Crisis in Autocratic Regimes

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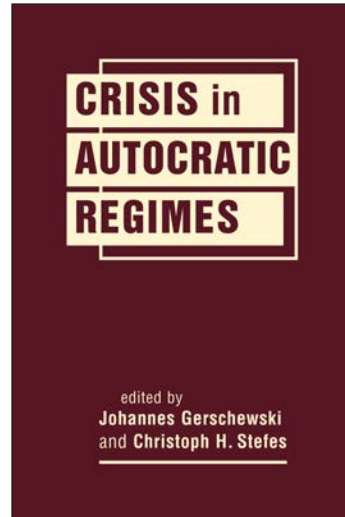
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Analyzing Crises in Autocratic Regimes

Johannes Gerschewski

In 1978, Juan Linz introduced his eminent work on "crisis, breakdown, and reequilibration" with the following words:

> A change of political regime affects millions of lives, stirring a spectrum of emotions from fear to hope. The March on Rome, the Machtergreifung by Hitler, the Spanish civil war, Prague in February of 1948, the coup against Allende—such dramas, symbolizing the transfer of power, become fixed in the memory of people as pivotal dates in their lives. Yet the events themselves are in truth the culmination of a longer process, an incremental political change that has evolved over a more or less prolonged period. Is there a common pattern in the process that has led to changes of the regime, or is each a unique historical situation? (Linz 1978, p. 3)

Our common research endeavor in this book is motivated by questions similar to those raised by Linz almost four decades ago, revolving around how and why a regime slides into crises. Linz and his colleagues focused on democracies, "with no attempt here to extend the study to authoritarian, totalitarian, or traditional political systems" (Linz 1978, p. 5). This is, however, exactly what the contributors to this book have in mind: while Linz's seminal contribution identified the Achilles' heel of young and mature democratic regimes, we embark on a similar endeavor for nondemocratic regimes. We ask what makes autocratic regimes prone to crisis situations. Why do some stumble in moments of crisis while others do not, and to what extent are we able to generalize beyond the idiographic case? Can we locate common patterns of vulnerability shared across different autocratic regimes? Are there parallels to be drawn with regard to the structures and functions that (de)stabilize autocratic rule? What roles do actors play in the emergence of crises? To formulate theoretically informed and empirically meaningful answers to these questions, we brought together chapters from leading scholars in the field of comparative autocracy research. The selected studies are firmly grounded in historical

research, providing a detailed and in-depth view of empirical cases spanning all geographic regions of the world.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of how to analyze crises in autocratic regimes. Adopting an institutionalist perspective, I outline common ground and define the concepts that the contributors use throughout the book. Our common analytical framework not only enhances the consistency of the collected work, but also is a necessary condition for the comparability across the cases studied. In essence, then, this chapter provides the building blocks for that common analytical framework. I want to stress that I do not aim here to offer concrete answers to the question of why autocratic regimes get into crisis situations. That task is left to Christoph Stefes, who in the concluding chapter builds on the rich insights found in the empirical chapters. Drawing on the empirical cases, we are able to put more empirical "flesh" on the theoretical "bones."

The rest of this chapter is organized in four parts. First, I discuss what a regime crisis actually means in the context of this book. Next, I review the state of research and identify connections to existing academic literature. In the third section, I put forth basic elements of how to analyze the emergence of regime crisis from an institutionalist perspective, and in the final section I outline the overall structure and contributions of the volume.

What Is a Crisis?

What is a regime crisis? *Crisis* appears to be an almost omnipresent term in academia. We currently discuss economic, Euro, and financial crisis, myriad ecological crises, demographic and immigration crises, the crisis in Syria, Libya, and Ukraine. Many academics almost routinely wonder whether or not democracy is in crisis, debating the implications of such a crisis (or its absence). Whenever a serious challenge or a malfunctioning occurs, we invariably announce a crisis. The German historian Reinhart Koselleck argues that the term "crisis" serves as nothing less than the "temporally elastic umbrella term of modern times" (Koselleck 1982, p. 631, my translation).

It is important to remember that the semantics of the term *crisis* have changed considerably over time. Not only has its meaning changed, but usage of the term has also transcended disciplinary boundaries. This leaves us with the need to define what we actually mean when we refer to a crisis. Etymologically, the Greek *krisis* implied layers of different possible meanings spanning from judgment, choice, and the weighing of pros and cons to a concrete decision. It was used in the context of laws, courts, and sentences. In medicine, the *Corpus Hippocraticum* introduced the term to refer to the diagnostic findings and judgment about the process

that eventually led to a decision determining whether a patient could be expected to recover or die.

This original meaning of a decision that is due and urgent, but that has not yet been made, was translated to the social sciences. The medical usage of the term *crisis* was the gateway to social sciences. Most interestingly, its historic entry point was the anthropomorphic comparison of a political system to a body and its organs (a metaphor not uncommon to autocratic political thought). It has since gained unparalleled prominence in the academic language of social science (Koselleck 1982). The political usage of the term has historically centered around the aspect of decision, emphasizing that crises redefine the space of possibility and constrain alternative behavioral options. However, over time, the analytical clarity of the term *crisis* has suffered. In contrast to its former meaning, it has also been applied to situations that are not unique, but repeat themselves due to inherent structural malfunctions. Crises have come to no longer describe just short and bounded periods of time, but also are applied to capture whole epochs. The entire century seemed to be in crisis. Further confusing matters, another strand of literature has equated crisis with revolutions; that is, short-term (and often violent) ruptures in history (Koselleck 1982).

