Select 4 out of 6 short questions and 1 out of 2 long questions.

Short questions:

1. **Most dictators don't have access to unlimited resources, and must therefore choose whom to co-opt strategically. Which groups should a wise dictator focus on co-opting?**

   Lecture 5 and related readings (Frantz ch. 7, Gerschewski, Knutsen et al. 2018; Gandhi, Knutsen) are relevant.

   We should reward answers that give a clear definition of co-optation and that focus on the strategic calculus of providing resources to relevant actors.

   The definitions of cooptation that were provided in the lecture were:

   - *intentional extension of benefits to potential challengers in exchange for their loyalty (Frantz, p. 111).*
   - *the capacity to tie strategically-relevant actors (or a group of actors) to the regime elite (Gerschewski, p.22)*

   The lecture introduced the concept of the support or winning coalition (BDM). According to that theory it could be either the masses or members of the elite that need to be co-opted. But selectorate theory suggests that in dictatorships it's often a very small circle of relevant elites that are the "best" targets for cooptation, since those groups have the power to remove the dictator and thus need to be kept happy by receiving benefits. That means that in many regimes the military is an important target of co-optation.

   Which should also reward answers that give examples of different types of co-optation (jobs, financial perks, etc.) and provide empirical illustrations.

2. **Describe the characteristics that have been fairly common to processes of democratic breakdown over the last two decades.**

Lecture 2 and related readings (Frantz ch. 3/6, Bermeo, Svolik) are relevant. Clear answers that focus on the processes of democratic breakdown, and what dfstinguishes the typical processes of last few years from such processes in earlier decades may be rewarded. (Note that the way the question is asked, typical determinants are not all that relevant, but could still give some bonus for answers mentioning examples of these such as low income, autocratic neighborhood, economic crises, etc.).

Especially relevant text pasted in from lecture slides (see also several slides not pasted in here with figures detailing typical characteristics, including sequences and types of institutional decline):

"Currently, self-coups clearly most prominent

•   Watch out for the elected president!

•   Bermeo: Traditional self-coups vs typical processes today:

«Executive aggrandizement»

– Gradual, step-by-step

– Slow-moving

– Subtle and seemingly conforming to democratic norms

– Particular sequences: Media, civil liberties, civil society, judiciary

before elections are rigged

– Hard to detect and fight while ongoing

How to become an autocrat today?

• Get elected as president or prime minister first!

• Be patient and pay lip-service to democratic norms

• Encourage polarization and get a loyal support base

• Build down checks and balances on your power: your own party, the media,

independent organizations and the judiciary

• Thereafter manipulate elections subtly! Better to rig the system beforehand than stuff

ballot boxes

• You don't need to win 90% of the vote, but make sure that you win"

3. What are the fundamental problems of autocratic rule according to Svolik (2012) and how do they relate to different (groups of) actors in autocracies?

Obviously, chapters in Svolik 2012 are most relevant, esp. Ch. 1, 3, 5. The relevant lecture is lecture 4 on actors in autocracies. Good answers list the three most important actors in an autocracy, list the elements of politics in autocracies and describe the two fundamental problems.

Most important actors in an autocracies are the dictator, the elites, and the masses. Bonus points for giving examples of types of elites and empirical illustrations (e.g. the "military in Myanmar")

Key elements of politics in autocracies are

- *Politics is informal => often unclear/intransparent rules; no or limited rule of law*
- *Possibility of violence => no protection from the state/dictator through laws and institutions means that politics often works under the threat of violence, e.g. repression, but also coup d'etats, purges*

The actors and elements of politics in autocracies give rise to the two fundamental problems:

