

Introduction: State capacity and elections in the study of authoritarian regimes

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Aurel Croissant

Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Germany

Olli Hellmann

University of Sussex, UK

Abstract

Studies of multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes have proliferated in recent years. Nevertheless, the available evidence remains inconclusive in terms of when, where, or why elections work to sustain or undermine authoritarian rule. The contributions to the special issue ‘State Capacity, Elections and the Resilience of Authoritarian Rule’ argue that analyzing the extent to which the effect of elections on authoritarian regime resilience is mediated through the factor of state capacity helps to solve this puzzle. This introduction lays out the analytical foundation for this discussion by reviewing key terms and concepts, and by highlighting possible theoretical connections between the state capacity literature on the one hand and the electoral authoritarianism literature on the other. Furthermore, it considers the contributions in this special issue, and points out areas of agreement and disagreement between the authors, while simultaneously placing the different arguments within the broader field of enquiry.

Keywords

Authoritarianism, elections, democratization, resilience, stateness, state capacity

Introduction

The end of the ‘third wave’ of democratization and the proliferation of electoral authoritarianism has sparked a shift in scholarly attention from the study of democratization to the origins, designs and outcomes of multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes. Nonetheless, the available evidence is not yet conclusive in terms of when, where, or why elections work to sustain or undermine authoritarian rule. In particular, scholars have, so far, largely ignored the question of the extent to

Corresponding author:

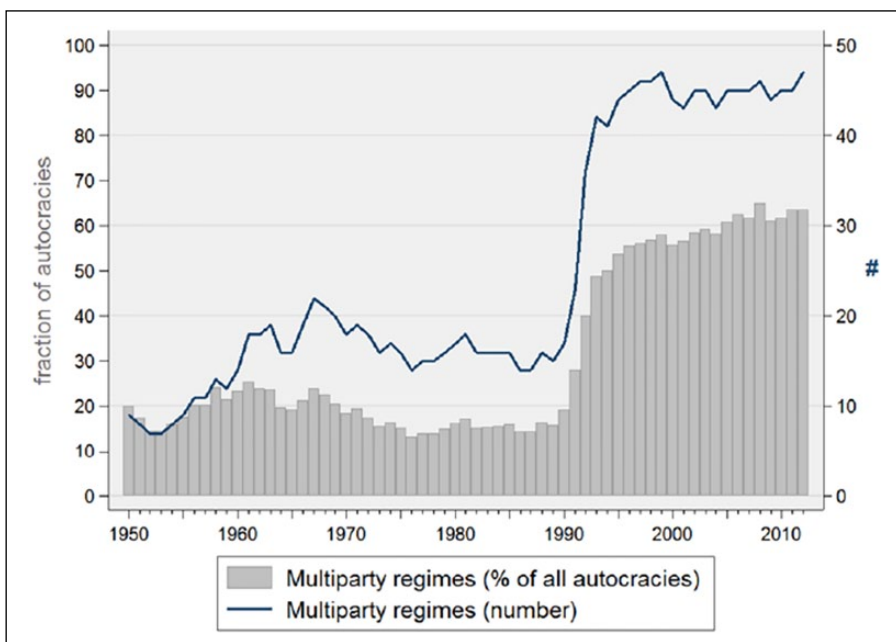
Aurel Croissant, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Bergheimer Str. 58, 69115 Heidelberg, Germany.
Email: aurel.croissant@ipw.uni-heidelberg.de

which the effect of elections on authoritarian regime resilience is mediated through the factor of the state. This is surprising in so far as the state is one of the key concepts in the study of politics. The special issue ‘State Capacity, Elections and the Resilience of Authoritarian Rule’ addresses this gap in the literature through a comprehensive discussion that features conceptual, quantitative, and qualitative contributions. The discussion revolves around a very specific question: how do institutional properties of the state capacity affect the impact of multiparty elections on the resilience of authoritarian rule? While the contributions in this special issue acknowledge that the causal relationship between state capacity and electoral authoritarianism flows in both directions, the thrust of the studies in this special issue is that elections are more likely to stabilize authoritarian regimes endowed with high levels of state capacity. On the other hand, where state capacity is low, elections are more likely to spin out of control, forcing the regime to turn to more blatant forms of fraud or large-scale violence, which tends to cause regime destabilization. Yet different dimensions of state capacity – namely, its extractive, coercive, and administrative subcomponents – are used in very different ways to maintain an electoral regime’s stability and access to power. Whether and how high levels of state capacity exert a stabilizing effect on authoritarian rule depends on the policy goals for which the state is used.

