and Gelbach and Keefer (2010) for examples.

<sup>2</sup> Jensen, Malesky, and Weymouth (2013).

<sup>3</sup> Joe Wright and Jen Gandhi shared data and suggestions with us on this project.

leaders to constrain their own behavior? Spoiler alert. We find no evidence of hand tying. Authoritarian legislatures have so little impact on the risk environment, investors pretty much ignore these institutions.

But we think there is a more plausible mechanism, one that doesn't threaten the political power of leaders while at the same time delivering many of the economic benefits of hand tying. Political leaders can use these institutions to help facilitate bargains between investors, and protect minority investors from corporate insiders. In short, these legislatures do help protect private investors, but not from the state – from each other.

### 2. What Good are Authoritarian Legislatures?

*... our focus is precisely on how these institutions potentially shape investor decisions by reducing political risks.*

The research on authoritarian institutions starts with the basic premise that nominally democratic institutions in authoritarian regimes matter. This premise may be surprising to casual observers, yet many authoritarian regimes spend a great deal of money and energy holding elections for national office, maintaining permanent legislatures, and erecting institutions for promotion and leadership selection. The great puzzle is what benefits such expensive institutions provide that could not be achieved more cheaply and expeditiously through other means.

Answering this question, political scientists have highlighted five benefits that parliaments provide for authoritarian regimes: legitimacy, information, professionalism, cooptation, and

power-sharing.

1. Legitimacy: Even if assemblies have no power, having them improves the standing of countries both domestically and internationally (Rustow 1985, Alagappa 1995).

2. Information: Activities in the assembly, such as query sessions and legislative debates, provide valuable information on popular support for the regime, the strength of potential opposition, public perceptions of national policy, and the geographic distribution of policy preferences (Wintrobe 1998, Gandhi 2008).

3. Professionalism: Better educated, and professional, fulltime delegates means that laws can be designed with more complexity and specialization (Schuler 2013, Truex 2013).

4. Cooptation: Query sessions and debates provide an outlet for potential critics, who otherwise might seek external outlets for their dissent (Lust-Okar 2005, Gandhi and Przeworski 2006, Wright 2008, Gandhi 2008). These potential critics can be coopted by the limited ability to influence policy and direct access to high-ranking politicians.

5. Power-sharing: The institutionalized rules and evaluations provide a powerful ability for elites to check the power

of other political elites (Svolik 2012; Gehlbach and Keefer 2011).

These theories are not mutually exclusive and could all point to a relationship between assemblies and improved economic performance. Of these, Cooptation and Power Sharing have assumed pride of place in the literature. While proponents of these arguments have strengthened their case with plausible theory and robust evidence of correlations between binding assemblies (and multiple legislative parties) and investment and economic growth in authoritarian settings, little work has been done on rigorously establishing the causal logic of these cross-national correlations. Most critically, the literature has yet to establish that assemblies in authoritarian regimes actually improve property rights protection – the assumed pathway between assemblies and growth.

### 3. Do Authoritarian Legislatures Reduce Political Risks for Investors?

As part of a series of projects on political risk, Nate Jensen interviewed investors and political risk insurers. Bringing up the topic of legislatures in authoritarian regimes was generally met with one of two answers by his respondents – surprise or laughter. Either these sophisticated market actors had not thought about these institutions, or just consid-

ered them to be window dressing. This is not to say that these professionals do not have a nuanced understanding of politics. They do -- even in relatively opaque authoritarian regimes. Most risk insurers have a deep knowledge of the political environment they operate in, and they could give political scientists a run for their money in country-specific knowledge. For example, many noted that quantitative and qualitative models of risk often have to account for a successor, or lack of successor, in personalistic regimes.

The lack of attention to authoritarian legislatures is also obvious in the evidence we present from both a survey of investors and our statistical models of political risk ratings. As part of our British Journal of Political Science article we conducted an original survey in conjunction with the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) in 2011. We specifically asked investors in an online survey about how authoritarian parliaments affect the risk of expropriation. More respondents indicated that these institutions increase risk for investors (38%) than reduce these risks (1%). Unsurprisingly, we also found no evidence in our empirical analysis of political risk insurance ratings (a measure of expropriation risk) that legislatures in authoritarian regimes reduce risks.

