Philip Roeder, "Soviet Policies and Kremlin Politics," International Studies Quarterly 28 (1984): 171-193.

Roeder posits that in order to understand Soviet policy, one must make assumptions as to whether the decision-making process is unified or plural. He seeks to explain how Soviet decision-making changed between 1953 (the year of Stalin's death) and the late Brezhnev period and how those changes affected Soviet foreign policy. He organizes a two step model in which the power structure is linked to the decision-making process, which is in turn linked to attributes of foreign policy. While this study deals exclusively with the (now-defunct) Soviet Union, Roeder suggests that this model might be expanded for cross-national comparison, which is why this peace has more than historical value. (Note – Roeder, a specialist in the then more or less autonomous and somewhat arcane field of Sovietology, never addresses realist claims that regime is unimportant. The project, however, seems to amount to something of a liberal analysis of foreign policy in a highly illiberal state).

Roeder describes the distribution of elite power on a graph with the horizontal axis representing the level of competition within the elite, and the vertical axis representing the extent to which control over individual policy areas is dispersed. The extreme of dispersed authority and high competition would follow legislative policymaking processes, while those at the opposite extreme tend to follow executive processes. (See chart p. 173).

Examining the Soviet Union, Roeder describes five distinct "regimes"

1. Pluralistic, which is characterized by the highest levels of elite competition and wide dispersal of policymaking authority.
2. Directive, which is characterized by extremely low level of competition and highly concentrated policymaking authority.
3. Primatial, which is characterized by high levels of competition, but concentrated policymaking authority.
4. Oligarchic, which is characterized by moderate levels of elite competition and dispersed policymaking authority (though not so dispersed as in the Pluralist period)
5. Cartelistic, which is characterized by a low, but extant, level of elite competition and a moderate dispersal of policymaking authority.

(Note – I have left out the exact periods that Roeder assigned to these regime types, which is of primarily historical interest, as well as the methodology he used to decide on these periods, which is an interesting example of the rather arcane methods used by Sovietologists in the absence of readily available information).

Roeder identifies four attributes of policy, and suggests seven hypotheses relating to these charachteristics.

I. Consistency – the extent to which actions in a specific policy area are reingorced by similar actions over time.
   Hypotesis I.1. The consistency of policy varies inversely with the competition for power. (Because policy will often become the tool of power struggles)

II. Coherence – the extent to which policies in different areas are similar.
   Hypothesis II.1. The coherence of policy varies inversely with the competition for power.

Hypothesis II.2. The coherence of policy varies directly with the consolidation of decisionmaking authority.
(These two seem pretty obvious)

III. Responsiveness – The extent to which policy responds in kind to initiatives originating outside the political system.

Hypothesis III.1. The responsiveness of policy varies inversely with the competition for power.
(Because policy is often controlled more by the desire to gain power, rather than as an effective response to external situations)

Hypothesis III.2. The responsiveness of policy varies curvilinearly with the consolidation of decisionmaking authority, reaching a maximum at intermediate levels of consolidation.
(Because an autonomous leader can pursue his own ends even if they are divorced from reality, whereas a moderately diffused authority allows for consultation)

IV. Risk-Taking – The propensity to engage in initiatives of either conflict or cooperation.

Hypothesis IV.1. Risk-taking increases directly with the competition for power.
(Because leaders may find it in their interest to take dramatic actions that keep opponents "off-balance")

Hypothesis IV.2. Risk-taking increases directly with the consolidation of decisionmaking authority.
(Because compromise tends to moderate policy)

Roeder tests these hypotheses by examining Soviet policy toward the United States between March 1953 and April 1977. He looks at data on all events of cooperation or conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States, summing the number of each type (while weighing each event for its intensity) and subtracting the conflict events from those of cooperation. He also looks at the data on American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, and from the two generates his random variable for Soviet policy in the month after the two examined previously. I will not comment much on his methodology, as I quite frankly do not have the quantitative skills to assess its quality, or the quality of his conclusions.

From his analysis, he concludes that his hypotheses were supported and posits a table of the relative level of attributes, compared with his expected outcomes (represented by pluses and minuses). Those marked with asterisks were not found to be significant at the 0.05 level

Regime	Consistency	Coherence	Responsiveness	Risk-Taking
Pluralistic	- 5	- 4	- 5	- 5
Directive	+ 1	+ 2 *	- 3	- 3
Primatial	- 4	- 5	- 2	+ 1
Oligarchic	+ 2	- 3	- 4	- 2
Cartelistic	+ 3*	+ 1*	+ 1	- 4

Roeder's conclusions are all based around the Soviet Union, but they can be generalized to say that even in dealing with authoritarian regimes, one must take the domestic politcs.