Historically, ‘hybrid regimes’ (Diamond, 2002) or ‘electoral authoritarianism’ (Schedler, 2006) – concepts that denote regimes that engage in multiparty politics while maintaining their claims to power – are not a new phenomenon (Miller, 2015; Skaaning et al., 2015). Nonetheless, the Autocracies of the World Dataset (Magaloni et al., 2013) shows that regimes ‘in which a ruling party allows opposition groups to form parties and participate in elections and the legislature’, in which politics ‘are highly biased in favor of the ruling party, but competition is real’ and in which ‘parties other than the ruling one have representation in the parliament’ (Magaloni, 2008: 732), have dramatically increased in number in recent years (cf. Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number and frequency of multiparty autocracies in the world, 1950–2012.

Source: Magaloni et al., 2013.



The recent and global nature of this development has sparked a shift in scholarly attention from the study of democratization to the origins and designs of multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes as well as the impact of these on regime resilience. Nonetheless, as an emerging literature has begun to point out, the available evidence is not yet conclusive in terms of when, where, or why elections work to sustain or undermine authoritarian rule (Boogards, 2013; Edgell et al., 2015). In fact, both supporters and opponents of the ‘democratization by election’ thesis (Lindberg, 2009) suggest that the effect of multiparty elections on the stability and survival of autocratic regimes will depend on the context – irrespective of whether this effect is positive or negative. Scholars have highlighted, *inter alia*, the importance of the international setting (Bunce and Wolchik, 2011; Levitsky and Way, 2010), the level of economic development (Blaydes, 2011), the specific design of electoral institutions (Lust-Okar, 2006), divergent patterns of party building (Morse, 2014) and regime-party institutionalization (Magaloni, 2008), domestic threat levels (Gandhi, 2008), and the cohesiveness of elite coalitions, as well as the role of opposition tactics and tactical emulation through mechanisms of diffusion (Bunce and Wolchik, 2011; Donno, 2013).

However, relatively little research has focused on the potential link between state capacity, elections, and the resilience of authoritarian rule. While the association between the strength of state capacity and the survival of democracy is by now a well-established research field (Carbone and Memoli, 2015; Møller and Skaaning, 2014), and a number of quantitative (Andersen et al., 2014; Seeberg, 2014) and qualitative (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Slater, 2008; Way, 2005) studies hint at a positive link between state capacity and autocratic regime stability, the relationship between state capacity and electoral authoritarianism remains largely unexplored.

Building on these literatures, the first and most distinctive aim of the contributions in this special issue is the attempt to apply the concept of state capacity to study the impact of multiparty elections on the resilience of authoritarian rule. Certainly, the concept of state capacity might also be useful to understand the survival or failure of dictatorships that do not hold regular multiparty elections. Yet, this special issue aims specifically at the ongoing debate in comparative politics about the relationship between elections and authoritarian resilience. A second distinctive feature of this collection is that each article examines a unique aspect of the relationship between state capacity, elections, and the political outcomes that ensue. A third one lies in the richness of methods and data selection. While the use of comparative research strategies is a unifying theme across the articles, some of the contributions apply quantitative methods of cross-national, cross-area comparative research, whereas others follow the case study method or present paired comparisons of crucial cases in different world regions, including East and Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the post-Soviet world.

This introduction will first review existing conceptualizations of electoral autocracies, and the literature on the purposes and effects of multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes, followed by a discussion of the existing state capacity literature. Finally, we consider the contributions in this issue and point out areas of agreement and disagreement between the authors, while simultaneously linking their arguments to the broader field of enquiry.

Purposes and effects of multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes

As reflected in Figure 1, authoritarian regimes that allow for multiparty elections have existed for many decades, but their number and relative frequency have increased substantially since the end of the Cold War, from 16 in 1988 to 47 in 2012. Hence, regimes in which politics are biased against the opposition, but electoral competition is real and parties other than the ruling party are represented in the legislature, now constitute the most common type of non-democratic regime. In