In this light, it is important to delineate different types of crisis and I propose doing so along three dimensions. First, does crisis refer to a brief moment or a longer phase? It is more precise to speak then of an acute versus a chronic crisis. Second, is the crisis present (manifest) or is it building up in the background and about to break out (latent)? In Chapter 3 of this volume, Andreas Schedler adds a third dimension. He suggests differentiating between a functional crisis in which the partial performance of a regime is put into question and an existential crisis in which larger survival is at stake. This constitutes a typological space with duration, manifestation, and scope as the three dimensions.

In this book, we concentrate mainly on one type of crisis: acute, manifest, and existential crisis. We also focus on regime crises. A *regime* is here understood as the set of formal and informal rules that govern the access to and the exercise of power. A *regime crisis* is therefore defined for us as an urgent situation requiring immediate action by the incumbents to maintain power. These are the life-and-death moments that the original medical usage of the term suggests.

Crisis and Existing Research

Crisis has been a catchword for the social sciences for decades. Nevertheless, I argue that the emergence of crises in autocracies has received less

attention than it deserves. I approach the subject of this book from three different angles: the democratization literature, the comparative autocracy research, and the neoinstitutionalist turn, placing particular emphasis on gradual forms of change that accumulate to a crisis moment. A deeper understanding of how the "termites in the basement" (Mahoney and Thelen 2010, p. 31) hollow out the autocratic substance is a crucial task. It sheds light on the long and evolving processes that eventually make an autocratic regime slide into existential crisis.

The first corpus of work is associated with the democratization paradigm (Huntington 1991; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Whitehead 2002). Not surprisingly, its point of departure is the end of the autocratic regime and the subsequent initiation of a complex democratization process. Accordingly, it disregards to a large extent the inner dynamic of the autocratic predecessor regime. The general assumption underpinning this literature is that an autocratic regime eventually reaches a tipping point, after which an uncertain democratization path unfolds. Adam Przeworski famously claims that the "crucial moment in any passage from authoritarian to democratic rule is the crossing of the threshold beyond which no one can intervene to reverse the outcome of the formal political process" (1991, p. 14). The end of the autocratic regime is typically portrayed as being a (given) historic caesura. The scholarly focus in the 1980s and 1990s was therefore not on longer-term trends explaining why and how an autocratic regime might have been hollowed out. These scholars instead explained the final fall of a regime through close analysis of deliberate political action within and against the incumbent regime, tracing the subsequent complex transition to, and consolidation of, democracy.

Over the past few years, however, a new research agenda has emerged that explicitly deals with the internal stability and performance of autocratic regimes. Barbara Geddes's (1999) groundbreaking contribution is often quoted as the starting point of this new research endeavor. She argues that some types of autocratic rule persist longer than others with one-party rule proven to be the most robust regime form. Geddes's work triggered other academic studies that have since supported her findings on autocratic regime stability (e.g., Hadenius and Teorell 2007). Building on her analysis, in recent years the study of autocratic regimes has strongly focused on institutions (Pepinsky 2014; see also Schedler 2013). Most prominently, the roles of political parties in autocratic regimes have been thoroughly reassessed. In classic accounts, their role is reduced to a mere power structure whose function is to provide a stable and reliable constituent base (Friedrich and Brzezinski 1956). More recently, scholarly focus has shifted to the various ways by which a political party can stabilize autocratic rule. Jason Brownlee, for instance,

makes a notable contribution by advancing an internal cohesion argument. He argues that autocratic regimes last longer when backed up by a powerful party because the party "curb[s] leaders' ambitions and bind together political coalitions" (2007, p. 37). Parties not only are mobilization vehicles for creating mass support, but also have an internal disciplinary effect by mediating and settling intra-elite conflict. They prolong time frames and make actions in general more predictable, including the facilitation of smooth leadership transitions within an incumbent autocratic regime. Political parties not only manage elite rivalries, but also "restrain the conflicts of actors *in* power" (Brownlee 2007, p. 38, emphasis in original). In a similar vein, Beatriz Magaloni and Milan W. Svolik examine the impact of institutions on the longevity of autocratic rule by expanding the analysis to focus on internal power-sharing arrangements and showing how institutions make commitments among the elite more credible. Institutions diminish the moral hazard problem (Magaloni 2008; Svolik 2009, 2012,). Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski also demonstrate that institutions neutralize threats and make autocracies last longer (Gandhi 2008; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007). Besides the role of political parties, other institutions such as cabinets (Arriola 2009) and elections (Blaydes 2011; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009; Heberer and Schubert 2006; Schedler 2013) have been found to stabilize autocratic regimes.

