

How Autocrats Defend Themselves against Armed Rivals

Barbara Geddes  
Department of Political Science  
UCLA  
Los Angeles, California 90095-1472  
[geddes@ucla.edu](mailto:geddes@ucla.edu)

Prepared for presentation at the American Political Science Association annual meeting,  
Toronto, 2009

## How Autocrats Defend Themselves against Armed Rivals<sup>1</sup>

Barbara Geddes  
UCLA

Sixty-seven countries with population above a million achieved independence between the end of World War II and 1989. Around the time of independence, 58 percent of them held multiparty elections and, despite some shortcomings in the quality of democracy, observers expected them to be more-or-less democratic. Twenty-two percent were single-party dictatorships, and 19 percent were monarchies.<sup>2</sup> Within twenty years of independence, 56 percent of the multiparty regimes had been overthrown by military coups, and in most of the rest ruling parties had suppressed the opposition to become dominant- or single-party autocracies. Only five of the initial 39 multiparty regimes had become stable democracies. The monarchies were equally fragile; 54 percent were overthrown by force of arms within 20 years. Single-party rule proved the most resilient with an overthrow rate of 31 percent.<sup>3</sup> Many of these initial coups were followed by later coups and other forms of armed intervention as time passed.

In short, military forces have governed many nations during the past 60 years. Yet we have little systematic knowledge about the way they govern. Scholars have delved deeply into their reasons for seizing power and also into how they collapse, but much less

---

<sup>1</sup> My thanks to Sarah Leary for thoughtful and conscientious research assistance on this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Calculated from the CIA World Factbook (2009). All countries that achieved independence after 1989 did so by seceding from existing countries. In contrast, the countries that became independent from 1946 to 1989 had previously been colonies or protectorates of richer countries. Many had not been states prior to colonization.

<sup>3</sup> Calculated from my collection of information on authoritarian regimes, updated summer 2009. See Geddes (2003) for a description of the data.

effort has gone into systematic explanations of what they do while they remain in power.<sup>4</sup> Often military rulers have been treated in academic investigations as though they were simply the instruments of particular societal groups or economic interests, but that view does not survive scrutiny of their actions while in office. In this paper, I investigate the politics of regimes brought to power in non-electoral ways, with special emphasis on those led by military officers. I propose a general argument about the key dilemmas facing such rulers and how strategies chosen to protect leaders' hold on power influence their policy choices and alliance strategies.

After an armed seizure of power, new leaders usually establish a council of military rulers led by one officer who serves as both head of state and head of government. The policies and practices of governments led by military officers, however, have diverged. Some, like military rulers in Argentina and Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, have collaborated with civilian technocrats (O'Donnell 1973; Biglaiser 2002). A few have tried to balance pre-existing partisan interests in their cabinets, as Batista in Cuba did. Still others have excluded civilians from the apex of government. Some have organized a party to support the regime and held regular elections, while others have banned parties and repressed all political activity. Some have created stable, long-lasting governments that pursued effective economic policies (Gandhi 2008; Clark et al. 2009), but repeated coups have plagued other military-led governments, leading to policy flipflops and

---

<sup>4</sup> A partial exception is Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) who claim that because rulers who once wore uniforms can count on the military for support, they choose different policies than do dictators supported by civilian parties. As I show below, however, only some leaders from the military can actually count on military support. Many, in fact, create parties so dictatorships cannot be neatly divided between those supported by the military and those supported by civilians. There are of course many studies of military rule in one or a few countries. The literature on armed seizures of power is vast, with country studies for every part of the world. Among the best known are O'Donnell (1973) and Linz and Stepan (1978). Among the best known studies of authoritarian breakdown are O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead (1986), Diamond, Linz, and Lipset (1988, 1989a, 1989b), and Bratton and van de Walle (1997). For a review of more recent literature on regime transition, see Geddes (2009).

chaotic governance. Some, like Pinochet in Chile and Banda in Malawi, have pursued market-oriented economic policies. Others, for example, Velasco in Peru and the Free Officers in Egypt, have chosen more nationalist and redistributive economic strategies.

In this paper I argue that many of these differences in political outcomes can be traced to characteristics of the military itself, which have determined what survival strategy leaders pursue. These survival strategies in turn influence what political institutions and policies rulers choose and what societal groups they tend to ally with.

New rulers choose survival strategies after coming to power when hitherto unseen challenges suddenly loom large. After coups, one of the many urgent problems facing new rulers is dealing with military rivals.<sup>5</sup> At the beginning of a regime established by force of arms, there are no binding rules or institutions to enforce prior agreements about sharing power or consulting, and there are many ambitious officers. Officers chosen to lead government try to consolidate their positions and concentrate power in their own hands, and other officers try to prevent concentration of power, influence policy decisions, and obstruct the personalization of rule in the leader. The ways that military leaders manage competition within the rest of the military influences many other choices they make. These struggles occur in all military-led regimes, but they result in different outcomes depending on characteristics of the military that has seized power.

Where the military is highly professionalized, meaning that discipline is sufficient to enable the military to behave as a unitary actor, other officers can enforce policy consultation and power sharing on the leader. If he refuses to play the consultative role

---

<sup>5</sup> Militaries created as part of a long armed struggle for power are sometimes exceptions. The mechanisms developed to maintain discipline during a years-long struggle can often be maintained after the seizure of power. Armed struggles for power usually result in single-party regimes. The substitution of the revolutionary army for the pre-existing military, which often occurs in these cases, is one of the reasons that single-party regimes are less often overthrown by coups.

assigned to him, he can be replaced in a coup supported by the unified top brass. Since the threat of ouster is fully credible, most leaders from professionalized militaries stick to power sharing agreements they have made with the rest of the armed forces. In contrast, where the military is relatively unprofessionalized, commanders' commitment not to oust if the leader plays by the rules is not credible because top officers cannot guarantee that lower-ranked officers will be bound by agreements. Consequently, in unprofessionalized militaries, dictators cannot safeguard themselves in office by sharing power with other top officers. Instead, they must try to develop other strategies to deter coups. In such circumstances, they often try to build balancing political forces. A frequent balancing option is to create a civilian party. Organizing a paramilitary force loyal to the leader is another.

The best survival strategy for dictators from more professionalized militaries is thus to agree to authoritarian institutions that induce power sharing and/or rotation among military rivals. This strategy choice has consequences for other aspects of governance. The power-sharing strategy does not require the expensive creation of a civilian party, so such dictatorships are more likely to make substantial use of civil servants and technocrats in policy making, and they are more likely to pursue the economic policies advocated by professional economists, market-oriented policies. When such a military government follows a government that pursued state interventionist and/or redistributive policies, it can often attract initial support from private business people and investors, but that support can be short-lived if the policies reduce subsidies to businesses, as they often do.

In contrast, the best survival strategy for dictators from less professionalized militaries may be to create a mass civilian party that can reduce the likelihood of a successful coup and thus reduce the military's influence. Authoritarian parties are expensive and carry their own political risks, but they may be the most effective strategy for a military leader from a military establishment too undisciplined to make credible promises of support. A military president who needs to create a mass party is more likely to choose redistributive policies and even more likely to engage in populist or socialist rhetoric. Jobs in the cabinet and state bureaucracy must be given to party militants, so policy making will be less reliant on experts and more reliant on political considerations. State intervention in the economy tends to grow because jobs in the state sector are needed to employ the party faithful.

In short, military leaders' choice of political institutions, economic strategy, and social allies derive from the strategy that best serves their interest in remaining in power. This is not to suggest that military officers lack ideals or sincere ideological commitments that also influence these choices. I suggest, however, that idealistic officers who choose policies and allies that are inconsistent with the strategies that would be effective for maintaining power are more likely to be ousted quickly and thus have less weight in both the real world and the datasets we use to analyze the real world.

#### The Military Dictator's Dilemma

A military ruler most often comes to power in a coup. Some plots involve collaboration among all top officers, as documented for the Brazilian coup of 1964 and the Chilean of 1973 (Stepan 1971; Valenzuela 1978). Most, however, are organized by small groups of officers who understand that other officers will go along with a coup that

seems to be succeeding (Nordlinger 1977; Geddes 2003). After the coup, leaders face challenges from rivals within the seizure group and also from officers excluded from the halls of power.

