

NOTES SEMINAR

JUNE 5: DAY 1 CONCEPTUALIZING AUTHORITARIANISM

Session I: Welcome and Introduction

Initial speakers: Lisa Wedeen; Carles Boix.

The first session started with an introduction about the way authoritarianism can be conceptualized. According to professor Wedeen we need to emphasize specific mechanisms of autocratic control if we want to move away from a definition of authoritarianism 'as lacking that which democracy has'. She suggested to consider the mechanism of social control because it allows us to understand processes of power that are insinuating and yet fundamental. Wedeen argued that in this market oriented era people are interpellated into new forms of risk and that authoritarian regimes and democracies may not be as different as we think they are. According to Wedeen there is firstly, a need to consider the comparative efficacies of authoritarian blatancy and democratic substantially (like snuffing out the dissent) instead of construing the distinction. And secondly, there is a need to consider the commonalities of autocracy and democracies in era of global capitalism. Wedeen argues that one might counter that authoritarian and democracies regimes rely on different types of legitimacy. According to Wedeen the term has a number of conceptual, ethical and methodological problems. In studying legitimacy in the context of authoritarian regimes it is a big problem to distinguish between public dissimulation of loyalty or belief, on the one hand and real loyalty or belief on the other hand.

According to professor Boix regimes are authoritarian when they do not fall into the category of 'liberal democracy'. That means when they meet the following conditions: 1. Unconstrained selection. 2. Accountable executive. 3. Fundamental individual rights. In addition, Boix argues that there can be no single theory about the concept because the proliferation and types seems to point to the fact that the regimes vary over time and across space. This is why authoritarian theory should describe the mechanism through which authoritarian leaders rule, instead of construing classification schemes. The best way to describe mechanism and the problems authoritarian rule face is to make the distinction between the internal and external dimension of authoritarian power. *Internal dimension* is about understanding the structure of shared power/governance. *External dimension* is about how the regimes control power of those that have been excluded. For each dimension Boix describes several questions/solutions. These aspects are partially correlated across dimensions: certain types of power-sharing agreements preclude the use of specific strategies to control power vis-à-vis the state's subject.

After the introductions the discussion that followed went about questions like: what does the term means today and should we revised the definition? There are many ways to give meaning to authoritarianism. Some suggested to distinguish the definition as a concept from authoritarian regimes. In reaction to the introductions of Wedeen and Biox -who both emphasis the need to look at mechanism- some countered that it would be problematic to look only at the mechanism – because what if a regime fulfills criteria 1 en 2, but not 3? How do you call it the regime than? Biox was telling that mechanism, like liberal rights, helps us to think about democracies and so also about authoritarianism regimes. The point is what happens to a place where there are competitions but not (liberal) rights. Wedeens's piece ignited a lot discussion. Someone asked that if intolerance is independent from the regime type, what does it tell us

about the regimes? Doesn't it become ambiguous and uninteresting? Wedeen argued that there is a commonality between regimes when the trait is from the regime itself. She said that she is against the self-satisfaction like: 'this otherness that we don't have and we call it authoritarianism'. And that there is a sneakiness in thinking that democracies are tolerant. I reaction on Wedeen the discussion went also about legitimacy. Someone argued that there is a possibility to operationalize the concept, it only depends on what discourse you choose. Someone else challenged Wedeen with the claim that 'social control' is difficult to operationalise and studying 'values' as well. How do you do this empirically and how to regard the concept also relevant for market modes of governing? Wedeen said that her issues are – indeed- methodological. In particular the different levels of ideological uptake. And the aspiration and oppositional dissenting forms of options. Finally, the discussion went about the difference between Wedeen and Boix. They both are more interested in mechanism, then typology, but Boix prefers to think about how regimes do gain power and how that relate to the kinds of political outcomes. Incentives structures, organization control and what kind of institutions get to violence. Difference is that Wedeen things more about the symbolic world. Language is important. In the context of political economy: it is more about aspirations. Not simply the haves and have not, but also what can happen.

Session II: Change and continuity over time

Initial speakers: Jørgen Møller; Pedro Ramos Pinto.

