

EDITORS' FOREWORD

The topic of this issue of the *Journal of International Affairs* requires little introduction, particularly at the end of a long year for autocratic rulers around the world. However, while many scholars have focused their attention on the causes of the Arab Spring revolutions—asking “Why there?” and “Why now?”—our aim is deeper. We asked our contributors, many of whom have first-hand knowledge of authoritarian regimes around the world, to examine the factors that underpin regime durability, not democratization. Our questions are, “Why not there?” and “Why not now?”

In 1951, one-time *Journal* contributor Hannah Arendt examined the ideologies of National Socialism and Stalinism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and concluded, quite rightly, that “totalitarianism, like tyranny, bears the germs of its own destruction.” The same is true of modern-day authoritarian regimes, except that for many, it is unclear whether destruction is indeed inevitable. Today’s regimes eschew Stalinist-style ideological purity; they are pragmatic and will do what works. This means that most regimes are finding ways to take part in the booming global marketplace of products and ideas, even though it is difficult for authoritarian leaders to do so while continuing to stifle political dissent.

Our contributors explore these issues with great expertise, and some with inside knowledge that is not typically available to readers in the United States. As editors we struggled to finalize the order of the articles because as we read and re-read them, similar themes emerged and our authors appeared to be engaging in an impromptu dialogue. Resisting the urge to order and re-order them, we leave it to you to discover the many felicitous conversations that arise.

The issue begins with a lively debate about the mechanisms of regime durability. **Natasha M. Ezrow** and **Erica Frantz** contend that political parties and legislatures are important institutional mechanisms that allow authoritarian states to prolong their rule. They offer citizens a measure of political participation, even

if their voices are co-opted and ignored, and enable regimes to channel and deflect leadership challenges. **Dan Slater** and **Sofia Fenner** take a different approach. They argue that while institutions are important, the *most* important feature of long-lasting regimes is their ability to mobilize state power to suppress dissent and eliminate political rivals.

Teresa Wright examines recent threats to the stability of the Communist Party in China in light of the Arab Spring revolutions and **Eldred V. Masunungure** argues that the durability of autocracy in Zimbabwe is a function of the diminished political voice of the middle class, Robert Mugabe's personality and, most importantly, the powerful state-security apparatus.

Sven Behrendt describes a relatively new development in the authoritarian tool kit: the use of sovereign wealth funds to invest state funds and achieve big returns from the global economy. **Sean Turnell** also discusses the state-resource question vis-à-vis Myanmar, where resource wealth and a close partnership with China have given the ruling military junta the confidence to extend its grip on power through a more open, but still highly controlled, political process.

Oleg Manaev and coauthors **Natalie Manayeva** and **Dzmitry Yuran** use their extensive knowledge of Belarus to argue that Alexander Lukashenko has exploited the people's uncertainty about their national identity—are they European or Russian?—and empowered a small elite to become Europe's last dictator. In contrast to the Belarusians, **B. R. Myers** contends that North Koreans have an *excess* of national identity. The Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il regimes have gained strength by stoking a racial and nationalistic fervor among the people, while South Korean leaders have been unable to generate as much goodwill for the state among South Koreans.

In the next three articles, scholars use their regional expertise to describe how regimes are empowering or co-opting certain classes of elites: **Mehdi Khalaji** describes the state appropriation of Shiite clergy and religious institutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran; **Eusebio Mujal-León** describes the transition of power from Fidel to Raúl Castro in Cuba and the younger brother's efforts to replace the aging revolutionary generation with a new crop of leaders; and **Johan Lagerkvist** describes how China's Communist Party is actively managing, and sometimes reining in, its "red capitalist" Internet entrepreneurs.

The issue features an exciting range of interviews with Nobel Prize winner **Mohamed ElBaradei** on Egyptian politics, former political prisoner **Wei Jingsheng** on China's leaders, Soviet-bloc expert **Ivan Krastev** on modern authoritarianism and political scientist **Alastair Smith** on his new book, *The Dictator's Handbook*, coauthored with Bruce Bueno de Mesquita.

Finally, this issue's student essays take a right-brain–left-brain approach to our

topic: the Cordier Essay, written by **Samantha Libby**, uses modern art to discuss the futility of censorship in Vietnam, and **Utz J. Pape**, author of the Global Public Policy Network Essay, uses game theory to analyze international interventions in authoritarian regimes, which is particularly relevant to the case of Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya. His model yields insights into the sometimes inscrutable decision-making process that informs whether dictators step down and whether the international community intervenes.

Since 1947, the *Journal of International Affairs* has served as a forum for exploring the critical issues of the day, principally by exploring the past in service of the future. We are proud to present this collection of scholarship on the authoritarian state and hope that it will do just that, animating discussion and informing debate in the years to come.

—*The Editors*