contrast to other approaches in comparative politics, which conceptualize regimes that are ‘neither fully democratic nor classic authoritarian’ (Boogards, 2009), as diminished subtypes of democracy (Merkel, 2004) or as ‘hybrid regimes’ (Diamond, 2002; Levitsky and Way 2010), the unifying approach across the contributions in this volume is different. Following the conceptual strategy proposed by Schedler and others (Boogards 2009; Brownlee, 2009; Edgell et al., 2015; Howard and Roessler, 2006; Lindberg 2006, 2009; Schedler, 2006, 2015), we conceptualize authoritarian regimes that allow for multiparty elections for legislatures (and the executive) in which opposition parties can compete – even though ‘governments deploy a broad repertoire of manipulative strategies to keep winning elections’ (Schedler, 2015: 1) – as a specific subtype of authoritarian rule (not a third, hybrid, category of regimes). Hence, we draw a line between authoritarian regimes that do allow for (limited) multiparty competition in elections (often labeled as ‘electoral authoritarianism’) and those dictatorships in which political parties are banned or only the ruling party is allowed to file candidates for parliament, and in which the entire legislature is composed of non-party representatives or members of the ruling party (‘closed authoritarianism’; Brownlee 2009; Magaloni, 2008; Schedler, 2015). Multiparty authoritarianism allows for at least limited multiparty competition and some form of party opposition without renouncing the regime’s dictatorial claim. The difference between multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes compared to those in democracies is that in electoral autocracies the ‘playing field’ is not level, and the defeat of the incumbent, although not excluded in principle, is far less likely. As such, elections are not meant to bring forth a new political majority, but rather confirm the status quo (cf. Edgell et al., 2015: 5).

Most contemporary research on multiparty elections under authoritarian rule falls into two broad categories: (1) studies that focus on the purpose of adopting nominally democratic elements, such as elections, political parties, and legislatures; and (2) studies that address the effects of elections on autocratic regime duration and resulting prospects for democratization (cf. Hanson in this issue).

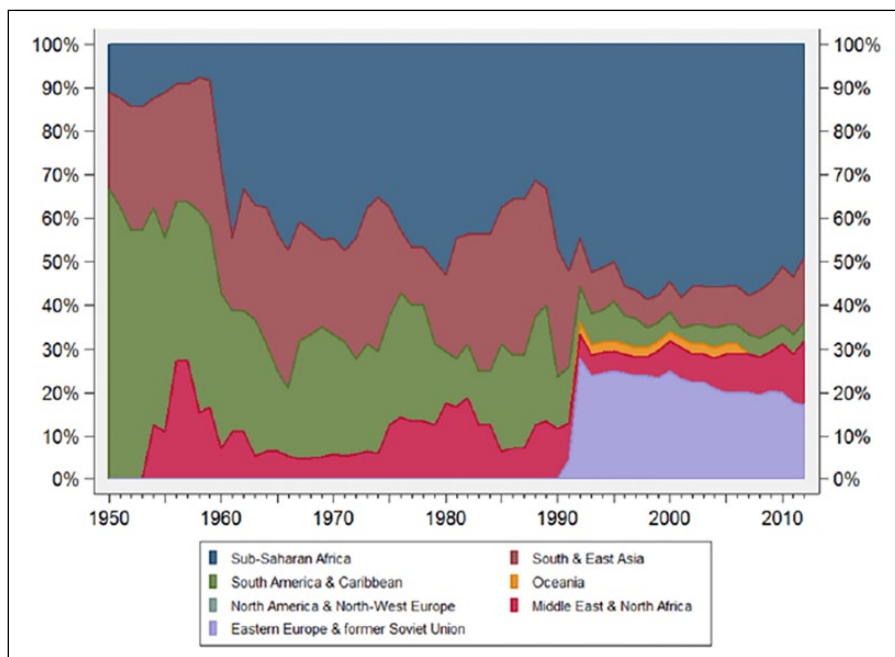
Purpose of adopting multiparty elections in autocratic regimes

Any explanation of the functions and effects of multiparty electoral authoritarianism must take into account the specific historical contexts in which they emerged. As Miller (2015) has shown, multiparty electoral authoritarianism appeared first in Europe and North America, but from the 1880s until the interwar period it became primarily a Latin American phenomenon. The spread of democratic norms during the interwar period and the end of colonialism following World War II led many post-colonial nations in Africa and Asia to adopt the electoral procedures of their former colonizers, albeit with only limited or uncompetitive elections (Linz, 2000; Miller, 2015). Today, however, these regimes are particularly common in the post-communist region and in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, where the rise of electoral authoritarianism since 1990 is mostly a liberalizing outcome of stalled or interrupted transitions from one-party authoritarianism (Wahman, 2014; see Figure 2).

In addition to the role of inherited colonial institutions, many scholars have also provided theoretical arguments as to why autocrats might adopt multiparty elections. Schedler (2006) was among the first to point out that holding elections may legitimize regimes without much risk of relinquishing office. Similarly, Levitsky and Way (2010) and Shirah (2014) argue that in the post-Cold War period dictators might want to hold elections in order to gain international legitimacy or satisfy the requirements of international aid organizations, especially when their economies are strongly linked to Western democracies. Other scholars highlight the power-sharing role of authoritarian elections and the informational benefits of multiparty elections under autocratic rule (Gandhi, 2008; Magaloni, 2008). That is, multiparty elections can be used as tools to communicate regime dominance, monitor subaltern regime elites, and distribute patronage to loyal elites and citizens

Figure 2. Shifting regional trajectories of multiparty autocracies, 1950–2012.

