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The vicious circle of policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes in consolidated authoritarian regimes

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Abstract

So far, interest in policy and political sciences has mostly centered around the varieties of policy advisory systems (PASs) and knowledge regimes in consolidated democracies rather than in consolidated autocracies, which largely remain as black boxes. Drawing on a hybrid literature review, this article aims to fill this gap. It reviews selected articles published between 1992 and February 2023 in the Thomson Reuters Web of Knowledge Social Science Citation Index database to not only to reveal the current state of empirical and theoretical knowledge and persistent knowledge gaps but also to offer an integration of the literature that leads to a preliminary conceptual framework in this emerging topic. In doing so, it contributes to the body of knowledge on this topic in three main ways. First, it provides a comprehensive review of PASs in consolidated autocracies to identify the central features of policy knowledge production within and across autocracies. Second, it proposes "the vicious circle of authoritarian PAS and knowledge regime" as a conceptual approach. In doing so, it takes a modest step toward a holistic conceptualization and synthesis of this literature to date. Third, it establishes connections between fragmented literature studies; identifies theoretical, conceptual, empirical, and methodological gaps; and proposes suggestions concerning promising paths for future research.

Keywords: Russia, information, manipulation, expert, post-truth

Introduction

Public policy scholars have advanced our knowledge on the policy advisory system (PAS) in *democratic regimes* that broadly refers to "the multiple sources of policy advice utilized by governments in policy-making processes" (Howlett, 2019: 241, for PAS in Westminster systems, see Craft & Halligan, 2020; Rhodes et al., 2009; for PASs in developed European countries, see Fobé et al., 2013; Fraussen & Halpin, 2017; Hadorn et al., 2022; Peters & Barker, 1993; Kelstrup, 2017; Van den Berg, 2017; Veit et al., 2017; for that of the United States, see Rich, 2004; Pfiffner, 2005; Ponder, 2000). This scholarship directs attention toward advisory actors in *advanced democracies*: Policy advisors are internal (those

inside the government) and external (those outside the government) individual or organizational policy experts supplying information, specialized knowledge, expertise, and recommendations for action demanded by policy-makers (Craft & Halligan, 2017; Craft & Howlett, 2012, 2013; Halligan, 1995; Howlett et al., 2014; Hustedt & Veit, 2017)[1]. More recently, institutionalist political scientists are interested in *knowledge regimes* as an organizational field for policy ideas concerning "the organizational and institutional machinery that generates data, research, policy recommendations, and other ideas that influence public debate and policymaking" (Campbell & Pedersen, 2015: 3). The main emphasis is on the role of policy ideas in affecting the decisions and actions of policy knowledge producers. Regarding principal characteristics of advice and advising, the scholars of PASs and knowledge regimes share a common view that assume that policy advice and knowledge production are evidence-/knowledge-based activities and responses of advisers to pressing policy problems Notably lacking from this scholarship, however, is explicit attention to the PASs and knowledge regimes in autocracies that have different characteristics from those in democracies.

Recent research has begun to examine various institutions and actors of policy advice to governments in the policymaking processes of developing and transitional economies, as well as of those that are not members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Develeopment, including consolidated autocracies such as China, Russia, and Kazakhstan (Howlett, 2019). Still, empirical, conceptual, and/or theoretical explorations of authoritarian PASs and knowledge regimes have only just begun. Even a basic search in Web of Science (WoS) for articles published in English in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) using the words "policy advisory system*" and "authoritarian" appearing in the topic (i.e., title, abstract and keywords) delivers just one result (i.e., Belyaeva, 2019), whereas the same search for the term "policy advisory system*" delivered 584 results in February 2023. This shows a clear gap in the literature, as there is a disproportionate amount of work in politics and policy sciences, as well as public administration scholarship on PASs, when compared to the scant research on PASs in authoritarian regimes.

If "countries… struggled in the space between democracy and authoritarianism … [and] are increasingly tilting toward the latter" (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2022: 1), and, "[l]ike spin doctors in a democracy, [new dictators] spin the news to engineer support [through manipulating information]" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022: 4), then an investigation of how authoritarian PASs and knowledge regimes are organized and with what effect in consolidated autocratic regimes is legitimate[2]. What are the central features of PASs and knowledge regimes in the authoritarian subtypes? How are they organized in consolidated autocracies? How do interactions among multiple structural, institutional, and agential factors inform the nexuses between political power, policy knowledge production, and truth? Why do autocracies interact with international (or foreign) policy advisers and engage with diffusion of their own PAS and knowledge regimes?

This article reports that autocrats create their own PASs and knowledge regimes that produce policy ideas reflecting their preferences (e.g., political economic) and/or desires (e.g., ideological). They speak power to PASs to shape formal and informal institutions of policy advice whereby policy advisers do not speak truth to power. The relationship between power and knowledge, or elite decision-makers in the state (e.g., autocrats, rulers, politicians, dominant party cadres, and senior bureaucrats) and policy advisors (e.g., bureaucrats, academic scholars, experts, consultants, and think tanks), is the products of various structural, institutional, and agential causal factors that are aligned with each other and reinforcing what I call "the vicious circle of policy advise" (for a theoretical discussion on the causal effects of such inter-related and multiple factors, see Bakir, 2022a,b).

This research emphasizes how intra-elite interactions, institutions, and political power related to policy advice are intertwined. In doing so, it addresses a resonant theme within public policy research identified in this Special Issue. It contributes to scholarship on PASs and knowledge regimes through a holistic conceptualization and synthesis of the literature to date. Specifically, it offers a conceptual framework of the vicious circle of PASs and knowledge regimes in consolidated authoritarian regimes. In doing so, it takes a modest step forward in unpacking the relationships between political power,

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[1] Advisors come in different types with different functions. For example, consultants and think tanks are the external sources of advice (e.g., policy advocates for policy-makers), and they *compete* with one another to influence policy reforms (Howlett and Migone, 2013). Academics, academic centers, and universities are more inclined to supply evidence-based and objective advice.

[2] Freedom house rates political regimes. Consolidated authoritarian regimes refer to "closed societies in which dictators prevent political competition and pluralism and are responsible for widespread violations of basic political, civil, and human rights" (see Freedomhouse, 2022).

knowledge production, and truth (e.g., power elites define truth through shaping policy knowledge production and dissemination). This article shows that autocrats speak power to PASs and knowledge regimes through creating repressive advisory institutions. They also co-opt targeted policy advisers into the regime apparatus through granting social status (e.g., endorsement in politically empowered policy networks in an issue area) and various resources. In doing so, they define, shape, control, and steer policy-relevant knowledge production and expert advice. Furthermore, policy advisers operating under repression and co-optation are more inclined not to speak truth to power. They pursue a political and ideological agenda of the regime elites. Co-opted advisers become the loyal servants of the power elite. In this context, however, advising is *Janus-faced*. On the one hand, advisers produce and disseminate information, policy ideas, and knowledge to legitimize stability and durability of authoritarian rule. On the other hand, operating under the institutional logics of the authoritarian regime (e.g., patrimonial rule) and emotions (e.g., a fear of sanctions), experts supply insincere and inaccurate policy advice that over exaggerates policy success and plays down setbacks that do not correspond to the empirical level of reality. The resulting policy failures or the actual gap between policy objectives and outcomes are more likely to erode the legitimation basis for the autocratic power elite and regime durability.