1. *The problem of autocratic power-sharing:*
   a. *The problem of autocratic power-sharing refers to the relationship between the elites and the dictator*
   b. *The dictator simultaneously fears and needs elites to govern, and elites fear the dictator (he can replace them, sometimes violently) but rely on the dictator for patronage and influence*
   c. *That means the dictator tries to accumulate power from the elites while the elites can threaten to oust the leader.*
   d. *This threat depends on whether it's credible: it becomes less credible when (1) elites have little information about the dictator's action and motives and (2) when rebellion can fail, because of cooperation problems within the elite*
   e. *This problem gives rise to two equilibria: (1) contested power-sharing in which the elites credibly threaten to oust the leader (successful power-sharing) and (2) established autocracy (or personalized dictatorships) in which elites have little information about the dictator and the threat of a rebellion can fail*
2. *The problem of autocratic control*

a. *The problem of autocratic control refers to the relationship between the elites and the masses (and indirectly the military)*
b. *Dictators don't know how large their popular support is so he fears popular uprisings*
c. *As a result the dictator can equip the military with the means to quell popular unrest but that also means making the military strong, giving it potentially the means to oust the dictator (Svolik calls this the "moral hazard" problem)*
d. *The conditions under which the dictator is willing to give the military so much power is when the threat of a mass uprising is credible, e.g. in large, young populations*

Whe should reward answers that give examples for these two dilemmas, especially those that go beyond the examples discussed in the lecture which were Stalin/USSR and China/Xi Jinping for autocratic power-sharing and Uruguay and Tunisia for autocratic control.

4. Explain the reasons why authoritarian regimes introduce and maintain seemingly democratic institutions, such as elections, parties and legislatures?

See especially the readings and lecture slides for lecture 4. There are many relevant ways to address this question, but answers that are able to draw the discussion up at a fairly abstract level and discuss the potential functions played by institutions, in general, (power sharing, control elites or population, legitimation, etc) and what the motivation of the autocratic elites introducing and maintaining them may be (staying in power, especially) should be rewarded. If such abstract answers are then also exemplified by the functions played by specific institutions (as those mentioned in the question text) that is great. But only specific references to, e.g., elections without discussing institutions more broadly should not achieve top score.

Especially relevant points from lecture slides:

" 3 main approaches to autocratic institutions in literature

- Genuine politics takes place in institutions (but fundamentally

different from democratic politics) ; serving interests of regime

- Institutions as merely symbolic/ceremonial or window-dressing

- Institutions as democratic institutions within autocracies –

Either eroded version of genuine democratic institution or as evolving

democratic institutions"

"Main perspective presented in this lecture (and literature)

- Authoritarian incumbents (and other actors in autocratic regimes)

are rational actors

- Institutions are established and maintained because they further

their interests

- Institutions do this by providing solutions to specific problems

that threaten their interests"

"How does this work?

Dictators can hand some power over to institutions, creating a power-balance

where they are strong enough to deter elites from conducting a coup, but elites

have enough power to deter him from conducting a purge.

Essentially, institutions can create a Mexican Stand-Off between dictator and

elite, where the balance of threats ensures that the elite continues to support

the incumbent, and the incumbent continues to share

revenue with the elite and refrains from purging too

much."

"Institutions can achieve such a balance of power through a range of

mechanisms:

- Enable elite coordination and collective action

- Inform autocrat and elite about each others behavior

- Put elite actors into positions of real power

- Give certain decision making powers to bodies independent from dictator

(and give those bodies resources) / establish procedure dictator cannot fully

control

- Give elites alternative ways to challenge/harm incumbent than violence

The power-sharing argument is important for parties, legislatures and

elections alike"

"The problem of autocratic control

Problem 1: Credible commitment

- Dictators can't credibly promise the population to respect

their demands Population can't credibly promise political

support

"What pleasure ... do you think a tyrant gets from those who say nothing

bad, when he knows clearly every thought these silent men have is bad for

him? Or what pleasure do you think he gets from those who praise him,

when he suspects them of bestowing their praise for the sake of flattery?"

(Xenophon, from Wintrobe 1998, 21)

Again, parts of this problem can to some extent be solved by

institutions, especially elections:

Elections provide autocrats with (imperfect) information on popular

support (and other things Allows them to better adjust their strategies

Regular (multiparty) incentives can bind incumbents (and especially

their local agents) to popular will to some extent, and increase their

efforts to provide public goods for the population."

5. **How can a dictator try to solve the moral hazard problem when he is dependent on using repression?**

   Lecture 7 and ch. 7 in Frantz, and the Davenport, Shen-Byah, and Roberts readings are especially relevant. Good answers define the moral hazard problem and lay out the strategies against it.

