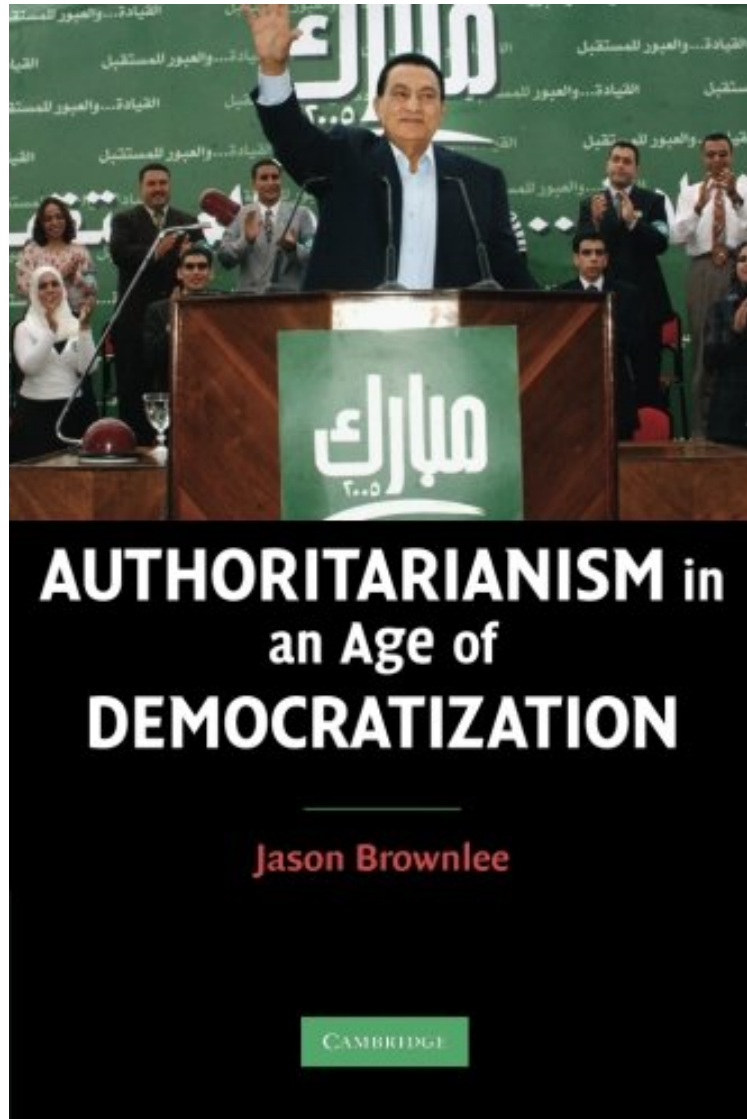


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Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization

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Jason Brownlee : Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization:

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By Arnold Jason Brownlee's *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* argues that strong party systems can stabilize authoritarian regimes by distributing patronage and resolving intra-elite conflicts. Brownlee's account of intra-elite competition in Egypt, Malaysia, Iran, and the Philippines is very compelling and filled with rich historical detail. However, the book doesn't quite prove his argument. First, Brownlee only discusses the theoretical debate and