### *External Rivals*

At the time of a coup, plotters have the support or at least acquiescence of other officers, but they have no way to guarantee that support tomorrow. Even at the beginning, this support might be halfhearted. Once a group of plotters has made a successful first move toward a coup – meaning, for example, they have surrounded the presidential palace and seized the airport and a TV station without facing serious armed opposition – other officers around the country have three choices. They can rush to defend the government, risking death in battle and the end of their careers if the coup succeeds; they can mobilize their troops to support the coup, risking death if other officers make the opposite choice and being tried for treason if the coup fails; or they can sit on their hands until they see which side looks likely to win, risking little, and then join the winning side. Most officers make the third choice. They join coups that appear to be succeeding and oppose those that look likely to fail. Ideals and personal loyalties also affect these decisions, but there is no point in supporting an ideal that is doomed to failure when the cost of failure may be execution for treason, so calculations about the likely outcome of a coup attempt, which depends on what other officers decide to do, always influence decisions. Officers' decision calculus means that the fact of an unopposed coup implies very little about whether the seizure group has solid support from the rest of the military.

So leaders installed after coups face an immediate and continuous risk of ouster by other soldiers. In fact, second and third coups soon after an initial one often occur. It is obvious that if a group of officers decides to oust a leader, they have a reasonable chance of success because they control weapons and men. Further, officers face only minor collective action problems compared to civilians if they decide to organize an overthrow. A feature of this danger that has been given less attention is that coups can in some circumstances be staged by only a few men. At the extreme, the government of Liberia was overthrown in 1980 by 17 men led by a sergeant ([globalsecurity.com](http://globalsecurity.com)). Many coups have been carried out with only a few hundred troops. If commanding officers cannot compel the discipline of lower officers, a dictator needs not only to keep top officers happy to be safe, but all officers who command troops.

### *Internal Rivals*

Officers who risked their careers and lives to support the coup can also challenge the post-coup leader. During plotting before a coup, relationships among plotters tend to be collegial despite differences in rank. Often it is not clear who will end up as junta leader; in fact, plotters sometimes invite a higher ranked, better known officer who was not part of the plot to serve as leader after the overthrow. Relations tend to remain collegial during plotting because in order to maintain the minimum support needed for effective action, leaders must consult and be responsive to the ideas and interests of other plotters. Officers who feel that the leader's interests differ from their own can simply abandon the conspiracy. Defection entails few costs for the one who leaves. In contrast, the loss of comrades can be quite costly to remaining conspirators, who may be left with too few allies for effective action and who may be betrayed by their former colleague.



Before or immediately after seizures of power, plotters “choose” a leader. In some instances, the leader has in effect chosen the group; that is, he organized and inspired the group and has maintained his central position despite the vicissitudes of the struggle. More often, however, the group either has not defined its leadership before the seizure of power or the original leader dies during or shortly after power is secured. In these instances, top officers select a leader and often make rules about how other officers will influence policy and how these lieutenants should be chosen. They also often make rules about the rotation of leadership and how succession should be handled.

Professionalized militaries, which tend to be legalistic and rule-bound, may negotiate quite detailed rules about consultation and succession prior to coups – especially if they have had past experience with the post-seizure monopolization of power by an erstwhile colleague.<sup>6</sup> They respect established military hierarchy but nevertheless try to make rational decisions about which among the set of top active or retired officers should be chosen to head the government. They sometimes require the man chosen to retire from active service in order to prevent him from controlling promotions and postings, which would enable the leader to eliminate anyone who challenges him. They often consciously choose an individual considered uncharismatic and legalistic to reduce the likelihood of power concentration. It has been reported that Augusto Pinochet, a late comer to the Chilean coup conspiracy, was chosen to lead the junta for those reasons (Arriagada 1988). Experience shows, however, that personality traits exhibited in a constraining and rule-bound institution like the military do not predict

---

<sup>6</sup> See the description in Fontana (1987) of the months long negotiation over rules within the Argentine military before the 1976 seizure of power.

behavior very well in the much less rule-bound situation facing the paramount leader of an authoritarian regime.<sup>7</sup>

Generally, the first months of a new dictatorship are fairly chaotic. Leadership within the junta or other governing entity tends to remain collegial, with hierarchies and routines for making and implementing decisions not yet established (cf. Jowitt 1975). Personnel within the junta often change in rapid succession as those recently chosen as leaders try to concentrate power in their own hands and other officers resist them and plot to replace them.

Once in power, the leader's interests diverge from his lieutenants', and their respective bargaining power becomes more unequal. Most paramount leaders seek to remain at the top and to concentrate powers in their own hands, regardless of the rules to which they have previously agreed. The impulse to consolidate personal power is not universal, but it seems to be quite common among those who plot coups. Among the cases I have examined, initial leaders voluntarily maintained fairly collegial consultative bodies and handed power to a successor not selected by themselves in only a few cases.

The struggle for leadership and the definition of the leader's powers occurs after most coups. Changes in the formal and informal rules that define the regime often occur during the first years after a seizure of power. These changes can result in regimes led by officers being labeled personalistic, sultanistic, or patrimonial rather than military by observers who note the concentration of power in one man's hands.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> For a description of how Qassem in Iraq reneged on agreements with the Free Officers after the 1958 coup, see Dann (1969), 23-24 and 43-45; for Ongania after the 1966 coup in Argentina, see Fontana (1987).

<sup>8</sup> See Chehabi and Linz (1998) for discussion of sultanistic regimes and Bratton and van de Walle (1997) among many others for patrimonial.

Thinking about the strategic interaction between leaders and lieutenants helps to highlight the areas we need to understand if we want to figure out when military leaders will share power and resources with other officers and when, in contrast, the leader follows a strategy aimed at reducing his dependence on the rest of the military. If the military was professionalized before the coup, that is, it was not factionalized and discipline was respected so that commanding officers could make binding commitments on behalf of the rest of the military, then power sharing agreements between the leader and the rest of the military can be enforced. The threat by a unified military to oust a leader who does not stick to his side of the bargain is compelling, and the promise not to oust if he keeps his promises is also credible. If, however, the military is factionalized or undisciplined, such that top officers cannot credibly commit all officers to refrain from plotting against a leader who shares power, then the leader is worse off sharing power than he would otherwise be. Sharing reduces his own resources while strengthening others who may be plotting against him.

If a leader cannot secure his position through a bargain with other top officers, he has strong reasons to search for other strategies to deter plots. Some strategies have a coercive focus, and others aim to deter coups by organizing support for the leader outside the military. The most common coercive strategies have been the creation of paramilitary forces loyal to the leader to counterbalance the regular military; hiring mercenary forces; and establishing the leader's personal control over the security apparatus so that it can be used against the military as well as civilians.

Many dictators have created paramilitary forces. Sometimes the youth wing of the ruling party is given rudimentary training, allowed to arm, and then used to intimidate

dissidents in the population and support the leader's faction in intra-party struggles. Such forces could not defeat a trained military in battle, but they have been large and militant enough to make officers quite reluctant to take them on. More often, leaders recruit paramilitary forces from their own ethnic group or home region. These forces are often better armed and housed than the military and well-trained by foreign advisors. They may be housed adjacent to the presidential palace and are often led by a relative of the president.<sup>9</sup> Their existence causes anger and envy among regular military officers who may be less well paid and armed, but they may also deter plots because officers fear defeat at their hands. The memoirs of high officers contemplating coups show that paramilitary forces have deterred or postponed coups that might otherwise have occurred.

Paramilitary forces seem to have been less effective in practice than those who created them hoped, however. Party-based militias have sometimes escaped the control of leaders, robbing and beating citizens and raping women (Decalo 1976, 141). Zolberg (1968) describes one such party militia as combining revolutionary idealism and delinquency. So most regimes have either disbanded or neutralized them eventually. Paramilitary forces based on ethnicity or region have been more easily controlled, but regular officers' envy of them has motivated support for coups in many instances (Nordlinger 1977), and they have usually lost battles with regular soldiers. In short, although dictators have often invested resources in paramilitary forces, this strategy seems to have paid off less often.

