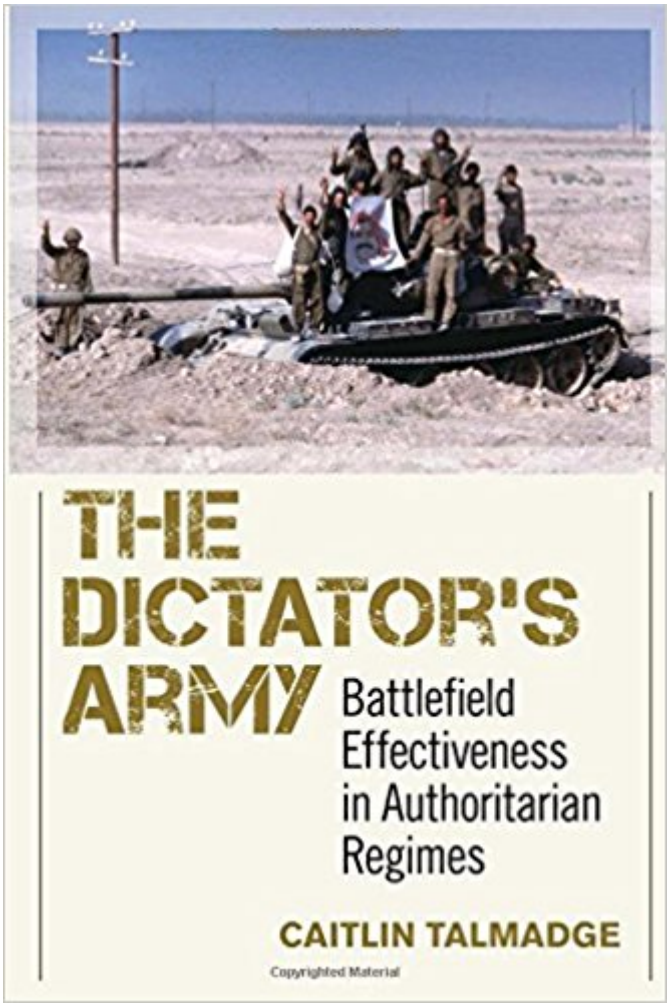
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The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness In Authoritarian Regimes (Cornell Studies In Security Affairs)



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Synopsis

In The Dictator’s Army, Caitlin Talmadge presents a compelling new argument to help us understand why authoritarian militaries sometimes fight very wellÃ¢â ¬â ¢and sometimes very poorly. Talmadge’s framework for understanding battlefield effectiveness focuses on four key sets of military organizational practices: promotion patterns, training regimens, command arrangements, and information management. Different regimes face different domestic and international threat environments, leading their militaries to adopt different policies in these key areas of organizational behavior.Authoritarian regimes facing significant coup threats are likely to adopt practices that squander the state’s military power, while regimes lacking such threats and possessing ambitious foreign policy goals are likely to adopt the effective practices often associated with democracies. Talmadge shows the importance of threat conditions and military organizational practices for battlefield performance in two paired comparisons of states at war: North and South Vietnam (1963Ã¢â ¬â œ1975) and Iran and Iraq (1980Ã¢â ¬â œ1988). Drawing on extensive documentary sources, her analysis demonstrates that threats and practices can vary not only between authoritarian regimes but also within them, either over time or across different military units. The result is a persuasive explanation of otherwise puzzling behavior by authoritarian militaries. The Dictator’s Army offers a vital practical tool for those seeking to assess the likely course, costs, and outcomes of future conflicts involving nondemocratic adversaries, allies, or coalition partners.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Dictator’s Army is a landmark book that greatly deepens our understanding of how dictators fight wars. Students, scholars, and policymakers will all benefit from reading this important work."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Dan Reiter, Samuel Candler Dobbs Chair of Political Science, Emory University"Through superb case comparisons Caitlin Talmadge shows carefully how military effectiveness varies, why it depends on far more than the technical factors normally considered, and especially the differences due to political and social characteristics of regimes. She takes analysis of the subject to a new level."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Richard K. Betts, Director, Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University"Why are some nondemocracies more effective than others on the battlefield? This question is really important for U.S. policy. In this highly original book, Caitlin Talmadge shows how the measures taken by authoritarian regimes to protect against coups makes their militaries less able to fight conventional wars."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Theo Farrell, Head of the Department of War Studies, King’s College London"Understanding the military behavior of autocracies is an important topic for both policymakers and political scientists. Combining new theory with in-depth research, The Dictator’s Army persuasively demonstrates how fear of domestic turmoil influences both the military organizational choices of autocrats and the success of their militaries on the battlefield. This book is a fascinating read, one that makes a significant contribution to our scholarship on military effectiveness and security studies more generally."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Michael C. Horowitz, University of Pennsylvania

Caitlin Talmadge is Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at The George Washington University. She is coauthor of US Defense Politics: The Origins of Security Policy.

Writing for the Cornell Studies in Security Affairs author Caitlin Talmadge, a professor at George Washington University, comes hard at the subject with a rigorous academic style. She sets up a postulate and then investigates a series of battle to discover if the postulate has validity, or not. This is a volume written by and written for those with a serious, studious intent. And even for the general reader like me this hold a wealth of fascinating information. She takes the armed forces of South Vietnam and the armed forces of Iraq under Saddam’s rule as her examples. The parallels are striking. I can still remember how shocked I was when the army of South Vietnam simply fell apart. Talmadge’s model strongly suggests that we should have been able to predict that exact outcome. I won’t spoil your fun in discovering her assessment for your self. I will say that the techniques used by dictators to use their military to keep themselves in power cross national and cultural boundaries

and hold true over many decades. 'Arabs at War', Pollack's massive opus, describes how Arab armies come up short. Talmadge explains why that comeupance is inevitable.

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