Source: Magaloni et al., 2013.



(Blaydes, 2011; Lust-Okar, 2006; Morgenbesser, 2014). Finally, Miller (2015) argues that autocratic elections serve to channel popular demands, ascertain citizen preferences, and provide autocrats with information that is necessary to develop new policies and to adjust already existing ones.

The effects of multiparty elections on authoritarian regime resilience

Scholars have also become increasingly interested in understanding the conditions under which elections contribute to democratization. On the one hand, the ‘democratization-by-elections’ thesis argues that repeated elections in authoritarian contexts will eventually lead to the breakdown of autocratic rule and the emergence of a genuinely democratic space (e.g. Donno, 2013; Lindberg, 2006, 2009). For instance, Miller (2015) recently showed that experience with autocratic elections is a positive predictor of democratization and democratic stability. Howard and Roessler (2006) find that multiparty elections under authoritarian conditions can likely turn into windows of liberalization when, during periods of more intensive popular protests against authoritarian incumbents, the opposition unifies to compete in elections. Moreover, experience with multiparty elections can provide elites with incentives to invest in party-building, thereby effectively institutionalizing a greater number of politically relevant cleavages, which, in turn, means that social conflicts are channeled into the electoral system. This reduces the risk of democratic failure after a transition from authoritarianism toward democracy (Shirah, 2014). Similarly, Morse (2014) argues that the opening of major offices for contestation under authoritarianism changes the incentives that opposition parties face and provides them with additional focal points for contestation, which might contribute to democratization. Lastly, Edgell et al. (2015: 12) emphasize socialization and experiential learning as mechanisms through which de jure multiparty elections have a positive effect on democratization and democratic survival.

On the other hand, several other studies find no effect of multi-party electoral histories on the likelihood of transitions to democracy or challenge the validity of the proposed causal mechanisms. For example, Boogards' (2013) re-evaluation of Lindberg's (2006) original data questions the latter's findings for Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas McCoy and Hartlyn (2009) and Kaya and Bernhard (2013) find no effect of authoritarian elections on democracy in Latin America and the post-Soviet republics. In fact, there seems to be an emerging consensus among researchers of elections in authoritarian regimes that multiparty elections can have both regime-sustaining and regime-subverting consequences, and that there is no clear cross-regional effect of elections on regime stability. For example, a recent study by Edgell et al. (2015) finds strong evidence for a positive effect of regular multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes on democratization at the global level, but also important cross-regional and temporal differences: the effect is much stronger for the 'third wave' of democratization – and especially the post-Cold War period – than for earlier time periods (Edgell et al., 2015: 16). Sub-Saharan Africa and post-communist states seem to account for the bulk of the global effect, while in Latin America this effect is only significant for the 'third wave' era. Lastly, the results for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are more ambiguous, while authoritarianism in Asia seems to be largely immune from the democratizing effect of multiparty elections (Edgell et al., 2015: 21). Given that the political landscape in East and Southeast Asia, compared to other parts of the world, features relatively strong states (Fukuyama, 2014), and that autocratic regimes in the MENA region often maintain absurdly overdeveloped security apparatuses – indicating that these states possess high levels of 'repressive capacity' (Springborg, 2016) – a likely reason for these geographically differentiated findings could be the factor that sits at the center of this special issue: state capacity.

Conceptualizing state capacity

In order to gain a better understanding of how state capacity and its constituent dimensions affect authoritarian electoral stability, one must first address the conceptual and theoretical challenges that accompany the concept of state capacity (see Hanson in this issue). While there is a well-established and rich literature in the social sciences on how the state should be defined, the concept of state capacity is of more recent origin and is more contested. It acquired centrality in political science during the 1970s and 1980s, when scholars first attempted to bring the state back into the study of newly developing economies (Evans et al., 1985) and, later on, aimed at linking state capacity to different outcomes in economic development, international security and stability, social welfare and public service provision, and democratic consolidation (Andersen et al., 2014).

Although fundamentally shaped by a Weberian understanding of the state as a set of public institutions and other public organizations that, together, define the legitimate control, use, and distribution of power over a given sovereign territory and people (Evans et al., 1985), existing studies differ on what exactly constitutes state capacity. In fact, the term has been used across a variety of disciplines to refer to everything from the general capacity of a state to accomplish its goals, to providing public services, and to the very specific and largely physical capacity of a state such as building roads. In an attempt to avoid amorphousness and imprecision, the contributions in this special issue share the common understanding that 'state capacity' concerns specifically the ability of state institutions to implement official goals and policies (Skocpol, 1985: 8). Even though there is a broad range of dimensions that have been proposed to differentiate and measure a state's capacity to 'get things done', scholars typically focus on three dimensions (Hanson and Sigman, 2013; Møller and Skaaning, 2014) which, together, constitute a 'least common denominator' in the understanding of this multidimensional concept (for more detail, see Hanson's article in this special issue): a state's (1) coercive capacity; (2) administrative capacity; and (3) extractive capacity.