Mercenary forces differ from paramilitary forces in two ways: they are generally better armed and trained; and since they are foreign, their loyalty is less subject to local

---

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, descriptions of the party militia in Congo (Decalo 1976) and of the National Guard in El Salvador (Stanley 1996)

political concerns and elite feuding. Mercenary troops probably kept Mobutu Sese Seko and several other African dictators in power longer than they would otherwise have lasted. They are, however, expensive, and many dictators cannot afford them.

A third strategy used in almost all dictatorship is investment in enlarged security services. If these services remain under the control of the several armed services, they contribute to the equalization of power between the leader and his lieutenants, but if a leader can centralize the security apparatus under his own control or that of a trusted relative or friend, members of the security service are themselves less likely to plot against the leader and more likely to discover plots organized by other officers.

It is easier for leaders to gain control over the security apparatus in some situations than others. Typically in professionalized militaries, a separate security apparatus is controlled by each service, which helps to prevent the concentration of control. The leader's control over the security apparatus is more likely if at the time of seizure he was allowed to continue as active duty commander-in-chief, as Pinochet was. Where a military leader does gain personal control of the security apparatus, as Pinochet did, he has taken a giant step toward the concentration of personal power, even in countries like Chile with a professionalized military. In countries in which the military is incompletely professionalized prior to the coup, the leader can make an alliance with the head of the security apparatus, reward its members generously, and use it to marginalize the rest of the military. The head of the security apparatus then becomes the most hated man in the government, and if the leader decides to get rid of him, all other officers will cooperate in carrying out that decision, shortsightedly allowing the leader to replace the original head of the security apparatus with someone more beholden to himself. In

situations in which the leader controls the security apparatus, investment in it appears to be a successful strategy.

Fear of punishment is not the only way to deter coups, however. Empirical research on military coups has shown that they rarely occur without substantial civilian support. Militaries oust governments during periods of crisis when citizens are fed up with political leaders' apparent incompetence and venality. It is not uncommon to read about dancing in the streets, as Pinkney (1972, 8) reports from Ghana after the military ousted Nkrumah. Hundreds of thousands greeted the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq by "milling through the streets screaming [their] joy and [their] thirst for vengeance...." (Dann (1969, 33). Officers rarely stage coups if they expect either that other factions in the military will respond with determined armed resistance or if they expect to have to kill masses of civilians in the process. Officers know they cannot count on the loyalty and discipline of ordinary soldiers asked to mow down their fellow citizens. Sometimes they follow orders, but sometimes they go over to the other side or simply melt away.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, if leaders can create mass organizations to support them, they can reduce the likelihood of ouster by fellow officers.

Authoritarian parties can perform many useful functions, but they are also expensive in that party militants have to be rewarded for their support. The creation of a party creates additional claimants on resources and demands for policy influence beyond those from military officers, so if a military leader considers the military itself a secure base of support, he should prefer to avoid creating a party. If, because of factionalization or indiscipline, the military cannot make credible promises to support a leader who shares

---

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Fitch's (1977, 71) description of soldiers' refusal to fire on citizens in Ecuador in 1966. When faced with the choice of repressing violent demonstrations or overthrowing the civilian government, Congolese officers overthrew the government because troops sided with the crowds Decalo 1976, 148).

power with them, however, the leader may consider creating a party the best option for sustaining his rule. Although party creation requires investment, it does not entail much risk of overthrow because it is much harder for civilians organized in a party to oust a leader than for disgruntled officers.

To summarize the argument, leaders of dictatorships supported by professionalized militaries can make enforceable bargains with other officers to share power in return for their support. Leaders backed by factionalized or undisciplined military forces cannot, however, because the commanders of such forces cannot make credible commitments not to oust a leader who lives up to his side of the bargain. Consequently, leaders who come from less professionalized military forces should be more likely to search for strategies that will reduce their dependence on the military. Which strategies the dictator chooses then constrain his choices about which civilians to ally with and which policies to follow.

#### Tests of the Argument

This argument implies a number of hypotheses that I cannot yet test because of data limitations, but it also implies some that can be tested. It implies that dictators who initially achieved power through force of arms, but who cannot depend on a professionalized military for continuing support, are more likely to take personal control of the security apparatus or delegate its control to a relative; more likely to create paramilitary organizations to try to counterbalance the military; and more likely to create a party to organize civilian support as an alternative means of counterbalancing. If these strategies work, dictators who follow them should face fewer coups and coup attempts than those who do not.

Below I show preliminary evidence consistent with these expectations. Data limitations prevent strong tests of some of the relationships, but I show preliminary evidence based on incomplete data where nothing better is possible.

### *Data and Measurement*

Because I want to test whether dictators supported by less professionalized militaries are more likely to organize a party as a civilian support base, the universe within which these arguments are tested is the set of authoritarian regimes in which dictators were not supported by parties at the time they first took office. This is a subset of the authoritarian regimes I have previously coded into regime types (though the regime types are not used in this study), updated as of summer 2009.<sup>11</sup> Most of these dictatorships seized power in coups, though some did so through other kinds of armed intervention and some were put in place by colonial powers, usually at independence. Some analyses include monarchies, nearly all of which were initiated by colonialists, and others do not. The argument for excluding monarchies is that they did not seize power by force, at least not recently, and probably depend less heavily on military support than do military officers who seize power. The argument for including them is that the monarchies that have ended since 1946 have all been ousted by their own armed forces, so monarchs also need strategies for deterring coups and armed rebellions. Whether their strategy choices are as much affected by characteristics of the military itself as those of military leaders is an empirical question that can only be answered by including them in the data analysis.

---

<sup>11</sup>Rules for determining beginning and endpoints of regimes and whether regimes are authoritarian are described in Geddes (2003).



Military professionalization is a key concept in the argument and cannot be measured directly. The aspect of military professionalization that matters for the argument is that commanding officers must be able to make credible commitments to oust or, equally important, to support the leader. In order to make credible threats to oust, high officers must have autonomous positions in the military institution; that is, their rank and future career cannot be dependent on the current leader. Officers in militaries in which promotions are based on standard criteria rather than loyalty to a particular person have such autonomy. In order to make credible promises to support the leader, the military must be disciplined and unified rather than factionalized.

Since professionalization is not directly measurable, I have tried to think of proxy measures that capture its key features, disciplined hierarchy and autonomy. As an indicator of disciplined hierarchy, I use the rank of the officer who leads the regime. (Monarchs are coded in the same category as generals because the militaries that support them are never commanded by junior officers.) For regimes begun by coup or armed rebellion, the regime leader is most often the man who led the coup or rebellion. Coups led by junior officers demonstrate a lack of discipline in the military. Some coups led by generals are also carried out by undisciplined factions so there is some error in the measure, but most coups led by generals have the unified (though possibly temporary) support of the rest of the officer corps. In the data shown below, regimes led by generals (or monarchs) are distinguished from armed interventions led by junior officers and officers who have been exiled, forcibly retired, or arrested, including those who have gone into hiding in the expectation of arrest. The exile, arrest, and early retirement of officers also demonstrate military factionalization.

A reason for low professionalization within an officer corps might be recent creation. Most new nations had to create an officer corps at the time of independence. In a few, the armed force that had played a large role in the anti-colonial struggle transformed itself into the new national military at independence. In most, however, the new military was created from the indigenous part of the colonial military. Colonizers typically recruited soldiers primarily from ethnic groups living in poorer parts of territories, leading to militaries dominated by men from particular regions and ethnicities at the time of independence. In most colonized areas, indigenous men were not permitted to become officers until shortly before independence. At that point, a few corporals and sergeants were rapidly promoted to the officer corps by colonial officials. As the only indigenous officers at the time of independence, these men were then promoted very rapidly by new governments, often becoming chiefs of staff and supreme commanders within a few years. Idi Amin in Uganda, Jean Bedel Bokassa in the Central African Republic, and Christophe Soglo in Benin are examples of men promoted just prior to independence who then reached the commanding heights of post-independence militaries within a few years. These initial promotions tended to perpetuate the dominance of certain ethnic groups in the officer corps, as those first promoted influenced recruitment into the officer corps and controlled later promotions. New officers in the first generation usually received about six months of training, if any, in a military school. After independence, promotions were very rapid and often politicized as shaky new governments sought to maintain military support. Officers from non-dominant ethnic groups often felt aggrieved about professional discrimination. These conditions tended to retard the development of unity and discipline in the new militaries.

