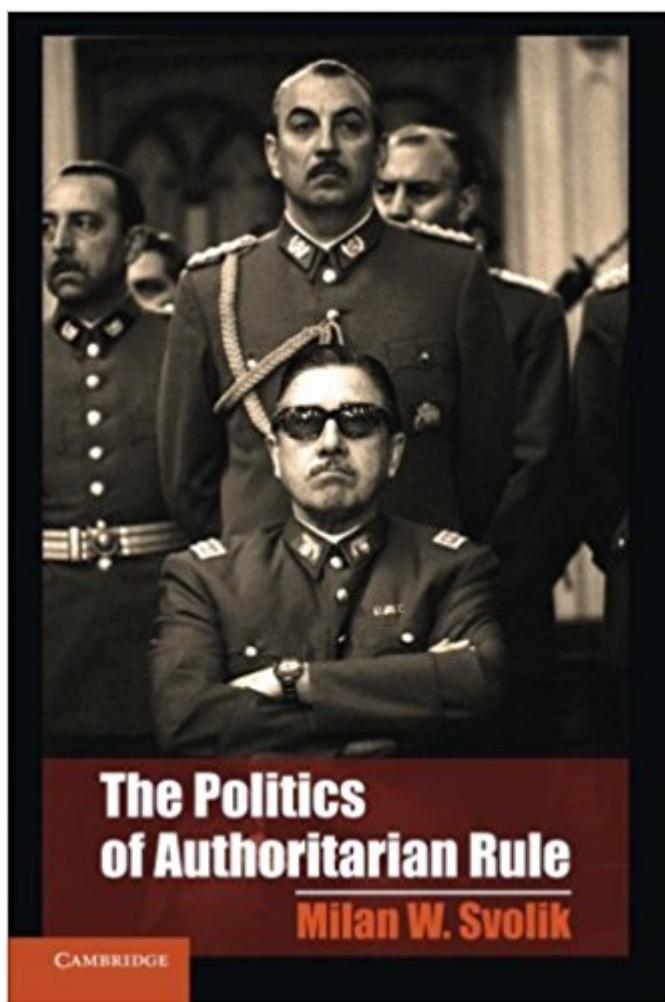


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# The Politics Of Authoritarian Rule (Cambridge Studies In Comparative Politics)



## **Synopsis**

What drives politics in dictatorships? Milan W. Svolik 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 is 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 conflict. Using the tools of game theory, Svolik explains why some dictators, such as 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 dictatorships are ruled by soldiers, as Uganda was under Idi Amin; why many authoritarian regimes, such as 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, Svolik 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.

## **Book Information**

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"The Politics of Authoritarian Rule is a very important contribution to political science. The book

provides much-needed theoretical microfoundations to a growing, but still scattered, literature on authoritarianism. It is based on superb empirical work. Above all, it is the product of Svolik's first-rate analytical mind working at its best." - Carles Boix, Princeton University "In the nascent literature on the political economy of dictatorship, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* stands out. Few scholars know as much about authoritarianism as does Milan Svolik, and that rich knowledge informs every model and empirical test here. Anybody who wants to know (and who doesn't?) why dictators behave as they do should read this book." - Scott Gehlbach, University of Wisconsin "In this superb book, Milan Svolik convincingly argues that authoritarian politics are the result of two critical conflicts: one between the ruler and the ruled, and the other among the ruling elites, both characterized by the fundamental problems of credible commitment and the ready availability of repression. This is a sophisticated, rigorous, and nuanced analysis that transforms our thinking about both the varieties of authoritarian rule and the underpinnings of authoritarian durability." - Anna Grzymala-Busse, University of Michigan "The Politics of Authoritarian Rule is a very important contribution to political science. The book provides much-needed theoretical microfoundations to a growing, but still scattered, literature on authoritarianism. It is based on superb empirical work. Above all, it is the product of Svolik's first-rate analytical mind working at its best." Carles Boix, Princeton University "In the nascent literature on the political economy of dictatorship, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* stands out. Few scholars know as much about authoritarianism as does Milan Svolik, and that rich knowledge informs every model and empirical test here. Anybody who wants to know (and who doesn't?) why dictators behave as they do should read this book." Scott Gehlbach, University of Wisconsin "In this superb book, Milan Svolik convincingly argues that authoritarian politics are the result of two critical conflicts: one between the ruler and the ruled, and the other among the ruling elites, both characterized by the fundamental problems of credible commitment and the ready availability of repression. This is a sophisticated, rigorous, and nuanced analysis that transforms our thinking about both the varieties of authoritarian rule and the underpinnings of authoritarian durability." Anna Grzymala-Busse, University of Michigan "Milan Svolik's book is a valuable and wide-ranging contribution to the emerging body of research on authoritarian regimes. Combining formal game-theoretic models, analysis of original cross-national datasets and an impressive array of short illustrative case-studies, he gives new insights into many of the key questions which occupy scholars of comparative authoritarianism. He does so from a parsimonious and powerful theoretical standpoint." CEU Political Science Journal

What drives politics in dictatorships? In this book, Milan W. Svolik argues that all authoritarian

regimes face two fundamental challenges. The first comes from the masses over which dictators rule; the second arises from the elites with whom they rule. Svolik identifies these as the problems of authoritarian control and power-sharing and shows that they account for key outcomes in dictatorships, including their institutions and policies, as well as the survival of leaders and regimes.

Brilliant theoretic explanation of authoritarian power-sharing institutions.

I'm not happy about all details of authors' methodology, but the book content - is among the best pieces of political studies outcomes, based on more or less universal criterions.

Svolik cogently lays out a unified theoretical framework that allows political scientists to first identify key actors and sources of political conflict in dictatorships and then to understand the intricate bases for significant variation in policies, institutions, and regime stability/leadership change across such regimes. What is truly groundbreaking about this work is that it utilizes large-N studies, single case studies, game theory, and qualitative analyses to propose a \*unified\* theory of dictatorship. Logically coherent and relatively easy to read, this book deserves to become the authoritative source on the study of authoritarian regimes.

Very informative material in understanding authoritarian regimes and how it functions. The only downside of the book is that not all people can understand the book. I mean ordinary people will not understand all of the contents of the book.

Read it Enough Said. I liked it a lot!

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