The remainder of this article describes its research methodology (including a review and classification of the results); reports, synthesizes, and discusses its findings; and offers its limitations and implications for further research.

Methodology

"A literature review is a systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous research" (Cho & HRDR, 2022: 147). There are various types of literature reviews (see, for example, Sutton et al., 2019). For example, systematic literature review is "methodical, comprehensive, transparent, and replicable" (Siddaway et al., 2019: 751) and therefore reduces author bias (see Bakir & Gunduz, 2017 for one of the first systematic literature reviews in policy sciences). Another review type is an integrative literature review that "reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated" (Torraco, 2005: 356). A review of "*new or emerging topics*…would benefit from a holistic conceptualization and synthesis of the literature to date. Because these topics are relatively new and have not yet undergone a comprehensive review of the literature, *the review is more likely to lead to an initial or preliminary conceptualization of the topic (i.e., a new model or framework)* rather than a reconceptualization of previous model" (Torraco, 2005: 357, my emphases). Informed by these insights, this article offers a hybrid review that combines systematic literature review and integrative review. It aims to offer an initial or preliminary conceptualization of the central features of PAS and knowledge regime in the consolidated autocracies through a new conceptual framework—the vicious circle of policy advice and knowledge regime[3].

The principal data for this review were gathered from Thomson & Reuters WoS, the SSCI database. WoS is preferred because it is the oldest database with citation and bibliographic data; it includes SSCI with "accuracy of journal classification" (Wang & Waltman, 2016: 359–360); and "journals indexed at [WoS] are indexed at the Journal Citation Reports (JCR), which offers a systematic and objective means to critically evaluate the world's leading journals, with quantifiable, statistical information based on citation data" (Schmitz et al., 2017: 372–73; see also Aksnes & Sivertsen, 2019: 15; Harzing & Alakangas, 2016: 788).

This review adopted a four-step selection process (see Table 1). This includes (a) conducting an SSCI search using a keyword combination in order to find a pool of articles from which the most relevant articles published in English could be selected (1,056 articles), (b) short-listing articles by reading their abstracts (110 articles), (c) reading the short-listed articles to select those most relevant (14 articles), and (d) broadening this pool through an additional selection process in order to avoid omission of relevant research (three articles). The coding criteria for the final sample of 17 articles (see Appendix 1) were used to satisfy the principles of relevance and of feasibility promoted by Webster and Watson (2002). Thus, articles were coded based on (a) author, (b) year of publication, (c) journal, (d) empirical focus,

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[3]   Scoping review is not adopted in this article. This is because, [s]coping reviews typically identify, present and describe relevant characteristic of included sources of evidence rather than seeking to combine statistical or qualitative data from different sources to develop synthesized results…[It is] developing as a policy and decision-making tool. (Peters et al., 2020: 2, 4). Furthermore, they are agnostic in that they focus on a heterogeneous literature across disciplines including articles, books, and grey literature such as policy documents, reports and newspaper articles (ibid.:3).

Table 1. Inclusion criteria and web-based search results.

General information		
Service	Thomson Reuters—Web of Knowledge	
Date	20 February 2023	
Timespan	Start: 1 January 1992	End: 20 February 2023
Search	Topic	
Document	Articles and early access	
Language	English	
Catalog	Social Sciences Citation Index	
Filtering processes		
Filter	Topic: "policy advisory systems," or "policy expert", or policy advi," or "knowledge regime," or "policy and autoc*" or "policy and authoritarian"	Results: 1,056 articles in WoS core collection

(e) research design, (f) theory focus, and (g) key findings and/or argument (see Appendix 1). Coding was performed in an Excel spreadsheet.

Reporting the descriptive findings
Number of publications and topical interests

PASs and knowledge regimes are context-specific, thus varying across countries. Despite extensive literature on varieties of policy advice in democracies, the knowledge of policy advice in autocratic political regimes is extremely limited in the public policy literature. Furthermore, such advisory systems have not been sufficiently analyzed in broader social science research. As noted in the previous section, the final sample of the most relevant contributions included just 17 articles published during the 31 years between January 1992 and February 2023. The bulk of the articles in the sample had been published since 2019 (70%, or 12 articles), again, pointing to the infant stage of this research topic. *Policy Studies*, with four articles (Belyaeva, 2019; Hustedt, 2019; Uldanov, 2019; Zaytsev, 2019), produced almost a quarter of the total articles due to its Special Issue on PASs in developing countries. There are just two articles that utilized a "policy knowledge regime" approach (Nachiappan, 2013; Zhu, 2020) in their analyses. Although an institutional analysis seems to inform all these articles, there are only five articles (Furstenberg, 2018; Hanson & Kopstein, 2022; Jones, 2019; Nachiappan, 2013; Zhu, 2020) that are clearly engaged with the institutional context that informs decisions and actions of policy advisors, as well as how regime elites shape institutions of PASs and knowledge regimes. In addition, there are only three conceptual articles found (Hanson & Kopstein, 2022; Hustedt, 2019; Nachiappan, 2013). The remaining 13 articles focus on expert advice in various policy sectors in authoritarian regimes. None of these articles are engaged with the PASs literature, but they contain material highly relevant to expert advice in autocracies, indicating the importance of using broad keywords and no SSCI subject category filter limitation. Most of the journals in which the articles were found are listed in the political science subject category. It is interesting to note that one of the articles was published in the *Scottish Journal of Political Economy,* a journal listed in the economics subject category of SSCI.

Methodologies, theoretical approaches, and countries studied

We observed that the multiple-cases design (five articles) and single-case design (three articles) are the most common types of research design (see Table 2 and Appendix 1). The case studies examine Russia (four), China (eight), and Kazakhstan (two) in detail (with Venezuela and Iran being shadow cases), as well as Arab Gulf monarchies including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman that are examined in an article using mixed-method research design (Jones, 2019). There were also quantitative and mixed-method design studies (three of each).

Despite the recently renewed interest on this topic and the relatively limited number of publications, however, there is a relative concentration on China and Russia (11 articles or 65%): China is the most individually focused country (six articles or 35%), followed by Russia (three articles or 18%). There are also comparative studies focusing on both countries (two articles or 12%), and Kazakhstan (two articles) is the third most widely in-depth studied autocracy.

Table 2. Research designs used in the articles.

Research design	Number of articles
Multiple cases	5
Single case	3
Quantitative	3
Mixed methodology	3
Conceptual	3

How do structural, institutional, and agential factors inform the relationship between power and knowledge in consolidated autocracies?