New militaries have also been created in some Central American and Caribbean countries during U.S. occupations. Outside of Haiti, these militaries have not suffered from factionalization based on ascriptive characteristics, but officers recruited and promoted by the man initially chosen to lead them were unable to make credible threats to oust the leader after seizures of power. This left such leaders free to centralize power and resources in their own hands. The best known examples of monopolization of resources in the hands of the commanders of occupier-created military forces are Anastasio Somoza, whose family is said to have owned more than half of Nicaraguan agricultural production and “vast amounts of industry” by 1970 (Anderson 1988, 178), and Rafael Trujillo, said to have owned 85 percent of the Dominican Republic when he was assassinated.

With these historical experiences in mind, I also use coming from a “new” military as a proxy for professionalization. I define “new” as within 30 years of the creation of a new officer corps through indigenization or occupier creation. Thirty years might seem like a long time, but occupier-created militaries often remain dependent on the first leader until he dies, and the factionalization within recently indigenized militaries tends to perpetuate itself, as noted above.

Recent indigenization or creation is of course not the only reason for factionalization and indiscipline in militaries. Ideological, regional, tribal, and personality differences can cause factionalism. Bolivia’s military, for example, was famously factionalized by ideology and personal competition from the early fifties to the eighties. If leaders from these other factionalized militaries behave as my argument suggests they do, their existence will reduce my ability to detect the effect of low

professionalization in the evidence since there is currently no good measure of factionalization per se. Any relationship found between coming from a new military and the leader's strategy will thus understate the true relationship.

Data and measurement problems also afflict the assessment of leaders' strategies. As far as I know, Belkin and Schofer (2003) are the only scholars who have attempted to gather data on the existence of paramilitary forces. Their measure, unfortunately, is a composite count of the number of different forces within the established military and paramilitary forces. Examination of the cases they coded strongly suggests that the count of forces within the military outweighs the count of paramilitary forces, making it unsuitable for my purposes. The country-years with the highest scores include many communist countries and South Korea 1978-86, none of which were known for their use of paramilitary forces. Their indicator seems to be a better measure of institutionalized repressiveness than of paramilitary forces created to counterbalance the established military. Instead of the Belkin and Schofer measure, I use a simpler one drawn from my own data collection that simply indicates whether one or more paramilitary forces linked to either the leader or the ruling party exists. This data collection is incomplete, so I can show only preliminary evidence.

Information about who controlled the security apparatus in different dictatorships is also incomplete in my data, but I show the limited evidence available. I have coded the security apparatus as controlled by the leader if the secondary literature describes it as controlled by him personally, by a relative, or by someone described as a close ally or friend who does not have an independent base of support in the military or party. Where

each military service runs its own security apparatus, I code them as not controlled by the dictator.

To assess the party creation strategy, I have gathered information about the year parties were created, if they were, for every dictatorship in existence since 1946 that came to power without the support of a party in countries with more than a million people. This is the measure of party creation used in the analysis. Regimes in which dictators allied with pre-existing parties are excluded.

### *Evidence*

Table 1 shows the bivariate relationship between the two proxies for professionalization and creating a party after the seizure of power in non-monarchies. Officers from recently created militaries are nearly twice as likely to create parties as those from long-established militaries. Parties are created less than half as often in regimes led by generals as in those led by lower ranking officers or ex-officers.

To carry out a more serious test of the relationship, we need to consider what other factors might affect party creation in authoritarian settings. To my knowledge, no prior research has been done on this question, but we can think of plausible arguments about why parties might be created sometimes but not others.

The proxies for professionalization are correlated with level of development, so we need to control for development in a more serious test.

Prior research has shown that dictatorships supported by parties last longer, on average, than those without parties (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Geddes 2003). Scholars have interpreted this finding as meaning that parties confer some advantage on either autocratic governments or their leaders (Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Magaloni

forthcoming; Boix and Svobik 2008; Geddes 2008), but the causal arrow might run the other way or the relationship might be spurious. Dictators might be more likely to create parties when things are going well, and doing well would increase their longevity. Or it might be the case that when growth is strong, dictators have the resources to create parties and their regimes also tend to last longer, but that the two have no causal relationship. To eliminate these possibilities, we would need to test whether growth increases the likelihood of creating a party.

It is also possible that parties are created with constant or randomly varying probability throughout the duration of an authoritarian interlude, so that longer regimes are simply more likely to have parties because they have had more time to create them. To control for this possibility, we would need to control for the passage of time since the regime was created.

By a logic similar to that relating growth to party creation, we might think that the substantial revenues flowing into government coffers in oil exporting states would provide their leaders with the extra resources that would make party creation an attractive strategy for generating popular support. Alternatively, we can imagine the opposite: dictators who have oil money with which to pay for extensive security services and high military salaries and state-of-the-art weapons to keep officers happy might have less need of mass organizations to counterbalance the military (Cf. Ross 1991).

Since monarchs may be able to rely on a reservoir of traditional loyalty, they may depend less heavily on military support than do leaders originally from the military. If so, they would be less likely to create parties to support their rule.

A number of arguments have been made about the difficulty of solving collective action problems in societies fragmented by ethnicity or religion. If these arguments are true, creating a mass-based party might be more costly and hence less likely in fragmented societies.

Since the universe of cases used to test this argument includes all seizures of power not previously organized into a party, it includes a number of seizures by rebellion, most of which were led by dismissed officers, and a few civilian rulers imposed by the military or the former colonial power. The senior officer variable might actually be capturing the effect of military coups as opposed to rebellions rather than differences in military professionalization. To test for this possibility, we need to include a control variable for whether the regime began as a coup, defined as a seizure of power carried out by current members of the established military of the regime being overthrown.

To control for these possibilities, I use logit models to predict party creation because the outcome is dichotomous. I use two kinds of specification, one in which regime-year is the unit of analysis and another in which regime is the unit. The models using regime-year are used to test whether dictators are more likely to create parties when the economy is doing well and whether regime duration increases the likelihood of party creation. Since economic performance varies quite a bit from year to year within countries governed by a single regime, we can see whether dictators are choosing times when they enjoy a lot of public support to create parties.

Several of the potential causes of greatest interest, however, vary little from year to year during one regime, so their effects need to be tested using the regime as the unit of analysis. Ethnic fractionalization and percent Muslim, for example, remain quite stable

from year to year unless boundary changes or ethnic cleansing occur. Whether a regime began with a coup does not vary; nor does whether it is a monarchy. In the present state of my data collection, I have information about the two professionalization proxies only for the initial leadership of the regime, so it also does not vary in the dataset, though it does in the world. Both sets of models include many of the same control variables to make them more comparable.<sup>12</sup>

Table 2 shows the results of models that aim to predict the year of party creation in authoritarian regimes that lack parties. The first thing to notice is that the “usual suspects” do a poor job of predicting party creation. The pseudo  $R^2$ s are low, and few of the coefficients are significant. I believe that this is because leaders decide to create parties as part of complicated, strategic political calculations that depend on how they expect other actors to behave. These decisions are thus not influenced in a straightforward way by structural characteristics of the economy and society.

The effect of growth is positive, but never approached significance in any specification. The analysis thus provides no support for the idea that dictators choose to create parties when they are doing especially well. Indeed, descriptions of what was going on in particular countries at the time when parties were created leave the opposite impression; dictators seem to create parties when their survival in office is threatened. Level of development also fails to predict party creation. The coefficient for GDP per capita, like that for growth, is positive but never significant.