These diverse academic studies focus on different institutions, but they converge in the research objective of explaining autocratic regime stability. However, less emphasis is paid to the gradual decline and the emergence of crises. These studies focus more on the puzzling question of why autocratic regimes survive and less on asking how their once stabilizing institutions may have been slowly undermined. This book is meant to connect to the nascent literature on institutional evolution in autocratic settings (Bunce 1999; Geddes 2004; Smith 2005; Slater 2010). Our collective analytical interest primarily lies in the emergence and decay of institutions. We are interested in the dynamic process of how institutions come into being in the first place and how they gradually lose their constraining force on actors' behavior. Against that backdrop, this volume should be understood as a complement to these important studies by providing insights into the long-term development of institutions.

By doing so, this book also speaks to a third, more general, strand of literature associated with the neoinstitutionalist turn (Thelen, Steinmo, and Longstreth 1992; Hall and Taylor 1996; Immergut 1998; Thelen 1999; Pierson 2004). More concretely, we are interested in gradual institutional change that takes place over longer periods of time. The core theorem of (historical) institutionalist explanations is the dualism of long phases of institutional stability that are interrupted by critical junctures,

which then again are the origins of far-reaching and stable developments (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Collier and Collier 1991). When it occurs, rapid change is assumed to be externally induced. Newer research has proposed two major modifications to this basic model (Mahoney and Thelen 2010). On the one hand, more emphasis has been placed on endogenous sources of change. On the other hand, the focus has been shifted from sudden rupture to long-term change that gradually undermines the status quo. In the following section, I outline these modifications and discuss the emergence of crisis within autocratic regimes.

## How Do Crises Emerge? Analytical Building Blocks

The challenge in theorizing the emergence of crises in autocratic regimes is a classic one: How can actors change an institution (or a structure more generally) that constrains them? How can actors overcome institutional straightjackets? Or, from a macro perspective, why do structures lose their influence on people's behavior? In the pages that follow, I first outline where crises occur. I then discuss how they occur, distinguishing between sudden ruptures and a gradual lead-up to crisis; and consider the deinstitutionalization process, its potential causal drivers, and concrete mechanisms.

Locus: Horizontal Versus Vertical Games

Where do crises occur? Svolik (2012) has introduced an apt distinction between two forms of challenges that every autocracy faces: a vertical and a horizontal challenge. Autocratic regimes need to control the opposition and the population with the instruments available. They can either try to repress the opposition and instill fear among their citizens or they can try to generate mass support (Gerschewski 2013). This game between the ruler and the ruled corresponds to a vertical axis. The horizontal axis, in turn, pertains to existing power-sharing arrangements among members of the ruling elite. Here, the regime needs to maintain unity within the elite, and power sharing must be credible and relatively predictable. Moral hazard problems must be avoided to achieve and maintain elite cohesion (Magaloni 2008; Svolik 2009).

As Figure 1.1 shows, crises in autocratic regimes can occur along both the vertical and horizontal axes. They can occur from below (i.e., in the interaction between regime opponents and members of the elite) and from above (i.e., between elite members). In the former case, we observe a mobilization of political protest from those that turn against the regime and join the opposition. In the latter case, splits within the ruling elite serve as an apt

Figure 1.1 Loci of Crisis in Autocratic Regimes
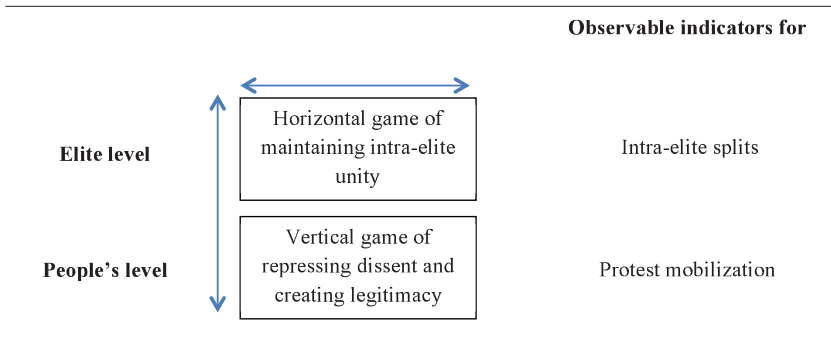
Source: Author's illustration.

indicator for internal disunity among regime decisionmakers. Of course, this distinction is only for analytical purposes to help pinpoint the origin of a regime crisis as defined in this book. In reality, spillovers, mutual infections, and contagions can be observed during complex transformation processes. For example, a protest movement that is perceived as either threatening or legitimate by elite members might serve as a catalyst for internal splits. This can also work vice versa: disunity in the elite might be interpreted as encouragement for the opposition to form a protest movement. These interactive dynamics often reinforce each other and deserve the close attention of political scientists. Yet accounting for the horizontal-vertical distinction contributes to a more precise analysis of the locus of crisis and improves the detection of a starting point for later political contagion effects.

Tempus: Sudden Ruptures Versus Gradual Lead-up to Crisis

How do crises emerge with regard to time? The bread-and-butter theorem of historical institutionalist explanations provides a first answer. The dualism between path dependency and critical junctures is a prominent analytical lens in comparative politics. Steven D. Krasner has called this the "punctuated equilibrium" (1984, p. 226) approach. It suggests a branching tree metaphor. After a juncture appears and a decision is made, that first step forecloses other options.