Hustedt (2019: 266) reports that the PASs in autocracies are "hierarchical," "closed," and "overtly politicized," with "weak" and "side-lined" bureaucracies, and that principal advisors are those "with a personal relationship to decision-makers." A comparative qualitative case study on PASs in Russia and China shows that "policy advice politization" is the central feature of PASs in these countries (Uldanov, 2019). Policy advice "could be characterized as uncertain and non-transparent; there is not much space for actors of policy advice, in particular, think tanks, nongovernmental organizations, and academics" (Uldanov, 2019: 322). Here, "advice is maintained by partisan actors and inner circles of the bureaucracy, and actors external to the political 'corporate' actors are significantly limited in their ability to participate in policy-making" (Uldanov, 2019: 323). However, for politically less sensitive issues such as urban transport policies in the policy advice subsystem, the "externalization" and "politization" of policy knowledge production and advice may coexist: External policy advice is likely to be present in Russia and China "only in cases where [policy] solutions *do not threaten the power of the political regime*" (Uldanov, 2019: 333, my emphases; see also Shen, Ieong and Zhu, 2022: 71–72; Zaytsev, 2019: 370).

Drawing on the Russian case, Belyaeva (2019) also finds that the political regime is at the center of the PAS in Russia. Principal actors nested in this structural context include the Presidential Administration and its central administrative organization, the Department on Internal Politics, and the dominant party (United Russia). They play a critical role by organizing and supervising "all available intellectual resources to help increase the popularity of the leadership, analyse electoral attitudes and invent new instruments of controlling electoral behaviour" (Belyaeva, 2019: 398).

Belyaeva offers insight into how the repression of power elites in the PASs takes place through their exercise of political power over policy experts in Russia,

> the participation of "United Russia" in policy advice—when and if it is invited to do so, since the party does not have much of policy analytical capacity—cannot contribute to having additional or alternative ideas, because its key function is the opposite: *to control and discipline political elites* so that they follow the course announced by Presidential Administration. This contributes to unification rather than to pluralization of opinions, limiting the scope for suggestions and possible policy solutions. So, the "politicization" of PAS in authoritarian regimes results in more political control over policy process. (Belyaeva, 2019: 398, emphases added)

As such, centralized political power aims to maintain the stability of the political regime.

The bureaucratic administration (i.e., the Presidential Administration) in Russia controls external policy advice "through founders and managers, through the financing and at the level of setting tasks." There is a revolving door from the Presidential Administration to nongovernmental, seemingly external policy advice organizations: "Heads of 'Political Brokers,' as a rule, are those with experience of work in the Presidential Administration (at the level of the head or deputy head of the department), in the government, or in the structures of the 'United Russia' party" (Belyaeva, 2019: 400). The mechanism of interaction between the "Political Bloc" and the expert community includes a variety of pathways: through brokers, through the placement of requests in the public procurement system, and through the distribution of presidential grants" (ibid.).

Hanson and Kopstein (2022) show that *patrimonial rule* based on obedience to the leader's commands informs the relationship between the leader and administrative staff in Russia: In contrast to "impersonal and legalistic" relations in rational bureaucracy, relationships are "highly personal and intimate" in patrimonialism in that "subordinates subjectively believe that orders from their superiors are 'legitimate' –that is, that they have a duty, and not merely a self-interested motive, to obey" (Hanson & Kopstein, 2022: 239). "Patrimonial rule" seems to be an important informal institution that informs the logic of appropriateness in Russian PASs.

In a comparative case study of the role of policy advisors in policymaking and implementation in civil society, education, and science, technology, and innovation policy sectors in Russia, Zaytsev (2019) concludes that the power elites in the Russian PAS, including both state actors and private-sector actors, politicize the PAS to sustain regime stability. Power elites' preferences are reflected in policy advice through politicization. "Politicization in this case is more dangerous for evidence-based policy-making and advice, because it institutionalizes policy advisors' role as 'the servants of power' for the long term" (Zaytsev, 2019: 69). Here, politicization "happens when the survival of the authoritarian regime and elites depends on the success of a certain policy, usually accompanied by repressive measures towards political opposition, autonomous actors, and alternative opinions" (Zaytsev, 2019: 366).

Drawing on case studies on think tanks in China, Nachiappan (2013) offers the first research on the study of authoritarian regimes that adopts the knowledge regimes approach. He describes the Chinese knowledge regime as a "politically tempered knowledge regime" that is

> characterized by a plurality of think tanks that operate and vie for influence; but their presence does not equivalently translate into influence, which is heavily tilted to think tanks that have established linkages with the party-state establishment. In short, an increasingly competitive marketplace of ideas is tempered by the heavy hand of the Chinese government that constricts access and influence to think tanks closely aligned to it, administratively and politically. (Nachiappan, 2013: 256)

This knowledge regime is the product of the alignment of repressive agential and contextual factors that inform advisory forms and functions of policy advisers. At the agential level, the regime elites are located at the center in the Chinese Communist Party. They are members of Politburo. They are responsible for policy formulation and oversee its implementation through "bureaucratic clusters." In addition to this group, there is a "second group comprised of several thousand bureaucratic officials who execute the edicts being issued from the party command. These two groups constitute the inner and outer sanctum of the Chinese policy arena, determining the contours and content of Chinese public policies" (Nachiappan, 2013: 260).

There are also multiple contextual factors that shape "the nature and the significance of Chinese think tanks" and "their existence and efficacy" (Nachiappan, 2013: 260, 264). Official and semiofficial think tank status and administrative rank are gained, maintained, supervised, funded, and terminated by power elites through formal institutional arrangement: "structural decrees have shaped the nature and significance of Chinese think tanks" (260). Furthermore, personal and administrative networks also emerge as complementary informal institutions that link various actors including experts, bureaucrats, and politicians. As such, there are legal, organizational, and administrative ties among these state actors and advisors. These institutional ties shape the interactions between power and knowledge, or elite decision-makers and policy advisors. The social status and position of policy advisors are shaped by such formal and informal institutional arrangements. It is this institutionalized state legitimization and sponsorship that enable the effectiveness of think tanks and their integration into the state apparatus at the agential level (Nachiappan, 2013: 255, 261).

In a similar vein, Zhu (2020: 296) refers to a "politically embedded knowledge regime" in China where "political power is deeply embedded in administrative and personal networks between bureaucratic decision-makers and their professional consultants." The influence of policy knowledge and ideas generated by think tanks are conditioned by "their direct or indirect administrative linkages and personal networks of decision-makers rather than on public debate to achieve influence" (ibid.).

Given that academia is the principal contributor to knowledge production, it is important to understand who generates what information and knowledge that inform policy ideas, as well as for whom, for what purposes, where, and why. Political power influences knowledge production in academia in China

through the institutionalization of co-optation via given privileges and benefits. For example, influential social scientists at the center of these political and administrative networks are intellectuals who have been co-opted through the promotion and tenure processes that bring various resources (Ma, 2022). These scholars adopt and/or produce the state's official policy narrative to legitimize regime stability, while receiving institutionalized state legitimization and sponsorship that reinforce incentives for their co-optation. They are subordinates to politicians. However, there is a symbiotic relationship between academics and political power holders. "Educated acquiescence" in China "points to another object of intellectuals' allegiance: the state itself," namely, "the fusion of cultural and political power" in the stability and legitimation of the autocratic regime (Perry, 2020: 2).