In the second session of the day Professor Møller and Dr. Ramos Pinto put the concept of authoritarianism in a more historical context. Møller called for an historical turn in the study of authoritarianism and to look beyond the Cold War and post-1989 dynamics. Modern authoritarianism (traced in the 19th century and in the 20th century outside of Europe), according to Møller, is part of the broader class of autocracies, but is defined by two additional properties: In the first place there is a much larger degree of state power, the scale and reach of the (repressive) state is much larger. Secondly, the extent to which the authoritarian ruler can base its rule on traditional sources of legitimacy – particularly religion- is very limited. Lastly, Møller gave some specific advice on interesting *historical* comparisons of authoritarian regimes that might allow us to marshal important variation on important contextual factors: With respect to the relatively open economies of today's developed authoritarian regimes (the rich Middle Eastern states and the East Asian developers) it would be valuable to compare them with the pre-World War One Western instances of authoritarianism (the authoritarian regimes that proliferated during the so-called first wave of democratization) and the post-World War One democratizations (regimes that had no genuine elections, but had open economies and were upholding liberal rights and the rule of law). Another interesting comparison would be to compare the contemporary electoral authoritarian regimes with the many cases of democratic breakdown of various states in Europe in the 1920's and 1930's but maintained a democratic façade up until World War Two.

Ramos Pinto also explored authoritarianism from a historical perspective. He argued that successful authoritarian regimes are so in the first place because they are able to adapt and respond to internal and external challenges. In order to capture these changes and the temporality of regimes Ramos Pinto proposes using Tilly's model to define regimes. According to this model the regime type is determined by four types of relations between states and citizens: 1) The degree of inclusivity of citizens ('breadth'). 2) The extent to which citizens are equal in

relation to each other and treated as such by the state ('equality'). 3) The degree to which citizens are protected from arbitrary action from the state ('protection'). 4) Whether there are mechanisms of binding consultation ('consultation'). This model proves itself particularly useful when studying (for example) the introduction of social policies which expands the category of citizen ('breadth') and the internal dynamics of relations between citizens ('equality') and can help legitimate and sustain authoritarian rule. Interesting topics to scrutinize from a historical perspective with regard to authoritarianism and globalization are according to Ramos Pinto 'authoritarian internationalism', and especially the 'horizontal internationalism' between authoritarian regimes (as opposed to the top-down internationalism of the Cold War), global population movements and its interaction with authoritarian politics, and authoritarianism in global economic dynamics.

The discussion that followed touched upon some interesting issues. First, there is the issue of comparability if a concept (in this case authoritarianism) travels through time. There is always a trade-off if one decides to go further back in time in terms of how thin/thick your concept can be. One loses thickness if a concept needs to travel far back in time. Second, the comparability of various time periods was discussed. Although everyone agreed that it is important to not only look at authoritarianism in the Post-World War II period doubts were raised about the extent to which the open, contemporary, authoritarian economies could be compared with their counterparts during the first wave of globalization since the latter was characterized by imperialism. Third, the issue of 'authoritarian learning' and 'horizontal authoritarianism' was discussed and how this concept could be operationalized. Interesting suggestions were made to capture this phenomenon such as studying copying behavior of regimes or the traffic of people and experts between authoritarian states. Fourth and lastly, the group reflected on the origins of authoritarianism and on the emergence of the concept itself. A study on the evolution of the concept of authoritarianism itself seems to be an interesting topic to examine.

Session III: Change and continuity in space

Initial speakers: Jason Brownlee; Kelly McMann

Brownlee argued that although authoritarianism is, strictly speaking, only something other than minimal democracy, political scientists should reflect upon how much authoritarianism matters for people's daily lives and to what extent it is a problem compared to other problems. According to Brownlee the most meaningful forms of authoritarianism today are not nationally bounded but *transnational* processes. He identifies a new authoritarianism in international processes of violence, surveillance, and governance that operates behind and can be shielded by traditional forms of sovereignty, including the reproduction of elected governments. He illustrates this argument with cases of renditions and drone strikes where various states ('old' democracies as well as authoritarian states) in a collaborative effort participated in human rights abuses and brutal acts of repression. In order to understand transnational authoritarianism we need to fathom the interconnectedness of elected and unelected authorities as they engage in repression against shared targets and reproduced shared norms about security, justice, and particular visions of human freedom.