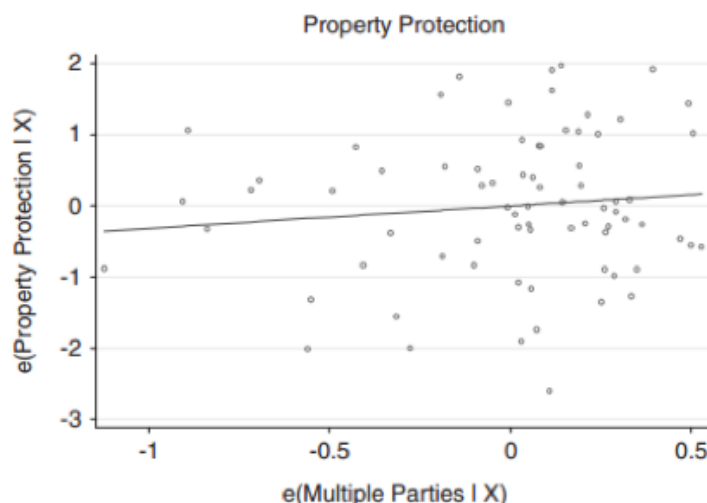
In summary, there is little direct evidence that authoritarian regimes use parliaments to tie their hands and encourage investment. At the very least, the investors we surveyed don't buy it.

### 4. Protecting Investors from Corporate Insiders

Where authoritarian parliaments may play a role in stimulating investment-- and thereby economic growth-- is through the establishment of institutions that protect investors from contract breaches by other private actors.

Domestic investors are intimately concerned with the strength of contracting

Figure 1: Property Protection





institutions, or the set of policies that govern economic relations among private actors in the economy. Specifically, outside investors seek protections that constrain corporate insiders from extracting rents on invested capital that the insiders control. Expropriation can take several forms, including outright theft, executive overpayment, or more subtly through the sale of assets at below market prices, a process known as transfer pricing or asset stripping. The underlying risk is that corporate insiders use the profits of the firm for their own benefit, rather than returning them to outside investors.

Our view is that parliaments provide a forum for the types of bargains that improve the contracting environment. Specifically, parliaments with multiple parties incorporate a broader coalition of interests, including investors, who push for improvements in investor protections.

The empirical analysis we conduct, which is summarized in the partial regression plots in Figure 1 and 2, finds no robust relationship between the strength of the authoritarian legislature and the risk of expropriation by the state. Rather, we find that countries with multiple parties in the legislature tend to have stronger investor protec-

tions.

In sum, authoritarian institutions matter. But the grabbing hand that they bind is not that of dictator or single party; it is the hand of the corporate insider seeking to expropriate assets for personal gain.

## 5. What Do We Know that We Don't Know?

Our published paper and this newsletter essay are written in the know-it-all style required of high-fallutin' academic journals. In truth, we see our analysis as more the beginning of a conversation on how these institutions shape investor behavior than the definitive statement. Work identifying how authoritarian institutions increase economic growth and investment are on to something. Yet, we still don't have a clear understanding of how these assemblies actually accomplish these important tasks. That is, we have useful theoretical models for explaining the relationship, but little direct empirical evidence necessary to understand these complex processes. More fine-grained work has begun to pick apart the actual behavior of delegates in China, Russia, and Vietnam, but there is still much to do.



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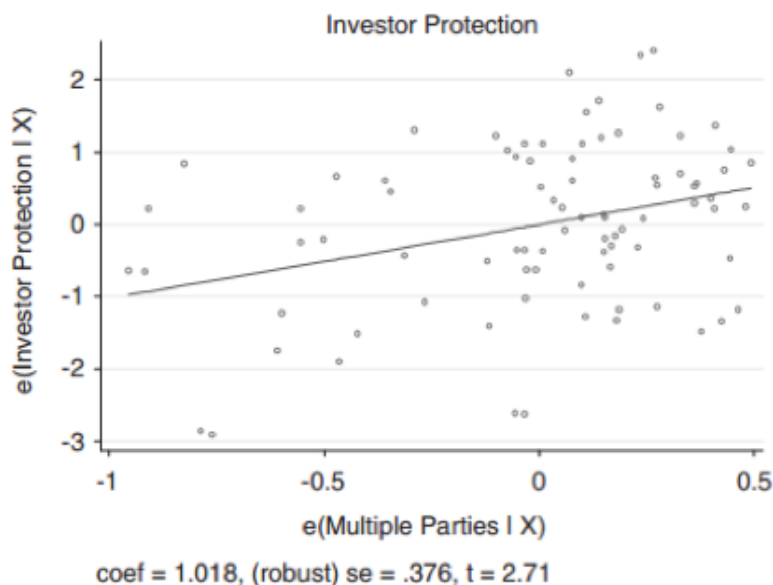