Drawing on three case studies from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Shen, Ieong and Zhu (2022) reach a similar conclusion that science arbitration, policy legitimation, and accountability facilitation are the three functions of experts in China's local (subnational) policymaking. Expert involvement and evidence-based policy take place within the institutional boundaries of authoritarian PAS:

> Such experts act as science arbiters or provide learned opinions to *legitimize policy*, just like their counterparts in democratic countries. *However, if experts could move to challenge the government agenda, policy makers would not hesitate to exclude them from policy formulation preemptively in order to dominate the government agenda.* As seen with the [Car Ownership Restriction] policy, through controlling and manipulating who could participate in the policy formation process, policy makers protect the government agenda from challenges from experts and other stakeholders. (Shen, Ieong, and Zhu, 2022: 71, 72, emphases added)

Chinese power elites involve experts in local decision-making for "performance legitimacy" "to boost the government's ability to process information and solve problems" and for "policy legitimacy" where "[o]fficials can claim their decisions are scientific and evidence based, thereby defending the government's policy position" (Shen, Ieong and Zhu, 2022: 61).

Drawing on a case study on environmental disclosure information in China, Li (2012: 31S,37s) also finds that "the policy agenda has been under the strict control of government officials and their advisors….[findings are] consistent with the actions of an authoritarian government that believes that the pursuit of the public interest, of which protecting the environment is one area, should emanate from the government rather than the public."

In addition to institutional factors, there are also conducive structural factors that inform policy advice. For example, the "traditional Chinese Confucian culture characterized by loyalty, guanxi, and pao (debt of gratitude), fundamentally discourages the career mobility of intellectuals and political elites" (Zhu, 2020: 298–299). In a similar vein, there are linkages among dominant single party-political regimes (e.g., think thanks are affiliated with party), the central planning system, and the bureaucracy-centered administrative tradition "that prioritizes an orderly hierarchy in which political power is heavily concentrated in society" (Zhu, 2020: 299).

Drawing on archival sources and internal documents produced by regime insiders, Dimitrov (2015: 52) argues that the collection, aggregation, and analysis of petitions rather than elections constitute critical sources of data at the local (municipal) level for the Chinese government on "popular perceptions of the quality of governance" as "they reveal the level of popular dissatisfaction with policy implementation; they present an opportunity to track corruption[,] and they allow the regime to monitor the overall level of institutional trust among the general population." The internal assessments of the quality of governance allow authoritarian regimes to identify and address public discontent before it threatens regime stability. Apparently, there are such channels that feed the preferences and grievances of people at local levels that inform policy-relevant knowledge production and central government's response to address the policy feedback in China. This, in turn, enhances regime durability by increasing its legitimacy.

Expert advisors from foreign universities, think tanks, and consultancies are "pervasive" in Arab Gulf monarchies (Jones, 2019: 11). Drawing on a comparative analysis of external advice by such experts on education reform, urban planning, economic policy, and infrastructure reforms, Jones (2019: 3) argue that "experts—although they bring some important benefits—neither rationalize governance nor provide legitimacy in any consistent way for the monarchs who enlist them."

On rationalization, I find that many expert advisers do bring added knowledge, data, and experience to bear in potentially rationalizing ways, especially in the early stages of a reform effort. But as time goes on, they also engage in the art of not speaking truth to power—they self-censor, exaggerate successes, and downplay their own misgivings in response to the incentive structures they face, a response in keeping with more critical perspectives on expert actors… On the legitimacy hypothesis, the experiments suggest that expert advisers reduce rather than encourage popular buy-in for reforms, potentially eroding voluntary compliance. Although authoritarian ruling elites may gain a measure of *international legitimacy* by enlisting top global experts, the same does not appear to hold for *domestic legitimacy*. (Jones, 2019: 3, emphasis added)

Rulers in the Arab Gulf monarchies also speak power to knowledge. Here, experts are not free from abuses of political power: "[T]hey are easily and arbitrarily dismissed, but also that they are competing in an atmosphere of extraordinarily intense rivalry and high turnover" (Jones, 2019: 18). It is a norm that rulers "blame particular experts for setbacks …or else they abandon reform efforts entirely, moving on to other projects as new ruling elites take their place…tackling the same reform challenge again and again" (Jones, 2019: 3–4). In this state of high "uncertainty" and "job insecurity," "especially those who stay long term or get involved in implementation, to seek to avoid rocking the boat and hence to cultivate *the art of not speaking truth to power…* —they self-censor, exaggerate successes, and downplay their own misgivings in response to the incentive structures they face" (Jones, 2019: 3, 18, my emphases). Competition among diverse groups with divergent beliefs that challenge rulers' preconceived beliefs, as well as institutions that promote expert job security, rational policy design/implementation processes, checks and balances of political decision-making, and policy feedback, is absent. Thus, rulers are overconfident about their policy choices and decisions in this institutional environment. As a result, the interactions between rulers and experts are "*cyclical and self-defeating*" and generate "*perverse outcomes like overconfidence and a penchant for state-building shortcuts*" (Jones, 2019: 4, emphasis added).

Two selected articles specifically examine the relationship between central bankers and autocrats with special reference to Central Bank Independence (CBI) (Bodea et al., 2019; Cobham, 2022). Drawing on quantitative data from 1970 to 2012 in 94 autocracies, Bodea et al. (2019: 601) show that "when high legal CBI overlaps with the collective decision making in dominant-party regimes, dictators have a harder time controlling the central bank." Bodea et al. (2019) argue that "high central bank independence increases the likelihood of regime collapse in dominant-party regimes" (Bodea et al., 2019: 607). This is because the CBI restricts fiscal spending that weakens the maintenance of interest coalitions through patronage. In contrast to monetary policy advice and conduct in dominant-party regimes, there are no such political constraints in personalist regimes where autocrats dictate monetary policy design and implementation to central bankers.

Cobham (2022) offers a quantitative analysis of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries'[4] monetary policy frameworks that inform the design and implementation of price stability and exchange rate policies between 1974 and 2017, comparing them to those of Latin American countries during the same period. Although this article targets an economics audience and covers illiberal democracies along with autocracies such as Gulf Arab monarchies, it reports some of the central features of monetary policy advice in personalized autocratic regimes, complementing arguments made by Bodea et al. (2019). He concludes that "most MENA countries have had little or no such change [towards greater CBI], and levels of independence and transparency remain very low." Institutions that promote CBI are lacking. The centralized political power promotes monetary governance where dependent central bankers as monetary policy experts and advisors to government do not have autonomy and discretion that would constrain the regime elite's policy desires and preferences.

Why do autocracies interact with international actors and engage with diffusion of their own PASs and knowledge regimes?

In contrast to the PASs articles focusing on policy advice in autocracies, the remaining articles on autocratic regimes discussed later are not engaged with the PAS literature. However, they contain relevant

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[4] MENA countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, and Yemen.

findings for policy advice and PASs in autocracies. They contribute to our understanding of the varieties of authoritarian PASs and knowledge regimes across time, jurisdiction, and policy sector, offering new insights into this emerging research. Autocracies may supply policy advice through engagement with international, intergovernmental organizations to promote the spread of autocratic institutions in neighboring countries.