McMann argued that a country can be home to multiple subnational regime types and that a subnational regime type can differ substantially from the national one. She reflected in particular on 'authoritarian enclaves' which she understands as subnational territorial units that

exhibit some non-democratic characteristics and that exist in countries with democratic, democratizing, or hybrid regimes. Progress in this field of research is hampered because of a lack of information about undemocratic enclaves. Only a few countries have been studied (mostly large countries with federal governments) and these studies have only gathered data about a small number of subnational units in each country. McMann further spoke about the extent to which subnational and national authoritarianism overlap and she claimed that they are quite comparable since sovereignty is not as influential as we think if regime capacity is taken in consideration. Hence, both fields of study could learn from each other: Exploring theories and evidence about the origins and maintenance of authoritarian regimes at one level might improve our understanding at the other level. Lastly, McMann suggested that (the understudied) subnational democratization is likely to be determined (for a large extent) by the interests and capacity of the national government.

Brownlee's piece ignited a lot of discussion. Questions were raised about the boundedness and utility of the concept of transnational authoritarianism. Some claimed that transnational practices do not fit under the umbrella of authoritarianism and enhanced a more procedural understanding of democracy and authoritarianism (distinguishing regime type and what regimes do). Others argued that by looking into issues that really matter for people (instead of using authoritarianism in its 'classic' way) one runs into the risk of using authoritarianism as a concept that could be used for everything that is bad or cruel, which makes the use of the concept rather problematic. However, Brownlee encouraged scholars to look (just like him in his study to renditions) at places where one should not look (in this case to democracies implementing authoritarian practices outside of their jurisdiction). Subsequently, the question was posed what states should do outside of their own jurisdiction to be called non-democratic. This question proved to be hard to answer, or at least to formulate an answer that everyone could agree upon. McMann was asked to reflect on the possibility of subnational authoritarianism that is not territoriality based but instead exists in certain sectors or in how the state treats particular groups of citizens. For some, transferring the concept of subnational authoritarianism beyond territory to various domains of state control seemed like a fruitful new approach in the study of (subnational) authoritarianism.

Authoritarianism and its opposite: learning from democracy studies

Initial speakers: David Beetham; Baogang He

According to professor Beetham an authoritarian regimes is a regime that is intolerant of political opposition and dissent. We recognize a ruler as such in two ways: 1) an authoritarian ruler uses repression; 2) an authoritarian ruler excludes certain groups of people from political power. Beetham argues that it's possible to generalize from a few significant examples. Modi and Erdogan are examples of people that rule on the basis of repression and exclusion. Yet, local elections show in the case of Turkey that there is no electoral penalty for authoritarian rule. Thus, elections might enable the structural potential for accountability, but do not necessarily lead to accountability. Concluding, authoritarian regimes can be electoral, since electoral regimes can still be intolerant to opposition through exclusion and repression and also undermine accountability with the use of these tools.

Beetham claims that we should pay attention to the substance of government projects by authoritarian regimes and we should pay attention to the specificities and the ways in which authoritarian regimes define their objectives and undermines the actors that get in the way.

Professor He argued that the concept of democracy leads to the opposite concept: authoritarianism. All regimes defend their system in terms of democracy. China holds more public consultation than any Western democracy at the moment. Societal dialogue gets promoted in this way. But the question is whether this is a new type of authoritarian deliberation. Deliberative authoritarianism is established in countries like China, Cuba and Venezuela. What we need momentarily is a sympathetic understanding of authoritarian regimes. These deliberations, for instance online, do have an impact on policy outcomes. Aristotle offers a way of thinking about mixed regimes. Democracy is a necessary component of a system and not a goal on itself according to Aristotle. Both democratic and authoritarian elements are needed to sustain a regime. He argues that there is a need to have that holistic understanding of regimes and look at both the democratic and authoritarian elements in each regime. A mixed regime is a better definition than a hybrid regime. We just need to re-conceptualize mixed regimes and extend our knowledge about it.