Years Regime in Power is included in the models to control for the possibility that regimes that last longer are more likely to be supported by parties because long duration itself increases the chances of creating a party, that is, that long duration causes party

---

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix for descriptions of control variables and sources.



creation rather than party causing longevity. The coefficient for Years is negative and not significant when monarchies are included in the analysis, but it approaches significance among non-monarchies. In other words, if there is a relationship between regime duration and party creation, it is the opposite of that expected if long duration increases the likelihood of party creation. On average parties were created in year three if they were created at all. Although there are some cases in which parties were created as the regime approached collapse, in most they were either created near the beginning or not at all.

Percent Muslim always has a positive coefficient, meaning that parties are more likely to be created in countries with Muslim majorities, and it is always significant or nearly so. This is a very robust finding, the more so since it does not vary from year to year within countries and the models control for dependence on oil exports, monarchy, and region, all of which are correlated with Muslim population.

Monarchs are dramatically less likely to create regime support parties than rulers who achieved power through force of arms. Only two in these data did so, Prince Sihanouk in Cambodia and the Shah of Iran, both of whose survival was threatened. It seems reasonable to interpret this finding as support for the idea that monarchs who survive for long periods of time have developed other forms of support. Note, however, that almost as large a proportion of monarchies as more-or-less competitive regimes were overthrown by force within 20 years of independence, so legitimacy and high coercive capacity, often ascribed to monarchies, are not inherent characteristics of the regime type. They have been developed by some monarchs but not others. Descriptions of the most stable monarchies emphasize reliance on family members to staff positions in the

military, security apparatus, and ministries. These descriptions are consistent with Michael Herb's (1999) argument that monarchs who share power widely within large extended families have been more successful at avoiding overthrow than those with a narrower base of familial support.

Ethnic fractionalization may reduce the likelihood of creating a party, as analysts who emphasize the importance of collective action problems in fragmented societies would expect, but its coefficient never approaches statistical significance. This is not surprising since it varies little across years within countries. The coefficients for civil war are also never significant.

Dependence on oil is negative and insignificant in the full dataset, but approaches significance when monarchies are excluded. This finding provides some very tentative support for Michael Ross's (1991) argument that oil helps stabilize autocracies by paying for high levels of coercion.

Begun by Coup was included to capture the idea that military rulers might be less likely to start parties than the ex-military leaders of rebellions since they can depend on the established military for support. It has negative coefficients as expected, but never approaches significance in the yearly data – not too surprising since it obviously does not vary by year within regimes.

Age of the leader was included in the analysis with the idea that youthful leaders would be more likely to come from unprofessionalized militaries and, whatever their background, would be more insecure in office. Coefficients are negative, as expected, but never approach statistical significance.

Region dummy variables were included to control for left-out cultural and historical characteristics such as colonial heritage and average time since independence. In the models shown below, only those regions that had statistically significant effects are included. The coefficients for East Asia are always positive and statistically significant, meaning that leaders in East Asia were more likely to create parties than those in regions left out of the models. In the yearly dataset, coefficients for North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa were also positive and either significant or close to significance. The positive coefficients for Sub-Saharan Africa provide further confirmation that dictators do not limit party creation to times and places where things are going well. The models all contain splines to capture trends, but they were never significant and are not shown.

The main conclusions to be drawn from Table 2 are that no evidence supports the idea that dictators are more likely to create parties when things are going well, and that it is not easy to predict exactly when, if ever, dictators will choose to create parties.

Using regime rather than regime-year as the unit of analysis allows tests of some potential causal factors that vary little across years, but significance is harder to achieve because the N is much reduced. In these analyses, the structural characteristics of the countries ruled by autocratic regimes have expected effects on the likelihood of party creation, though they are not always statistically significant at conventional levels. Unsurprisingly, monarchy and percent Muslim show the same effects as in Table 2 and remain statistically significant.

Level of development shows no effect in the full dataset, but among non-monarchies, positive coefficients indicate that leaders in more developed countries are more likely to create parties, all else equal, and these coefficients are statistically significant in one-

tailed tests. GDP per capita is measured during the second year of regime existence, so it captures the effect of development on party creation, not the possible effect of party creation on longer-term economic performance.

Dependence on oil or gas exports also seems to have predictable effects on the likelihood of party creation, but only in the non-monarchies. The coefficients are negative and statistically significant at or close to conventional levels, indicating that dictators in countries that rely on oil and gas exports are less likely to create parties.

Ethnic fractionalization may also reduce the likelihood of party creation in non-monarchies. The coefficients are not statistically significant at conventional levels, but they might possibly make it in a larger data set.

The models also include some variables expected to capture characteristics that affect the leader's strategic position relative to his elite supporters. Models 1 and 3 include the same ones included in Table 2, Age of Leader and Begun by Coup. Models 2 and 4 include two additional variables, the proxy measures for professionalization of the armed forces, Long-Established Military and Senior Officer leads post-seizure regime. These two variables are the crucial ones from the point of view of testing my argument about how professionalization affects bargaining within the seizure group.

In Models 1 and 3, that is, regardless of whether monarchies are included, Begun by Coup, the proxy for rule by a current military officer, reduces the likelihood of creating a party and is statistically significant at conventional levels. Results are similar but smaller and not quite significant at conventional levels in Models 2 and 4, discussed below.

Age of the leader at the time of seizure of power shows no effect in these models, just as in Table 2. The suggestion that younger leaders might be generally more insecure and thus more likely to create parties can be rejected.

I proposed above that officer corps that had been recently indigenized or created by foreign occupation might be less professionalized than those that were long-established. In the full dataset, this measure has the expected effect, that is, dictators in countries with long-established militaries are less likely to create parties. The coefficient is negative and statistically significant. In the dataset that excludes monarchies, however, the effect completely disappears. Because the other proxy for professionalization has the expected effect in both datasets, I interpret the failure of this proxy as meaning that the measure itself is a poor indicator of professionalization.

The second proxy for professionalization is the rank of the officer who led the government after the seizure of power (with monarchs, when included, coded as equivalent to generals). Regardless of whether the analysis includes monarchies, if the leader is a senior military officer, he is less likely to create a party than if he is a junior officer or an exiled, dismissed or previously jailed former officer. In all models tried, the coefficients for this measure have been negative and statistically significant.<sup>13</sup> Note that inclusion of these variables reduces the size of the coefficients for Begun by Coup and decreases their significance. I interpret this change as meaning that adding a measure of level of professionalization helps explain some of the effect that would usually be attributed to military leadership per se.

---

<sup>13</sup> I also tried models using each of the proxies for professionalization separately. Senior Officer is always negative and statistically significant. Established Military is always negative, but often not significant; results depend on what else is included in the model and what dataset is used.

In these models, the effects of region are very similar to those shown in Table 2, with one exception. When regime is the unit of analysis, parties are less likely to be created by Middle Eastern dictators, even when monarchies are excluded. As in the previous models, splines are used to control for trends, but are never significant and are not shown.

To sum up the findings based on the analysis using regime as the unit of analysis, the usual suspects such as level of development have the expected effects on the likelihood of party creation, but they do not explain that much. Two of the variables that aim to capture aspects of leaders' strategic situation as they bargain with other elite members of the regime also have expected results. First, leaders in regimes that begin as coups, that is, those led by officers in established militaries, are less likely to create parties than those led by leaders of rebellions, even though most leaders of rebellions are former officers. Second, leaders who were senior officers before the seizure of power are less likely to create parties than those who were either junior officers or ex-officers. The rank of the leader is used as a proxy for professionalization of the officer corps, and the significant coefficient associated with it in all models tried is consistent with the argument that leaders supported by less professionalized armed forces are more likely to create parties because the armed forces cannot make credible promises of support.

