

## **Contestable Autocracies, Redistribution, and Public Goods**

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This paper offers a theory of coalition formation under contestable autocracy. The autocrat creates coalitions based on promising resources to citizens, conditional on they not protesting against the regime. A challenger, conversely, seeks to create coalitions by promising to reward citizens who protest, after the regime change. If enough citizens protest, the regime falls. I find that in equilibrium the autocrat wants to treat every citizen the same, while the challenger may (or may not, depending on parameter values) focus their promises on a favored subgroup. I compare this equilibrium feature with the closest democratic model of distributive politics, which in my setting happens to be Myerson (1993). The equilibrium in that model features unequal treatment of citizens for strategic purposes. From this apples-to-apples comparison, I conclude that autocracy and democracy give rise to fundamentally different incentives to target favored subgroups.