Such thinking has also been prominent in the social sciences where it is usually referred to as *path dependency*. Once a particular path is taken, it becomes increasingly difficult to alter it. Instead, the first step shapes future choices and sets up a long-term trajectory. Against this background, Ruth Collier and David Collier have proposed a related theoretical framework. They

set forth a sequential theory of (1) structural antecedent conditions that lead (2) to a cleavage or crisis that again (3) triggers a critical juncture. This is a brief moment in time, a watershed, in which rapid change is possible. Through (4) a crystallization process of reactions and counterreactions a legacy is produced which again leads (5) to a stable equilibrium core of attributes (Collier and Collier 1991).[1] Critical junctures open up space for change and represent moments in which new paths can be generated, that again become difficult to alter (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2004). However, the critical juncture versus path dependency discourse has remained largely silent on the central questions of how crises emerge in the first place and how change becomes possible. This approach brackets out the emergence of critical junctures, avoiding such questions by referring vaguely to structural antecedents that make change possible "in distinct ways in different countries" (Collier and Collier 1991, p. 29).

The neighboring rational choice approach to institutions faces the same challenge.[2] While this approach has the advantage of paying greater attention to actors and allows for the refining of historical insights with the help of formal modeling techniques, structural sources for change have only been found exogenously and in the form of rapid and sudden moments (Shepsle 1986, 1989). Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. Taylor have called it a "contradiction" (1996, p. 953) to reconcile institutional stability and institutional change in such a rational choice fashion. The contradiction can be resolved only by reference to an external shock that profoundly affects the rules of the game. While in rational choice approaches actors have no incentive to deviate, even sociological explanations have generally "outsourced" (Mahoney and Thelen 2010, p. 5) their explanation of change. Like the former, these are also better suited to explain stability rather than change. Typical recourses are made to concepts such as socialization and reification, the taken for grantedness as well as the routine of cognitive scripts (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Zucker 1989; W. W. Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Clemens and Cook 1999). However, these are all means of institutional reproduction that do not clarify how and why political change occurs.

The three neoinstitutional approaches (the historical, the rational choice, and the sociological) share an intrinsic strength in explaining why some institutions exhibit inertia and remain persistent over time. However, they also all struggle to explain the emergence of crisis situations. Loosely following the Gould-Eldredge type of change in which sudden leaps bring about change, these three approaches all have difficulties in explaining why these crises occur in the first place.

Against this backdrop, two major critiques have emerged that are important for our own theoretical reasoning on crisis in autocracies. On the

one hand, the research on sudden ruptures needs to be complemented with closer consideration of the potential for more gradual change. On the other hand, the reliance on an external and largely unexplained deus ex machina that triggers sudden ruptures also needs to be complemented (Weyland 2008). James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (2010) argue that all three branches of neoinstitutionalism take compliance with institutional rules and norms as given. In contrast, Mahoney and Thelen argue that compliance is contested and that there is always a struggle over the proper meaning of an institution; the institution's "guiding expectation often remains ambiguous and always are subject to interpretation" (2010, p. 11). If institutional demands are contested and compliance is not given due to emerging cognitive disequilibria, but needs to be achieved instead, then this opens up new space for endogenous sources of change (Aoki 2001). Compliance with institutional demands for action should be taken as the central variable of inquiry. This not only makes room for endogenous sources of change, but also provides an opportunity to think more systematically about gradual forms of change. If an institution is always contested, the struggle between actors over its proper meaning and effect can be a lasting and incremental one. The one-sided view on critical junctures and path dependency should be complemented with a parallel understanding of endogenous and gradual forms of institutional degeneration. A regime crisis can occur in both ways: either as the result of an exogenous shock that leads to a rapid deinstitutionalization (see also Chapter 10 by Frédéric Volpi in this volume), or as the product of a long and gradual hollowing out of an institution.

Exogenous shocks are by definition difficult to explain. They arrive almost unnoticed and can potentially develop a sudden and overwhelming outcome. Revolutions or spontaneous mass protests come to mind, for example. They are unanticipated, by both political actors and political scientists. However, most shock events do not fall from the sky. They are almost always foreshadowed by various signals and warnings that often go unnoticed, however, due to their brevity, tempo, and acceleration. The gradual hollowing out of institutions that become defunct over time is usually easier for observers to track. The challenge here lies in detecting piecemeal change. It happens over a longer period, is slower, and usually has a constant velocity without acceleration. However, what the sudden ruptures and the gradual hollowing out share is a decline prior to the crisis. I try to make sense of this decline by using the idea of deinstitutionalization processes.

The Deinstitutionalization Process

A crisis usually results from the prior decline of institutional capacities. An *institution,* defined as the "rules of the game" (North 1990, p. 3), is able to

shape and influence individual and collective actions. Institution should be understood as a placeholder in this general discussion, not intended to denote a concrete meaning. In specific empirical investigations, the place-holder "institution" can refer to formal and informal institutions ranging from political parties, parliaments, courts, and elections to corruption, patronage, and other informal practices. The important common denomi-nator uniting formal and informal institutions, however, is that they "exert patterned higher-order effects on the actions" of individuals (Clemens and Cook 1999, pp. 444–445). To be sure, an institution does not determine what action ought to be taken, but it does provide a powerful incentive structure that changes the individual calculation of risk and probabilities in the formation of preferences, the construction of actor coalitions, and the eventual action itself (Katznelson and Weingast 2005).