In their comparative case analyses of Russia, Iran, and Venezuela, for example, Kneuer and Demmelhuber (2016) argue that these autocratic regimes supply their policy ideas, knowledge, and resources to promote the attraction of such regimes to neighboring countries and regions. These "new regional authoritarian protagonists" defend, promote, and "label their own regime as a 'new' or 'alternative' form of non-Western democracy and export the model to nations within their neighborhood" (776).

PASs in autocracies also interact with supranational and international intergovernmental actors. International norms promoted by democracies may have the potential to define key policy advice, policy content, and institutional arrangements (Furstenberg, 2018). Such norms may be integral to policy advice in autocracies. Here, autocrats may adhere to international norms as useful policy instruments to promote their reputation, credibility, and regime legitimacy-related concerns at domestic and international levels. In doing so, they aim to maintain regime stability and authoritarian survival. Furstenberg (2018) shows how autocratic regimes shapes policy advice, design, and implementation, with special reference to the extractive sector in Kazakhstan. An autocrat is most likely to pretend to adopt an international norm promoted by international intergovernmental organizations when he has considered the "regime's reputational concerns and legitimacy at both international and domestic levels" (Furstenberg, 2018: 287). This also reflects the institutional logic of autocrats.

Knox (2020) offers an analysis of the impact of the European Union-funded development evaluation, namely, Public-Sector Reform and Modernization (PSRM), that aims to support Kazakhstan's policy to modernize its public administration. He argues that "the PSRM programme did not have a significant impact on improving governance in Kazakhstan" (132). This was mainly due to the weaknesses inside the government: "the absence of any institutional memory and a short-termist view based on hunch and intuition of 'what works,' less informed by policy itself than by whether it is favoured by the President or his close political and business allies" (Knox, 2020: 131).

A conceptual framework: the vicious circle of authoritarian PASs and knowledge regimes

This hybrid review finds that the PASs and knowledge regimes in authoritarian regimes have several distinct features. First, *autocrats speak power to PASs and knowledge regimes*, shaping their repressive institutions. The repression of PASs and knowledge regimes refers to political power holders' authoritarian intervention designed to align policy advice and knowledge production with their desires and preferences. The *repression* of PASs is reflected in the political directives, orders, or demands made by autocrats that enlist (or dismiss) advisers and shape the content of policy advice. Second, policy advisors who operate at the center of PASs, no matter whether they are inside or outside the government, are co-opted by the power elite. These co-opted actors are strongly embedded within authoritarian regimes and collaborate with autocrats and/or dominant party elites over policy knowledge production. They are inclined *not to speak truth to power*. Under repression and co-optation, truth is defined by knowledge that reflects ideational and material preferences of the power elite. Third, authoritarian PASs and knowledge regimes contain their own institutional and cultural logics that inform expert thinking, decisions, and actions. *The structural* (beliefs, values, and norms) and *institutional* (i.e., ideas and practices) *logic of appropriateness* arise from, for example, patrimonial rule, cultural norms, and/or hierarchical, closed, and centralized administrative traditions. This involves loyalty to autocrats and autocracy, as well as obedience to the autocrats' command whereby advisers believe that such orders are necessary and legitimate. *The logic of instrumentality* arises from a self-interested motive based on rational cost–benefit calculations of policy advisors informed by forms of empowerment including promotion, prestige, legitimization, influence, and funding. Fourth, policy advisers' main function is to generate legitimacy for the sake of regime stability, requiring public consent to the institutional orders of the regime and the policy preferences of the power elite. *The autocratization of policy advice* suggests that policy advisers pursue the political economic

and ideological agenda of autocrats and regime elites. In this context, the norm is that policy advisors supply policy solutions that do not threaten the stability of the autocratic regime and the political power of the regime elites. PASs also function as political support for autocrats via the legitimization (and dissemination) of elite decision-makers' policy choices in the public sphere. Finally, domestic PASs and knowledge regimes in consolidated autocracies interact with regional and international factors. Autocrats may use their preferred regional organizations to promote their PASs and knowledge regime abroad. They may, for example, interact with international, intergovernmental organizations that promote good governance norms in public administration in respective policy sectors. In a similar vein, foreign experts advising on domestic reforms may supply advice to authoritarian regimes that could inform policymaking. Yet, such experts have a limited effect on policy design and implementation. This is because autocrats seek such advice to promote their reputation, credibility, and/or legitimacy and regime stability–related concerns.

Does the high representation of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, and Arab Gulf monarchies in this newly emerging topic represent a bias for these conclusions? Or do the findings of this article generally represent PASs in authoritarian regimes? By establishing connections with the *mature* literature on authoritarian regime persistence in the comparative politics field, scholars might make further sense of these central features of PASs and knowledge regimes in consolidated autocracies. Gerschewski's (2013) seminal work entitled "The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-Optation in Autocratic Regimes" offers a relevant insight. This theoretical framework aims to explain the durability of autocracies and is based on the three pillars of repression, co-optation, and legitimation. *Repression* refers to "actual or threatened use of physical sanctions against an individual or organization, within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, for the purpose of imposing a cost on the target as well as deterring specific activities" (Davenport, 2007: 2, cited in Gerschewski, 2013: 27). It is informed by power asymmetries between the ruling elite and targeted actors. Co-optation refers to "the capacity to tie strategically relevant actors (or a group of actors) to the regime elite" (Gerschewski, 2013: 22). It is "a form of sociopolitical control used by authorities against those within their territorial jurisdiction to deter specific activities and beliefs perceived as threatening to political order" (Frantz & Kendall-Taylor, 2014: 333). Co-optation "can be seen as more strategic action, in which both the ruling elite and the elite to be co-opted weigh their individual costs and benefits" (Gerschewski, 2013: 22). It is "the intentional extension of benefits to potential challengers to the regime in exchange for their loyalty" (Frantz & Kendall-Taylor, 2014: 333). Legitimation involves (a) "'specific support' [that] can be defined as the 'quid pro quo for the fulfilment of demands,' and particularly includes the performance orientation," and (b) "'[d]iffuse support' [that] refers to what the regime 'actually is or represents'" (Gerschewski, 2013: 22). It "seeks to guarantee active consent, compliance with the rules, passive obedience, or mere toleration within the population" (Gerschewski, 2013: 18). This is the internal dimension of legitimacy. The concepts of repression, legitimation, and co-optation are "causal for the stability of autocracies," and the related three processes "take place within and between these pillars to explain the stabilization process" (Gerschewski, 2013: 23).

In addition to the internal dimension of legitimacy, Debre (2021) also refers to an external dimension—international appeasement—as a component to legitimation that affects regime stability. She argues that "external pressures from democratic powers and donors can be mitigated through international appeasement. This strategy either involves signaling compliance with demands for democratic governance without jeopardizing core powers of the regime or devaluing the applicability of democracy and human rights" (Debre, 2021: 397). Here, regional organizations "as political opportunity structures [sic.] affect domestic polices by redistributing resources between actors, and thereby strengthen executive capacity of autocratic incumbent elites to execute survival strategies vis-à-vis internal and external challengers" (Debre, 2021: 406).

Guriev and Treisman (2022) refer to an "informational autocracy" in which autocrats propagate alternative facts to generate popular support for their competence, enabling them to stay in power. Policy advisors may purposefully engage with disinformation, propaganda, and post-truth politics to advance the desires and preferences of regime elites (Giusti & Piras, 2020).