   The lecture defined the moral hazard problem as follows:

   - *Giving the military and security forces too much resources and power to repress gives them also the means to remove the dictator*
   - *The bargaining position of the military/security forces becomes better, the more the dictator needs to rely on them*

   Strategies to counter the moral hazard problem:

   - *Coup-proofing:*
     - *Create & exploit ethnic or family loyalties (e.g. staff influential positions only with family members)*
     - *Rely on multiple internal security agencies (so that they can control each other)*
     - *Try not to politicise the regular armed forces*
     - *Divide your security and military apparatus in multiple competing factions*
   - *Combine repression with other survival strategies*
     - *Co-optation (espcially perks to the military)*
     - *Loyalty (ethnic/family kin, see above, but also ideology, e.g. "Führer" cult)*
   - *Censorship as a more subtle strategy than overt repression*
     - *Can help to reduce threat from popular unrest/protest. Trade-off: difficult to collect information about the population and can backfire (like "hard" repression)*

6. **What are the main types of mistakes that autocrats make that can lead to democratization, according to Treisman (2020)?**

   See especially the lecture on Democratization, and the Treisman article. The lecture sets the mistakes made by autocrats in broader theoretical frame known from the course (elites and population as threats and mishandling these threats and related problems of autocratic control and authoritarian power-sharing): See especially slide 10 in this lecture

   Very good answers go into the even more specific types of mistakes as classified by Treismann, and may even discuss what are the most frequent mistakes. Figure 4

provides a condensed overview and even the coded frequencies of mistakes. Very good answers might even draw on this to say which of the mistakes are the most frequent.

FIGURE 4.   Democratizations "Probably" or "Very Probably" Caused in Part by Incumbents' Mistakes (Percentage of Cases)
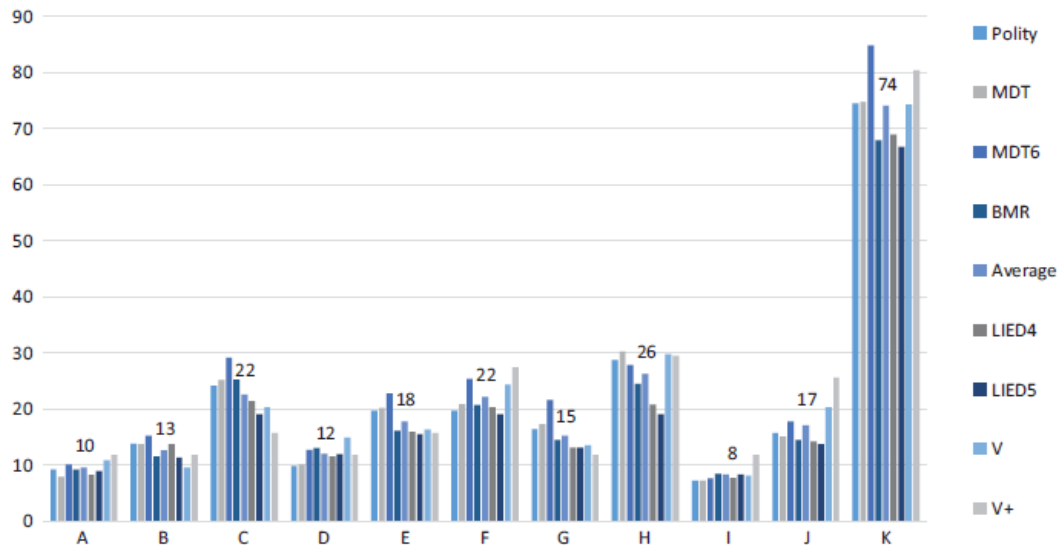
A: Excessive or poorly targeted concessions that strengthen the opposition: "slippery slope."
B: Failure to make concessions that would likely have divided and demobilized the opposition or coopted allies.
C: Excessive or poorly targeted repression that catalyzes opposition: "counterproductive violence."
D: Failure to use repression (and surveillance or censorship) that would likely have weakened or disrupted the opposition.
E: Major domestic policy failure that discredits incumbent or avoidably alienates key groups.
F: Mishandling election or referendum (e.g., calling when could be avoided/postponed; campaigning and/or manipulating results non-optimally; falsifying too blatantly).
G: Avoidably alienating previously supportive (civilian) elites or creating divisions among regime insiders, leading to replacement of incumbent.
H: Avoidably alienating army or security services (or part of them), leading to overthrow by them or erosion of state's repressive capacity.
I: Delegating to agent who turns out to be more motivated to pursue democratization (or unexpectedly weak in resisting demands for it).
J: Major foreign policy failure that provokes foreign intervention or discredits incumbent.
K: At least one mistake.

