

Do places with greater racial equality in representation have more equal access to parks or mass transit?

Similarly, future work might further unpack the role of political organizing as a potential tool for mitigating disparities. While this book outlines a fairly small role for election timing as an important mechanism for explaining racial disparities in political representation, political campaigns that explicitly target underrepresented groups, for example, might have an impact on representation.

In the last analysis, this book provides an empirically careful, important examination of representation at the local level. Bringing new data to the study of local politics, it provides an important foundation for future studies of racial inequality in local politics.

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**Constraining Dictatorship: From Personalized Rule to Institutionalized Regimes** by Anne Meng. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2020. 278 pp. \$39.99.

Given the persistence of authoritarianism and its recent advance across the world, scholars have increasingly examined the substantial variation among these autocratic regimes. By further developing the institutionalist approach pioneered by Samuel Huntington, Anne Meng makes an important contribution to this agenda. Whereas recent investigators emphasize the role of parties, elections, and parliaments, Meng in *Constraining Dictatorship* cuts through this quasi-democratic façade and probes the very core of autocracy, the ruler's relationship to other top politicians. Whereas the chief executive faces effective constraints, an authoritarian regime is much more likely to survive its founder's demise. Meng highlights both formal institutions, especially constitutional succession rules and term limits, and informal norms such as filling major cabinet positions with other powerful leaders, rather than having the autocrat command these portfolios personally.

The underlying logic is paradoxical, but Meng develops it systematically through game-theoretic modeling. Leaders who are comparatively weak when taking power can stabilize their rule by ceding resources and influence to other top elites. This commitment to sharing the spoils of office allays the fear of potential rivals that with regime consolidation, the autocrat would concentrate ever more power and push erstwhile allies aside. By tying their own hands, authoritarian

rulers prevent their internal competitors from making a preemptive strike and ousting them while they are still weak. In sum, precisely by empowering others can a ruler secure his own political survival and give the regime institutional solidity and impersonal longevity. By contrast, initially strong rulers avoid power sharing and institutional self-constraint. Yet while their personal strength enables them to keep office for decades, the regime risks collapse after their death.

Meng skillfully illustrates this interesting reasoning through case studies of Cameroon and Ivory Coast and then carefully conducts systematic statistical analyses of 46 African countries from 1960 to 2010, avoiding the tricky endogeneity problems that often plague institutionalist analyses. The findings show that initially weak dictators are much more likely to create institutional constraints than their strong counterparts, and that such self-limitations extend regimes' longevity.

Clearly written, convincingly argued, and exceedingly well researched, this outstanding book makes major contributions to institutionalist analysis and the study of African politics. By penetrating the inner nucleus of power, Meng sheds new light on the political dynamics of authoritarianism. Moreover, she paints a comprehensive picture of African authoritarianism and its development over time. Surprising insights emerge. For instance, by weakening autocrats, external pressures for democratization after the Cold War's end induced rulers to institutionalize—but that made dictatorships more resilient and hindered democratic transitions!

Meng's empirical results are somewhat mixed, however. As her statistical investigations reveal, formal constitutional rules are more effective than informal patterns of cabinet appointments, and a clearly designated line of succession proves more reliable than term limits. Perhaps, then, the paradoxical argument that weak autocrats can stabilize their rule by giving away power to other top elites does not always apply? During acute crises in particular, endangered presidents may benefit from grabbing the defense portfolio, rather than handing the sword to a potential rival. Similarly, constitutional rules do not seem to have the strong lock-in effect postulated by Meng; incumbents frequently overturn term limits. Indeed, as autocrats gain power over time, they often strip away earlier constraints and establish growing personal predominance. Thus, initial political bargains and institutional settlements do not necessarily hold. Institutions are not that sticky, especially under dictatorship.

These questions, however, do not detract from the many important contributions of this study, which is highly recommended for students of autocracy, institutions, and African politics.

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**Let Them Eat Tweets: How the Right Rules in an Age of Extreme Inequality** by Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. New York, W.W. Norton, 2020. 288 pp. \$26.95.

How did Donald Trump's supposedly populist takeover of the Grand Old Party culminate in a presidency that overtly served the interests of the ultra-rich? What did Trump's working-class voters get for their devotion to a reality TV entertainer with a gold-plated toilet? And how is the Republican Party still electorally competitive after years of pursuing unpopular policies?

Continuing the trajectory of *Off-Center* (2005) and *American Amnesia* (2016), *Let Them Eat Tweets* by esteemed political scientists Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson convincingly answers the preceding questions with a startlingly parsimonious explanation: the current Trump-tinged GOP is the logical extension of a multigenerational development in the Republican Party that married policy objectives of wealth concentration and social welfare retrenchment with rhetorical stylings that emphasized racial threat, emotion over fact, and culture wars. To maintain control, this alliance of social populists and plutocrats (termed "plutocratic populism") increasingly turns to anti-democratic practices to govern as a radical plurality, doubling down on a negative feedback loop that is less and less responsive to majority will with each passing election. In the end, the working-class masses quite literally get tweets and little else that materially benefits their daily lives.

New to their arsenal and the centerpiece of the book, Hacker and Pierson's analysis in Chapter 4 emphasizes the role of Republican operatives and the media in manufacturing a politically tractable, outrage-based identity within the electorate, effectively building loyalty while obfuscating attention to plutocracy. This analysis is reminiscent of works by Karl Marx, W.E.B. Du Bois, E.E. Schattschneider, William S. Willis, David R. Roediger, Thomas Frank, Arlie R. Hochschild, Kathy Cramer, and Ashley Jardina that collectively uncover the salience of sociocultural dimensions in either bolstering or supplanting economic conflict.

Among the variety of approaches that those with power employ to displace economics throughout political history, this analysis focuses exclusively on the