During the discussion not everybody seemed to be convinced by Beetham's example of Thatcher. She did not imprison or kill her opposition when they criticized her. Beetham responded that there are different ways of defeating the opposition. Imprisoning is one of them. Thatcher used a lot of mechanism to defeat everyone who was standing in her way in realizing her project. According to Beetham it is not the only measurement, but an important one. He added that he distinguishes the occasional intolerance to opposition and systematically intolerance. The introduction of Baogang caused a lot of questions about his claim that we have to understand the different kinds of mixed regimes and the example of China as an authoritarianism deliberation. Doubts were raised about things like: where are the democratic institutions in China? Are there any indications that local decisions are against the Party? What kind of measures can be used that actually makes a difference? What does the mixed differ from hybrid regimes? Someone expressed worries and said that we may not embrace democratic simulation. According to Baogang it is very important to understand how they –the Party- are trying to maintain the top authority and in the other way study (empirically) the democratic local elements. It is about a (slowly) democratization. The process is important. It is an educational process. Access to power on the local level is the first state. The final is the transitions in institution. Finally the discussion went about the conceptualizing of authoritarianism: are we moving away from regimes to practices? Someone claimed that there are regimes who have authoritarian practices and that we talk about 'authoritarian regimes' when they institutionalize authoritarian practices. Others argued that we have to take the wider concept of authoritarianism. Go beyond regimes and look at subnational levels as well, functional and temporal variations, mechanism and practices

JUNE 6: DAY 2 OPERATIONALIZING AUTHORITARIANISM

Session V: Elements of authoritarianism

Initial speakers: Milan Svobik; Agustina Giraudy

The next day Professor Svulik argued how differences between authoritarian and democratic politics shape and limit effort to map and explain the world authoritarian politics. He argues that – compared to democratic politics- authoritarian politics taken place under distinctively toxic conditions. Authoritarian politics is different from studying democracies in two ways: first, in dictatorships, no independent authority has the power to enforce agreements among key actors; and second, in authoritarian politics, violence is the ultimate arbiter of political conflicts. Svulik argues that these features result in a number of challenges. In *theory building*: both features place a high bar on what reasonably counts as an “explanation.” When it comes to *inference*, these features of authoritarian politics exacerbate concerns about the endogeneity of presumed causes to their effects. And in *measurement*, the tentative binding power of institutions in authoritarian politics raises questions about which institutions and decision makers actually matter -- doubts that we rarely encounter in the study of democratic politics. Svulik suggest when it comes at theory building, explanation about institutions in authoritarian politics much examine the ‘full’ rather than the partial equilibrium – that we must explain why both behavior and the institutions that presumably govern it are self-enforcing. Authoritarian institutions cannot be taken as given.

Professor Giraudy begins her assertion that she agrees with many other scholars that *access to state power* (elections: procedural, minimal or Schumpeterian) and *exercise to state power* (limits to incumbents) are two key dimensions when studying (subnational) regime types. Giraudy claims that, contrary to the conventional approach, these two dimensions should be distinguish conceptually and empirically different. She describes a number of problems when the two dimensions are lumped together and regarded as one single concept and measurement. First, scholars fail to recognize the existence of undemocratic regimes in which elections are rigged and electoral violence prevails but in which political power is exercised in an impersonal way. Secondly, scholars undercount the number of nondemocratic subnational regimes in democratic countries. And third, by focusing only in subnational regimes that score low on both dimensions researchers only develop an account on regime continuity in the partimonal variety of SURs. After a brief conceptualization and operationalization of the two dimension Giraudy demonstrate her assertion by using original evidence from SURs in Argentina and Mexico. In addition Giraudy argues that the separation of the two dimension is also beneficial because it allows the possibility of identifying varieties of subnational undemocratic regimes (SURs). It is important to distinguish different SUR types because you will get a better understanding of the *origins* of each regime type and you will be in a better position to explain regime *change*.

In the discussion that followed Svulik was asked to reflect on particular historical institutions in authoritarian contexts, such as the referendums in Pinochet’s Chile and the Brazilian dictatorship where rotation among the elite did take place. He was moreover asked about the (apparent) increase in the amount of coups over the last years. Svulik doubted whether there was indeed an increase in the amount of coups, but did argue that contemporary coups have a different character. Recent coups are oftentimes veto coups where the army vetoes the people’s mass participation and social mobilization in governing themselves. Svulik’s remark about the limited scope of our large N data on authoritarian politics (focus on post WO II period) raised the question what the population actually is political scientists studying authoritarianism try to say something about. Some pleaded for only inferring about authoritarian states in the last 200 years because of the rise of the modern state and increased state capacity in the 19th century. Furthermore, the issue was discussed how clientelism might fit into Svulik’s internal/external

dimension of authoritarian rule and whether (democratic) institutions that initially only serve authoritarian ends ultimately can be used against authoritarian leaders. Lastly, one of Svobik's defining features of the authoritarian state was questioned, namely that violence is the ultimate arbiter of political conflict and always looms in the background. Arguably, this is not something distinctive for authoritarian states but also exists in new democracies.