Note: Source—author's assessments. See *Democratization Synopses* for historical sources. Polity: increase of six or more points on the Polity2 scale, completed within three years; MDT: major democratic transition under Polity definition; MDT6: major democratic transition ending at Polity2 ≥ 6; BMR: Boix, Miller, Rosato definition; LIED4: Transition to minimally competitive, multiparty elections (LIED); LIED5: Transition to at least full male franchise (plus minimally competitive, multiparty elections) (LIED); V: Increase of at least 0.3 on the V-DEM electoral democracy index (v2x_polyarchy) within 3 years; V+: Increase of at least 0.3 on the V-DEM electoral democracy index (v2x_polyarchy) within 3 years, ending as "democratic" (e_v2x_api_5C ≥ 0.75). The number shown is the percentage of democratizations to which the given mistake "probably" or "very probably" contributed, averaged across the eight democratization indicators.

Long questions:

LA1. The current political regime in Russia

a. *Using the Geddes et al. typology, how would you classify today's regime in Russia? Please explain your classification.*
   - *GWF put forward four main autocratic regime types: Monarchy, Military, Personal, and Party. The core distinguishing feature between these types is the group that controls policy and leadership selection*
   - *GWF label a regime "personalist" if policy-decisions and leadership selection is in the hand of a narrow group centered around an individual dictator.*
   - *Based on this criterion, Russia under Putin can be labelled a "personalist" dictatorship, since it displays these features: the regime centers around Putin as a dictator and there is only a narrow group that has access to him and has influence on policy-making.*
   - *Bonus points for pointing towards concrete examples (e.g. Putin's televised meeting with his national security council before the war) or the fact that the regime's personalist features have developed more strongly over time (though it's classified as personalist regime in GWF since 1994).*

b. *Do you think that particular features of the current regime in Russia contribute to the decision to invade Ukraine this year? Please explain why or why not.*
   - *Jessica Weeks proposes a theory of how autocratic regime types can affect the probability of war initiation by autocracies.*
   - *She proposes that two characteristics determine an autocracy's tendency to initiate wars: the degree of personalism and its audience, civilian vs. military*
   - *Personalism increases the probability of war because of a number of mechanisms: personalist leaders are less accountable, might exhibit war-prone psychological traits, have less access to unbiased information which increases misperceptions.*
   - *Since Russia can be labeled a personalist dictatorship (see previous question), the features of this particular regime type are likely to have increased the probability of war initiation by Russia.*
   - *Bonus points for an A if the student can bring up examples for the mechanisms, e.g. Putin's limited inner circle*

c. *Has the probability of regime breakdown in Russia changed as a result of the ongoing war in Ukraine? Please provide a detailed justification for your answer.*
   - *Definition of regime breakdown: A change in the ruling coalition who selects the leader. Note: this does not necessarily imply democratization!*
      1. *Bonus points if the student discusses differences in the likelihood of transition towards democracy vs. different autocratic spell*

- ○ *The lecture discussed several structural factors that increase the risk of regime breakdown:*
    1. *Diminished economic growth: slower economic growth (or even recession) increases popular dissatisfaction, can fuel protests (see below)*
    2. *Less income from natural resources: reduces patronage funds and state income necessary to buy support from key elites (e.g. oligarchs and the military)*
    3. *Protests: sustained nonviolent resistance can destabilize the regime since it signals strong dissatisfaction with regime legitimacy*
    4. *Elections as focal points for anti-regime coordination*
    5. *Within-elite splits*
- ○ *Very good answers list each of these structural factors and discusses how each of them have changed in Russia as a result of the war and what that implies for regime breakdown in Russia.*