Preliminary evidence also suggests that dictators from more professionalized militaries are less likely to control the security apparatus and less likely to create paramilitary forces to balance the regular military than are junior and ex-officers. See Table 4. The proportions shown in Table 4 are based on information for only about half the regimes used above, so interpretation has to be tentative, but the differences are quite large and in the direction expected. Dictators who come from more professionalized

militaries are only about half as likely to gain personal control of the security forces as those who come from less professionalized militaries. They are also much less likely to create paramilitary forces. It might seem surprising that any regime led by a professionalized military would create paramilitary forces, but some of these are forces like ORDEN in El Salvador, created by the military regime to enforce the status quo and fight leftist guerrillas in rural areas. Several military regimes in both Latin America and Southeast Asia organized such paramilitary forces in the sixties and seventies.

Since party creation, control of the security apparatus, and the recruitment of paramilitary forces are all ways dictators try to reduce their dependence on the military, we should expect that the same dictators who create parties would be more likely to bring the security forces under their personal control and/or organize paramilitary forces to defend themselves. Table 5 shows that dictators who create parties are about three times as likely to bring the security apparatus under their personal control as those who do not create a party. Those who create a party are about twice as likely to recruit paramilitary forces as those who do not create a party. These figures, like those shown in Table 4, are based on information for only about half the regimes used to analyze party creation.

To sum up, dictators who cannot depend on the support of a unified and disciplined military tend to choose the kinds of survival strategies my argument about the consequences of military professionalization implies. I next test whether choosing the “right” strategy in fact deters coups. It is possible to do this because many dictators can be expected to choose “wrong” strategies, whether because they misunderstand their situation or because their ideals determine their choices. Among dictatorships that depend for support on unprofessionalized militaries, the argument leads to the

expectation of fewer coups and coup attempts against leaders supported by parties than against those not supported by them. Where militaries are highly professionalized, we would expect fewer coups and coup attempts when the leader shares power with other officers. Since I currently have no way of measuring power sharing, however, I cannot use these two strategies as part of the test. Instead, I assume that since the category dictatorships supported by professionalized militaries includes cases in which both the “right” and the “wrong” strategy was chosen, on average these regimes will experience more coups and coup attempts than will those with unprofessionalized militaries that have chosen the “right” strategy, that is, created parties.

Two datasets that identify the country-years in which successful coups occurred exist, one part of the Banks dataset and the other independently collected by Belkin and Schofer (2003).<sup>14</sup> In addition, the Center for Systemic Peace has collected a third dataset that includes both coups and coup attempts. The correlation between the Banks dataset and the Belkin/Schofer dataset for years they both cover is surprisingly low, .49.

Investigation shows that each dataset omits quite a few coups that actually happened, so I have combined the two as a way of reducing these errors of omission. Every year identified as a coup-year in one or both datasets is identified as a coup-year in the combined dataset. In the data analysis below, I show results for the Banks/Belkin-Schofer combined measure of coups, for the CSP measure of coups, and for the CSP measure of combined coups and coup attempts. Coups in the first year of a regime have had to be dropped because they are usually the coup that brought a regime to power.

Two additional control variables are used in these models, both created by Belkin and Schofer (2003). The first is what they call Couprisk, a measure that combines the

---

<sup>14</sup> My thanks to Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer for generously sharing their data with me.



country's past history of coups and measures of participation. A history of coups is one of the best predictors of future coups. Belkin and Schofer combine it with a measure of participation because they argue that coups are less likely when citizens have non-violent ways to influence leadership and policy choice. They show that their indicator, Couprisk, predicts coups better than the history of coups alone (Belkin and Schofer 2003). Using Couprisk as a control variable makes the test shown below a hard one because it shows that parties affect the likelihood of coups even after controlling for past history of coups and any "democratic" characteristics of authoritarian parties.

I also try a second Belkin and Schofer measure, Counterbalancing, in one model. Counterbalancing is their measure of dictators' efforts to protect themselves by creating new military forces and paramilitary forces. They have data for only a short period of time and, as noted above, I do not think the variable actually measures what it is supposed to very well, but I include it in one of the models to see if it seems to matter. The unit of analysis in these models is regime-year, and I include a number of control variables that other authors have suggested affect the likelihood of coups.

As shown in Table 6, creating a party seems to deter coups and coup attempts, as would be expected if it is an effective survival strategy for dictators who come to power without a pre-existing party. Coefficients are always negative and always statistically significant in one-tailed tests.

Belkin and Schofer's best predictor of coups, Couprisk, is associated with an increase in the likelihood of coups and coup attempts, as expected, but it is only statistically significant in the dataset that includes Belkin and Schofer's measure of coups.

Most studies of coups identify economic crisis as one of their main causes, but the effect of growth is less clear than most observers would expect in these data. Coefficients are mostly negative, as expected, but in some models they are not close to significance. It is possible these weak results are caused by the exclusion of democracies from the dataset. Many of the governments overthrown by coups during economic crises have been democratic. Dictatorships are also vulnerable to ouster during economic crisis, but civilian opponents leading democratization movements have caused quite a few of these ousters, not military plotters.

Level of development, measured as log GDP per capita, shows the same pattern as growth. Coefficients have the expected sign, indicating that richer countries are less prone to coups, but the results are not always statistically significant. This relationship is probably more unstable in these data than in studies by other researchers<sup>15</sup> because limiting the analysis to authoritarian regimes not initially led by parties has the effect of eliminating all the richer countries in the world from the data.

Although it seems that engagement in a civil war might increase a government's vulnerability to coups, neither the models shown nor others tried provide evidence to support that suggestion.

Coups and coup attempts are less common in monarchies than in other kinds of dictatorship. Coefficients are invariably negative and statistically significant. This finding provides a reason for the infrequency of regime-support parties in monarchies. If monarchs need fear coups less than other autocrats, then they have less reason to invest in party creation.

---

<sup>15</sup> See especially Londregan and Poole (1990 and 1996).

Regime duration was included in these models because in reading about authoritarian regimes I have noticed that coups aimed at changing leadership rather than ending the regime often occur during the few years after seizures of power. My casual observation is not supported by the data, however. Coefficients are negative, as I expected, but not statistically significant.

Year refers to the historical year and is included to capture an international trend in attitudes within the military. Rule by the military as an institution has proved less resilient than it once appeared to be (Geddes 2003), and officers' experiences in office have taught them about the high cost in terms of unity and professionalism of political involvement. Military regimes and coups have both become less common during the more than sixty years since World War II. Coefficients are negative and statistically significant as expected.

Counterbalancing is included in one model. It has a negative coefficient as expected but is not statistically significant. I have tried it in a number of other models including one using the Belkin/Schofer data alone, but never found it to be significant.

Many other specifications have been tried, including ones with region dummies, year dummies, and various other control variables. The results in them were similar to those shown here.

### Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that dictators who achieve power without having a party to organize their regime choose different survival strategies depending on whether they can make an enforceable bargain with the armed forces. All governments are vulnerable to ouster by armed men, but those that achieve power through force of arms are most

vulnerable. Leaders of such regimes seek therefore either to craft an enforceable power-sharing agreement with the rest of the military in order to secure their on-going support from the armed forces or to devise alternative strategies to deter coups. I argue that commanders of professionalized militaries can make credible commitments both to oust leaders who renege on promises to share power and resources and, equally important, to support leaders who keep their promises. In contrast, where militaries are factionalized or undisciplined, commanders' promises to support leaders who share are not credible. The same is true for the less formally organized armed forces, usually led by former officers, that carry out rebellions. Since dictators brought to power by factionalized or incompletely disciplined armed forces cannot count on them for stable support, they are more likely to undertake the substantial expense of creating a mass-based party to support their rule.

I further suggest that each of these survival strategies tends to be associated with typical societal allies and policy choices. Dictators who draw their main support from a professionalized military need not distribute substantial resources to civilian supporters and need not provide large numbers of jobs in the state sector for party militants as dictators who create parties generally need to do. They are thus free to rely heavily on experts and technocrats for policy advice. In contrast, dictators who create parties must devise ways of paying for the support of party leaders and activists. In many times and places, the easiest way to pay them has been to employ them in the state bureaucracy and state enterprise sector, thus creating pressure to increase and maintain high levels of state intervention in the economy. Although these strategies do not determine the ideological cast of policy choices, dictators supported by professionalized militaries have leaned

toward more market-oriented policy strategies, and dictators who have created parties have tended to opt for more state interventionist strategies.