Institutionalization is the process by which an institution gains behav-ioral power over actors. The classic definition proposed by Samuel Hunt-ington in his early work describes it as a "process by which organization and procedures acquire value and stability" (1968, p. 12). The process of institutionalization unfolds over a longer period of time and, as it pro-gresses, the behavioral demands on actors tend to intensify.

From this perspective, *successful institutionalization* can be character-ized as the process by which an institution exerts its patterned higher-order effect on more actors, in more circumstances, more often. In contrast, *dein-stitutionalization* can be defined as the reverse process. Deinstitutionaliza-tion is then a process by which the behavior-shaping power of an institution declines. Deinstitutionalization can be characterized as the process by which the actions of fewer actors in fewer circumstances are constrained less often by institutional pre- and proscriptions. It creates new space for alternatives; for the purpose of this book, deinstitutionalization in autocratic regime contexts opens up space for oppositional demands.

This deinstitutionalization process can be driven either by actors or by shifts in the structural parameters. Moreover, I distinguish here between two mechanisms: an inherent design error at institutional inception; or a later occurrence that puts an institution on an erroneous development that creates perverse incentives undermining the original institutional design. In the following I discuss, first, the different causal drivers, and, second, the mechanisms.

Causal Drivers:
Change Agents and Structural Quasi-Parameters

What are the causal drivers behind such a deinstitutionalization process and the subsequent emergence of crises? Among the major developments of his-

torical institutionalism has been the inclusion of power in the explanation of outcomes (Pierson 2015). Institutions should be understood as vehicles for both power allocation and power (re)distribution (Streeck and Thelen 2005). In a recent contribution, Giovanni Capoccia (2016) pushes the debate further by proposing that academics think more systematically about microfoundational perspectives and more closely observe bottom-up processes. In this light, Capoccia (2016) emphasizes the role of shifting social coalitions and points to the specific role of "change agents" (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; see also Bernhard 2015). These agents are the major drivers for change. Since institutions are always contested and compliance with their norms and rules cannot be taken for granted, these change agents are capable of creating a crisis moment. Because coalitions are often built on initial power asymmetries, losers of the arrangement might have a strong incentive to defect at a later stage, implying constantly shifting coalition membership.

This is in line with most causal accounts that view actors and actor coalitions as being the initiator and source for change. From this point of view, it is actors that bring about crisis—and nothing else. In our context of autocratic regime crisis, the fundamental texts by Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter (1986) as well as Przeworski (1991) already argue that splits in the elite between hard- and soft-liners and changing loyalties are a prerequisite of democratization processes. While this research program has focused on intra-elite struggles, Svolik (2012) adds an important second axis, the vertical one. Change agents can also arise from the vertical game between the ruling regime on the one hand and the opposition on the other hand. If the opposition is able to mobilize and organize dissent with the regime, then a crisis looms large. Moreover, the role of ordinary citizens who are not formally part of the mobilized opposition should not be underestimated. An autocratic regime needs to provide an effective justification formula to legitimate its grip on power. Autocracies need to control the masses as well (Gerschewski 2013; Gerschewski et al. 2013). Protest by normal citizens often emerges as a result of popular perceptions of declining regime legitimacy. With this in mind, the most important (collective) change agents come from the elite, the opposition, and ordinary people.

However, to a certain extent, the explanatory route via change agents relegates the reasons for crisis and change to the black box of actors and their myriad competing identities, interests, and preferences. In particular, structuralists find it unsatisfying to merely refer to actors, likely wondering: Why do actors change their motivations in the first place? Why do they want to change an existing institution? As such, the explanatory factor for crisis, (i.e., emergence of change agents and changing actor coalitions) is already the outcome of what is actually studied. Rule defection and the

noncompliance of rule-takers with the demands of rule-makers is not the explanation. In other words, endogenous change has already taken place that has prompted important actors to reconsider their choices—and it is this that deserves to be explained.

If we take the alternative route and focus on structural factors (instead of actor motivations), the explanatory dilemma is, however, turned upside down. One needs to find a solution for a seemingly paradoxical situation: an institution that once contributed to stabilizing autocratic rule has now turned into its opposite, becoming a reason for regime crisis. In other words, how does what once worked in one direction (institutionalization) now turn in the opposite direction (deinstitutionalization)? How can such a paradox be tackled in a way that goes beyond reference to actor motivations and change agents?

An interesting idea of explaining structural institutional change was proposed by Avner Greif and David D. Laitin (2004, p. 633), the crux of which was their introduction of "quasi-parameters." They proposed a tri-partition into (1) parameters that are fixed and exogenous to the institution under study; (2) variables that vary and are endogenous to the institution; and (3) quasi-parameters that are fixed in the short run, but can vary over time and therefore become endogenized. Quasi-parameters thereby serve as an explanatory bridge. If a quasi-parameter changes, it either reinforces an institution (and, hence, makes the institution more robust), or it triggers the opposite effect when the institution refers afterward to a smaller set of situations. It then undermines the behavioral effect of the institution on actors (Greif and Laitin 2004). The main idea is that small changes in these quasi-parameters are not recognized by the relevant actors and therefore are perceived as parametric (i.e., exogenous and fixed) in the short run. In the long run, however, they can vary and may turn into an endogenous force of change. In this sense, the introduction of quasi-parameters provides us with more leeway to solve the central paradox of how something that has long been a stabilizing factor can turn—at least in the medium and long run—into a source of its own demise.