Session VI Operationalizing accountability and its absence

Initial speakers: Jennifer Gandhi; Andreas Schedler

Associate professor Gandhi argued that it is worth spending time on operationalizing accountability since it is unclear whether there exists accountability in authoritarian regimes or not. This is what makes it close to impossible to measure. Responsiveness however, should be seen as a different phenomenon, and relates to the public supports (aka popularity) of a certain policy or set of policies. Accountability is different than responsiveness in the sense that it refers to the fact that policies can be withdrawn after they are implemented. Even though there are ways for citizens to appeal to certain sections of the bureaucracy and might be able to put certain policies on the political agenda, according to Gandhi, this also does not count as accountability. A necessary condition of the accountability of leaders includes that these can be sanctioned. Concluding, accountability is about policy outcomes that are already produced instead of the inclusion of citizens in certain decision-making processes. The problem with the analysis of accountability is that it sometimes works, but many times doesn't. Demonstrations can lead to policy changes, but in many cases it does not. The outcome often has to do with the power of the challengers of the regime and not. Citizens themselves do not have the direct capacity to hold governments accountable. Yet, in case citizens team up with local NGOs, they could potentially take on a ministry. Under conditions of decentralization, accountability can take place to a greater extent. This because of the fact, that central governments in a decentralized context have high incentives to look for alternative ways to control local governments. Consulting citizens is a way to this, and even punishing local officers can be a way of gaining control over local governments.

According to Professor Schedler you can see accountability as a continuum or look for the traces of it. He suggested that we should see accountability as information as justification of a certain policy, under the justification of transparency and public debate. In authoritarian regimes, the genuine rulers are the people that are really unaccountable. Yet these rulers want to keep other subjects accountable and other lower ranked rulers unaccountable. A relevant question in the debate about accountability is of course whether authoritarian rulers can be held accountable by groups of citizens, but also whether they can be held accountable are there other specific actors besides citizens, like military rulers or international actors. What we should be seeking for, is the actual practices of accountability. The punishment side should be easiest to observe. Perhaps we can use case study material to see how certain actors position themselves towards government officials? In other words, the capacity that certain actors have to keep governments accountable, and not the actual willingness of regimes to allow certain accountability.

The discussion that followed as a result of the two presentations of accountability, touched upon the question whether it is possible to separate democracies and authoritarian regimes on the basis of this concept. First of all it was agreed that free and fair multiparty elections is the most common way to hold leaders accountable for their actions. Yet, this notion is problematized by

two phenomena. First of all, elections might create an *opportunity* to hold leaders accountable for their actions, but does not by definition lead to leaders being held accountable. Whether constituents hold leaders accountable for issues like corruption or other types of power abuse depend on other factors, such as the provision of information and the organization of civil society. Second of all, in regimes without free and fair multiparty elections, officials can still be held accountable for their actions, because of the fact that authoritarian regimes also depend on legitimacy. Yet this type of accountability is not controlled by constituents but by elites.

Session VII Operationalizing coercion

Initial speakers: Oisín Tansey; Todd Landman

Professor Tansey focused on some of the challenges of conceptualizing and operationalising repression and coercion. In the first issue Tansey argued that defining authoritarianism only as those cases with high levels of coercion, it may lead to a skewed sample that excludes regimes that lack key attributes we would expect from democracies. Tansey suggested that it may be more appropriate to define authoritarianism in a more minimalist fashion, excluding considerations of coercion, and then assess the impact of globalization on coercion across different types of non-democratic regime. In his second challenge Tansey argued that any treatment of coercion (and its relationship with repression) will need to begin with a clear definition and specify whether the role of the use or threat of force is a defining characteristic. Coercion and repression are, for different reasons, both very hard to measure. Tansey explored in his third issue that it would be problematic to indicate repression as a failure of authoritarianism. However, the judgment of failure is more reasonable when using the distinction of Levitsky and Way: high intensity coercion reflects generally the presence of a significant threat and low visible acts, such as surveillances is a common feature of authoritarian rule. The last question Tansey dealt with is whether repression by supra states and transnational institutions should be measured in the same way as states. Tansey argued that there has to be made a conceptual development of 'transnational repression'. Tansey suggested an event-based approach to data collection where individual instances are collected and analyzed.