More recently, drawing on theoretical intuition on loyalty *versus* competence trade-off in authoritarian regimes, Egorov & Sonin (2023: 3, 4) note that poor policy advice may also have a delegitimization function:

The leader's power is at risk only if the regime is vulnerable and a wrong policy decision is made. …Worsening survival prospects generate a vicious cycle. Once the leader set on the repression path, the stakes become higher. The raising stakes – the fear to be tried and executed if dethroned – result in choosing the advisors with a lower information-processing capacity. Such advisors are more loyal in equilibrium. …However, the quality of policy making with [loyal but incompetent] advisors becomes worse. As a result, a fully rational, strategic dictator who has chosen to repress opposition to reduce the probability of a strong challenge ends up surrounded by low-quality subordinates [e.g., advisors] and making low-quality policy choices.

It should also be noted, however, that the inner circle of an autocrat may include competent policy experts who may not prefer to supply accurate and sincere advice that might challenge the preferences, decisions, and actions of an autocrat; this may be due to various factors including the institutional logics (e.g., loyalty and obedience) and emotions (e.g., personal and/or political fear of being sanctioned, fired, and/or marginalized) embedded in the authoritarian PAS (for Arab Gulf monarchies, see Jones, 2019; for China, see Wallace, 2023, especially Chapters 2 and 8; for Russia, see Kaczmarska, 2020; Chapters 1 and 2; Treisman, 2018; Insider, 2022). Here, experts are inclined to supply distorted information, overemphasize policy successes, and play down setbacks that fuel the autocrat's capacity for self-deception and overconfidence. This inclination may contribute to the autocrat's agential choices and actions, resulting in policy failures guided by poor policy advice (for anecdotal evidence of such failures of Vladimir Putin over the Ukraine war, see *The Washington Post*, 12 April 2022; *The New York Times*, 16 December 2022; and *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 December 2022; for that of Xi Jinping on the Spy Balloon program, see *The America Times*, 14 February 2023). Such policy failures have strong potential to contribute to the erosion of public confidence in state regime elites and policy experts, leading to a legitimation crisis in autocracies (for mistake of information; for the threat of legitimation crisis).[5] Policy failures occur when autocrats adopt poor choices and actions because experts are inclined to supply biased, faulty, subjective, and/or incomplete information and insincere policy advice. There are limited (if not absent) conducive, structural, institutional, and agential contexts that promote experts to display what Tong referred to as "the basic virtues of truth: sincerity and accuracy" (for Arab Gulf monarchies, see Tong, 2022: 234–35). This, in turn, may undermine the power of regime elites. These intertwined repression, co-option, and legitimation processes constitute and reproduce the authoritarian PAS and knowledge regime.

These perspectives are highly relevant to a synthesis including a new conceptual framework of *the vicious circle of authoritarian PASs and knowledge regimes*. I propose that there is a vicious circle of PASs and knowledge regimes in consolidated autocracies that (a) ties the resources, power, influence, and social status of advisers to the allocative decisions of the power elite, sanctioning a supply of evidence-based, objective, and rational policy advice that is not aligned with the values and preferences of regime elites (i.e., repression); (b) ties policy advisers and knowledge workers to regime elites via repressive institutional arrangements that promote the logic of appropriateness and the logic of instrumentality whereby policy experts become co-opted actors (i.e., co-optation); (c) ties policy expert advice to the legitimization of regime stability (i.e., legitimation) in order to generate internal (domestic) and/or external (international) legitimacy promoting popular consent that would serve the stability or persistence of the regime over time; and (d) ties inaccurate and insincere expert advice to policy design and implementation failures, leading to an actual gap between the policy objectives and policy outcomes that erodes the legitimation basis for the autocratic power elite and regime durability (i.e., delegitimization).

Figure 1 shows the vicious circle of the PAS and knowledge regime. It is the product of circular repression, co-optation, and legitimization or delegitimization processes. The intertwined relationship between suppliers (e.g., experts) and recipients (e.g., autocrats) of policy information, knowledge, and advice is cyclical in authoritarian knowledge regimes. The entry and exit to the PAS and knowledge regime are controlled and manipulated by the power elite. Autocrats restrict formal expert status, use their political power to steer experts into regime-confirming policy knowledge production and dissemination, and discourage them from challenging the preferences of regime power elites. They define, control, manage, maintain, and privilege preferred (e.g., material) and/or desired (e.g., ideological, ideational, or belief-based) knowledge production and policy advice that aims to contribute to regime durability and legitimization.
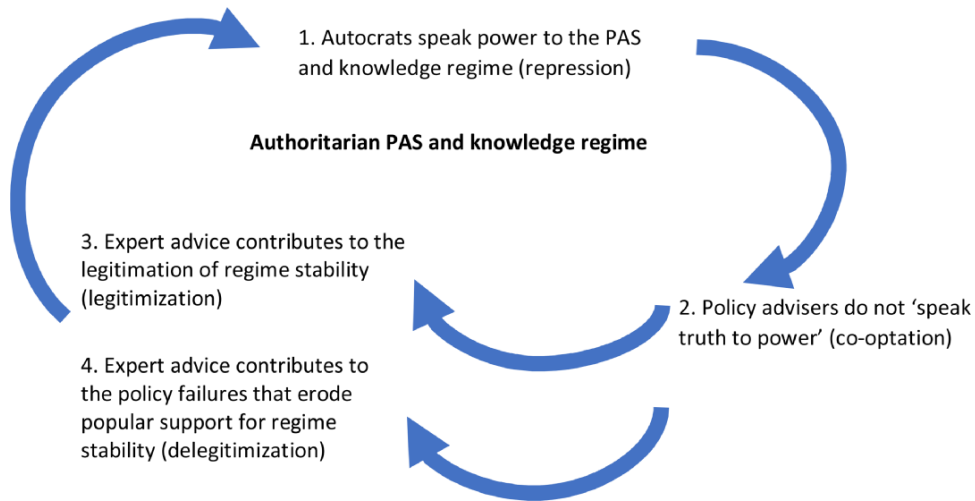
Figure 1. The vicious circle of the authoritarian PAS and knowledge regime.

> To wit: *The repression of the PAS and knowledge regime occurs when autocrats define the knowledge that is to be produced (as well as by whom, for what purposes, when, and why) through preferred institutional arrangements.*

   The repression and co-optation of policy experts are intertwined processes: Policy advisers' social position and status within the authoritarian knowledge regime are determined by regime elites. Advisors' policy ideas are ineffective unless they are endorsed by political power. For example, advisers are enlisted by autocrats and are inclined to be embedded in the politically empowered bureaucratic and personal networks (e.g., China), as well as to collaborate with rulers (e.g., Arab Gulf monarchies) or a president, his inner circle, and/or bureaucracy (e.g., Russia and Kazakhstan) in the production of policy ideas, knowledge, and advice. Arguably, co-optation of experts also serves as a tool for autocrats to mitigate potential ideational threats emanating from within PASs and knowledge regimes.

