



Dictators at War and Peace (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs)

By Jessica L. P. Weeks



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Why do some autocratic leaders pursue aggressive or expansionist foreign policies, while others are much more cautious in their use of military force? The first book to focus systematically on the foreign policy of different types of authoritarian regimes, *Dictators at War and Peace* breaks new ground in our understanding of the international behavior of dictators.

Jessica L. P. Weeks explains why certain kinds of regimes are less likely to resort to war than others, why some are more likely to win the wars they start, and why some authoritarian leaders face domestic punishment for foreign policy failures whereas others can weather all but the most serious military defeat. Using novel cross-national data, Weeks looks at various nondemocratic regimes, including those of Saddam Hussein and Joseph Stalin; the Argentine junta at the time of the Falklands War, the military government in Japan before and during World War II, and the North Vietnamese communist regime. She finds that the differences in the conflict behavior of distinct kinds of autocracies are as great as those between democracies and dictatorships. Indeed, some types of autocracies are no more belligerent or reckless than democracies, casting doubt on the common view that democracies are more selective about war than autocracies.

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Dictators at War and Peace (Cornell Studies in Security Affairs) By Jessica L. P. Weeks Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #319655 in Books
- Published on: 2014-09-30
- Released on: 2014-08-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x .66" w x 6.13" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 264 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"[Weeks] makes readers insightfully aware of the key differences among 'dictatorships' that may account for alternative foreign policies. With a good review of extant literature and innovative data-based and case studies on regime types and conflict behavior, she examines theories that distinguish between authoritarian leaders who nevertheless answer to significant elite constituencies and those who behave like unrestrained 'bosses' or 'strongmen'. . . . [T]his study, and its main findings. . . are a significant contribution to the scientific study of war and peace."?F. S. Pearson, *CHOICE* (July 2015)

"*Dictators at War and Peace* by Jessica L. P. Weeks is one of the most significant contributions to this literature. Weeks argues that not all authoritarian regimes are created equal, and this difference affects their likelihood of initiating and winning military conflicts. . . . Week's typology and analysis have laid the foundation for understanding the diversity of authoritarian international politics, and *Dictators at War and Peace* will undoubtedly become the standard for such analysis."?Michael McKoy, *H-Diplo* (September 2015)

"*Dictators* is an excellent book that constitutes a significant leap forward in the study of authoritarian regimes and international security. Importantly, the book reveals that not all dictators are alike. . . . The book deserves to be read broadly in the academy and among policymakers. Its relevance for U.S. foreign policy is clear as the United States wrangles with several different types of authoritarian governments in China, Russia, Iran, Syria, North Korea, and elsewhere."?Alexander B. Downes, *Political Science Quarterly* (Winter 2015-16)

"*Dictators at War and Peace* is an excellent book that makes a significant contribution to empirically tested theory in international relations. Jessica L. P. Weeks has made a state-of-the-art appraisal of dictators' foreign policy behavior."?Bruce Russett, Dean Acheson Research Professor of International Relations and Political Science, Yale University, author of *Controlling the Sword: The Democratic Governance of National Security*

"In this cogent analysis of the important variation among autocratic regimes when it comes to decisions about war and peace, Jessica L. P. Weeks shows that the usual dichotomy between democracies and autocracies is too simplistic. By focusing on not only domestic accountability but also the predilections of leaders and, crucially, the preferences of the domestic audiences they are accountable to, Weeks shows that some autocrats face incentives much like democracies, and therefore behave much like their democratic

counterparts when it comes to questions of war and peace. Others are constrained by strong domestic audiences that have relatively hawkish views. Still other leaders face few constraints, and it is their own preferences and predilections that matter. Weeks' theory helps explain not only conflict initiation but also war outcomes and the fates of wartime leaders. This book combines parsimonious yet powerful theorizing with rigorous and thoughtful multimethod analysis, to answer crucial policy questions about war and peace. It is a model of what good IR scholarship should be."?Virginia Page Fortna, Columbia University, author of *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil War*

About the Author

Jessica L. P. Weeks is Assistant Professor and Trice Faculty Scholar in the Department of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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