Coercive capacity refers to the state's ability to maintain a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, including the ability both to maintain order within the borders of the state and to defend the territory against external threats. As Fukuyama (2014: 1329) points out, coercive capacity is not a 'binary, on-off condition' (see also Albertus and Menaldo, 2012). Instead, the extent to which a state is able to provide security to its population can be measured as a continuous variable that ranges from near-absolute security to the complete breakdown of state authority.

Similarly, administrative capacity is a scalar concept, indicating the degree to which state agencies are governed by meritocratic recruitment and formally institutionalized rules, rather than by forms of particularism such as corruption, clientelism, nepotism, cronyism, or patronage. Finally, the third type of state capacity is the ability of the state to raise revenues (extractive capacity). As Hanson (in this special issue) notes, extractive capacity 'is not only essential for funding state activities of all types, but it serves as a marker for the capabilities that underlie state power'. Hence, it is analytically distinct from the other two capacities but, at the same time, depends on and is affected by the state's capability to coerce subjects into paying taxes as well as regulate the social and economic spheres.

Of course, the territorial dimension of state capacity should be mentioned. Quantitative, cross-national studies lack the necessary data to capture subnational variation in state capacity, although the qualitative state building literature provides plenty of evidence for important subnational and sectoral variation within a given country (Koehler in this special issue; Soifer and vom Hau, 2008). Despite laudable efforts to create better measurements and data, scaling down from the national to the subnational level in order to identify differences in state capacity at the local level, which would then permit making statistical inferences on the relationship between state capacity, elections and authoritarian resilience on the subnational level, remains an unsolved problem.

State capacity and elections in authoritarian regimes

The causal relationship between state capacity and electoral authoritarianism flows in both directions. That is, the different dimensions of state capacity 'both affect, and are affected by, the strategies that authoritarian regimes use to maintain power' (Hanson in this special issue). In the same vein, elections can strengthen or weaken the state. Slater (2008) argues that the organization and holding of multiparty elections under non-democratic conditions can have a direct state-building effect. Specifically, not only do elections act as catalysts for the construction of mass ruling parties and the capture of previously marginal and peripheral populations, but they also enable government interventions in local power enclaves. In this way, 'competitive national elections [...] incite the territorial extension of state institutions' (Slater, 2008: 252). Yet, competitive elections can also subvert state capacity and contribute to state collapse. According to Mansfield and Snyder (2005), the opening of the electoral arena for contestation at the subnational level in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia spawned centrifugal forces in the regions that weakened central governments and ultimately undermined their authoritarian regimes. Moreover, in the case of complex multinational states, what is often at stake in elections is not merely regime survival but also state survival in the face of pressures for disintegration, including challenges by secessionist movements.

The focus of the contributions of this special issue, however, lies above all on the question of whether and how state capacity influences the regime-strengthening or regime-weakening effects of elections. As Fenner and Slater (2011: 17) assert, 'states are the ultimate institutional weapons in the authoritarian arsenal'. Hence, conventional wisdom holds that strong states strengthen authoritarian regimes whereas state weakness amplifies the regime-subverting impact of elections in authoritarian regimes. Autocrats presiding over a highly capable state may abuse the bureaucracy to subtly manipulate voters and the electoral framework. Moreover, a strong coercive

apparatus serves to prevent opposition mobilization and post-electoral protests (Seeberg, 2014). Thus, elections are more likely to stabilize authoritarian regimes endowed with high levels of state capacity. On the other hand, where state capacity is low, elections are more likely to spin out of control, forcing the regime to turn to more blatant forms of fraud or large-scale violence, which tend to cause regime destabilization. Furthermore, studies of authoritarian state-building in post-Soviet countries suggest that state weakness strengthens electoral competition in authoritarian regimes, as regime elites in the provinces have little interest in building strong political parties or strengthening political party penetration. This, in turn, makes it more difficult for rulers to increase state integration and capacity (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Way, 2005). Yet, while the findings of Andersen et al. (2014) show that state capacity does indeed tend to enhance autocratic regime stability, their analysis also reveals that what primarily matters is coercive capacity, not administrative effectiveness (see also Albertus and Menaldo, 2012).