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**Figure 2: Investor Protection**



# When Do Dictators Comply with International Security Treaties?

by Alexandros Tokhi

Is Iran's recent promise to partly freeze its nuclear program credible, given the country's past shifts between cooperation and rule violation? The Iranian nuclear crisis points toward a larger puzzle of cross-country and temporal variation in compliance with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) nonproliferation treaties in the Middle East. Having committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as well as to the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions respectively, some countries violate these treaties while others comply. While neorealist theories of International Relations (IR) would predict WMDs to proliferate given Israel's nuclear capability, liberal IR theory expects Middle Eastern nondemocracies to break international rules more frequently.

Empirically, though, we observe more compliance than these theories predict. This raises the question of why autocracies vary in their compliance with nonproliferation treaties? I argue and show that variation in durable institutional constraints on authoritarian executives accounts for variation in compliance. Past IR research barely analyzed differences across and within autocracies for treaty compliance. However, the IR literature on the domestic determinants of international compliance can offer valuable insights for conceptualizing autocracies as is presented further below.

## Credible Commitments and Autocracies

Noncompliance with international security treaties is a problem of credible commitments. Secretly enriching uranium or hiding information about one's capabilities are examples of willful breaches of nonproliferation agreements. In international security cooperation, short-term temptations to procure for one's security often out-

weigh long-term benefits of collective disarmament. Domestic institutions can inhibit such short-term temptations if they curtail governments' discretionary authority through institutional checks and balances. Under such conditions, treaty commitments become credible.

Autocracies differ according to the degree to which their executive decision-making authority is institutionally constrained. Comparative autocracy research has shown that dictators might choose institutions to secure regime survival. Depending on their need to

*...The longer a constraining institutional structure exists in a given country, the higher is the likelihood that it exerts a binding effect... In such a setting, autocracies are more likely to keep their international promises.*

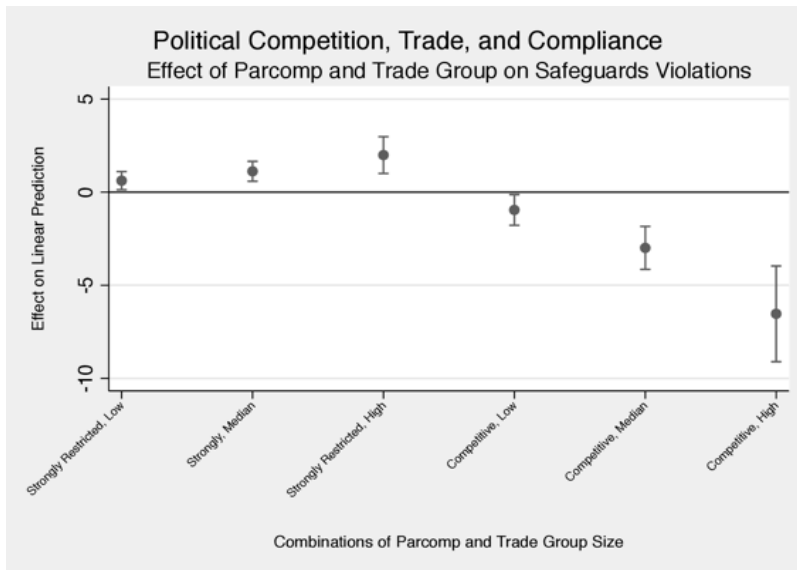
contain credible regime threats, to co-opt authoritarian elites, or to mobilize resources from other groups in society, dictators create institutional structures and procedures and thereby limit their own menu of political options in order to stay in power. The specific solution of the dilemma of autocratic rule gives rise to a variety of autocracies ranging from absolutist monarchies to regimes that maintain nominally democratic institutions. Each institutional arrangement is consequential for the capacity to make credible treaty commitments, since they affect whether the consent of supporting coalitions is required, abrupt policy changes retarded, and, most importantly, whether political power is divided. Depending on its durability, a given authoritarian institutional structure will have a different effect on the prospects of treaty compliance.

