

4/16 Prof Mattingly's title+abstract:

Autocracy Reborn: The Rise of Personalist Leaders in Modern China

What explains the rise of personalist leaders in authoritarian regimes? The conventional wisdom is that leaders consolidate power by exploiting weak institutions and overcoming elite resistance. This book argues that policy crises prompt elites to voluntarily empower strong leaders to ensure regime survival, even at significant personal risk. It develops a framework with three core claims: (1) crises create incentives for elites to cede power; (2) leaders with strong military ties are more likely to consolidate power through coercion; and (3) such leaders are more likely to reshape the regime's ideological trajectory. Combining qualitative case studies of Chinese leadership transitions from the 1930s to the present with a database of 12,000 military appointments and a corpus of 110,000 speeches, this book offers a systematic analysis of power consolidation and ideological transformation in the Chinese Communist Party and beyond.#