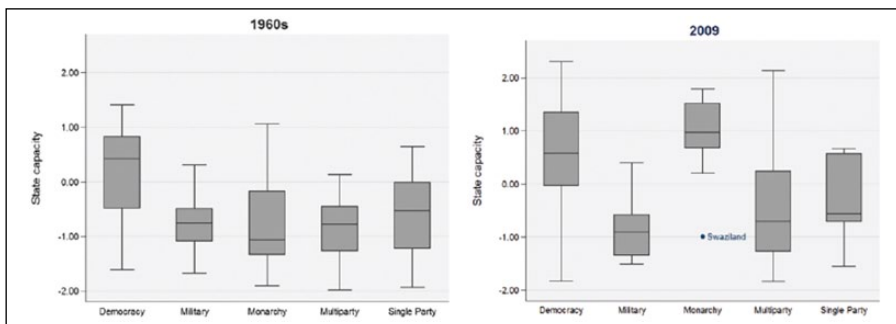
As reflected in Figure 2, different types of political regimes exhibit different degrees of state capacity. Based on the regime data provided by Magaloni et al. (2013, see Figure 3) and state capacity data collected by Hanson and Sigman (2013; for more detail, see Hanson in this special issue), it seems that average state capacity has increased across regime types since the 1960s. However, multiparty autocracies are clearly inferior in terms of their state capacity compared to most other regime types.

For lack of space, we omit an in-depth discussion of the theoretically intriguing variation of state capacity across regime types. However, it is not terribly surprising that monarchies tend to have stronger state capacity than other types of authoritarian regimes, as most of the surviving royal dictatorships (as of 2009) are oil monarchies in the Near and Middle East, who use their vast rents to invest in strong security apparatuses and relatively well-functioning state bureaucracies. Furthermore, most single-party regimes can be found either in Asia, where strong (developmental) states are relatively common for historical reasons (see Woo-Cummings, 1999), or post-conflict regimes in Sub-Sahara Africa, such as Rwanda and Ethiopia, which are often cited as prime examples of African developmental states (e.g. Kelsall, 2013). In contrast, the category of multiparty regimes is much more diverse in terms of state capacity: the range is by far the largest in terms of outliers at the top (regimes with particularly strong state capacity) and also considerable in terms of outliers at the bottom-end of the range (particularly weak state capacity).

While statistical analysis is the most appropriate approach to analyze ‘typical’ cases of state capacity in electoral authoritarian regimes (those lying within the boxes), a qualitative case study

Figure 3. State capacity and regime types, 1960s and 2009.

Note: Regime data are from Magaloni et al. (2013); state capacity is the value of the capacity measure developed by Hanson and Sigman (2013) in their State Capacity Dataset, version 0.95. For more detail on how the (composite) measure of state capacity is constructed, see the article by Hanson in this special issue.



approach might be more appropriate to deal with the outliers – such as pre-1988 South Korea. Moreover, the relationship between state capacity and regime stability is not static but can evolve over the course of time, with the two elements either mutually reinforcing or undermining each other (Hanson in this special issue). Autocracies with strong state capacity such as South Korea (Hellmann in this issue) face a dilemma. On the one hand, high state capacity enables industrialization, which, in turn, strengthens the regime through the causal mechanisms of legitimation and cooptation. On the other hand, the social and cultural consequences of economic growth undermine the structural foundations of authoritarian rule, as modernization shifts the traditional support structures away from small farmers and rural populations in favor of industrial workers and the urban middle class. In such a scenario, high levels of state capacity are associated with increasing socio-economic development and resurrecting civil societies. That is, strong state capacity can make autocracies strong in the short to medium term, but can also contribute indirectly to the erosion of autocratic rule in the long term.

The contributions to this issue

Addressing the gaps in the literature mentioned above requires a multi-method approach, which is why this special issue brings together conceptual, quantitative, and qualitative contributions concerning the link between state capacity and the stability of electoral authoritarian regimes. Using diverse methodological approaches and a wealth of data to make their cases, the articles collectively attempt to link debates among three different subfields of comparative politics: state-building research, authoritarianism studies, and the wider impact of elections on regime survival or breakdown. In doing so, the articles cover the geographic regions of East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, and the post-Soviet region. While the special issue mostly focuses on contemporary cases, it also includes historical cases of electoral authoritarianism – namely, South Korea and Indonesia, which constitute the statistical outliers that combine a relatively high-capacity state with a weak electoral authoritarian regime.

