Power-sharing and the Timing of Autocratic Institutions

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October 2014

Abstract
Are there unique paths to the development of political institutions in autocracies? While democratic theorists have long argued that paths of institutional development, particularly horizontal accountability preceding vertical accountability, influence democratic stability, we know little about whether the sequential development of political institutions in autocracies enhance their durability. This paper examines when different types of autocratic political institutions – legislatures and support parties – emerge to explain how they influence autocratic survival. Dictators in uncertain environments need support from vital regime insiders. As an institution that facilitates horizontal accountability by lowering the transaction costs in bargaining between the leader and elites, a legislature stabilizes regimes and promotes economic development. However, the mobilization of mass-based groups, such as an urban workforce or peasant unions, requires vertically-oriented institutions, namely political parties, to integrate their political interests. This sequential path of institutional development in autocracies promotes regime longevity independently of political parties or legislatures, and indicates that a specific sequence of institutional change accounts for autocratic durability. Using the case of Mexican political development since the Porfiriato and cross-national data covering the period from 1946-2010, I demonstrate that restricted legislatures that precede the development of strong support parties are associated with autocratic survival. The research introduces a new approach to the empirical study of political development by using sequence analysis to model autocratic durability.