LA2. Electoral autocracies

a. **How would you define "electoral autocracy", and what is the difference between an electoral autocracy and a democracy?**

Lecture 1 is most relevant for this part of the answer. Very good answers offer clear definitions and answer the questions directly rather than just exemplifying, but exemplification can be rewarded as well (especially if comes in addition to more general definitions and considerations). Somewhat different definitions may be accepted, but very good answers would point to a standard definition maybe even with a reference (Schedler or Lührmann et all), centering on de jure multiparty elections for legislature and/or executive, but that are not free and fair. See especially pp. 22-23 on lecture slides.

Note that we are asking for a definition and not a measure, but answers that go into operationalizations and measures after giving the conceptual definition should not be penalized.

As for difference with democracy, very good answers would then provide a definition also for democracy, though this is not neccessary for obtaining a very high score. Though depending on the democracy definition, of course, I would assume that most answers would follow the Frantz textbook and lecture and centering on the extent of competition/contestation, or, related degree of freeness and fairness in the multiparty elections for distinguising democracies from EA

b. What clues would you look for, in practice, if you were to tell whether a country actually is an electoral autocracy or a democracy?

Here, students may be creative and be rewarded for coherent and plausible answers, but it would be natural to draw on existing measures and discussions of operationalizations, centering on how one could identify degrees of freeness and fairness or contestation/competition. Examples could be everything from election violence to reports of ballot box stuffing or other fraud. But, more indirectly, could also be looking for implausible winning margins. Especially relevant may be the much used (and discussed) alternation criterion (at least one government change…) by Przeworski and collaborators for separating multi-party autocracies from democracies using the ACLP/DD measure. Lecture 1 is once again most relevant.

c. Discuss how, and to what extent, holding elections might actually threaten an electoral autocratic regime.

Several lectures may be relevant here, and good answers may tie together and expand on exactly how elections generate threats both in specific terms (e.g., spurring protest) and using more abstract concepts (focal point for collective action and anti-regime coordination). Perhaps most relevant is lecture on autocratic breakdown, and in particular the Knutsen et al. (2017) on elections as presenting a short-term threat to autocrats: Mobilizing and coordinating opposition, enhancing grievances when fraud is detected etc, leads to elections functioning as triggers for regime death (even though may have stabilizing functions in the long term). Very good answers discuss multiple, potential ways in which elections might induce threats to the regime, explains the theoretical rationale, and also specifies and exemplifies these points.

This particular slide from the "How autocracies die" lecture is relevant:
"Elections also has downsides
• Focal points for opposition coordination
• Triggers of anger (over lack of fairness)
• The incumbent can lose (even where there is fraud)
• The opposition can show strength and mobilize"

d. How can autocrats manipulate elections in order to make them less threatening to their rule?
Here, the students may once again display creativity and combine specific suggestions and ground them in overall theoretical insights (such as how does this type of manipulation reduce chances of opposition coordinating, risk of protest, risk of unexpected electoral loss, etc). Insights from Lecture 4 on how institutions, and elections in particular, may serve to enhance authoritarian control are relevant. In order to gain a very high score here, students should here, however, not only engage in such abstract discussions, but discuss specific measures that autocratic regimes may make (e.g., ban most dangerous opposition parties, reduce the weight of votes in opposition districts, manipulate elections in less blatant manner, e.g. before election day by dominating media or by gerrymandering, which generates less backlash than if caught in

stuffing ballot boxes, ensure control over election monitoring boards – these are only some specific examples, and very good answers need not mention more than around three ways to manipulate elections). Bonus also if students are able to plausibly tie in examples/cases to illustrate points, and also bonus if able to draw on empirical findings from literature on when elections may be threatening to regime and when stabilizing to anchor their points. But, the latter bonus discussions are not required for achieving very high score if discussion is otherwise clear and plausible and displays both theoretical insight and gives concrete suggestions for ways to manipulate.