Given the current state of data collection, the suggestions about policy and alliance consequences of authoritarian survival strategies cannot now be tested. I do test a couple of the key elements in the argument, however: that low professionalization in the armed forces increases the likelihood of party creation; and that choosing the “right” strategy with regard to party creation reduces the likelihood of being ousted through military force. For the data analysis, I created two proxy measures for professionalization to test the argument that party creation occurs more often in regimes supported by factionalized armed forces. One was the military rank before the seizure of power of the man chosen to lead the post-seizure regime, and the other was how recently the officer corps in a country had been formed. The occurrence of coups led by junior officers is a direct indication of low professionalization since only senior officers have the official authority to make decisions to oust governments. The idea behind using the length of time since the officer corps was formed as a proxy for professionalization is that the internalization of professional norms might take some time. The results show that dictatorships led by senior officers are less likely to create parties than are those led by junior officers or ex-officers, which is consistent with my expectations. The length of time since creation of the officer corps did not have the expected effect in most models. I interpret this result as meaning that time since creation is not a good proxy for professionalization.

The argument also implies that those dictators who choose the “right” survival strategy should be less likely to lose power via coup. I tested this argument by investigating the effect of party creation on the likelihood of coups and coup attempts.

The data analysis shows that party creation does reduce the likelihood of both coups and coup attempts. These results are consistent with the argument that party creation decreases the dictator's vulnerability to military ouster and consequently his dependence on the military for support.

This study has focused on one small part of the portrait of autocracy being developed by a number of scholars, but the results also contribute to a more empirically grounded theoretical understanding of the chief actors involved in day-to-day authoritarian politics and their motives. Many systematic studies of authoritarianism have relied on implicit assumptions drawn from theories of democratic politics. As a result, some have failed to investigate important phenomena that have little importance in developed democracies. An example of understudied phenomena is military rule, examined in depth by country and region specialists during the 1960s and 1970s, but largely forgotten in both recent theories and large-N empirical studies of the rise, collapse, and institution-building of autocracies.

As the argument and analysis above demonstrate, dictators who come from the armed forces face some demands and challenges different from those that face other dictators, both because the interests of their most threatening allies-cum-rivals do not derive primarily from positions in the private economy and also because of the ease with which they can overthrow a leader who fails to satisfy them. For both these reasons, the primary constituency that military rulers must satisfy in order to remain in office differs in theoretically relevant ways from the civilian elites, whether economic- or party-based, who must be satisfied by other dictators. This study thus adds to the evidence that all

autocracies are not essentially alike and that therefore theories that treat autocracy as an undifferentiated category may fail to explain big chunks of reality.

## References

- Anderson, Thomas P. 1988. *Politics in Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua*, revised ed. NY: Praeger.
- Arriagada, Genaro. 1988. *Pinochet: The Politics of Power*. Transl. N. Morris. Boston: Unwin: Hyman.
- Banks, A. S. 2001. Cross-national time series data archive (data set). Binghamton, NY: Computer Systems Unlimited
- Bebler, Anton. 1973. *Military Rule in Africa: Dahomey, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Mali*. NY: Praeger.
- Belkin, Aaron and Evan Schofer. 2003. "Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47:5, 594-620.
- Biglaiser, Glen. 2002. *Guardians of the Nation? Economists, Generals and Economic Reform in Latin America*, University of Notre Dame Press.
- Boix, Carles and Milan Svoblik. 2008. "Foundations of Limited Authoritarian Government: Institutions and Power-sharing in Dictatorship," presented APSA.
- Bratton M, van de Walle N. 1997. *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Center for Systemic Peace. [www.systemicpeace.org/inscr.htm](http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr.htm)
- Chehabi, H. E. and Juan Linz, eds. 1998. *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Chiozza, Giacomo, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Hein Goemans. 2009. "Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders." <http://mail.rochester.edu/~hgoemans/data>
- CIA. 2009. World Factbook. [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/)
- Clark, William Roberts, Paul Poast, Thomas Flores, and Robert Kaufman. 2009. "Why Do Some Autocracies Perform Surprisingly Well?" Presented APSA, Toronto.
- Dann, Uriel. 1969. *Iraq under Qassem: A Political History, 1958-1963*. NY: Praeger.
- Decalo S. 1976. *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Studies in Military Style*. New Haven: Yale University Press.



- Decalo, Samuel. 1998. *The Stable Minority: Civilian Rule in Africa, 1960-1990* (Gainesville: Academic Press).
- Diamond, Larry, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds. 1988. *Democracy in Developing Countries: Africa*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Diamond, Larry, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds. 1989a. *Democracy in Asia*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications (Sage).
- Diamond, Larry, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds. 1989b. *Democracy in Developing Countries: Latin America*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, 1 (February 2003), 75-90.
- Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003. "repdata.dta," <http://www.stanford.edu/~jfeardon/>.
- Fitch, John Samuel. 1977. *The Military Coup d'Etat As a Political Process: Ecuador, 1948-1966*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Fontana, Andrés. 1987. "Political Decision-Making by a Military Corporation: Argentina, 1976-83," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas.
- Gandhi, Jennifer. 2008. "Dictatorial Institutions and Their Impact on Economic Growth," *European Journal of Sociology*.
- Gandhi, Jennifer and Adam Przeworski. 2007. "Authoritarian Institutions and the Survival of Autocrats," *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2009. "Changes in the Causes of Democratization through Time," in Todd Landman and Neil Robinson, eds., *Sage Handbook of Comparative Politics*.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2008. "Party Creation as an Autocratic Survival Strategy," presented Conference on Dictators, Princeton University.
- Haddad, George. 1973. *Revolutions and Military Rule in the Middle East: The Arab States, Pt. II: Egypt, The Sudan, Yemen, and Libya*. NY: Robert Speller & Sons.
- Herb, Michael. 1999. *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in Middle Eastern Monarchies*. NY: State University of New York Press.

Global Security.

[www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1985/liberia\\_1\\_tolbertpresidency.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1985/liberia_1_tolbertpresidency.htm)

Hartlyn, Jonathan. 1998. "The Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic," in H. E. Chehabi and Juan Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press).

Jowitt, Kenneth. 1975. "Inclusion and Mobilization in European Leninist Regimes," *World Politics* XXVIII: 69-96.

Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan, eds. 1978. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan, eds. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Londregan John and Keith Poole. 1996. "Does High Income Promote Democracy?" *World Politics*, 49:1-30.

Londregan, John and Keith Poole. 1990. "Poverty, the Coup Trap, and the Seizure of Executive Power." *World Politics* 42: 151-83.

Magaloni, Beatriz. Forthcoming. "Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule." *Comparative Political Studies*.

Nordlinger, Eric. 1977. *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ; Prentice-Hall.

O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1973. *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California).

O'Donnell, Guillermo, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds. 1986. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Pinkney, Robert. 1972. *Ghana under Military Rule, 1966-1969*. London: Methuen.

Przeworski, Adam. "invars.xls." <http://politics.as.nyu.edu/object/przeworskilinks.html>.

Reno, William. 1998. *Warlord Politics and African States*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Ross, Michael. 2001. "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics*.

Stanley, William. 1996. *The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Stepan, Alfred. 1971. *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Valenzuela A. 1978. *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Chile*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Zolberg, Aristide. 1968. "The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa," *American Political Science Review* 62, 70-87.