This idea is well illustrated by an example in this book. In their case study on electoral politics in Uganda (Chapter 6), Svein-Erik Helle and Lise Rakner argue that multiparty elections can have—depending on the quasi-parameters—both a stabilizing and a destabilizing effect on nondemocratic regimes. The case of Uganda is particularly apt for such a research endeavor as it hosted three different institutional landscapes during the presidency of Yoweri K. Museveni. This provides the authors with enormous analytical leverage because they can follow a comparative within-case design. They show that the adoption of multiparty elections can be interpreted as a response to the decaying no-party rule. The introduction of

double-edged multiparty elections was therefore a strategic choice by the incumbents. Helle and Rakner are able to show with their rich empirical material that these elections indeed had a stabilizing effect for the regime. However, they also argue that this success might be seen only in the short-run and only as long as rural strongholds continue to supersede the influence of the urban population. This rural bias in Ugandan electoral politics is what we would define as a *quasi-parameter*. The rural voter advantage enjoyed by the regime is likely to change with an increasing number of Ugandans heading toward the cities. This ongoing rural exodus will have important future repercussions for the power equilibrium in Uganda. While the institution of multiparty elections did indeed stabilize the Museveni regime, it may turn out to be the source for a deinstitutionalization process in the foreseeable future. The factor of rural bias in this light can be interpreted as the hinge between a potential stabilizing and destabilizing effect of the institution. (In treating it as a quasi-parameter, we might be able to find a way out of the paradox of what stabilized the regime for some time might contribute to its eventual decay in the long run.)

Mechanisms: Construction Error Versus Perverse Incentives

As of now, we have clarified locus (horizontal vs. vertical game), tempus (rapid vs. gradual), process (deinstitutionalization), and drivers for change (change agents vs. structures). In the last step, I focus on how institutional compliance with an established rule can be undermined over time. I propose here two mechanisms. On the one hand, an institution can be designed erroneously from the very beginning in a way that subverts its intended objective in the long run. Such an institution is impaired by an inherent fundamental flaw. Such cases refer to institutions afflicted by an initial construction error that later leads to a crisis. On the other hand, a soundly designed institution can also evolve over time to develop in a manner different from what was originally envisioned. This deviation from its original developmental path then distorts the institution and leads to unforeseen pathological and perverse incentive structures.

   To illustrate this distinction between initial construction errors on the one hand and the development of perverse incentives on the other, consider the following empirical examples. The breakdown of the Ferdinand Marcos regime in 1986 is a good case in point to illustrate the construction error mechanism (Lande 1986). Marcos's rule was personalistic in style, and his inability to build a reliable group of followers supportive of his regime was a major factor in his downfall. He empowered new economic elites and sought to maintain their loyalty by fostering dependence on him and his goodwill. However, Marcos also alienated and repressed

some traditionally influential family clans such as the Lopez, Aquino, and Osmeña families (Kang 2002). This exclusionary style of co-optation was his regime's Achilles' heel. It can be effectively argued that Marcos's co-optation efforts were ill designed from the very beginning. Instead of incentivizing elite cohesion, his approach bred fierce and powerful internal opposition from the first days of his regime. While his exclusionary style worked temporarily and could be compensated in the short term by other stabilizing mechanisms, it remained a vulnerability throughout his tenure before he finally fell.

While the Marcos regime's co-optation efforts can be interpreted as an example of institutional construction errors at the point of inception, a well-known example of how perverse incentives develop over time is illustrated in modernization theory more generally and the "developmental state" (Johnson 1982) more specifically. In Chapter 8, Thomas Heberer uses the concept of developmental states to explain the remarkable endurance of the Chinese autocratic regime over time. The core idea of the developmental state is a strong state that directs and steers economic and social policies largely independent from societal demands. This feature brings about at least an elective affinity to authoritarianism (Woo-Cumings 1999). Heberer argues with great insight that the Chinese regime is now experiencing a new version of the developmental state, in which the local-state nexus is strengthened and greater emphasis is placed on innovations and sustainability. In so doing, the regime successfully adapts its legitimacy formula to a fluctuating environment, but this adaptation can also result in unintentional changes to existing incentive structures. Political demands for greater transparency and less corruption, which might be encouraged by the new policy direction, could also backfire in the long run. Heberer lists concrete demands ranging from the disclosure of incomes and performance evaluation of senior officials and party cadres, to the abolishment of torture and reeducation camps and the liberation of political prisoners. This sets perverse incentives that were unintended at the beginning of the developmental era under Deng Xiaoping.