Lastly, professor Landmann specified different theses on repression as a series of 'stylized facts' with illustrative empirical referents for this last section of the conference. Landmann started by arguing that because of the –Hobbesian– notion of protection, repression is a crucial element of all states. The key difference of democracies and authoritarian regimes is the legitimacy of the use of repression. Landmann claimed the use of coercion by states can be explicit and implicit. The use of repression by authoritarian states evolves over time as well. With time, the use of repression is became more targeted, varied and less violent while producing the same impact on social control. The different combinations of principals and agents in the face of different threats produce great variation in both the use and severity of repression across different types of authoritarian states. According to Landmann the challenge for systematic research on the contours of authoritarianism is to capture both the *within-case* and *between-case* variation in the use of repression. Finally Landmann argued that repression can be internationalized, either from states pursuing their own national security doctrine within the jurisdiction of other states or in collaboration with other states.

In response to professor Tansey's view to exclude coercion from definition, or at least not specify the level, the discussion started with the question what the relationship is between repression and coercion. Does coercion have to be physically violent? All states need coercion, they need to collect taxes as well. Repression is also something all states can do, but authoritarian states tend to do more of it; systematically of torture. What rights violations count as repression and which ones as authoritarian repression? Some responded on this that violation of public rights and political rights is more important than individual repression of civil liberties. Someone else suggested that repression is politically direct and about getting 'someone to do something they don't want to do'. Someone argued that we are too state-centric in our conceptualization of human rights. The discussion continued about the challenge that it might be difficult to observe certain threats of repression. There are different types of repression – high and low intensity – high intensity reflects the presence of a significant threat to the regime. In addition the following question was raised: does repression indicate success or failure of a regime? The question referred to Landmann's point: that repression tends to be more intense in the early phases of a new regime. In the early stages of the regime, high intensity repression might indicate successful consolidation or effective consolidation of power.

Finally some exchanges were made with examples of how to measure repression. It could be CIRI (political terror), but there is no data on how non-state actors repress; counting drone strikes would be difficult, giving lack of reporting in the media. Other suggestion on data and literature were: King et al 2004 APSR – compare China and Mexico, list experiments. And 'Power – a Radical view, applied to Appalachian valley'.

Last session: Closing Reflections.

In the last session the recent developments in the Middle East were discussed and especially the question whether the cases of Iraq and Egypt learn us that war is worse than authoritarianism and how external (Western) actors should deal with authoritarian states. Some remarked that there seems to be a 'white man's burden' in a lot of the literature on authoritarianism. In other words, scholars seem to feel an urgency to 'solve' authoritarianism or to provide hope for a better life to those living under authoritarian rule. Others argued that political science literature has found that democratic development is more probable under certain conditions (i.e. high equality, high economic development) and that in cases where these conditions are not met one should be acceptant towards authoritarian forms of rule. A suggestion for further research individual yearning as a result of repression instead of looking at structural variables. Subsequently, the issue was discussed to what extent one believes in endogenous change and agency in authoritarian regimes. Whereas some were very optimistic about this and pointed towards specific cases where agency seemed to have played a vital role (the case of Mongolia was discussed), others stressed the importance of more structural variables in explaining democratization (such as equality and asset mobility). Then surveillance was discussed and whether this is a defining feature of authoritarian regimes. Some doubted whether this was the cases since democratic regimes also extensively monitor their citizens. Moreover, surveillance seems to be by definition extremely difficult to observe. Before ending the seminar some final remarks were made by Glasius, McMann, and Gandhi. Glasius presented her own conceptualization of authoritarianism which she understands as a mode of governance that disables citizens to give input into governance and that is rights curtailing. Lastly, McMann and Gandhi made a series of final remarks. Both argued that conceptualizing authoritarianism should always be done with a particular research question in mind. Gandhi was rather pessimistic

about what we know about the functioning of authoritarian regimes (the accumulation of knowledge) and what we possibly *can* know about it given the closed nature of these regimes.