alternatives to his theory in the last chapter, almost as an afterthought. He never goes about systematically disproving competing theories. Based on his historical analysis (and events since the book's publication), one could argue that ensuring the loyalty of military elites matters more than party organization. Traditional accounts of the Philippines in 1986 emphasize the decisions of Enrile and Ramos to prevent the military from cracking down on People Power. It's not too hard to imagine a different scenario in which the military under General Ver executed a "tiananmen square" style crackdown. Second, the Iran case study simply seems at odds with Brownlee's argument. True, there have been electoral losses for the conservatives, but they conservatives seem firmly in control of the institutions that matter. Moreover, Brownlee suggests that the failure of liberals to dislodge the regime stemmed from the fact that they didn't engage in public confrontation. However, the 2009 election shows what happened when regime opponents took that approach - the Revolutionary Guards and basij cracked down on them. That, in the end, suggests the Iranian theocracy has some staying power, despite the lack of a strong elite party. Finally, Brownlee never explains what constitutes a strong party. Is it membership numbers? A strong executive committee? A connection to rural voters? In the end, this gap makes it difficult to apply Brownlee's argument to other countries and test his hypothesis. For example, was Suharto's Golkar strong or weak (Suharto lasted over 3 decades, but eventually fell). It's too bad, because *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* is obviously well-researched and proposes an intriguing idea. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good history of elite conflict, but doesn't prove its argument. By Arnold Jason Brownlee's *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* argues that strong party systems can stabilize authoritarian regimes by distributing patronage and resolving intra-elite conflicts. Brownlee's account of intra-elite competition in Egypt, Malaysia, Iran, and the Philippines is very compelling and filled with rich historical detail. However, the book doesn't quite prove his argument. First, Brownlee only discusses the theoretical debate and alternatives to his theory in the last chapter, almost as an afterthought. He never goes about systematically disproving competing theories. Based on his historical analysis (and events since the book's publication), one could argue that ensuring the loyalty of military elites matters more than party organization. Traditional accounts of the Philippines in 1986 emphasize the decisions of Enrile and Ramos to prevent the military from cracking down on People Power. It's not too hard to imagine a different scenario in which the military under General Ver executed a "tiananmen square" style crackdown. Second, the Iran case study simply seems at odds with Brownlee's argument. True, there have been electoral losses for the conservatives, but they conservatives seem firmly in control of the institutions that matter. Moreover, Brownlee suggests that the failure of liberals to dislodge the regime stemmed from the fact that they didn't engage in public confrontation. However, the 2009 election shows what happened when regime opponents took that approach - the Revolutionary Guards and basij cracked down on them. That, in the end, suggests the Iranian theocracy has some staying power, despite the lack of a strong elite party. Finally, Brownlee never explains what constitutes a strong party. Is it membership numbers? A strong executive committee? A connection to rural voters? In the end, this gap makes it difficult to apply Brownlee's argument to other countries and test his hypothesis. For example, was Suharto's Golkar strong or weak (Suharto lasted over 3 decades, but eventually fell). It's too bad, because *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* is obviously well-researched and proposes an intriguing idea.

Far from sweeping the globe uniformly, the 'third wave of democratization' left burgeoning republics and resilient dictatorships in its wake. Applying more than a year of original fieldwork in Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, and the Philippines, in this book Jason Brownlee shows that the mixed record of recent democratization is best deciphered through a historical and institutional approach to authoritarian rule. Exposing the internal organizations that structure elite conflict, Brownlee demonstrates why the critical soft-liners needed for democratic transitions have been dormant in Egypt and Malaysia but outspoken in Iran and the Philippines. By establishing how ruling parties originated and why they impede change, Brownlee illuminates the problem of contemporary authoritarianism and informs the promotion of durable democracy.

"Why does conducting elections sometimes undermine authoritarian regimes and sometimes seem to fortify them? Jason Brownlee answers this timely and provocative question in his study of four countries where elections produced unexpected outcomes: Egypt, Iran, Malaysia and the Philippines. From his close and careful reading of these electoral experiments, Brownlee concludes that their outcomes were shaped by the strength and solidity of the ruling parties. For scholars, students and policymakers alike, this salutary emphasis on the institutions that sustain and betray political regimes in transition is a valuable contribution, not only to the political science of democratization, but also to the policy debates about democracy promotion." -Lisa Anderson, Columbia University "Do elections in authoritarian states inevitably lead towards democracy, or do they serve as a safety valve allowing dictators to tighten their holds? Do even rigged elections indicate that some political competition is occurring, despite the regime's tight grip? These are the questions that Jason Brownlee tackles in his fascinating four-country study. Looking carefully at different historical trajectories of political parties, he unravels a central dilemma: why some authoritarian regimes have survived in an age of democratization, while others have given way to true democratic practices." -Joel Migdal, University of Washington "Brownlee's work serves as an autopsy of departed dictatorships and a diagnosis of the past and future

health of persistent autocracies. He skillfully deploys an ingenious research design and abundant evidence from four countries to identify ruling parties that contain elite conflict as the main source of authoritarian stability. Yet the maintenance of ruling parties is medicine that some autocrats refuse to take. Fearing that they will become institutional bases of opposition, some ruling groups dismantle their own parties. In these cases, Brownlee demonstrates, uncontained elite conflict motivates the emergence of soft liners who may become leaders of democratic transitions. This ambitious and well-written book provides many important lessons about the origins and effects of political institutions. It is a 'must read' for scholars of regime dynamics." -David Waldner, University of Virginia

"This is a welcome addition to recent work emphasizing the importance of institutions in nondemocratic regimes. [...]The care with which the author traces the theoretical claims through the empirical narratives is the book's greatest strength. What he finds within the cases themselves opens up potentially interesting new puzzles for future research." -Jennifer Gandhi, Emory University, *Perspectives on Politics*

About the Author Jason Brownlee is Assistant Professor of Government at the University of Texas, Austin. Prior to arriving at the University of Texas, he was a post-doctoral Fellow at Stanford University's Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law. Professor Brownlee's research addresses domestic and international processes of democratization. His work has appeared in *Comparative Politics*, *Studies in Comparative International Development* and the *Journal of Democracy*.