To sum up, theoretical reasoning about the emergence of crises in autocracies consists of several building blocks introduced above. I defined deinstitutionalization as the process by which an institution gradually loses its influence over people's behavior. This creates new space for oppositional demands, potentially resulting in a regime crisis. While sudden ruptures have traditionally been the central research focus, given the classical interest in analyzing critical junctures and path dependency, newer research has pointed to the gradual and endogenous origins of regime crises. The first step of such a gradual change can be located in the quasi-parameters discussed above. This is not a prerequisite for the explanation. However,

accounting for quasi-parameters often provides context essential to understanding why the ambiguity of an institution becomes visible in the first place, and why the resistance of change agents and shifting actor coalitions is initiated. In some cases, the origin of the deinstitutionalization process can be traced back to its initial design. An institution can sometimes be afflicted with a fundamental flaw from the very beginning, meaning that the institution and its behavior-shaping influence never fully develops as foreseen. In other cases, deinstitutionalization sets in after a certain period in which the institution worked properly, but then develops perverse incentives that lead to unintentional consequences—notably sliding into a regime crisis. Table 1.1 summarizes the building blocks of analyzing crises in autocratic regimes.

Structure of the Book

The next four chapters (Chapters 2–5) make theoretical and conceptual contributions, while Chapters 6–10 present in-depth case studies. In all of these chapters, a distinction is made with regard to the sources of the

Table 1.1 Crises in Autocratic Regimes

Type of crisis	Acute and chronic Latent and manifest Existential and functional/partial
Locus of crisis	Horizontal game within elite and vertical game between elite and people/opponents
Indicators for crisis	Intra-elite splits (horizontal game) and protest mobilization (vertical game)
Tempus of crisis	Sudden rupture vs. gradual lead-up
Causal drivers	Actor-driven (change agents, coalitions of actors) Structural factors and quasi-parameters as bridge between exogenous, long-term, and fixed parameters and short-term endogenous variables Spillover and contagion effects between institutions under study
Mechanism	Construction error from the very beginning or erroneous development of perverse incentives in institutions under study

crisis, clarifying whether they stem from oppositional challengers to existing rule or from within the regime's elite. These are the two weak spots of authoritarian rule, corresponding with the vertical and horizontal power-sharing games. Chapter 11 summarizes our findings and suggests avenues for further research.

In Chapters 2 and 3, Martin Dimitrov and Andreas Schedler focus on the vertical axis between the ruler and the ruled. They discuss the relevance of public protest. While Schedler (Chapter 3) analyzes protest and asks to what extent the opposition becomes a change agent that challenges autocratic rule, Dimitrov (Chapter 2) goes on to the interesting distinction between hidden and overt forms of discontent. To avoid regime crisis, authoritarian regimes need to undercut the transformation of the former into the latter. To avoid crisis, an authoritarian regime needs to create and maintain effective "anticipatory ex-ante governance." This effectiveness is measured with a pioneering and novel approach: via archival citizen complaints, which are interpreted as the goodwill of the population to voluntarily transfer their discontent to the regime. However, this goodwill depends on material demands that the regime can or cannot fulfill.

Schedler's contribution is thought provoking in the best sense and challenges what we know about protests in autocracies (Chapter 3). He contrasts two dominant perspectives: a first strand of literature that argues that protests are rare in autocratic regimes—and if they appear lead to severe crisis and disruptions; and a second strand that argues that we should perceive protests as frequent events with an information function for the ruling regime. If protest occurs, it remains mostly within preaccepted limits and does not trigger an existential regime crisis. In light of these contrasting views, Schedler explores a new dataset and highlights the "disturbing normality" of protest. He cannot find empirical support either for protests being an apt indicator of crisis or for an "anticipatory obedience of risk-averse protesters" that limit themselves to certain domains. Instead, it appears to be genuine protest, but not disruptive protest. It is not self-censored protest, but rather open dissent that aims at disturbing the legitimacy narrative of the ruling regime.

In contrast to Dimitrov's and Schedler's focus on key themes of the vertical game between ruler and ruled, Milan W. Svolik is interested in horizontal threats that emerge from inside the elite. His main research interest revolves around how to interpret institutions in authoritarian settings, and he proposes that we rethink our common understanding of institutions. Compliance with institutions is a puzzle that needs to be solved and cannot be easily assumed or discounted. Instead, we need to ask how institutions shape actors' behavior. Do they set the incentives that were originally intended or do they also facilitate the development of

perverse incentives over time? What are the consequences of an institution such as term limits and what incentives do they provide for key actors? Answering these questions, as Svolik points out, also has methodological implications. Our focus on formal political institutions might need a corrective because "the man who gives orders might not reside in the presidential palace but rather across the street from it."

Svolik's contribution to this volume can be applied to different kinds of institutions. Empirically, he demonstrates his idea on an elite-level institution that seeks to ensure cohesion among the party cadres. Aurel Croissant, Tanja Eschenauer, and Jil Kamerling take up this perspective of the horizontal game in Chapter 5. They apply it to the second elite group that matters most in creating and avoiding crisis: the military. The authors develop a novel and innovative dataset on military influence. They differentiate between the military as a hidden ruler on the one hand and the military as a supporting structure to the ruling regime. They systematically test whether these different military regimes are more prone to crises phenomena and if these crises occur rather at the horizontal intra-elite axis or at the vertical elite-people nexus. They provide a novel picture to help understand why and how different types of military regimes slide into crisis. Croissant, Eschenauer, and Kamerling's contribution should be understood as a more nuanced discussion of an important subtype. Military regimes differ from each other perhaps as much as they differ from other autocratic subtypes. The contributions of Schedler and Dimitrov focus on key themes of the vertical game between the ruler and the ruled, while Svolik and Croissant et al. expand the view to the horizontal game by respectively discussing the role of the party and the military in nondemocratic rule.