> To wit: *The co-optation of advisers is most likely to occur when autocrats empower policy advisers through granting them expert social status and position, enlisting and linking them with the power elite through personal, administrative, and social networks (i.e., institutional inclusion), as well as through granting them economic and financial benefits in exchange for loyalty and the legitimation of his policy preferences and regime durability.*

   One of the main characteristics of the authoritarian knowledge regime is *post-truth* (i.e., biased, and unreliable) *advice* produced by repressed and co-opted advisers. Such policy advisers are the political regime's loyal servants who work toward its legitimacy. Legitimization takes place when advisers and policy knowledge producers supply advice, information, and knowledge to promote the policy preferences of the regime elites and/or the institutionalization of regime stability and sustainability over time. The policy advisors are more likley to supply post-truth policy advice and engage in a purposeful construction of a regime-desired/preferred version of reality through disinformation and propaganda.

> To wit: *Policy advisors are most likely to supply policy information and knowledge that legitimize regime durability.*

Operating under repression and co-optation, policy advisers have strong complementary structural and institutional incentives and emotions to supply inaccurate and insincere advice. They are more likely to align information, knowledge, (subjective) facts, and truth with the preferences and beliefs of elite decision-makers who include (exclude) and empower (marginalize) them at the agential level. Here, policy advice aims to contribute to public support for autocrats through persuasion and legitimation (i.e., policy legitimacy), however, in the absence of truthfulness, policy advice that is likely to result in *policy design and implementation failures* (i.e., the lack of performance legitimacy). Such failures might undermine the stability of the authoritarian regime and erode power of regime elites in the long term.

Hence, the vicious circle of the PAS is likely to have a Janus-faced effect of autocratic stabilization and destabilization.

> To wit: *Policy failures arising from power elite decisions and actions guided by poor policy advising are most likely to erode the legitimation basis for autocrats and regime durability when yes-men advisers operate under repression and co-optation.*

The limitations of this research and directions for future research

The vicious circle of the PAS and knowledge regime illustrates the inter-relatedness and complementary roles of the three core features of the authoritarian PAS: repression, co-optation, and legitimation in policy advice. This preliminary *process-oriented* conceptual model of the relationship between political power, knowledge production, and truthmaking is context-specific and subject to variance according to the local context of autocracies and illiberal democracies. One of the main limitations of this research is its focus on the democratic versus authoritarian regime dichotomy; therefore, it does not consider the worldwide rise of the patrimonial rule based on personal loyalty and trust to the demands of strong political leaders or its opposition to rational-legal bureaucratic rule, the bureaucratic administrative state, and socially inclusive democratic institutions (for an excellent theoretical discussion, see Hanson & Kopstein, 2022; for a related conceptual discussion and an empirical illustration, see; Bakir, 2020). Thus, given the worldwide decline in the number and quality of democracies (Waldner & Ellen, 2018), there is an opportunity for future research on the relationship between power, knowledge, and truth in 'authoritarianizing' contexts (e.g., the process of democratic backsliding). Such research would be particularly interesting (both practically and theoretically) because the relationship between power, knowledge, and truth evolves from a more balanced dynamic in a democratic system to a more predatory or instrumental dynamic in a nondemocratic system[6]. A comparison of the varieties of PASs in authoritarian subtypes (such as communist single-party regimes, noncommunist single-party regimes, and nondemocratic monarchies) constitutes another avenue for future research. How does a strongman and his inner circle exercise power over knowledge regimes in the generation of an alternative version of facts? What role do policy advisers play in disguising truth and manipulating information in policy-relevant knowledge production and advice?

Institutionalist comparative qualitative research on the "three core features of advice" in autocracies at the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical levels within policy sciences, administrative sciences and political sciences is also recommended; such research might address how agential action informs a vicious circle across PASs and knowledge regimes, as well as how the context of this vicious circle shapes such actions. More specifically, how do power elites combine and configurate repression, co-optation, and legitimization as a strategic action designed to complement and reinforce their power and authoritarian regime persistence? What are the different forms of repression, co-optation, and legitimization processes in the vicious circle operating across different subtypes of autocracies? Does the vicious circle of PASs and knowledge regimes offer a conducive context for authoritarian regime (in)stability and (de)legitimacy? How do co-opted advisers contribute to institutionalization and the legitimization of the autocratic rule through utilizing various *types* and *forms* of policy ideas? Another promising area for future research involves unpacking *the vicious circle's* interagential dynamics of cooperation (i.e., the alignment of incentives) and coordination (i.e., the alignment of actions) between autocrats and advisers who collaborate over the durability of the authoritarian regime.

One of the main implications of this article is its call for situating PAS research as a useful bridge that links the politics of policy knowledge production, truthmaking, and regime durability. For example, the recent comparative politics literature on "the dictatorship of fear" and "the dictatorship of spin" (Guriev & Treisman, 2022) or "informational autocrats" (Guriev & Treisman, 2019) focuses on manipulation of information by autocrats, ignoring the critical role of PASs in knowledge production and truth making to generate popular and political support for autocrats and autocracies through manipulation of information. Furthermore, as Przeworski (2022: 3) notes, "[s]mart autocrats may use performance to convey information… but they do so because performance speaks for itself." Accordingly, PASs may supply not only "policy legitimacy" but also "performance legitimacy" for autocrats and autocracies.

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[6] I am grateful to a referee for pointing out this insight.

Future research agenda will also require assessing the conditions under which the vicious circle informs various forms of legitimacy with what effect.

This article calls for theoretical, conceptual, and empirical explorations of multiple causal structural (e.g., political regime type, type of policy network, and administrative traditions), institutional (e.g., cognitive and normative ideas and practices that inform policy advice and its implementation), and agential factors (e.g., emotions, social status and position of advisors, and state policy capacity) (for a discussion on such research explorations, see Bakir, 2022a,b) that inform intertwined policy advice, decisions, choices, actions, and outcomes, thereby resulting in political and public support of (or opposition to) autocrats and autocracies.

Finally, the literature lacks a rigorous and transparent inductive qualitative research design that promotes theory building or testing. The articles reviewed also lack information regarding research design such as data collection, analysis, and presentation. In addition to relying more on a comparative case study research design, future research should also convincingly and transparently demonstrate the progression of the research (from raw data to analysis that precedes analysis and synthesis). The literature also lacks research that builds conceptual and theoretical bridges between public policy theories and variants of institutional theory. There is a need for future research to address these concerns.

Methodologically, the filtering process in this article is not immune from omissions., This systematic review is biased toward articles published in SSCI journals listed in WoS. Consequently, I do not rule out that some relevant articles may have been omitted. Furthermore, despite every care taken, this research recognizes its subjectivity regarding the classification of articles in that it only includes articles published in English. Nevertheless, I believe that this research adopted a rigorous systematic review protocol, complemented by its additive intervention, thereby reducing the likelihood of omitting a finding that would critically alter its conclusions. Its pool, the inclusion of additional relevant material, and its extensive discussion reflect the state of knowledge in the literature.

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Conflict of interest

None declared.