Table 1, Relationship between Military Professionalization and Party Creation

	Created Party (%)	Did Not Create a Party (%)	Total (%)
Established Military	36	64	100 (N=70)
Recently Created*	63	37	100 (N=54)
Led by Senior Officer	31	69	100 (N=61)
Not Led by Senior Officer	63	37	100 (N=63)

\*Indigenized or created by foreign occupiers within 30 years of the date of seizure of power

Table 2, Causes of Party Creation in Regimes That Initially Lacked Them

Logit. Unit of analysis: Regime-Year

Dependent variable: Year party was created

	Includes Monarchies	Excludes Monarchies
Monarchy	-2.51 (0.08)	
Growth	0.02 (0.45)	0.02 (0.38)
Log GDP per capita	0.24 (0.38)	0.19 (0.52)
Percent Muslim	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.06)
Ethnic Fractionalization	-0.54 (0.48)	-0.55 (0.45)
Oil/Gas Exporter	-0.00 (0.87)	-0.03 (0.20)
Civil War	0.39 (0.41)	0.29 (0.55)
Years Regime in Power	-0.02 (0.52)	-0.06 (0.20)
Begun by Coup	-0.50 (0.53)	-0.41 (0.58)
Age of Leader	-0.01 (0.59)	-0.01 (0.52)
East Asia	1.74 (0.01)	1.87 (0.01)
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.23 (0.06)	1.41 (0.05)
Middle East	-2.35 (0.09)	
Constant	271.46 (0.65)	-17.12 (0.98)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.17	0.13
N	859	609

P values in parentheses below coefficients.

Table 3, Causes of Party Creation in Regimes That Initially Lack Them

Logit. Unit of analysis: Regime.

Dependent variable: Party created while the regime was in power

	Includes Monarchies		Without Monarchies	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Monarchy	-2.66 (0.01)	-1.77 (0.11)		
Log GDP	-0.14 (0.51)	0.01 (0.97)	0.55 (0.09)	0.55 (0.11)
Percent Muslim	0.02 (0.00)	0.02 (0.01)	0.04 (0.00)	0.04 (0.00)
Ethnic Fractnlzn	-0.06 (0.94)	-0.27 (0.76)	-1.20 (0.26)	-1.28 (0.26)
Oil/Gas	0.02 (0.29)	0.00 (0.50)	-0.23 (0.07)	-0.23 (0.05)
Begun by Coup	-1.36 (0.02)	-0.91 (0.14)	-1.41 (0.05)	-1.15 (0.12)
Age of Leader	-0.02 (0.38)	0.01 (0.59)	-.03 (0.31)	-0.00 (1.00)
Established Military		-0.92 (0.05)		-0.03 (0.97)
Senior Officer		-1.76 (0.00)		-1.79 (0.00)
East Asia	1.32 (0.07)	2.00 (0.02)	3.38 (0.00)	3.75 (0.00)
Sub-Saharan Africa			2.25 (0.01)	1.95 (0.05)
Middle East	-2.37 (0.01)	-2.60 (0.01)	-2.99 (0.01)	-3.67 (0.00)
Constant	33.63 (0.63)	20.27 (0.78)	111.62 (0.42)	86.18 (0.57)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.15	0.25	0.28	0.33
N	143	143	129	129

P values in parentheses below coefficients.

Table 4, Military Professionalization, Control of the Security Apparatus, and Creation of Paramilitary Forces

Dictator:	Controls Security (%)	Lacks Control of Security (%)	Creates Paramilitary (%)	Creates No Paramilitary (%)
Senior Officer	27	73	35	65
Not Senior	61	39	63	38
Monarch	78	22	*	*

\*N too small to report

Table 5, Correlation between Party Creation, Control of Security Forces, and Creation of Paramilitary Forces

Dictator:	Controls Security (%)	Lacks Control of Security (%)	Creates Paramilitary (%)	Creates No Paramilitary (%)
Creates Party	74	26	69	31
No Party	23	77	32	68

Table 6, The Effect of Party Creation on the Likelihood of Coups

	Combined B & B/S		CSP Coups	Coups & Attempts
Party	-0.47 (0.07)	-0.62 (0.10)	-0.91 (0.04)	-0.57 (0.04)
Couprisk	0.24 (0.03)	0.30 (0.08)	0.16 (0.36)	0.10 (0.36)
Growth	-0.04 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.37)	0.01 (0.63)	-0.02 (0.15)
Log GDP	-0.27 (0.04)	-0.19 (0.27)	-0.15 (0.42)	-0.25 (0.04)
Civil War	0.12 (0.67)	-0.60 (0.21)	-0.33 (0.50)	-0.19 (0.51)
Monarchy	-1.87 (0.00)	-1.17 (0.15)	-2.74 (0.01)	-1.68 (0.00)
Regime Duration	-0.01 (0.74)	-0.01 (0.61)	0.02 (0.93)	-0.15 (0.30)
Year	-0.05 (0.00)	-0.09 (0.02)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.02 (0.06)
Counter- balancing		-0.07 (0.59)		
Constant	98.47 (0.00)	168.18 (0.02)	71.62 (0.07)	46.24 (0.07)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.14	0.15	0.10	0.10
N	1163	550	1163	1163

P-values in parentheses below coefficients



Appendix

Variable Name	Unit of Analysis: Regime	Unit of Analysis: Regime-Year
Monarchy (Geddes data)	Dummy variable for whether or not regime is a monarchy	Dummy variable for whether or not regime is a monarchy
GDP per capita (loggdp) (Penn World Tables)	GDP per capita as of second year of regime. Where regime began before 1960, first available year.	GDP per capita for each year data are available
Growth (Penn World Tables)	N/A	Calculated from GDP per capita for each year
Region (Geddes data)	Dummy variable for each region	Dummy variable for each region
Begun by Coup (Geddes data)	Dummy variable for whether the regime began as a coup. Autogolpes treated as coups.	Dummy variable for whether the regime began as a coup. Autogolpes treated as coups.
Age of Leader (age of dictator in power) (Chiozza et al., Archigos dataset)	In regimes that created a party, age of dictator when party was created. For no-party regimes, age of dictator in the second year of the regime.	Age of dictator each year.
Time in Power (Geddes data)	N/A	Number of years since regime began
Civil war (Fearon and Laitin)	N/A	Dummy variable for civil war in each regime-year.
Created Party (Geddes data)	Coded 1 if a party to support the regime or dictator was created at any time during the regime; 0 otherwise	Coded 1 if a party to support the regime or dictator was created during a particular year; 0 otherwise. The years after party creation in regimes that created parties are omitted from the analysis.
Coups and Coup Attempts (Banks; Belkin and Schofer 2003; Center for Systemic Peace. Coding slightly different in each source and described in them.)	N/A	Coups and coup attempts recorded for each year

<u>Variable Name</u>	<u>Unit of Analysis: Regime</u>	<u>Unit of Analysis: Regime-Year</u>
Couprisk Coding described in Belkin and Schofer (2003)	N/A	Couprisk as calculated by Belkin and Schofer for each year
Counterbalancing Coding described in Belkin and Schofer (2003)	N/A	Counterbalancing as calculated by Belkin and Schofer for each year
Ethnic Fractionalization (Fearon and Laitin, repdata.dta)	Measured in second year of regime	Measured in each year
Oil/Gas Measurement described in Ross (2006) <sup>16</sup>	(Volume of exports in metric tons)(Price-Cost) per capita, measured in second year of regime. Measured in hundreds of constant dollars rather than dollars to reduce zeroes in the tables.	(Volume of exports in metric tons)(Price-Cost) per capita, measured each year. Measured in hundreds of constant dollars rather than dollars to reduce zeroes in the tables.
Percent Muslim (Przeworski, invars.xls)	Assessed in second year of regime	Assessed in each year
Recent Creation of Regime (Geddes data)	Years between independence or last year of occupation and first year of regime; coded 1 if less than 30, 0 otherwise.	N/A
Senior Officer Leads Regime (Geddes data)	Rank of first leader after seizure measured before seizure; coded 1 if general currently in military, 0 otherwise	N/A
Control of Security Apparatus (incomplete, Geddes data)	Coded 1 if secondary literature reports security apparatus as controlled by dictator, a relative, or someone described as friend or close ally who does not have a high rank in the military; 0 otherwise	N/A
Created Paramilitary Force (incomplete, Geddes data)	Coded 1 if one or more paramilitary forces created by the dictator or his party or allies; 0 otherwise	N/A

<sup>16</sup> My thanks to Michael Ross for generously sharing his data.