Svein-Erik Helle and Lise Rakner (Chapter 6) examine the inner tension of elections as an institution. As discussed above, Helle and Rakner's contribution can be read against the theoretical question of why an institution's effect on actors can change over time. How can we explain that institutionalized multiparty elections in Uganda have a stabilizing effect (in the short run) while also providing potential for destabilization (in the medium and long run)? To tackle this paradox, the authors look at the horizontal challenge to the regime as well as to the challenges that slowly started to emerge from the population.

That elections are Janus-faced and may have crisis-inducing effects has also been noted by observers of the postelection protests of the color revolutions in the post-Soviet space. Max Bader focuses on this type of regime crisis in Chapter 7. He adds a transnational perspective to understanding why autocratic regimes slide into crisis. The regimes of Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are all consolidated autocracies in the region that cooperate via various formats, most

notably the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These intergovernmental forums allow for mutual learning, through three mechanisms highlighted by Bader. First, these regimes learn from each other about how to prevent elections from having unintended consequences. Second, they provide a forum for political solidarity and support for each other during times of crisis. Third, Bader is able to trace the process of legal emulation: the autocratic regimes in the region even coordinate their legal activities for best practice.

Thomas Heberer (Chapter 8) studies the Chinese case. With rich empirical material from original and secondary sources as well as from his intensive field work, he argues that the Chinese state has been quite successful in avoiding a regime crisis since 1989 by institutionalizing a developmental state with strong local roots. However, as noted above, Heberer also makes clear that while the institution has been a successful formula in the short and medium run, it might also lead to unintended perverse incentives in the long run. Avoiding crises by being responsive to innovations and local developments might turn out to be the beginning of a longer deinstitutionalization phase in which the autocratic regime increasingly loses its grip on power.

Turning to Latin America, Felipe Agüero and Julian Brückner (Chapter 9)—like Croissant, Eschenauer, and Kamerling in Chapter 5—argue that military regimes are not internally coherent, but should be internally differentiated. "Military regimes," despite being a common and widely used concept in comparative authoritarianism, should be disaggregated. By reviewing and reviving the classic works of the 1970s and 1980s in the field, they highlight the role of historical legacies in shaping the institutional choices of military rulers. They illustrate their reasoning with two typical case studies that shed light on the inner working mechanisms of these regimes. While Peru has followed an inclusionary ruling style by incorporating different actors, Chile is a prime example for the exclusionary role model. The former attempts to attract a large coalition of peasants (via land reforms) and political parties as well as organizations like trade unions that are mostly placed on the political left. The latter is more restrictive and bans these parties and organizations. With this distinction, Agüero and Brückner demonstrate the weak spots of these regime subtypes and show how they gradually slide into crisis.

Frédéric Volpi analyzes the causes of the Arab Spring in Chapter 10. Volpi argues that standard models of explanations have not only missed a causal factor when accounting for the Arab Uprisings. Instead, he calls our attention to "eventful sociology" and the idea of "transformative events." We need to interpret the role of agency differently in times of rapid deinstitutionalization versus times of routine governance. This compelling idea

is applied to the horizontal and the vertical games in autocracies. Moreover, he provides insightful suggestions about the origins and nature of regime crisis and the role that different actors play in them.

In the final chapter, Christoph H. Stefes connects and summarizes the various contributions of this volume. Here, he picks up Svolik's suggestion that institutional stability fundamentally rests on distinct balances of power that in turn are engendered by rules and norms. Slowly changing structural factors might upset this reinforcing cycle of institutions and balances of power, leading to the emergence of autocratic regime crises. Stefes shows how this has been the case in all instances of actual and potential regime crises analyzed in this volume. He concludes the book with a call for further research into the structural parameters and roles of actors in bringing about and shaping regime crises, borrowing from Volpi in Chapter 10.

Notes

I would like to express my gratitude to the generosity and patience of the colleagues who collaborated with us on this book. We had two fruitful and inspiring workshops at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. This introduction benefited immensely from the discussions that we had. I am particularly grateful to Julian Brückner, Martin Dimitrov, Andreas Schedler, Lise Rakner, and Farrah Hawana for insightful and detailed comments.

1. This sequential theory of institutional change has later been refined by James Mahoney. He presents an analytical frame in which also (1) antecedent conditions define the range of historical options that are available for actors. The actors decide during (2) critical junctures, which option is taken that sets in motion a consequential chain. At this point, he expands the definition of *critical junctures* by stressing that different options must be on the table. Otherwise, we could not speak reasonably of a critical juncture. This critical juncture is then followed by an institutional pattern that is characterized by (3) a structural persistence in which this pattern is produced and reproduced and by (4) a reactive sequence in which reactions and counterreactions to the institution take place. Finally, (5) the regime outcome represents the solution of the conflict; it is a new institutional pattern, for example, a distinct regime type (Mahoney 2001).

2. The following discussion is particularly informed by the insightful article by Mahoney and Thelen (2010). As it is central to my own perspective, I take up their main argument on the blind spots of neoinstitutionalist explanations of gradual change.