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Dictators and their secret police: coercive institutions and state violence, by Sheena Chestnut Greitens

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Dictators and their secret police: coercive institutions and state violence, by Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, xix + 306 pp., appendix, index, £64.99 (hardback), ISBN 9781107139848; £23.99 (paperback), ISBN 9781316505311

After much research on the function of pseudo-democratic institutions such as elections, legislatures or parties within authoritarian politics, scholars have recently paid increasing attention to repression and the agencies of coercion in securing the political survival of dictators and dictatorships. It is to this literature that Sheena Chestnut Greitens' book provides an important contribution. It aims to answer two interrelated research questions: How can different designs of authoritarian security apparatuses be explained? How do these different institutional designs affect the patterns and levels of violence employed by these organizations against citizens?

In answering these questions, *Dictators and their Secret Police* presents two well-specified theoretical arguments. The first argues that dictators design their security agencies strategically based on their threat assessment. If they see their survival in office threatened mainly by elite conspiracies and coups, they will create a fragmented security apparatus whose large number of individual services are isolated from each other and non-representative of the larger population and keep each other in check. If dictators perceive the main threat as coming from mass uprisings "from below", they will create unified security agencies that recruit their members broadly from all social groups. In her second theoretical contribution, Greitens argues that a fragmented-exclusive apparatus created to counter intra-elite threats will lead to much greater and indiscriminate violence and brutal repression than the unified-inclusive model. This is not only due to the latter's institutional advantages in information-gathering and penetration of society, but also because the inter-agency competition created by a fragmented security apparatus is likely to lead to cruder measures of "successful" repression and more brutal methods of intelligence-gathering.

Greitens tests these theoretical arguments with case studies of four authoritarian regimes in East Asia: Taiwan under the rule of the *Kuomintang* (1945–1987), the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos (1972–1986), and the two successive South Korean military regimes of Park Chung-hee (1972–1979) and Chun Doo-hwan (1980–1987). In these impressive examples of in-depth qualitative empirical analysis, Greitens not only describes the authoritarian repressive apparatuses and uncovers the correlations between the dictators' threat assessment, the design of the security agencies and the degree of violence imposed on the citizenry. She also convincingly tests the causal mechanisms that link the theoretical variables through in-depth process tracing based on a wide range of primary/archival and secondary sources and personal interviews. Moreover, in true Lakatosian fashion, she puts her theory to a three-cornered test by comparing it not only against empirical case-study evidence, but also against the explanatory potential of alternative theories, including the path dependence of previous institutional arrangements and external influence by the United States. Finally, she evaluates her theory's ability to explain the design of repressive agencies and patterns of coercion outside East Asia. In brief studies of the Chilean military dictatorship under Pinochet, the German Democratic Republic and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, she finds that the evidence from these "shadow cases" (271) fits her theoretical expectations well, and much better than the potential alternatives.

Dictators and their Secret Police is an important, thoughtful and well-researched contribution to the large and growing body of literature on authoritarianism. It not only fills multiple important gaps, but – as any good book – suggests a number of avenues for future inquiry. Conceptually, the book introduces the useful distinction between fragmented-exclusive and unified-inclusive repressive apparatuses, which immediately raises the question whether there are mixed types (for example, fragmented-inclusive coercive systems), how and why these are chosen, and how they affect coercion in authoritarian regimes. Theoretically, the book not only provides the first systematic and coherent explanation for the particular design of repressive apparatuses and their effects on the human rights tally of authoritarian regimes, but also reminds students of authoritarian politics that repression is the result of agency and strategic considerations by rational actors who react to (or aim to preempt) real or perceived structural threats. Future research might want to think more deeply about the relationship between strategic actors (including the dictator, his ruling coalition, the leaders and members of the repressive organs, but also their potential victims) and their respective threat perceptions to provide an even more nuanced insight into the microfoundations of repression in authoritarian regimes. Methodologically, the book is based on a convincing research design that should be used in courses on qualitative and case study research as an example for well-done comparative process tracing. Empirically, the case studies provide a host of historical detail, painting a rich but systematic picture of the development of coercive apparatuses in the three East Asian countries. Especially, the case study on Taiwan is exemplary in terms of the empirical data and level of detail, drawing on a large body of Chinese-language sources that have been capitalized for the first time in English-language scholarship. But Greitens' work is also an invitation to put her arguments to additional hard tests, both quantitative and qualitative, and in other empirical contexts. This is not least due to the fact that the book is written in a clear and approachable style with well-defined concepts and a theoretical model that generates empirically testable theoretical expectations.

Whether Greitens' brief conclusion that Western policy-makers should support the establishment of effective, unified-inclusive repressive apparatuses in authoritarian regimes in order to reduce state-led terror and citizens' suffering really would be "feasible" (300) is doubtful. But given the impressive scholarly contribution to research on authoritarianism, repression, human rights and mass protest, this in no way lessens the highly commendable academic work presented in this book.

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Recovering democracy in South Africa, by Raymond Suttner, Boulder and London, First Forum Press of Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2016, xiii + 255 pp., sources, QR codes, index, \$72.00 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-62637-368-6

The legacy of colonialism, constitutional democracy, and participatory struggles in contemporary South Africa are topics that have received considerable attention recently.