Appendix 1 Articles covered in the literature review

Number	Author(s) year	Journal	Empirical focus	Design and methodology	Theoretical approach	Key findings/arguments
1	Bodea et al. (2019)	*The Journal of Politics*	Large N	Quantitative analyses on data from 1970 to 2012 in 94 autocracies, including quantitative pooled probit models and regressions	Institutional analysis (implicit)	"We argue that when high legal CBI overlaps with the collective decision making in dominant-party regimes, dictators are constrained from arbitrarily transgressing central bankers' preferences." (p. 602)
2	Cobham (2022)	*Scottish Journal of Political Economy*	MENA Countries	Quantitative Large-N design/ Monetary policy frameworks of 19 MENA countries from 1974 to 2017	Institutional analysis (implicit)	"the political arrangements have precluded the better economic performance which might be possible with different monetary policy frameworks (and different economic arrangements more widely" (pp. 129–130)
3	Dimitrov (2015)	*Studies in Comparative International Development*	China	Single-case design (China 1950s–1982)/qualitative: analyses on government reports on citizen petitions reactions	Institutional analysis	"The theoretical argument of this article is that the information on public opinion that is extracted from petitions is essential for enabling routine governance in contemporary China, whereas protests are important for crisis governance. [.] In contrast, this article argues that petitions function as police patrols, whereas protests are more like fire alarms" (p.51)
4	Furstenberg (2018)	*Central Asian Survey*	Kazakhstan	Single-case design (Kazakhstan)/ qualitative: semistructured interviews	Institutional analysis	"This article argues that high reputational risks compelled Nazarbayev to adopt the international [transparency norms] … [that] was instrumental in the regime's reputational concerns and legitimacy at both international and domestic levels." (p. 287)
5	Hanson & Kopstein (2022)	*Perspectives on Politics*	Patrimonial regimes (main focus is on Russia)	Conceptual article with empirical examples from Russia, United States, Israel, post-Communist countries	Patrimonialism in comparison to bureaucracy is used as a conceptual framework/institutional analysis	"In this article we argue that what matters most in explaining comparative regime responses to the pandemic is the degree to which countries—whether formally democratic or authoritarian—were governed by rulers who consider themselves the unique embodiment of the political community. Such leaders generate a regime type that the great German sociologist Max Weber termed "patrimonialism"" (p. 238)

(Continued)

Number	Author(s) year	Journal	Empirical focus	Design and methodology	Theoretical approach	Key findings/arguments
6	Kneuer & Demmel-huber (2016)	*Democratization*	China, Russia, Venezuela, Iran	Multiple-cases design	Authoritarianism in comparison to democracy is used as a conceptual framework/institutional analysis	"We argue that autocratic countries actively export sets of autocratic ideas, rules or policy instruments in order to deter their regional environment from developing in a liberal direction." (p. 777)
7	Knox (2020)	*Development Policy Review*	Kazakhstan	Mixed-method (single-case design, quantitative secondary data sources about the effectiveness of governance and interviews with major stakeholders)	Institutional analysis	"We find no significant improvements in governance over time. While the donor responded in a flexible way to meet the changing strategic goals of the state (which were at the personal behest of the President), this did not help to embed evaluation as part of the policy cycle for future learning. The key beneficiary here was the Government of Kazakhstan" (p. 121)
8	Zaytsev (2019)	*Policy Studies*	Russia	Multiple-case design (civil society, education, and 'science, technology and innovation' policies compared)	Informed by various theoretical approaches on PASs, offers a typology related to policy advisors' impact on policy change/institutional analysis	"ideology and private interests of power elites drive policy-making… Politicization in this case is more dangerous for evidence-based policy-making and advice, because it institutionalizes policy advisors' role as the servants of power for the long term" (p. 370)
9	(Uldanov, 2019)	*Policy Studies*	Moscow and Beijing	Multiple-cases design (urban transport policies)	Various PAS frameworks/Institutional analysis	"The usefulness of the advice offered by policy advisory institutions that are not a part of the bureaucracy depends strongly on authorities' capacity to absorb their innovative proposals, informal contacts between advisers and authorities, and financial priorities. … Authoritarian states pay attention to the opinion of the masses, if only to establish and reshape control of the population and make the social environment more predictable…" (pp. 320, 333)
10	Belyaeva (2019)	*Policy Studies*	Russia	Single-case design ("municipal filter")	Various PAS frameworks	"consideration of the PAS in Russia as a state-centred system allows us to reveal several important characteristics of PASs in nondemocratic regimes." (pp. 394)

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Number	Author(s) year	Journal	Empirical focus	Design and methodology	Theoretical approach	Key findings/arguments
11	Hustedt (2019)	*Policy Studies*	N/A	Conceptual	The concept of policy advisory system discussed with special reference to Westminster and non-Westminster systems/institutional perspective	"the dominance of Westminster-studies resulted in a Westminster-bias in theorizing and conceptualizing policy advice systems" (p. 261)
12	Ma (2022)	*Voluntas*	China	Quantitative including network analysis	The concept of "authoritarian knowledge regime" used within institutional theory	There are "four key components of the knowledge regime in authoritarian China: (1) the state's official policy narratives, (2) institutionalized state sponsorship for co-opting intellectuals, (3) co-opted intellectuals centrally embedded in scholarly networks, and (4) intellectual brokers as sources of novel ideas"
13	Shen, Jeong and Zhu (2022)	*Politics and Policy*	China	Multiple cases design	Institutional analysis of expert involvement in local policy making	In the Chinese local policy making, experts function as science arbiters, policy legitimators, and accountability facilitators when social problems require scientific knowledge (i.e., science arbiters) or policy-makers need to defend their position (i.e., for legitimation or accountability).
14	Jones (2019)	*World Politics*	Arab Gulf monarchies including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman	Mixed method including qualitative and experimental data. Cross-country comparative case study on policy advice in education reform.	Institutional analysis of policy advice by outside experts	"from both a rationalization and a legitimacy perspective, experts can have an undermining effect on authoritarian governance." (p. 34)
15	Li (2012)	*Administration & Society*	China	Two cases of environmental advocacy initiatives in China	Institutional analysis of environmental information transparency and sanctioning environmental violations	Advocacy coalitions and pressure groups "did not have shared core beliefs but focused their attention on single issues" and dissolved after the issues were addressed. Thus, decision making emanate from the government rather than non-state actors. (37s)

(Continued)

Number	Author(s) year	Journal	Empirical focus	Design and methodology	Theoretical approach	Key findings/arguments
16	Nachiappan (2013)	Policy & Society	China	Conceptual analysis of think tanks and policy knowledge nexus in China	Institutional analysis of how context shapes the actions of Chinese think tanks and knowledge regime framework	"China possesses a politically tempered knowledge regime that is far more plural and diverse than ever before but where policy influence is contingent on administrative linkages to different government ministries." (255)
17	Zhu (2020)	International Review of Administrative Sciences	Think tanks in the politically embedded Chinese knowledge regime	Mixed method including survey and interview data, single case	Institutional theory, knowledge regime framework	China has a "politically embedded knowledge regime [that refers to] a distinctive policymaking and consultation system in which political power is deeply embedded in administrative and personal networks between bureaucratic decisionmakers and their professional consultants... the revolving door's contribution to the influence and revenue of think tanks in China is negligible." (296)

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