The first contribution, by Jon Hanson, discusses various approaches to the conceptualization and measurement of the institutional underpinnings of autocratic power. His theoretical inquiry into how state capacity influences the organization of authoritarian rule and the strategies used for regime survival suggests that different dimensions of state capacity – namely, its extractive, coercive, and administrative subcomponents – are used in very different ways to maintain an electoral regime's stability and access to power. Hanson argues that 'vertical' threats from below can best be combated through administrative capacity and coercive capabilities, whereas 'horizontal' intra-elite pressures are most effectively quelled through extractive and coercive capacities. By focusing more specifically on the constitutive parts of state capacity and outlining the various approaches that have been taken to measure them, Hanson demonstrates how the sub-facets of state capacity can affect electoral regime resilience in different ways. Moreover, by outlining a two-way causal relationship between state capacity and regime strategies aimed at maintaining power, Hanson clarifies some of the analytical problems that emerge when distinguishing the two.

The next two contributions examine how elections work to destabilize autocracies and what the impact is of regular multiparty elections on democratization. Merete Seeberg approaches these questions from an economic perspective and suggests that a dictator's control over the country's economy may be crucial for understanding the complex relationship between autocracy, elections, and regime change. More specifically, she theorizes that an incumbent's control over the economy decreases the likelihood that elections will cause regime breakdown, as economic control provides crucial coercive and manipulative resources. Such resources allow for various forms of electoral manipulation and, as such, economic control is converted into electoral control. In order to test these claims,

Seeberg conducts a regression analysis of autocracies with and without elections from 1970 to 2006, supplemented by in-depth knowledge of a number of case studies, including Mexico, Russia, Egypt, Malaysia, Zimbabwe and Belarus. Her focus on the power relationship between rulers and their economic institutions not only indicates how economic control – through the institutional apparatus of the state – can be used to stabilize a regime but also contributes to our understanding of how the stability of electoral autocracies and non-electoral autocracies may differ.

The contribution by van Ham and Seim addresses how state capacity affects not only electoral authoritarianism and its stability but also the consolidation of democratic systems that may follow the breakdown of electoral authoritarianism. Drawing on a sample of 460 national-level executive elections in 110 electoral authoritarian regimes from 1974 to 2012, the authors propose a two-phase theory of democratization-by-elections that considers the different effects of state capacity on turnover in elections and democratic change after elections. They hypothesize that state capacity has a negative effect on the likelihood of regime turnover, but a positive effect on democratic change after elections. Thus, what may be needed for democratic change after elections to be successful is the (unlikely) combination of strong states and incumbent turnover in elections.

Shifting from statistical analyses to case studies, the next two articles analyze different cases of electoral authoritarianism in Asia. First, Olli Hellmann examines the case of electoral authoritarianism in South Korea from 1963 to 1987. Combining insights from the literatures on the developmental state, electoral authoritarianism, and the stability of autocratic regimes, he contends that – although high capacity states have more strategic options and resources available compared to low capacity states – regime stability is ultimately a function of the interplay between state capacity and the contextual embedding. Specifically, through a historical comparative analysis of various stages of regime and state-building in South Korea, Hellmann shows that changes in the social and international context made it increasingly difficult for the authoritarian regime to use the state for stabilizing purposes. To some extent, the regime itself contributed to these social changes, as the high-capacity state was employed to coordinate industrialization and economic development. In other words, high-capacity states can be a highly ambiguous regime tool that can have stabilizing or destabilizing effects, depending on the policy goals for which it is used.

Marcus Mietzner's examination of autocratic rule in Indonesia under Suharto from 1965 to 1998 also demonstrates that well-developed state capacity can prove futile in the fight for political and authoritative hegemony. Mietzner argues that the impact of state capacity on the stability of electoral authoritarianism may depend not only on the specific type of capacity that is considered, but also on the development phase in which the regime finds itself. For example, although coercion can engender a strong authoritarian regime, it does not necessarily guarantee its long-term survival. This is especially true of regimes that transition from a military to a civilian dictatorship, as such a transition relies on elite support that cannot be garnered only through coercive measures. Instead, at later stages of regime development, Suharto used extractive capacities and economic development to sustain his regime. Legitimation based on socio-economic performance and elite cooptation stabilized Indonesia's electoral authoritarianism by, *inter alia*, generating electoral support. However, when the Asian financial crisis of 1997 hit, elites and masses considered the 'authoritarian contract' broken. It is for this reason that Suharto, although still in possession of a structurally strong state, fell in the wake of a popular uprising. Hence, Mietzner's contribution is significant in at least three ways. First, it makes a convincing case that state capacity should not only be disaggregated into its key dimensions, but also into key phases of regime consolidation. Second, the case of Indonesia casts a new light on the relationship between state capacity and the functions that create and sustain it. Third, the case study exemplifies that resounding electoral victories do not necessarily guarantee a regime's endurance.