The longer a constraining institutional structure exists in a given country, the higher is the likelihood that it exerts a binding effect, because there is more time to consolidate governance and decision-making mechanisms. In such a setting, autocracies are more likely to keep their international promises. Consolidation of an autocracy with few constraints implies that the ruling elite will increasingly monopolize political authority. This raises the odds of non-compliance.

Enduring institutional constraints increase rule compliance. But what binds dictators effectively? Instead of proposing a particular institution, I focus, in the second step of the argument, on the degree of political competition between political factions over policy decision-making. Political competition might lower opposition against the leadership by balancing rivals and thereby avoiding the emergence of powerful contenders. Moreover, a relatively unrestricted degree of competition enables the trading of policy concessions. When decision-making authority is fragmented, backing down from promises becomes more difficult. In sum, the more factional veto players compete over policies, the fewer policy shifts should be expected, and the higher a regime's policy continuity. What decides whether a given number of veto players favors rule compliance or the pursuit of WMD? Past IR research showed that societal and elite groups that depend for their income on global economic exchanges have a stake in stable and predictable inter-state relations. When these groups can affect policy-making, then the prospects of compliance with international institutions grow. Whether and to which extent they do so depends on how political competition is regulated. A high share of groups favoring trade leads to rule compliance when political actors within authoritarian regimes represent these and have the power to implement them.

## Autocracies' Effects on Nonproliferation Compliance

**Figure 1: Political Competition, Trade and Compliance**



I tested each of the arguments above in a comparative quantitative study. For this purpose I created several original panel data sets on the patterns of compliance with three WMD nonproliferation treaties in the Middle East. For reasons of space, I will present findings concerning the variation across autocracies and within them over time.

Middle Eastern states with enduring institutional constraints comply more with all three WMD nonproliferation treaties – also when including relevant control variables (e.g. power, threat). Autocracies with institutional constraints that endure for at least 35 years are associated with a .70 predicted probability of compliance, while regimes with few limits on rulers are considerably less likely to comply with the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions respectively (predicted probability of .46). This finding is even more pronounced for the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

In the Middle East, more veto players and larger shares of trade groups lead to more compliance with nonproliferation rules across all three treaties. Again, this finding is stronger for nuclear compliance. Figure 1 shows varying combinations of the sizes of groups favoring trade (low, middle, high) and the degree of competition between political factions (strongly restricted, competitive) in the Middle East. The combined

effect of both variables leads to more nuclear rule violations when competition is restricted and trade groups relatively small. Greater degrees of factional competition and growing shares of trade groups reduces significantly the number of rule violations.<sup>1</sup>

*Iran's recent nuclear cooperation will be pursued as long as political factions that depend for their income on foreign sources can affect policies.*

Iranian nuclear politics is characterized by considerable temporal variation in compliance. After an initial phase of obstruction and concealment in 2002, Iran mostly complied with nuclear rules from late 2003 to 2005. Political factions favoring trade and the country's integration into the international community (pragmatists and reformists) assumed a leading role in nuclear policies in 2003. They halted uranium enrichment and corrected past violations, since they dominated relevant

<sup>1</sup>Factional veto players have been proxied by Polity IV's component measure Parcomp. The results hold when taking the constraints index from the Database of Political Institutions and Henisz's measure of veto players. Trade group size has been calculated as the share of non-oil exports to GDP

decision-making institutions and wanted to avoid international sanctions. However, the conservative establishment and radical factions, which favor economic autarky, successfully occupied more veto points and eventually put an end to cooperative nuclear policies. Under President Ahamdinejad's tenure, strengthened by a favorable conservative parliament and the violent removal of competing political factions, the nuclear compliance worsened, isolating the country to the degree that regime survival was at stake. With Hassan Rohani's election to the Presidency in 2013, pro-trade factions gained a say in nuclear policy-making. Their resolve to stop economic sanctions as well as their institutional representation contributed to the conclusion of the interim agreement in late 2013 to partly freeze Iran's nuclear program and restore compliance. In sum, the above arguments explain Iran's recent nuclear cooperation. It will be pursued as long as political factions that depend for their income on foreign sources can affect policies - a finding, which applies more generally to WMD nonproliferation compliance in the Middle East.



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