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## If You' re Against Them You' re with Us: The Effect of Expropriation on Autocratic Survival

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September 25, 2010

*Comparative Political Studies, Forthcoming***Abstract:**

This paper advances a theory of why some dictators weaken the elite through expropriation while others do not. When the organization that launches a new dictator into power is uncertain about whether he will remain loyal to them, a dictator' s decision to expropriate the preexisting elite may contribute to political stability by signaling his exclusive reliance upon this group. We corroborate this claim empirically. Using new data compiled on land, resource, and bank expropriation in Latin America from 1950 to 2002, we show that large-scale expropriation helps dictators survive in power. The history of autocracy in Mexico between 1911 and 2000 also illustrates the importance of expropriation in promoting autocratic survival, as well as how the codification of new property rights can transform a dictator' s launching organization into a new economic elite.

**Number of Pages in PDF File:** 39**Keywords:** Credible commitment, information assymetries, autocratic survival, expropriation & redistribution

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## Paper statistics

Abstract Views:	1,194
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Citations:	6
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### Suggested Citation

Albertus, Michael and Menaldo, Victor A., If You're Against Them You're with Us: The Effect of Expropriation on Autocratic Survival (September 25, 2010). Comparative Political Studies, Forthcoming. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1601138>

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