

A Model of Institutional and Coercive Power Sharing

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Abstract

Authoritarian leaders frequently share power with the opposition. Under what conditions do power-sharing deals work? Under what conditions do rulers share power? This paper develops a formal model to examine the two main modes to enforce power-sharing deals and their consequences. Institutional concessions enable rulers to commit to greater spoils for the opposition, but may be reversed. Coercive enforcement mechanisms can protect against transgressions, but also create a threat-enhancing effect that can outweigh the protection effect. The model yields two main insights. First, a credible threat to revolt by the opposition is necessary but not sufficient to induce power sharing. Reallocating power via the threat-enhancing effect can cause either the ruler or opposition to reject all power-sharing deals. Second, when enforcement is endogenous, either strong institutions or strong defensive ability are needed to enable power sharing. Consequently, rulers sometimes benefit and are sometimes hurt by coercive means of tying their hands.

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