Delving further into the subnational dimensions of state capacity and the organization of authoritarian rule, Kevin Koehler's case study of Egypt demonstrates how state and regime building can hinder the construction of strong institutions. The statistical tests of differential effects of state administrative capacity on electoral control in the 2005 and 2010 elections illustrate that the ability of regime institutions to penetrate society and state capacity can evolve with reference to each other but, at the same time, manifest themselves disparately. The case study of Egypt is valuable in this regard because it underlines the importance of uniform state capacity and official party mobilization for regime resilience. Moreover, the study shows that the emergence of regime and party institutions in Egypt can be best understood in the context and process of state growth. It is only from this perspective that one is able to decipher how regime and state institutions have co-evolved, as well as what role party organizations have played.

The paired comparison of Tanzania and Cameroon by Yonatan Morse tackles the question of why electoral authoritarianism has found such fertile ground in Africa, even though the continent has generally been plagued by state weakness. One common answer has highlighted the role of strong ruling parties. That is, in the absence of high state capacity and a strong state, highly institutionalized parties have filled the void. Yet, Morse's comparative study of Tanzania and Cameroon shows that ruling parties address weak state capacity in different ways, which, in turn, has consequences for the stabilization and resilience of their authoritarian regimes. Specifically, in the face of weak state capacity, Tanzania opted for a strong ruling party, whereas Cameroon adopted an alternative path of institutional design and created a centralized presidency. These choices had significant effects on their respective forms of electoral authoritarianism as well as their transitions to multi-partyism. Although neither country can be considered fully democratic nor do they possess high degrees of freedom or fairness in elections, the transition in Tanzania was marked by better managed and more competitive elections, as the structure of the party allowed internal grievances and power-sharing struggles to be adequately addressed. In contrast, thanks to a centralized presidency, Cameroon experienced continued electoral repression and fraud, as well a lack of dispute mechanisms to confront elite resentment and loyalty. The comparison of Tanzania and Cameroon thus shows how the organization of ruling parties, in a context of low state capacity, affects authoritarian resilience and the transition to multiparty elections.

In the final contribution to this special issue, David White takes a nuanced look at the relationship between stability, electoral authoritarianism, and state capacity in Russia. He argues that autocracies with strong regime capacity, although perhaps lacking in state capacity, can, contrary to popular opinion, be sustainable over the long-term. By delineating the measures and strategies President and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has adopted since 2000 to develop regime capacity, he demonstrates the ways in which autocrats can circumvent state building yet, at the same time, engage in regime building. His case study, along with Hanson's contribution, illustrates the difficulties of delineating the differences between state and regime and their respective capacities. Together, these contributions show that although capacities of regime and state can be conceptually distinct, the two concepts may be empirically interwoven. In terms of authoritarian resilience therefore, both regime strength and state strength should be considered as having conditioning effects on electoral authoritarianism and its resilience.

In lieu of a conclusion

The articles in this issue point to the importance of the concept of state capacity when analyzing the 'paradox of elections' in authoritarian regimes. While many issues remain partially unresolved, the contributions provide evidence that state capacity matters for the resilience of electoral authoritarianism. In addition, they point to the necessity of disaggregating the semiabstract notion of state

capacity into different dimensions or capacities, to differentiate between national and subnational levels of analysis, and to observe temporal change. Another key lesson is the importance of the origins of institutions in understanding whether institutional effects 'are indeed real or if institutions are mere epiphenomena of underlying structural processes' (Koehler, in this issue). Finally, while elections do not always have the effects anticipated by autocrats, they can have both positive and negative unintended consequences, as is made apparent through strategies of comparative analysis.

Of course, the contributions in this special issue cannot solve all the theoretical, conceptual, methodological, or empirical challenges and issues that concern students of electoral authoritarianism. The aim of this special issue is more modest. Clearly, elections differ substantially in their impact on regime stability and survival, a fact that is widely acknowledged in the present literature. But electoral authoritarian regimes also differ in regard to how autocrats deal with strong capacity states or how they react to the challenges of state weakness. However, we believe that this special issue is useful and timely because it successfully demonstrates that state capacity matters for regime resilience and therefore also matters for the study of multi-party elections in autocracies.

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Author biographies

Aurel Croissant is Professor of Politics at Heidelberg University. His main research interests include democratization and comparative authoritarianism studies, electoral politics, the political role of the military, and the transformation of the state in the Global South and, especially, in Asia-Pacific.

Olli Hellmann is Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Politics at the University of Sussex. His research on democratization and party politics in East Asia includes *Political Parties and Electoral Strategy: The Development of Party Organization in East Asia* (Palgrave Macmillan) and articles in *Party Politics*, the *Journal of East Asian Studies*, and other journals. His research agenda has recently shifted towards issues of state building and corruption.